

THE ME OF YOURS AND THE ME OF MINE: AN INVESTIGATION OF  
SUBJECTIVE SELF AND OBJECTIVE SELF IN DANCE

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how the subjective self and objective self are shaped by interacting with the world. It examines how self-awareness arises when we put ourselves in an unfamiliar environment. In this research, I include personal dance experiences that have illuminated my own subjective self and objective self as a human being and dance artist. Finally, I address how my understanding of the relationship between these two selves has informed and transformed my identity as a performer, and choreographer.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

As a modern dance choreographer, I try to create choreographic work that expresses my intended ideas. I also desire that my work be accepted by the dance community. However, feedback from audiences is not always necessarily what I expect. A section they like might be the section I find weaker. A section I am most satisfied with may leave no images in their minds. The way I look at my work seems to be in occasional opposition to the vision of others.

As a Taiwanese performer, choreographer, and teacher, living in a Western society, the past 3 years have given me an opportunity to re-evaluate my self-identity. Thus, this thesis records my life in the U.S., especially my artistic life in the Department of Modern Dance at the University of Utah. I want to use my experience of living in America to understand my sense of “self” through the lens of my choreographic work. This compels me to examine my “self” and my work critically, much like visualizing a cell under a microscope.

What is a sense of “self?” Is it my personality, my genetic code, my cultural background, or some combination of these? Current theories in Behavioral Science suggest that up to 45% of a personality can be influenced by various configurations of genetic information (Bouchard 1994, Science). The rest is largely a mixture of environmental factors, personality trait indicators, and testing limitations. The human brain is complex, and the human sense of self is no less complicated to understand. My research is focused on how I understand my “self” through my experiences. In other words, I took a

phenomenological approach to a study of self. I cannot “see” my genetic code, and so that is hard for me to study. My research will focus on ways of understanding these relationships between my “self” and my environment.

I am interested in the conflict between how I view myself and how others view me. In psychology, this phenomenon relates to the concept of subjective self and objective self. In *Mind, Self, and Society* (1932), American psychologist George Herbert Mead used the “I” to represent the subjective self and the “me” to represent the objective self. He stated: “The ‘I’ is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the ‘me’ is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized ‘me,’ and then one reacts toward that as an ‘I’ “(pp. 174-175).

Simply put, one’s behavior from his or her subjective self can refer to his or her inner perspective, personal history, and personal life experiences. These influences help to create an individual’s personal standards, morals and values, and the ways that one acts without the influences of outside public forces. Everyone has his or her own unique subjective selves, and it is impossible for one to have the same subjective self as another, even if he or she happens to have had the same background.

Conversely, the objective self relates to the way that we act in reference to our perception of other people’s judgments about us. According to American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley, it is not just our appearance that determines our outer “self,” but it is the “imagined judgment, which is quite essential” (Cooley 1983, p.184). Sometimes we act the way that we do because we assume that others expect certain actions from us.

In this way, as human beings, our motivations behind acting are not necessarily sincere to our subjective desires, yet we assume that if we act in a certain way, we will be more accepted by the people we interact with. Moreover, the objective self can be fluid or

changeable, because we meet different people, at different times, and in different environments, each of whom has a different expectation of us.

Human behavior cannot be divided into either a subjective self or objective self. Instead, these two self perspectives are dialectical. When we interact with the world, we learn about ourselves based on what other people perceive us to be, or the kind of person they believe we are. In my experience, over time, my objective self started to accept and enact the individual that others perceived in me. After this, my subjective self began to believe that this is the kind of person that I really am. Other people's perceptions began, in part, to form me.

This experience is not the same for everyone. For example, many people throughout history have fought against the identities that others have prescribed for them. From this we can see the rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. However, sociologist Ann Branaman has said that primarily "We decide who we are on the basis of how other people respond to us" (Branaman 2001, p.169). Outside forces can play a large role in defining our options. In this way, the subjective self and objective self do not exist individually, but they are interrelated.

In the first chapter (year one), I explore how the American style of communication and the culture shock I experienced aroused my curiosity to research my self-identity. This experience was important to me because it caused me to question my sense of "self." I was surprised by the way that my cultural surroundings caused me to feel "different." Suddenly, I became aware of the way that artistic inspiration can be affected by the "self" in relationship to environment. This realization was reflected in the dance piece *I Open a Door*.

In the second chapter (year two), I will introduce a broad analysis of several

psychologists' theories of self. I will discuss the theory behind subjective self and objective self. I ask how these perspectives are formed, and how they function. Then, I will address the relationship between these two self-perspectives, which psychologist Anne-Lise Lovlie calls the dialectical self.

In the third chapter (year three), I discuss how this continued research resulted in the choreographic process of my thesis work, *A Believable Absence*, as well as a secondary work, *Is There No Doubt*. I use these choreographic processes as examples that demonstrate my understanding of the subjective self and the objective self through asking the audience to contemplate the limitations to their perspectives.

In addition to the discussion of those works, I discuss a personal experience I had in Taiwan that revealed how the gaze influences my self-awareness. I also explore how the two different self-perspectives manifest in my artistic life outside of choreography, especially in dancing (daily dance training) and performing.

In my conclusion, I emphasize the influence these theories have had on me as a human being, and an artist, as well as how honest self knowledge is essential for artists. For me, self-reflection has resulted in more self-acceptance and confidence, as well as an openness to feedback and critique. These tools are invaluable for artists, who must have confidence to make strong decisions about their art, while at the same time being permeable to influence and feedback from the outside world.

## II. YEAR ONE

I left my hometown, in Taiwan, to study in the U.S because I wanted to know how dance happens in the world. In my graduate school application essay I stated that studying abroad is like standing on a giant's shoulder. I am able to see the whole view at once.

In 2008, I got the opportunity to study in America. The experience of being a foreigner in America has had a great impact on me and forced me to question myself and who I am. My social experience in America and communicating with people of a different culture are the two motivations that engaged my self-awareness in my first year of living in the U.S.

### Social experience

Coming to the U.S I was like a tourist, feeling excited by and interested in everything that happened around me. My sensory systems were opened to receive new molecules of information from this different environment. After a few weeks, however, I gradually closed off my outward sensory systems in the wake of so much new social experience. Living in an unfamiliar place left me without an understanding of how people would judge me. I was a like drop of oil in water: unmixable.

I strongly noticed my own sense of self when I realized the difference between myself and the people who I interact with in the United States (specifically, Utah), such as the faculty, classmates, students and my friends. If interacting with society is like looking at ourselves in the mirror, the image in the mirror would be the people and environment that

we communicate with. If the people who we interact with have similar perspectives, values and share a similar culture with us, the image in the mirror may appear more familiar. On the other hand, if the people that we see are significantly different from us, then there is a contrast between our “self” and the mirror images that we see. In reference to the self in its original culture, Mead said:

In our habitual actions, for example, in our moving about in a world that is simply there and to which we are so adjusted that no thinking is involved, there is a certain amount of sensuous experience such as persons have when they are just waking up, a bare thereness of the world. Such characters about us may exist in experience without taking their place in relationship to the self (Mead 1934, p.135).

I barely sensed my “self” in Taiwan because I was used to the social situation and culture. I was not aware of my sense of self because everything around me was just as natural as the sunset and sunrise. The mirror metaphor mentioned above made me think about why, in America, the mirror image and I were in contrast, why the image was not what I expected, and most importantly, why and how I was different? During my first year in America, my sense of self was expanded like a balloon.

Living in a different environment made me question my self understanding. But surprisingly, the feeling of not knowing who I was during the first year became a meaningful motivation that encouraged me to investigate my inner self thoroughly. In addition to my new social experience, communication likewise added to my questioning and investigation.

### Communication

Before I came to the U.S, I took communication for granted. I never questioned the way that I interacted with others in my native language because I was comfortable with the

cultural norms surrounding communication. I felt articulate, but I did not realize that it was the experience of living within my home culture for over 24 years that made me feel confident. Taiwan helped form my personality and identity, and according to Social Constructionist Vivien Burr, communication within community was a huge part of this growing process (1995). Then I moved to America, and everything changed.

In essence, a subjective shift in my sense of self occurred. It began with the simple question, "How are you?" This common American greeting turned my world upside-down because it forced me to ask myself, "Do I know how I am?" This is the kind of self-reflective question I rarely asked myself when I was in Taiwan. In Utah, people kept asking me how I was and so I kept thinking about it. This changed my interior landscape, and so my inner feelings about who I was began to shift. Having to speak my feelings made my identity feel stronger because I knew how I felt.

In Taiwan, especially in the school setting, self-reflection is not usually encouraged. In my American graduate experience; I found that a student-centered discussion is the predominant learning style that allows students to contribute their thoughts. In my American dance technique class, movement correction is not always from the teacher but also from peers. Students are willing to chance voicing what they feel inside their dancing bodies. In a workshop class, each student needs to comment on other peers' choreographic work through observation. Communication keeps happening around me, even with a bus driver, a cashier in a supermarket or a stranger who passes by me on the street. I am always asked to respond in a personal way to those around me. My sense of my subjective self, knowing my "self" from the inside, came alive during this time period.

At this point, the question of communication and how it functions in a culture and in the construction of an identity became very important to me. For humans, communication is

a daily tool; it allows us to interact with others and better perceive the world.

Communication is a symbolic system for human beings to express themselves and also in a practical way for people to relate to their environment. Communication involves both verbal and non-verbal elements. These elements come together to create either understanding or opposition between people.

Through communication, we are not only able to perceive the world, but we are also able to map out our own identities. Vivien Burr mentions in her book, *An Introduction to Social Constructionist* (1995): “Our identity arises out of interactions with other people” (p.51). Burr also argues “The discourses that form our identity have implications for what we can do and what we should do” (p.54). The bilateral conversation process creates a complex means for us to establish our self-regulated behavior. This kind of discourse gradually molds us to fit social norms and becomes a social standard of behavior by which we condition and control ourselves. This two-way conversation guides us to behave appropriately in a particular society (Burr, 1995).

Communication is also able to reveal our personal beliefs. For instance, in a reciprocal discussion, we can identify a unified value system and gain personal validation through affirmation, negotiation, or compromise. Eventually, this everyday communication helps us frame our thinking patterns, build our ability to judge, and understand ourselves more deeply. Self-regulated behavior develops a strong social structure that enables us to react in a socially acceptable way toward the outside world.

Effective communication is a passport to assimilation in a new culture. Yet, in my first year of studying in America, and dealing with the difficulty of language skills, I felt challenged by this environment. I could not express myself completely or respond to people immediately. I was not able to find words to describe specific things and could not get used

to sharing my thoughts with everyone around me. I could not communicate with my American colleagues in a way that they could get a sense of who I was and what I believed. This caused a rift between my subjective self and my objective self. I was becoming more aware of who I was but everyone around me was confused about how to interact with me. An interaction with a friend is a good example of this confusion.

I asked a friend of mine to tell me what kind of person she thought I was when she met me for the first time. She said I looked arrogant because I did not often smile. This is totally different than what I thought she would say, I thought she would say I was pretty easy going because I thought I usually smiled. Suddenly my sense of identity became unreliable. The perception of the Li-Sha I know might not match the Li-Sha that others' perceived.

My communication difficulties did not always allow me to understand the people and the culture of this society. I did not know how to talk and behave appropriately. Finally, the way I interacted with the outside world was transformed into something else. I began to isolate myself and question the appropriateness of my actions. Since then, I have engaged in the process of self-reflection more often. By observing the way people interacted, I gradually figured out how different I was in this country in terms of speaking and responding. Also, the language barrier enabled me to re-recognize who I am and why I tend to respond in a certain way. I continued mapping out my self-identity as I learned to live in the U.S.

### Creative work—*I Open a Door*

In second semester of graduate workshop, 2008, each student in my class was asked to make a dance piece and show it in the Grad Salon at the end of the semester. It was my first choreographic work in this dance program, and was a concrete statement about how I perceived myself as a person literally and honestly during a period of confronting cultural

difference.

The dance was a solo, which I performed, entitled *I Open a Door*. The title referenced leaving the environment that I was familiar with in order to give myself an opportunity to see the variety of the world. The word “door” in this title is a metaphor that implies the difference of the transition from when I lived in Taiwan to now living in the U.S.

In this piece, I wore a traditional Chinese costume and held a fan that usually appears in Chinese folk dance. I used the ideas of movement changes and space variation to express how I have been influenced by my new life, using spatial pathways such as a diagonal line, circling in the center stage, another diagonal line downstage, and a straight line exit to the space. The different pathways stood for how I lived in a different period, which was life in Taiwan, and then moved to America with my time of struggle with culture shock, and the process of adjusting to my new life.

I used Chinese dance movements in the beginning with the fan, which symbolized where I am from and the way I move. Eventually, I dropped the fan and traditional movements, to illustrate my feeling of being uneasy in my unfamiliar situation. In the end of this piece, both movements of praying and using the mouth-like saying “how are you” symbolized my attempts trying to be involved in western society.

The motivation of making this solo was to record my mental and physical experiences in that moment. It was similar to Ann Cooper Albright’s idea of autobiographic choreography in her book, *Choreography Difference* (1997): “autography, like dance, is situated at the intersection. Meaning literally ‘to write one’s life,’ autography draws its inspirations from one’s being-in-the-world...translating one’s life experience into a written text or, perhaps, a dance” (p.119). This piece meant to describe my own living experience,

not judging what was happening to me. However, reflecting on the creative process now, this solo piece not only showed the different choreographic aesthetic between living in Taiwan and America, but also revealed that I had started to notice the concept of who I am. It is the reason I would say this solo work remains the most valid evidence of my knowledge of self-perception.

### III. YEAR TWO

The first year of graduate school was a very illuminating experience for me. Going into my second year, to know my “self,” from the inside out, became my research. I became inspired by the psychological theories surrounding the idea of self-identity. It was during this time that I decided to focus my thesis work on the concepts of the subjective self (which describes the ways we look at ourselves from the inside) and the objective self (which refers to the ways we represent ourselves in public, to be seen by others). A deeper understanding of these concepts has guided me through my analysis of my “self.” I think it is important for all of us to become more aware of ourselves because awareness opens the door to choice.

#### The social context of the self

We are born with a genetic code that will dictate some of what we will experience in our lives. Our skin color, our gender, and many other elements of our physical bodies are initially defined by our genes. Studies have shown that some elements of our personalities are inherited as well. Agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism are five categories in which Behavioral Scientists study the personality (Bouchard 1994, Science). These categories have all been found to have genetic components.

However, when we look at our awareness of “self,” and our perception of our

personality, our ideas can change over time due to social and cultural influence. The theories of subjective self and objective self seek to describe what happens to us as we develop our sense of self within a matrix of social interaction and cultural norms. Mead states that “the self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity” (Mead 1934, p.135). Through the work of Mead, Cooley and Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman, I have come to understand the importance of this process of socialization.

Additionally, this process takes place on two levels: the inner self and the outerself. We understand ourselves from the inside as a subject, and our perspective on our innerself comes from a first-hand, subjective point of view. This is our “I,” a place from which we can claim our personal desires and experiences. Our outer self responds to our perception of what is expected of us by the outside world. We understand this “me” as an object; we judge our actions as if we were on the outside, looking in. These judgments are made from our assumptions of how others see us. These two ways of understanding each relate to our social self, which is the self that is made by our socialization process. They can be described by the psychological theory of subjective self and objective self.

### Objective self

The goal of the objective self is to seek social acceptance. According to Goffman’s performance theory, we have a set of roles that we play in social situations. Goffman studied social roles in order to discover the nature of the social order, and he is considered to be one of the foremost “observers of daily life, social interaction and the production of self” (Elliott 2007, p.37). He claims that we “act” in accordance to social norms in order to meet others’ expectations of us. We pretend to be different than we

are. For example, when someone asks me how I am doing, I always say that I am fine, even if I am not. I know now that this is an American custom, and so I conform to their expectation of my response.

According to Mead, when I respond that I am doing fine, I am in the process of making my objective self. I see my actions from the outside, and try to judge them objectively to see if I am reflecting the image that I assume others expect. Of course, not every conversation feels like an “act.” We do not always need to censor what we say and do. However, in some situations our objective self becomes more apparent. For example, during the rehearsal process I may spend time trying to figure out what kind of movement the choreographer might be interested in, therefore placing his/her expectations of my dancing ahead of my own interests or priorities. When a choreographer tells me to make a phrase that has an awkward feel to it, I do not really know what they want, I only have my interpretation of what I think that the choreographer wants. Some choreographers purposely work to avoid this tendency of dancers to “want to please.” In effect, these choreographers would rather see the dancers address the movement from a subjective place, with intention that initiates from the perspective of the “I.”

### Subjective self

The self that is uniquely me and based on my particular set of genes and experiences, is called the subjective self. Even though two people may grow up in the same house, go to the same school, and have the same religion, they will still be different from each other. This is because the subjective self is utterly personal and has to do with our reflections upon our individual thoughts and feelings. The subjective self is formed as we make meaning from our lives. Only I can understand my “self” from this subjective viewpoint. Others can

only see the objective me, but I have a unique perspective on my interior world. It is as if I am a first-person narrative, writing my life from the “I” point of view. British scholar Regenia Gagnier said, “The subject is a subject to itself, an ‘I,’ however difficult or even impossible it may be for others to understand this ‘I’ from its own viewpoint, within its own experience” (Gagnier 1991, p.8).

As a choreographer, I want to draw movement from the subjective experience of dancers. As artists, this well of meaningful knowledge is a source for movement that speaks to metaphor, human emotion, and personal truth. It is knowledge of the subjective self that can take me closer to this artistic goal.

### Dialectical self

These two ways of understanding the self, subjective and objective, are always interrelated. At times, they are in harmony with each other, and at other times they are in conflict. They influence each other, as we relate to others and continue to reflect on our identity. As children, we play make-believe. This practice of creating social characters helps us to understand our future choices. As adults, we accumulate these objective experiences and through ongoing self-reflection we generate our subjective realities.

I use the term “realities” rather than “reality” because the subjective self is continually forming as we reflect on our interactions with our environment. The process will not be stopped as long as we still live and interact with the outside world. Also, subjectivity can change and be formed over time because we consistently meet different people as well as confront new environments and situations, which, in turn, affect and change our beliefs. The way my objective self interacts in the world affects my subjective self, and the relationship between these two selves is known as the dialectical self. Developing one’s

dialectical self is not a short-term outcome, but a life-long process.

Mead explains how this relationship works. He refers to the subjective self as the “I” and the objective self as the “me.” The “I” is built up over time in response to actions that the “me” has taken. In the present, the “me” acts in accordance to social expectations, but then the “I” remembers and reflects upon one’s actions. Reflection can change who “I” am, and so the new subjective self is born in relation to the objective self. Then, Mead explains, “the ‘I’ of this moment is present in the ‘me’ of the next moment” (Mead 1934, p.174). In this way, the dialectical self functions like a back and forth conversation between subjectivity and objectivity.

Children begin their understanding of the social world through play. They take on different roles that they observe in adult society (like a teacher, doctor, or fireman), and learn from the process of enacting different social roles. Mead believes that the shape of the self begins to appear and develop in the activity of children’s play. He refers to this as the theory of the *Generalized Other*. He states:

Little children play at being a parent, at being a teacher—vague personalities that are about them and which affect them and on which they depend. These are personalities which they take, roles they play, and in so far control the development of their own personality. This outcome is just what the kindergarten works toward. It takes the characters of these curious vague beings and gets them into such an organized social relationship to each other that they build up the character of the little child. (Mead 1963, p.153)

Taking on roles is a mental activity that uses the imagination to practice social norms. These characters come with particular social situations. This allows the children to learn the behaviors that are expected in those environments. Children pretend to talk to a patient when they act like doctors. They may take on an authoritarian demeanor if they are pretending to be a strict teacher. Sweden psychologist Ann-Lise Lovlie says, “In this way

the child gradually builds himself from a base of other people's reactions to him. Children's play is characterized by the child's taking several roles." She also says: "He tries them out and converses with himself through gestures. First the child will take the view of specific individuals, then the generalized others (the society, the organized community)" (Lovlie 1982, p.49).

This process of self-formation continues into adulthood. Below is a personal example of how the two selves (subjective and objective) maintain an ongoing, dialectical relationship:

In my second year of living in America, I had dinner with all my classmates in the dance program. During the party, we shared what we were satisfied with and worried about in that very moment. They explained that it was an activity called "what's up, what's down." I was surprised by what they shared. They all talked a lot about their ups, but mentioned less of their downs. I was wondering how a person's life could be that good. I thought that it was unlikely that they would not have challenges as well. But because of their positive attitudes, I said, "I love being part of the dance artists in the dance program and I enjoy living in a foreign country alone. For my down, I only mentioned a little bit about my language obstacle issue.

This story implies some information about my objective self's presentation. First of all, the motivation of my objective self in this case involved my subjective thought. Because of my classmates' positive attitude, I subjectively assumed that they are the people who always think on the bright side and focus less on the negative side. In order to present a similar attitude as theirs, I showed my own affirmative inclinations. Observing my classmates' conversation made my subjective self create an assumption of them, and my objective self responded to them.

Secondly, this story implies that my objective self presented both what kind of person I want to show others and what kind of expectation I want myself to meet. In the "what's up, what's down" story, the moment when I was sharing my thoughts was objectively based on

my classmates' reactions. But as I recalled my motivation of saying those comments, I realized it was not only a shared thought, but I delivered a self-image to people hoping they would believe that I am a person who acts positively. I hoped people would think of me as inspiring, encouraging, and proactive, no matter if it is my true personality. I expected myself to love my life, I hoped I was satisfied with my new life in America, and I also hoped that I was that brave and positive.

After dinner, I was stunned that telling people "I enjoy my life" really made my life become more joyful. It was not merely a reaction to my peers but also subtly transformed my subjectivity. I did not expect to say, "I love my life", but I learned my expectation of myself afterward. By acting (but not pretending) in positivity, I started to believe that I am satisfied with the life that I am living. Branaman has said: "If we project certain identities frequently enough, as we tend to do in intimate relationships. We tend to become the person that we have enacted" (Branaman 2001, p.170). I think it is worthwhile for human beings to think about the social characters that they play, because these characters could have a very real effect on who are, and who we will become.

As artists, it is our inner characters, so often hidden from the world, which we can lay bare on the stage. In *I Open a Door*, I began the process of taking my interior world public. It was difficult for me to show a piece that did not seek to entertain, but to expose. It was hard, because the audience did not necessarily understand the seriousness of the content of the piece. In this way, my subjective feelings were in contrast to my assumed objective expectations of the spectators. However, after making this piece, and researching the subjective self and objective self, I became confident that my understanding of subjectivity and objectivity could support my growth as an artist in my third year of graduate school.

#### IV. YEAR THREE

##### Research and reflection

In my third year of graduate school, I began to bring this theory into the dance studio. I also continued to think about the state of the dialectical self in my daily life, and in reference to my dance training, performance experience and choreographic aesthetic.

In Taiwan, I was familiar with one type of dance aesthetic, and I believed that my technique and my choreography needed to meet the expectations set up by that particular framework. This is an example of how my objective self worked to define what I thought was “good” or “valid” about my work. Then, I came to America and I was exposed to many different ideas about dance. I realized that expectations could change. Thus, I began to explore different options for myself, and my ideas and beliefs (my subjective self) about “what is dance,” began to shift.

When I was in Taiwan, the Chinese dance I studied focused on technical, and unison movement. There were other elements, too, but these two aspects of dance seemed most important in my mind. Thus, I came to believe that technical virtuosity and harmony needed to be the highest priority in dance training and choreography. These priorities even affected how I viewed the work of others. I think that, as artists, we need to examine what our values and interests are, so that we can explore where they might be coming from. I had reached a point, in my Taiwanese education, where my objective self’s desire to meet the expectations of my dance world became a part of my subjective self. I had internalized

those priorities. When I noticed that these values were coming from outside of me, I was able to begin the search for my personal artistic voice. It is only with the acknowledgement of the way our objective self interacts with our subjective self that we can understand when our inner desires may be in the process of being silenced. Then we can start to explore what truly interests us, in relationship to our environment, but not ruled by it.

When Pina Bausch's company came to Taiwan to perform *Nelken*, my own aesthetic heavily influenced my viewing.

There was one part in the piece where a male dancer did some technical, balletic movement. While he was dancing, he repeated a few phrases over and over. "Do you want to watch this? Does this make you happy?" I felt that Pina Bausch was trying to tell me that technical movement wasn't the most important part of a modern dance. Instead, she was asking me if these movements, that I practiced every day in my ballet class, really had any inherent meaning. Even though I was intrigued by the theatricality and the profound meaning of the piece, I disagreed with her concept. I still believed that dancers should always show their beautiful, skilled and technical body on stage. I believed the technical movement was more important than what the piece wanted to express.

These feelings have changed over time (particularly after beginning graduate school). Aside from harmony and technique, personal voice could also be highlighted. My attitude was able to shift because I wasn't seeing a singular performance (like Bausch's *Nelken*). Instead, I was participating in a wide range of new training, performance opportunities and choreographic processes.

#### Dance class: from Taiwan to America

The teaching style in modern dance technique class at the University of Utah has impacted me greatly. It shows me how students can value their own dancing body and how the dance teacher objectively values the students' technical performance.

In Taiwan, the dance classes I took were usually teacher-centered. The teacher's function was to give a movement phrase and explain the objectives of movement that the teacher was looking for. Students were asked to move in the same way and the same direction. It is common to see students in a dance class moving together as one. Even though students' self-discipline in dance skill is highly needed in dance classes, the standard that guides students to execute the self-discipline more closely follows the teacher's objectives. When I was a dance student in Taiwan, I rarely used my own eyes to see my dancing body in a dance class and usually depended on the teacher's judgments to modify myself. Thus, the way I used my body was based on what the teacher wanted. My perception of their expectations (my objective self) shaped my technique. As I am writing, I recall my dancing body during the time in Taiwan; as a body of water that was asked to fill into different containers, I was flexible to be shaped by different dance teachers' classes.

Compared to the dance class style in Taiwan, classes in America (especially in this program) place the teacher and the students in roles which are negotiated depending on the situation. The teacher is not always the leader, and the students are not always the followers. Although the teacher is still the person who gives the movement phrase, he or she provides a free space for students allowing them to find their own movement styles and unique, moving voice. Students investigate the potential of their bodies in their own ways. Instead of expecting the exact same movement from everyone, sometimes American teachers emphasize that the students should explore the movement to find their own range. It seems to me that teachers expect dedication and self-responsibility from the student, as a first priority. This is a new kind of learning community that I did not have in Taiwan. It was hard for me to adjust in the beginning until an "aha" moment happened to me.

During my first year of graduate school, I was introduced to the practice of peer

feedback in technique class. The teacher asked us to find a partner, and each partner would observe the other and then give feedback. After I was finished dancing, my partner told me that he appreciated my articulate movement, but that watching me dance was boring. He compared my dancing to a robot: too held, too precise, and no life to it. My objective self was totally shocked by this feedback, because I never considered “life” to be a necessary element to technique. I thought that he would give me a movement correction so that I could be more “correct.” Instead, he seemed to be asking for more, or redefining the term in a way that was unfamiliar to me.

Slowly, as this objective information was absorbed into my subjective self, I realized that in dance class, the thing I need to work on is not only about “how clearly I move” but also “who I am when I move.” I needed an awareness of “who” I am, (my subjective self), in order to make that “self” present. It is my unique presence that can allow people to see me when I am dancing. I had never paid attention to what my dancing body could bring to the viewer. I only tried to meet the expectation of my teachers, and to dance so perfectly that no one would even see “me,” but instead see how well I executed the movement. In graduate school, I began to ask different questions. What are my movement patterns, and how do they serve me? What new patterns could I investigate? What are my own movement priorities? What does my body believe in?

Ever since my partner made this unexpected comment, I have been researching these movement questions for myself. Now I can understand the reason my partner would say that I was boring to watch dance. I was missing the personal, moving force that can drive dance from the inside. Since then, I started to build subjectivity in my body when I take dance classes. For example, now I feel more sensitive to my body’s relationship to dance technique. I notice when I have a movement habit that gets in the way of a phrase that I am

investigating. I can acknowledge where that habit comes from, in my personal subjective history. This acknowledgement can open the door for different choices to be made. At the same time, I still feel fearful to try out new ways of dancing. To look different still makes me uncomfortable, because in my training it was important to match the technique of the other dancers. This is my next challenge, as I take my subjectivity out into the world, and invest the connections that my objective self can make with others.

### Performing: solo to group work

Performing on stage is significant for dancers to show their dancing bodies, and their selves. It is an activity that involves both physical and mental consciousness. The aspect of physicality means doing movement according to the choreography, and the mental aspect means dancers need to think about how they chose to use their own dancing bodies as a medium to interpret the choreography. This subjective, mental aspect could be setting a certain emotion, or placing themselves into an imagined situation to tell a story with their bodies, or simply being present in the moment of the dance. Dancers should understand what the choreographer wants to express, and, based on the choreographer's perspective, figure out ways of perform that are suitable for both themselves and the choreographic goals.

My dancing history is imprinted on my subjective dancing body, defining what my technical choices are, in relationship to the process of training that I have undergone since the age of twelve. My dancing body did not possess a unique signature style when I was just a dance beginner. After I learned different kinds of dance styles, such as ballet, modern dance, jazz, and Chinese dance, these various moving styles gradually enriched my dance abilities but also established my dancing identity. Through years of training I shaped my

identity with a specific set of movement languages, and my body became a repository for these histories. My unique relationship to these histories, along with my anatomical realities, finally became the subjective self of my dancing body. My genetic heritage and my training history informed the subjective body that I brought to the following solo experience.

In the spring 2010 Performing Dance Company concert, I was in the piece *Polvere e Rovine (Dust and Ruins)*, choreographed by Donna White. According to the choreographer, this piece was inspired by Italian ancient history, so that audiences could see the pictures such as ancient statues and architecture projected on the screen as well as several columns on stages. I began this piece by standing in the center of the stage. Bent over, I slowly treaded my feet as if walking in place. As the spotlight grew brighter, my movement gradually became more expansive. Suddenly, I reached both arms outward and upward, drawing myself onto relevé, only to collapse to the floor.

In the rehearsal process, Donna gave me a free space to explore and practice my own ways to perform this solo character. She did not put a physical expectation on me, and so my objective self could relax, and my subjective self could express itself. I imagined myself walking and searching through a “time tunnel” from the ancient era to the present. I wanted to work with the music to create a mysterious atmosphere. I tried to create movement that I, myself, was interested in, in addition to designing a specific angle of movement for the purpose of showing my dancing body. Overall, in this solo, I explored the process of creating a performing bubble that could support me the best. My subjective self provided the self-history that made my dancing choices possible, and the necessary self-knowledge for me to be able to explore my intentions, and make them visible on my body.

On the other hand, my objective self is also crucial to my performance life, especially when I need to work with others on stage. We performed the same movements, turned

toward the same direction, and jumped at the same count. For the purpose of dancing together, we rehearsed the movement and timing extensively. When we practice unison movement, the choreographer watches very carefully and points out the ways in which we are not conforming to the standards of the group. I internalize those judgments, and hope to meet the expectations of the choreographer. As I perform the piece later, I still have that memory of my objective self. I ask myself, “Am I on the right count? Is my shape similar enough to the shape of the dancer next to me? Are we getting it right?”

Expectations are not a bad thing. They help us to dance together, to act in a way that meets other’s needs, and to work cooperatively. Even though I still desired to motivate my movement from a subjective place, I could not help but feel that there was an outside expectation placed on the ensemble dance. In performance, I hope to finally claim the movement for myself, but the objective self was an important part of the process in honing the group dance.

It is interesting to insert the idea of subjectivity and objectivity into a performing experience and analyze how these two perspectives work in the dancing body. Even though in my daily life I am focusing more on developing my sense of my subjective self, when I am performing I am reminded that I need both aspects. The conversation between these two selves, the dialectical self, is a necessary part of me. This researching process has made me realize that it is important to consider the dialectical, whole self, as we present ourselves in daily life, but also when we, as dance artists, investigate our lives on stage.

Choreographic analysis: *Is There Really No Doubt*

*Is There Really No Doubt* (a trio for three women) was not my primary thesis work but a secondary work choreographed for the April 2009 Student Concert at the Marriott Center for Dance at the University of Utah. I also presented this piece at the informal showing of the 2010 American Dance Festival at Weber State University, as well as, the Packing House in Denver, Colorado, November 2010. This piece was my first attempt at using direct metaphors and theatrical elements rather than relying on technical precision or unison alone, thereby, actively challenging old aesthetic preferences.

Throughout the piece there is a story:

Once upon a time there was a Hindu empire that invited six blind men to touch an elephant and describe what they thought it was, what it looked like or its shape. This first blind man touched the belly and said 'this is just a big wall,' the second blind man touched the leg and said, 'this is just a big pole,' the third blind man touched the ear and said, 'it's such a big blanket that can take us anywhere,' the fourth touched the trunk and said, 'it's a rope.' The fifth man touched the stomach and said, 'it's like a cow,' the sixth touched the tail and said, 'it's a spear.'

The reason I used this story in the development of the dance was because those answers represent the subjective belief of each blind man. They say what they think it is without objectively seeing what is before them.

In the beginning of the piece I spoke this story in Mandarin. I also made gestural movements that were symbolic of the text. I wanted to challenge audience's subjectivity in this moment. Few, if any, in the audience could understand Mandarin but could make assumptions based on the gestures.

At the end of the piece another dancer (Emily Terndrup) spoke the story in English. This conclusion gave the audience the opportunity to check what they thought the meaning was before hearing the story in English. I offered to audiences the ability to question truth

and what they subjectively see versus what they objectively expect.

Throughout this piece, I also used props and theatrical elements to imply meaning. At the beginning, one of the dancers was blindfolded. I chose to use this prop because I wanted to make a comment about the way that we use sight to interpret our world. When our vision is taken away from, how will we know what is expected of us, and therefore how will our objective self function? The dancer who was blindfolded existed in her own happy reality, only aware of outside forces when another dancer clapped to call her over, tickled her under the chin, and fed her popcorn. In this way, the blindfolded dancer seemed innocent as a child, without knowledge of the gaze that was on her from the other dancers and the audience. The dancer with the popcorn represented the forces of the outside world. She was blatant in her attempts to train and control the blindfolded dancer, using the chin-tickle and popcorn as condescending rewards for good behavior.

As the piece continued, the dancers used gestural movements that described the way that their blinded character would interact with the only part of the elephant that they could "see." During the middle section of the piece, the dancers performed these gestural phrases as they walked a circular pathway. They kept rotating together, and even though they were trying to express themselves, they could not communicate. Not only were they limited by their single, subjective perspective on the elephant, they were also silenced by three large apples that were stuffed in their mouths. For me, this section of the dance represents the difficulty of having a language and cultural barrier to understanding. When I moved to America, I experienced these barriers. My inability to communicate or understand sometimes put me into a surreal world, in which I felt strangled by my lack of speech, and hindered by my perspective as an outsider. My objective self was unable to interpret the signals that I received from others, and so I was unable to tell what was expected of me.

At the end of the piece, one dancer finally tries to speak, to tell the audience the whole story in English. As mentioned previously, at this point the objectivity of the audience can react to the story of the piece. They finally understand what the dancers have been trying to say, and so they can add this objective information to their interpretation of the piece. They can compare it to the information that they received from the rest of the piece, information that they interpreted based on their subjective feelings.

During this creative process, I enjoyed experimenting with a new aesthetic. I aimed to create a piece that would gain meaning, not from its technical virtuosity but from its conceptual strength. My research into subjective self and objective self provided me with a way to structure the metaphors of this dance. This experience helped me to become more interested in, and more confident in, my personal voice as a choreographer. Therefore, even as I was testing the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity on the audience, I gained a stronger sense of my own subjective self.

My thesis work: *A Believable Absence*

We always assume that the symbol we use is one which will call out in the other person the same response, provided it is a part of his mechanism of conduct.  
(Cooley 1983, p.143)

My dance, *A Believable Absence*, was a further investigation into my understanding of and personal experiences with the concept of selfhood, especially the ideas of the subjective self and the objective self. This work was choreographed as part of my graduate thesis and performed in the fall of 2010 at the Marriott Center for Dance at the University of Utah.

*A Believable Absence* was inspired by the idea of “gaze,” illustrated by my personal experience, and by the movie *The Truman Show*, which describes the life of a man who is initially unaware that he is living in a constructed reality TV show, and broadcast all day to

people all over the world. *The Truman Show* reminded me that in our daily life, the way we show people who we are is like performing onstage. Following Goffman, we act out “social characters” everyday whether we are on stage or not. By being seen by audiences, we attempt to show people the character we are playing; it could be our personality, social status, or our position in a particular environment.

In the same year I proposed my thesis, I had an interesting experience during a vacation in Taiwan. I realized through this experience how the power of gaze could greatly influence my sense of self, and how the power of gaze compelled my subjective self and objective self to respond in certain situations.

This is the story:

One day, I took the subway and chose a window seat. The subway I took was an underground line so anything in the train was reflected on the window. From the reflection of a window, I noticed a guy stood in front of me and glancing at me. I did not put much attention on my bodily awareness until I acknowledged the uncomfortable looking. With the purpose of portraying myself nicely, my inner self went crazy to decode the implication inside his eyes. I wondered what kind of “me” would meet his perspective. However, I found the gaze is not as simple as verbal-conversations that are more easily understood by word choice or voice tone. His gaze included too many hypotheses that were impossible to prove. The gaze from the guy absolutely disturbed my behavioral orientation in that moment.

By being watched in the train, there was a three-way gaze created unexpectedly-- the guy was watching the “me” in the present, the “me” in the present looked at the “me” in the window, and the “me” in the window looked at the guy without his notice. How did the three looking lines work? In order to make myself look good, the present “me” tried to sit

up straight with crossed my legs. My mind started to check my body: Do I have my lips slightly curved-up? Do I release my facial muscles too much? Maybe bending my elbows would be good. Afterward, the present me turned to examine the “me” in the window in order to check if my makeup was messy, and also tried to neaten my clothes. After the present “me” completed the self-checking and was satisfied with myself, the “me” in the window turned to look at the guy who was watching me. Watching him without his awareness was the only second that I felt more comfortable, it gave me a chance to relax during this strange process of self-portrayal.

The “me” in the window started to estimate this guy by his dress, his look, and his body gesture. For the purpose of knowing what kind of “me” would meet his expectation, I assumed his personality, his role in the society, and even his life by the look he showed me. Finally, the assumptions from the window “me” delivered the information to the “me” in the present, the present “me” took these assumptions as the basis for showing myself in a good way. It was only a 10 minutes experience but incredibly, it left a huge space for me to think of the sense of self.

According to Cooley, “a self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification” (Cooley 1983, p.184). To me, the theory perfectly explains the subway experience. In the train, I imagined my appearance to this man, hypothesized what judgment, he would have, and graded myself by those judgments, which were all created by my imagination. In this situation, my objective self and subjective self had difficulty finding a balanced agreement and were placed in a hostile position. The subjective wanted to ignore the man, but the gaze was like annoying chewing gum on the bottom of your shoes that made the objective unable to

overlook the unknown information from his eyes.

Showing people who we are seems the every-day routine that we cannot avoid. But as we are watched by people, how much do we honestly show them our true selves, or do we just show the parts that we presume are acceptable? Furthermore, during the daily interpersonal interactions, how do we look at ourselves? Can we examine ourselves objectively? And how hard it is to observe ourselves without judgments? Eyes are not just an organ. To me, they are a mirror to show how we perform ourselves to people, and also reveal what kind of “self” we want ourselves to be.

These were the ideas that inspired me, as I began the choreographic process for my thesis piece, *A Believable Absence*. There were four sections in this piece, each showing a different way that gaze can cause people to be aware of the self. In the first section, all the dancers crept slowly toward the audience with their backs hunched over. After they began to acknowledge that there were other people sharing the same space, they started to imitate their movements, each dancer acting as both leader and follower. One would lead the whole group of dancers toward the same direction, but suddenly be a follower, only imitating someone else’s movement.

A Chinese proverb says: “One who stays near vermilion gets stained red, and one who stays near ink gets stained black.” It means that an individual can easily be affected by his/her environment. I believe that it is inevitable to be affected by the people by whom you are surrounded. This is why we see people in the same group having a similar way of talking. People from the same culture easily give similar comments to certain situations. In society, we are both leaders and followers, we usually have someone who behaves like us (being seen) and we, ourselves, behave like others (seeing).

In the second section, I employed two stories which I and the dancers had made up.

The first story is spoken by a male and the other is by a female. I wanted to use these stories to show that everything in this world has different sides, but sometimes the side we can see is not necessarily the truth. We are quick to interpret an experience based on our own subjective but rarely consider if there are some other reasons behind the truth. Following are the two stories:

The other day, I grabbed my camera and took a walk to the park. I saw a couple sitting on the bench holding hands that was such a beautiful and romantic image to shoot. I was so ready to take a picture of the couple. But suddenly, a girl stood up in front of them. She brushed her hair out of her eyes and stood there in a weird pose. I just waited for her to leave. The couple left while the girl was changing poses. I left that spot, looking for other beautiful scenes (male).

One day, I put on my yellow shoes and took a walk to the park. One of my shoes fell off so I stopped to put it back on. I saw a man and I noticed he had a camera. I swear he was going to take my picture. I smiled my best smile, my teeth felt wet, my eyes glistened. I brushed my hair out of my eyes and stood in a flattering position. But then he just turned and walked away. I guess he must be intimidated by my beauty (female).

Even though the two people described the same situation, the viewpoint and attitude from each of them are absolutely opposite. In the woman's mind, she thought the man was going to take her picture because of her beauty. But in the man's eyes, the main image was the old couple that he was going to shoot; the woman is only a distraction, not the object of his gaze.

We imagine our appearance of ourselves, examine ourselves, portray ourselves, and seek to "prettify" ourselves to be welcomed and even attractive. After I finished choreographing the second section of *A Believable Absence*, I realized something important. When I set up the interaction between the male and female story, I believed that the objective self of the female was dominating her subjective self. I thought that she was "prettifying" herself because of what the male wanted to see, just as I "prettified" myself

for the gaze of the man on the subway. However, I came to realize that in these situations, neither I nor my female character was really aware of the judgments coming from the outside gaze. Thus, our actions were based on our presumptions of what those judgments would be. Our perceptions are part of our objective self, but they are built up over time and become part of how we know our subjective self, and our place in the world. Therefore, it is the conversation of the dialectical self that is influencing our behavior in these situations wherein outside scrutiny comes into contact with inner motivation.

In the subway story, I realized that I should have my lips slightly curved-up because I THOUGHT a smile would be the best way to be attractive. I bent my elbows because I THOUGHT the shape would make me more feminine. In *A Believable Absence*, the female in the story brushes her hair out of her eyes because she THOUGHT that the male wanted to see her face. She changes position because she THOUGHT that the male wanted to catch a variety of poses to get the most flattering picture. I wanted to show the audience that our actions, based on our objective assumptions and subjective histories, do not always reflect the reality of the situation. It is useful for all of us to check our assumptions about a certain situation before we commit ourselves to unnecessary actions. Not because we can always avoid looking foolish, but because we may find that we have options that we have overlooked due to the assumptions our ego.

In the third section, the dancers stood in front of the first row of seats in the audience. They stared at the audience members, yawned, smiled, and waved their hands right in the audiences' faces. Then, the dancers began to imitate the audience members' gestures and facial expressions. There was a live feed of this action projected on a stage screen. The live feed not only allowed the audience to see how the people in the front row were reacting to the dancers, it also demonstrated to the people in the front row how their

interactions with the dancers were made public. By this mean, I tried to take away the comfort of social norms of interaction from my audience members. In daily life, people do not come right up to our faces and yawn, groan, and wave. When my dancers did these things, the audience members may not know how they are “supposed” to behave. Their objective self, which controls their perception what others expect of them, may go into crisis. Some people had a lot of fun with the surprise of the experience, while others looked very uncomfortable. The variation in their reactions surprised me, as the choreographer. Based on my assumptions, and my familiarity with Taiwanese culture, I presumed that everyone would feel very unsure of themselves in this situation. I thought that this section of my piece would be very uncomfortable for them. However, my expectations were challenged when some people seemed to love the experience of being interacted with, and filmed for the entire audience to see.

In the fourth section of the piece, I brought the eyes of audience back to the stage, but continued to work with the live feed projected on the screen. The cameraman was onstage with the dancers, shooting them from various angles that would be impossible for the audience members to see from their seats. By doing so, the audiences’ view would not be limited by the traditional theater setting, but would allow for multiple perspectives of the dance. This way of presenting my piece forced the audience to recognize that their personal perspective was not the only possible perspective on this piece. In *Is There Really No Doubt*, six blind men discover that there is more to an elephant than a tail, or a leg. Similarly, in the fourth section of my thesis piece, the audience discovered that seeing a piece from only one perspective limits their understanding. When the cameraman shows them things one couldn’t otherwise see, the meaning of the piece may be changed. If a dancer moves with her back facing me, as an audience member, I might interpret her undulating movement to

mean that she is crying. But, would I have a different interpretation if I could see that she is smiling? It seems like I always believe what I see and never question if my belief has misled me. Thus, in this section, I wanted to give audiences an opportunity to see the different sides of this dance. By projecting a live video on the screen, I was not only able to enrich the visual effect on the stage, but I also gave the audience an opportunity to see the information that they might be missing when they view a piece only from the front.

Choreographing *A Believable Absence* helped me to understand myself more deeply as an artist. I realized that, the creative process for me was like placing my self in a box. I had assumptions about what the audience would do or feel, but my assumptions were based on talking and listening only to myself. In this way, I was interacting mostly with my own subjective self. However, when I presented my piece to a live audience, they responded in ways that I couldn't imagine. In this piece, I wanted to remind the audience of their gaze, and their own subjective views, and then I asked them to question what other perspectives may be out there. Similarly, I began to realize that there are many ways of interacting with the world, and I can learn from other's viewpoints on this issue. Our own subjective perspective is important. However, it is also crucial, as artists and humans, to recognize that others may have different perspectives, and that these perspectives can come together to create a larger understanding of the world. As individuals, we are limited. As a community, we can see broadly, if we choose.

## V. CONCLUSION

By examining my “self” throughout this research process, I have discovered some deep truths about my inner self, and I have noticed which of these truths I am afraid of and which I am satisfied with. I realized that interacting with people sometimes confuses me, when I don’t know what response is expected of me. As I have gotten used to living in America, I have grown more comfortable with conversational conventions. I have also realized that before I did this research into the subjective self and objective self, I was reluctant to admit things about myself that I considered to be imperfect. In my journal, I would skip those things that would cause me to judge myself as failing to meet the expectations of others. In this way, I saw myself as an object, vulnerable to the scrutinizing gaze of others.

Through this research, I have come to value my subjectivity more, which can point me towards the work that I find interesting, and the art that inspires me, not because of other’s opinions but because of my own. However, I have also realized that my subjective assumptions are not the only lens through which I can understand the world. Through an inclusion of other’s perspectives, I can understand the world, and my art, more broadly. Thus, my subjective understanding of my own desires, plus the objective information that I can gather from the outside world, can create a healthy, dialectical self.

As artists, it is so important for us to have a balanced relationship between our objective and subjective self. This balance can allow for more self-acceptance and confidence, but also for an openness to feedback and critique. I feel more grounded as an

artist after this research, and so when others share their views with me about the work that I have made, I feel that I can accept their critique without letting their questions destroy my self-confidence. I also feel that a balanced, dialectical self is less likely to jump to conclusions without reflection or research. This is important for artists, who must investigate their topics both from an internal point of view, and with an understanding of the relevance that their topic has for the outside world.

The next question, for me, relates to my future in Taiwan. I know that these changes in the way my subjective self and objective self relate have occurred because of experiences and research that I have done in America. The way that I dance, see dance, and choreograph have been influenced by my time here. However, I will not always live in Utah. I will be travelling back to Taiwan to live my life, or perhaps I will live in multiple countries in the coming years. How will these different cultures affect my dialectical self? How will I continue to evolve, when I am confronted with new, unfamiliar situations, or with familiar situations like Taiwan, where I am the unfamiliar one? Will the changes that I found for myself be reversed, when I am back in familiar territory? How will my dance aesthetic develop? My goal is to always trust myself, to listen to others, and to see the world as a complex place. As I continue in my dance career, my plan is to make dances that present my views, which have been influenced by a dialogue between cultures, and my new self. I want to see how much more I can learn about my “self”, my background, and my future. This conversation between my subjective self and objective self will continue, as I live my life, and I hope to make dances that reflect a balanced, dialectical position.

Self is the thing that people should be the most familiar with, but it is also the thing that is the most difficult to fully understand. I realize that the internal research is like excavating a huge ancient grotto, the more I dig in, the more I find out, and the more

unpredictable the self becomes. In the research process, looking at myself through the aspects of the subjective and objective selves has given me an opportunity to investigate my self-history and ponder the formation of the person I can be in the future. I have begun to explore the person that I believe that I am (subjectivity) as well as how I believe that others see me (objectivity). I realize that this process of researching the subjective self and the objective self benefits me as a human being and an artist.

My self-view has already become less obstructed. Instead of seeing a diluted version of my self, I am starting to see my unabridged self. And I have discovered that this self is more cohesive, yet also more adaptable than I previously thought. By choosing to know my self more deeply, I am choosing to live more deeply. As I move forward, committed to seeing and acting on these glimpses of truth, I will have the power to continue to unveil my authentic self. It has been the constant tension and interplay between these two aspects of my “self” that has been essential to my creative process so far in my graduate career.

The idea of the subjective self and the objective self provides me a channel to re-examine the motivation behind my thoughts and my behavior, and how those motivations echo my personal life experience. To me, questions of the self are complex and difficult to decipher within a short time. The exploration of the inner self is a life long process that needs constant investigative effort. These challenges fascinate me, both choreographically and therapeutically. I want to use this research in the future, as I follow my artistic vision and my life’s direction. As the authors of *Art & Fear* describe, my work will be like a “complete, comprehensive, limitless reference book” for me as I go into the future (Bayles & Orland 1993, p.36). I think that, as artists, it is both our past work, and our past lives that provide necessary reference to our present perceptions and future directions. Without this self-knowledge, we have no way to understand or produce our own work. For

me, this knowledge starts with the relationship between my subjective and objective selves.

This thesis is not an end, but a beginning to this research.

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