

# Appendix A:

## *Me and Movement:*

*I just finished running outside in the natural lands. One minute into my run I started sobbing, gutturally. Screaming. Calling out “MOM!” I then started wondering: why am I having this deep longing and missing for my mom right now? I left home a week ago for Spring Semester. It occurred to me that it was likely because I was running! Running is an activity I’ve done with my mom since childhood.*

*Like my relationship with my mom, the majority of my relationships with the world around me have been formed through intentional movement. With my papa we dance jazz, lap swim, and play the bongos. With my dad, we cook and do the dishes— we don’t talk much. I’ve always known, understood and connected with the world around me through movement. So it makes sense that I feel the relationship of my mother with my being when I run, because my mom and I have created a relationship through shared physical experiences.*

*Unfortunately, I couldn’t understand this until recently. This is because I’ve intentionally hid this superpower. I’ve always been told I’m too sensitive. That I feel too deeply. That I need to ignore my large feelings to not let them guide me. I thought my sensitivity to how people look at me, how they position their body in space around me, and how they do all this with the world around them was a distraction. I thought it was pointless anxiety that I needed to ignore or get rid of.*

*But, just the other day during the last class of my interim dance course, I started crying, and I was happy I was crying. We were forming our last closing dance circle, and the beauty of the people around me and the community we created hit me like a brick. As I was crying, I realized how this orientation to the world has allowed me to feel so, so, so much love.*

*I know now this is my purpose, to use my hyper-orientation to create community and love. I cannot keep this superpower for myself. I must share and show how to use and understand the superpower that others have but likely concealed. I want to teach people how to access this emotional-physical connection with the world around them. Show them how it builds deep intimacy so they can use it to build a life full of love with as many living beings as possible.*

## Learning Objective One:

This learning objective is crucial to be a human in this world. It teaches people how to see the body as a source of self. Dance helps us to identify this bodily-self and express it. It gives us the ability to know and shape who we are as we move around the world when we get lost. What some might know as the feeling of “I need to get back into my body.”

## *Beginning to Dance:*

*My first step out of bed in the morning, I am dancing. I discovered I needed to do this about three weeks ago.*

*I noticed that I was waking up not wanting to get out of bed, scared of the day. Scared of all the possibilities, all the endless possibilities. All of the things that could go right, but also all of the things that could go wrong. Laying in bed I felt like a shell of a person. It was so hard to get out of bed.*

*One morning I decided to dance. I danced in my undies on the rug in the middle of my room. I started smiling. I started laughing. “I’m alive, I yelled.”*

*Undulating my torso to the right and the left like a wave made me realize I was a human because it reminds me that I am a movement and I can share this with the world. Witnessing the patterns that my body can create reaffirms my unique human nature to keep creating in order to become my best self. These movements reminded me of my role as a human (Lamothe, 2016). Tapping my feet on the ground repeatedly reminded me that I am breathing and my heart is beating. Shaking my butt back and forth reassured me that I am alive and that means..., well, that’s all I need to know. With a world swirling around me that is so much out of my hands, knowing the one thing I can control, my body, which is my existence, is enough. It is more than enough*

*I started to interweave dance into my life when I felt anxiety about ‘how to be the best me’ creeping in. I find that dance gave me a sense of self that the anxiety had taken away. It makes me feel secure and connected in my body. I feel in control when I am creating myself, shaping my human life (Lamothe, 2016).*

*Walking to class I’m moving my arms in a bird-like motion. “I’m alive.” In the bathroom in the middle of the class, I’m jumping up and down. “I’m alive.” It doesn’t solve the fact that I will not always take care of myself in the way I want to, but it reminds me that I am in a relationship with my body. I am embodied. I am not in fact a mind floating in the air like a balloon, but a physical reality on this earth that has a place in this world. I am here and alive. This is enough. Because with embodiment, I have the ability to experience the world around me and thus become an agent in this world. See my footsteps shaping the life around me . I can become a part of a community. And all I need to do to remind myself of this is to dance.*

*This was my first step to becoming human again. To remind myself I’m alive. To remember that I have a body and that I can create movement. Once I conquered this, I noticed I started seeking more with my dancing. I started to notice that when dancing I feel parts of myself that I don’t notice otherwise. Moving my arms in a bird-like motion on the way to class, I remembered oh yeah, I’m alive, and I’m Sophia...Sophia who feels like a bird sometimes. Sophia whose limbs can move up and down. Sophia who has a beautiful body. Sophia who learned to move like this in a West African Dance Class. Sophia who does know how to express herself. I realized that I am a body and maybe there are some things my body can teach me about myself.*

### **Learning Objective Two:**

In learning objective number two students explore how individual movement is shaped by the movements of others. They will learn how moving together with others creates a relationship in which there is a common understanding of feeling and experiencing the world. By others, I mean all life on this planet. “This process of shaping each other is what creates connection. Because how can you not care about something that you have shaped? How can you not feel connected to something that has formed your being in this world?”

*Shaking my booty at 8:00 am in the morning one day, I thought of my coworker who showed me how to twerk. I realized I don't know who I am without knowing the movements of others. I thought about the bird-like motion I learned from my West African Dance professor Dr. Cudjoe. I remembered the feet taping I picked up from my former Jazz and Improv dance professor. I thought about the way I walked which I learned from my mom. Hunched over a little bit, big smile and a lot of zest. At this time, I was feeling lonely, lost in my relationships. I wondered where the intimacy was in these relationships. I don't feel like I know the people around me and they don't know me. I kept dancing. I realized that I need to move with people. To know them I need to be alive with them. I need to be alive with them responding to the same rhythm. Of course we are always moving with people, as we are always moving. But I needed to train myself and others how to access this aliveness so we can be alive together. To do this I needed to dance. We needed to dance. I knew then that we would be able to show each other ourselves and witness how through moving together these selves shaped each other and we see this through movement. I wanted to see and feel my relationships and connections. I wanted this intimacy.*

*As the sun came up, I started spending more time outside. The grass was green. The sun was fully shining. The snow was still a bit there. But I was walking to the natural lands every day after class. Sometimes I was running, too.*

*I noticed that the grass was moving, too. Oh and the trees were bristling in the breeze. And the wind was rubbing up against my face. The natural lands were dancing. Another piece of the puzzle was unlocked. Everything in this world is moving. All the time. I am in a relationship with the wind, too. No wonder I undulate my torso so much when I first wake up. The wind has shaped how Sophia moves throughout the world.*

## Learning Objective Three:

In learning objective number three students will understand how this feeling of connection from dance is necessary to feel connected to the world around you. It is necessary to feel embodied and see the world as a home. Students tie up their learning from previous classes to understand how they have agency in this world to create.

### *Dancing for a Home:*

*My dances with the squawking bird and the nosy owl and the sweet tall grass and the poky short grass showed me my home. Showed me that I am embedded in a community. Reminded that I am a human in a home. I am not alone.*

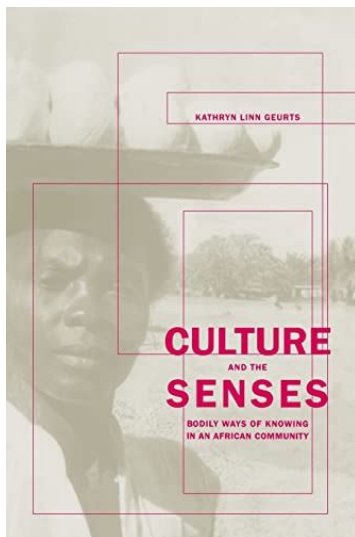
*I still often go to the natural lands. I start with a run...but my anxiety still pops us like a groundhog most runs and I stop in dance by the tall trees. It often quiets once I start dancing and see the intertwined rhythms of my movements and the long branches of the tall tree next to me.*

*Chirps. I hear chirps all around me. I am sitting on my neighbor's porch. Typing, typing, typing. Drinking water out of a reused salsa glass.*

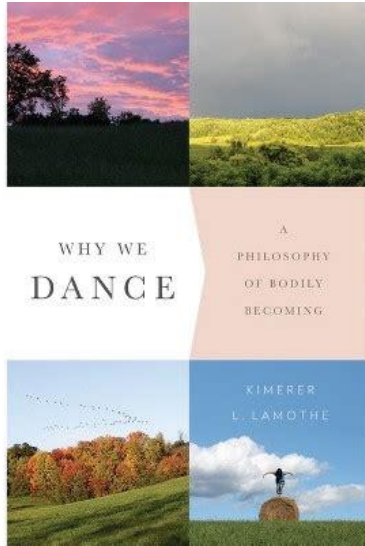
*The chirps are accompanied by wind chimes and an airplane above. I'm suddenly distracted. My torso jiggles. My mouth curls up. The sounds of the world around me reminds me of my aliveness and role in this world as a human: To Dance. So I stand up and dance to the chirps of the birds, with the chirps of the bird. I feel my anxiety momentarily replaced with a feeling of love that my jiggle sends out to the birds. Because To Dance is to also love.*

*As I type, I also think about my West African dance class. The love circle they created for me last Friday when I had an anxiety attack. They sensed my distress. They knew my movements. They knew how to take care of me. I was surprised by their love, but I shouldn't have been. We've been constantly shaping each other all semester as we twist our hips with the beat of the Djembe across studio one. We've created a community through our thousands of steps. They showed me my home.*

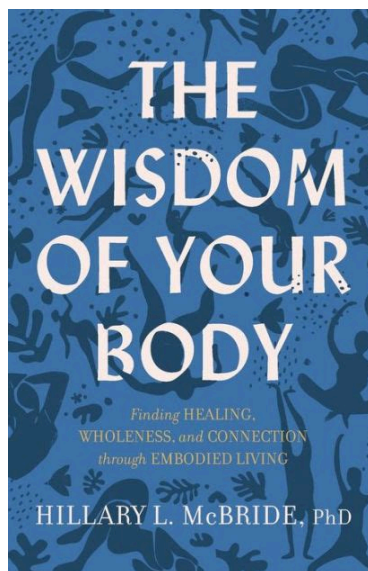
## Appendix B:



*In Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing in An African Community*, Kathryn Geurts introduces the body as a communication tool that is integral for building community by looking at an African community. She discusses how kinesthetic senses are not often valued in the West and thus the importance of the body in building connection is often overlooked.

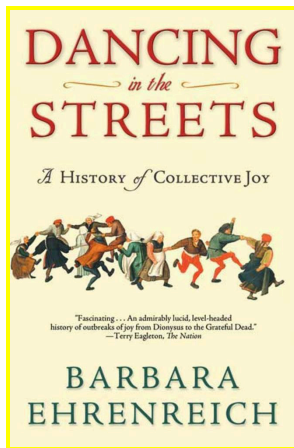


In “*Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming*,” Kimmerer LaMothe introduces dance as a philosophy to create a world that is imbued with connection rather than isolation which we see prevalent today. She proposes dance as a tool to build communities that support social environments they’re embedded in.



In *The Wisdom of Your Body*, Hillary McBride introduces readers to a world where the body is central to identity. She debunks the mythology that mind and body are two distinct entities and rather are connected. She entertains the

idea of the body as a method of experiencing the world that holds knowledge of how to live a healthy life.



In *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, Barbara Ehrenreich introduces readers to the concept of dance as a way of building sustaining community. She does this by introducing the theory of *collective effervescence*, a pleasure experience when moving syncopated with others.