

EMBODIED MEMORIES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF

HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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DANCE

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To my grandmother, 李月姣

for inspiring me to be determined, consistent and follow my own path in life.

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ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates and documents the creative process of creating, choreographing, producing, and performing *Embodied Memories*, a dance film featured in an MFA dance thesis virtual concert on October 2nd and 3rd, 2021. *Embodied Memories* explores embodying the lives of our grandmothers through dance, and features eight dancers in a dance for camera film that was presented as a choreographic thesis in partial completion for the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Dance at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Dance Film/Dance for the Camera – Video is used as the medium for presenting dance choreography and film editing techniques as well as camera positioning is used to enhance compositional choices and develop the overall narrative.

Somatic Movement – The application of somatic principles into dance movement, such as acquisition of knowledge felt through movement improvisation, deep-body listening, depth-connection to body through a felt dialogue, attentive and depth connection with body-self, and interoceptive kinesthesia (sensory-perceptual awareness of the internal body) (Williamson, 34-42).

Embodied Knowledge – The experiences we have, whether physical, mental, or emotional, are embedded into our experience of the body and therefore implicated in our notion of identity. Cultural identity and somatic identity are not necessarily synonymous but are interconnected into our lived experience (Albright, 12). Embodied knowledge in dance refers to the movement that comes through as a way of understanding our embeddedness in the world and a “intellectual, emotional and physical mediator for understanding our bodily way of being-in-the-world” (Block and Kissell, 14).

Practice as Research – Practice as the production of knowledge is the method of inquiry. A research methodology using dance practice as a mode of inquiry to understand epistemological issues, exploring the close relationship between theory and practice as forms of research (Dance Studies Association).

Narrative Inquiry – Narrative inquiry is the mode of investigating experience depicted through stories. A research methodology using the re-telling of critical life events as a framework to investigate human experience (Webster and Mertova, 1-3).

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CHAPTER 1. Thesis Proposal

The first part of my thesis includes components of my original proposal of choreographic intention, projected use of production elements, as well as proposed preparations for casting, funding, rehearsals, and performance.

Introduction to Topic

Embodied Memories is a dance film that explores the concept of embodying our ancestors. During the past year and a half of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the world has shifted to a work-from-home environment, allowing us the opportunity to connect with our families in different ways. Being sheltered at my home in Hawai‘i gave me a nostalgic sense of longing for my family and home in China, as well as an eagerness for connection, which led me to be curious about connecting with my family members who are no longer living. My maternal grandmother, my *laolao*, was my only grandparent in my life and she passed away a few years ago. Parts of her personality and what I know from her life experiences are embedded within me, and I felt a strong desire to explore and investigate her being, not only as a means to connect and honor her, but as a way to learn more about her, and inherently, learn more about myself.

This project explores embodying the memories, actions and lived experience of one’s grandmother. How can we embody our ancestors through dance movement? Through the creation, choreography, and development of this piece, I investigate how knowledge is passed ancestrally through embodiment, and how connecting to one’s own ancestral lineage is a shared experience among humanity.

Statement of Broad Intention

Because of the unforeseen circumstances due to the pandemic and restrictions on in-person gatherings, the choreography is intended for presentation online through dance film. The choreography will be presented for the purposes of culminating movement based on stories and memories told by individual dancers of their own grandmothers. The intention of the work will be embodied in movement through emotional expression, connection through ritual and pattern, and somatic reflection. The proposed choreography will be embodied in the following ways:

1) Research

The choreography engages Practice as Research and Narrative Inquiry methodologies to use dance movement to research individual dancers' chosen maternal ancestor. Somatic experiences and receptive connection to memories through improvisation will be used to create movement. Through the practice of somatic improvisational prompts that I create, dancers will respond to their own memories of their grandmother and respond to research they conduct on unknown aspects and curiosities they have based on their grandmother's personality and life experiences. From these somatic improvisational practices, I will direct the choreography of unique movement motifs that dancers develop. By practicing the movement knowledge that they create, dancers will be able to dive deep into the narratives of their embodied experience.

2) Reflection

Movement will be the mode of investigating and accessing creative information that shapes the embodiment of the memories and stories that each dancer investigates. Ultimately, each dancer will be exploring parts of themselves and their own identities while embodying the memories and experiences of their grandmother. This exploration will encompass reflection on the influence and ancestral patterns of their grandmothers in their lives as a way of physically exploring and documenting their ancestral lineage. Through Narrative Inquiry, dancers will be able to go “beyond the use of narrative as rhetorical structure, to an analytic examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that the story illustrates” (Webster and Mertova, 4). These insights and assumptions will be illustrated in kinesthetic, corporeal understandings as embodied knowledge.

3) Ritual

By connecting to the memories of one’s grandmother, dance can be a way to honor and connect with our ancestral lineage. Dancers will investigate, recreate, and expand patterns of movement from memories and stories of their grandmother. The rituals that their grandmothers hold will be embodied in movement interpretation. The choreographic practice will create connections between individuals and their ancestors, as well as support boundaries of exploration into that practice.

Projected Use of Production Elements

Production Planning

The production planning process for my MFA dance thesis has shifted due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. My thesis was originally planned to be presented as a live performance during the Spring 2021 semester, however due to restrictions on social gatherings and uncertainties about rehearsals and productions, my thesis was pushed back to the Fall 2021 semester allowing me to plan rehearsals and produce my thesis in a timely manner. During a regular season, the Department of Theatre and Dance has a biannual Footholds Dance Concert, where the MFA thesis is conventionally presented as part of the concert in the Earle Ernst Lab Theatre on campus. However, the impact of the pandemic has resulted in the department changing future Footholds Dance Concerts to occur only during the spring semesters. As a result, my plans for a Fall 2021 thesis performance left me no option but to find another performance production and venue to present my work. After exploring the possibilities of an individual performance at off-campus locations such as the Arts at Marks Garage, Aupuni Space, and on-campus locations such as Andrews Outdoor Theatre, the most feasible option was to create my own virtual concert. This way not only am I able to determine and organize the schedule and performance details, but also reduce the costs and reach a wide audience.

With restrictions on social gatherings in place, I used this as an opportunity to create a dance film that would be presented virtually as a joint concert with fellow MFA Dance candidate, Amanda Allen. Also, my rehearsals would take place on Zoom for the health and safety of me and my dancers. I plan to create movement on my dancers through weekly

rehearsals on Zoom, with a final recording for the film in May-June taking place in person, to be recorded individually, at a location to be determined based on safety and feasibility of cost.

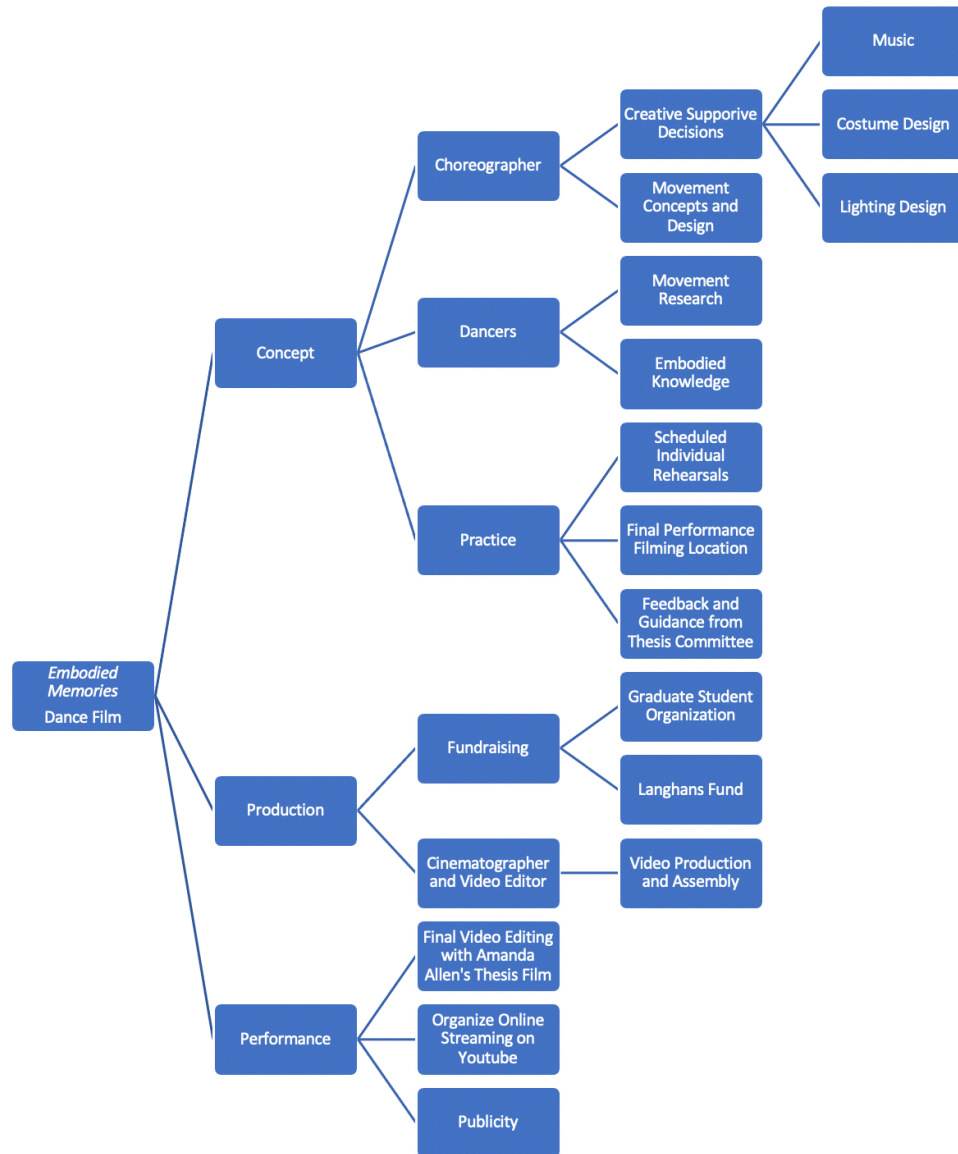


Figure 1. Diagram of Production Outline

The thesis choreography is proposed to be presented in a dance film for a virtual showing in the Fall 2021 semester. The figure displays the components necessary to create the dance film.

Costumes

Dancers will be embodying the stories and memories of their own grandmothers, which reflects very individual stories. Therefore, each costume will connect to the story told by each individual dancer and will therefore be unique. The costume choice will be discussed with each dancer to determine what they feel best represents the story they want to tell of their grandmother. For instance, one dancer may wear an accessory such as a scarf, while another dancer chooses to wear a jacket, etc. However, all dancers will wear a similar costume that will serve as a unifying visual basis. Specifically, all dancers will wear a flowy tunic in earthy colors such as black, grey, red and brown to provide a neutral basis and to accentuate movement.

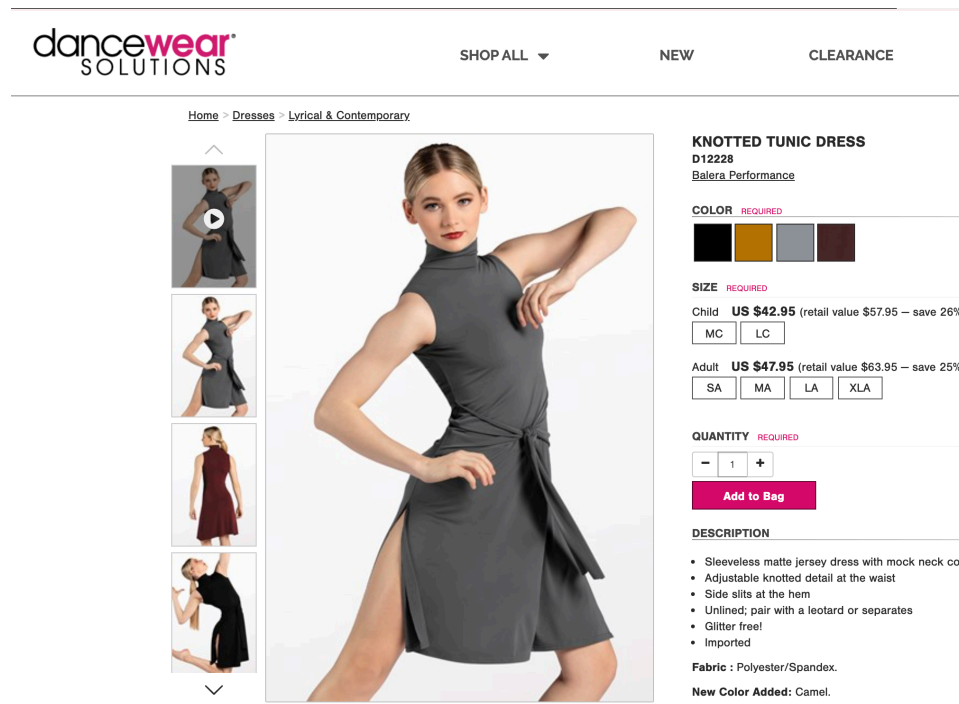


Figure 2. Proposed Costume Design: Image of a Knotted Tunic Dress from Dancewear Solutions as an example of costume color and style.

Sets

The choreography will be rehearsed and recorded in individual sessions on Zoom. Therefore, dancers will be filmed in their homes, and the sets for choreography will depend on what environment they have available to dance in. Depending on the change in restrictions on social gatherings, a final in-person individual recording of dancers will take place in a dance studio location to be determined.

Lighting

Natural lighting will be used to support the narratives of each individual dancer while providing the best unifying visual appearance for the overall film. Recordings will take place during the daytime. Lighting enhancement in video editing will be used as necessary or to create different visual effects, to best support the appearance of the dancers and their movement.

Music

Because of the individual nature of the movement concepts that dancers will explore, it's important that the music supports the environment without distracting from it. I've chosen two compositions by contemporary composer Dustin O'Halloran that I feel create an imaginative landscape, and can be adapted to different movement styles and gestures:

Contreaux in 2 by Dustin O'Halloran

The composition has a gently melody, with a consistent rhythm and smooth, delicate percussion. These elements will support creativity and overall emotion from my dancers.

Opus 2 by Dustin O'Halloran

This contemporary piano piece is inviting, breathy and mellow. It inspires a feeling of nostalgia that I think will support movement narratives in my thesis.

Other Production Elements

I propose to source a videographer/editor to produce the film, to achieve the highest quality performance possible, especially because film and editing are not skills that I am able to provide at the highest level. A professional videographer/editor has the tools, preparation, and adaptability to capture the dance movement from my dancers, which allows me as choreographer and director to focus my attention on the direction of the dancers and coordinate with the videographer/editor in a collaborative way. The film will be edited through a platform such as Adobe Premiere Pro and will be presented in an online platform such as Zoom, Youtube, or Vimeo.

Task	Deadline
Create title of show	August 16
Create gmail account for show	August 27
Create ticket booking survey & finalize ticket purchase dates/times	September 3
Set up youtube livestream	September 3
Merge videos into one video for streaming	September 3
Finalize program	September 17
Dress rehearsal/Run through	September 24 & 25
Send tickets & programs out before performance	September 30

Figure 3. Proposed Production Checklist and Timeline

Publicity

I plan on producing an independent virtual concert with Amanda Allen, and as a result we will be independently publicizing and seeking the support of the Department of Theatre and Dance to share publicity media on the department's platforms. Our publicity strategies include creating a flyer, sharing information through social media such as Facebook and Instagram, and sharing information through the department's website, Facebook page, weekly newsletter, and the university's campus event calendar.

Strategy
Contact Jessica Theatre Manager/Public Information
Create and Post to Instagram Accounts
Create Facebook Event
Share to UHM Dance Facebook Page
Share to Department of Theatre and Dance's Weekly Newsletter
Submit to UH Events Calendar https://www.hawaii.edu/calendar/manoa/

Figure 4. Proposed Publicity Checklist

Casting Process

My casting process depends largely on the availability and interest of dancers at the university. In May 2020, I had set out to inquire if the original dancers from my MFA thesis qualifier choreography from Footholds of Fall 2019, *Higher Ground*, were interested in being in my thesis piece. Nonetheless, the impact of the pandemic meant that most of my dancers from this original cast were traveling back to their homes on the mainland or were unavailable otherwise. Therefore, I reached out to dancers from the graduate and undergraduate level, as well

as new and incoming (MFA dance) students through email. In December 2020, I was able to cast seven dancers, (nine including myself) who were interested and available.

Dancers:

Amanda Allen

Loleina Carlos

Audrey Castañeda-Walker

Carla Guajardo

Alaina Meyer

Greta Pearse

Katelyn Wyatt

Allan Zablocki

Proposed Budget

On account of producing a dance film outside of the department's Footholds Dance Concert, the cost of production will not be supported by the variables of support that come with being in a Footholds concert. Thus, with the in kind supports such as the spaces at Kennedy Theatre and the Dance Studio being unavailable, my proposed budget reflects the cost of filming production, (with the Art at Marks Garage rental cost as reference) editing as well as costumes and equipment necessary for creating a dance film.

Item	Cost		
Equipment: Lighting equipment	\$150		
Filming space (Rental Art at Marks \$100/hr x 5hrs)	\$500		
Costumes	\$40 x 9 dancers (\$360)		
Videographer/Editor for a 20-25 min film	\$25/hr x 5 hrs filming + 35hrs editing (~\$1000)		
Total estimate:	\$2,010		

Figure 5. Proposed Budget

Research Questions

My thesis concept has allowed me to think critically and creatively about how movement is embodied and how the medium of dance film can be used. The sources that prompted and inspired by research inquiry came from my graduate courses such as Dance and Visual Media, Seminar in Dance Research, Seminar in Teaching Dance/Theatre, Movement Improvisation, and Dance and Performance Studies: Ways of Knowing. During these courses I explored new ways of understanding through dance, connections between movement and media and gained insights about how technology influences and shapes movement.

How are the narratives of one's embodied experience expressed? What kind of knowledge can be accessed from our ancestors? How can embodied knowledge be a form of healing, reflection, and practice? What kind of emotional and kinesthetic response do I wish to elicit from my dancers and from my audience? How can the camera represent a subjective experience to be told as part of a larger shared human experience? What can be revealed through the medium of dance film that is not readily apparent in live dance performance? What creative opportunities are possible by adapting dance for the screen?

Proposed Timeline

Event	Date
— Projected date for thesis committee meeting based on acceptance of the proposal;	February 1-22
— Showing date for the first 1/3 of the choreography footage	April 5-11
— Showing date to present 2/3 of the choreography footage	May 3-9
— Showing date to present first edit of dance film	May 24-30
— Showing date, which must be at least two weeks prior to the tech week of the concert, for the complete choreography	Showing date: August 23-29 Tech week: September 13-19
— Concert dates	September 23-26
— Scheduling of production- and publicity-related elements	August 23-September 19
— Deadline for submission of first draft of written work	October 5-21
— Deadline for submission of video and written document to Graduate Division	November 5

Figure 6. Proposed Timeline

CHAPTER II. Reflecting on the Production Process

The production of my thesis involved many internal and external factors that shaped the foundation of my work. Through the process of rehearsing, researching, and organizing, I faced many challenges that shifted the performance of my thesis in different directions than I originally anticipated. This chapter outlines and reflects on the rehearsal, videography, editing and funding phases that were part of the overall production process. I discovered how designing the structure of my production was vital for the flow of creativity and choreographic expression.

My goal is to describe and analyze the production process of my choreographic thesis *Embodied Memories*. Through this reflection I aim to reveal the unique experiences I went through as director, choreographer, and producer. This information can be advantageous for future collaborative creative initiatives between psychosomatics and dance, as well as dance and filmmaking. This approach also provides transparency into the structure of my work and the decisions and considerations that were made, giving insight into factors that affect the final product.

Rehearsals

The concept of embodying one's grandmother through dance is a highly individual experience, and therefore I wanted to structure my rehearsals in a way that would shape the narrative of my thesis to the dancers who were in it. My rehearsal process began in late January, after I had casted seven dancers. At the time, in-person gathering was still restricted and COVID-19 cases were quite high, so the best option for my cast's safety was to rehearse virtually. I chose

to rehearse with each dancer on a one-on-one basis to bring out their somatic responses in a personal and genuine way. Rehearsing one-on-one also guaranteed dancer availability and dedication to a long rehearsal schedule. Greta and Allan were the only dancers who had their Zoom rehearsal together, due to scheduling availability. Two of the dancers in my cast, Alaina and Loleina, were on the mainland, which did not pose a problem for rehearsals because my rehearsals had planned to take place on Zoom. However, it did mean that these two dancers were to be filmed via Zoom and would indicate a difference in video quality level between the filming of the rest of my cast. Although this was not a major concern, it did force me to think creatively about the visual representation and making the film's narrative flow smoothly.

	Wednesdays, Recurring	
Week	Date	Time (HST)
1	January 27	9:00-10:00am
2	February 3	9:00-10:00am
3	February 10	9:00-10:00am
4	February 17	9:00-10:00am
5	February 18	9:00-10:00am
6	February 24	9:00-10:00am
7	March 3	9:00-10:00am
8	March 10	9:00-10:00am
9	* No rehearsal - Spring Break *	
10	3/22/2021 - Monday	9:00-10:00am
11	March 31	9:00-10:00am
12	April 7	9:00-10:00am
13	April 14	9:00-10:00am
14	April 21	9:00-10:00am
15	April 28	9:00-10:00am
16	May 5th * Rehearse if needed - Last week of classes *	9:00-10:00am

Figure 7. Rehearsal Schedule: Example of schedule for individual dance rehearsals over Zoom.

Over a period of sixteen weeks, I was able to create a deep connection to each of my dancers in a manner that brought out their true artistic responses to my choreographic prompts. Having dancers rehearse through Zoom meant they were rehearsing in their homes, which I think

positively contributed to the inquiry into their grandmother's lives. The home environment can be nurturing and provides a good basis for exploring familial connection and a safe environment for self-reflection and expression. The rehearsal process also evolved and progressed in many ways. During the first few weeks, dancers were first becoming familiar with the concept, and the dominant focus was to inquire as much as they could about the grandmother they chose to embody, which meant researching their family history. The middle stages of rehearsal during March and April involved deepening the narrative of each dancer, and by the last few weeks of rehearsal, I was framing the entire choreographic piece in a way to tie each individual story together.

Throughout the rehearsal process, Zoom as a dance rehearsal platform provided me with many insights. The physical distance allowed me as a choreographer to step back and develop how I observed movement on another body. The rectangular frame on screen was also a good prelude to envisioning how I wanted the camera to frame the dancer's movements. For example, if a dancer was front facing, it allowed me to envision the limitations of what movement the audience doesn't see, and how the camera must work to move around the dancer's body. It also allowed me to exactly see how much negative space within that rectangle was around the dancer, which made me think about how to manipulate that space. Choreographing through virtual connection has pushed me and my dancers to be conscious of the body in new ways. Dancers must become more internally aware of their movements, how they originate and how they are expressed. Moreover, the process of creating movement is restricted because the choreographer does not have the same freedom to observe other dancers interacting in one space. Rather, the choreographer's observation is limited to the space of the screen. Therefore, the lack of in-person

interaction allowed me to develop a higher awareness of my body's movements before teaching or prompting my dancers. For example, when I explored choreographic action components such as gesture, stillness, and travelling, I modeled the movement where dancers learning my choreography had the ability to learn by observation and mimicry. It became less about transmitting the material, but more about how to internalize the material. I learned I first had to develop more internal awareness in my own body of these action components before developing them into more movement.

Although I gained internal awareness, choreographing my thesis virtually has its benefits and limitations. It limits the relationship component in choreography. Incorporating elements such as formations, become a challenge because their meaning shifts to have to exist through the screen. I used this as an opportunity later to create a unified experience of internal awareness through my costume, set and choreographic choices. The presence and attention between myself as choreographer and my dancers were still maintained virtually. Therefore, this connection became more valuable because dancers are forced to develop better proprioceptive awareness. For example, developing the expression of contentment and comfort required me as a choreographer to be even more attentive to my dancer's movement on screen, and the nuances in the way they expressed themselves. As a result of this awareness, I was able to guide them and craft the movement successfully through enhanced communication. It forces the dancer to reorient themselves according to how they are represented on camera. For example, their pathways and direction of left and right that are normally communicated physically become difficult to develop on a screen. Therefore, verbal cues and communication are developed in place of the lack of physicality. Instead of relying on being physical to demonstrate movement,

my choreography through Zoom relied on sounds and words to describe and define movement. Choreographing online has forced dancers to build a different relationship with space. I worked with limitations around creating pathways in the boundaries of a rectangular screen. Although dancers are accustomed to working creatively in a close intimate space, the physical separation between choreographer and dancer in an online environment has allowed dancers to heighten connection and communication in choreography.

Videography and Editing

My intention for acquiring a professional videographer and editor was to provide a level of quality and skill to my thesis on par with the level of quality that is provided in a live Footholds concert setting. In my research, I contacted a variety of videographers and editors on island, looking for people with experience working with dancers, which allows me as choreographer and director coordinate and collaborate to capture my vision. A videographer & editor also provide dance the tools such as film equipment and video editing software necessary to produce the film.

Videography:

- 4K Camera
- Camera Stabilization
- Basic Storyboarding/Shot List Preparation under choreographer's direction

Editing:

- Off Line – Rough Cut
- Online Editing
- Color Correcting/Grading
- Audio Enhancement
- Titles and Graphics
- Export for Delivery
- Two Rounds of Major Revisions
- One Round of Minor Revisions
- Final 4K Ready Video

Figure 8. Videography and Editing Skills: The capabilities provided by a videographer and editor my film production.

Ultimately after reaching out to students from the Academy for Creative Media at the Mānoa and West O‘ahu campuses, local production companies and individual freelance videographers, I worked with Randy Villaver, a local dancer and filmmaker who had immense experience shooting dance films. I also worked with my brother, Joseph Weingrad, as video editor, to provide the edits and techniques needed to put the film together. The choice to work with Randy and Joseph was mainly due to financial feasibility and availability.

Filming Location and Schedule

Although my rehearsals took place of resume, and I appreciated the home environment that supported each dancer’s investigation into their own grandmother, I wanted to fill my dancers in a location that was a neutral unifying place so that their body was the central focus, and not the environment. The spaces that I initially looked into included the UH Mānoa dance studio, yoga studios and theater stages in Honolulu, the Arts at Marks Garage, Aupuni Space, and the studio space at ACM West O‘ahu. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, however most of these spaces did not allow more than two people inside at once and required face masks during filming, which would have affected the aesthetic and narrative of my choreography.

Filming Dates & Times

5/17/21 – 2.5 hours - Katelyn, Greta and Allan at Infinity Movement Studio

5/24/21 – 1.5 hours – Loleina on Zoom

5/31/21 -1 hour - Carla at Infinity Movement Studio

6/1/21 - 3 hours - Greta, Allan, Amanda, Audrey, myself at Infinity Movement Studio

6/2/21 - 1 hour Alaina on Zoom



Arthur Murray Dance Studio



Infinity Yoga Studio



The ARTS at Marks Garage

Figure 9. Potential Film Set Locations

The location I decided on as my film location was Infinity Movement Studio in Kaka‘ako. Their larger studio space allowed up to 10 people at the time and because I was only filming one dancer at a time, the dancer had the possibility of removing their face mask while being filmed. Infinity Movement Studio also had the most affordable rate for studio rental, which was an important factor in my decision.

Their large studio space offered great natural lighting, a neutral backdrop of Honolulu that allowed dancers to separate their performance of movement narrative in a mindful way. It also allowed the audience to truly view embodied knowledge, because the story comes from the

dancer, and they are using movement to create the imagery around them. The location was a supportive element and a blank canvas for the dancer's performance.

Budget & Funding

Due to the pandemic and unforeseen circumstances where assistance by the department for the MFA thesis is no longer supported in the Fall 2021 semester, I requested funds through various sources. Funding was received through the Graduate Student Association's Grants and Awards Program to cover research, preproduction, preliminary shooting, and post-production expenses. Funds were also received through the Edward A. "Skeep" Langhans Fund to cover the remaining cost of costumes.

Funding was necessary to produce the film, especially because the variables of support that usually come with being in a Footholds Dance Concert include in-kind costs that exceed the \$1000 Footholds budget. For example, the use of a stage, marley flooring, a lighting designer and professional stage lighting equipment, support staff including stage crew, a stage manager, front of house staff, publicity staff and costume designers. With my proposed budget I was able to receive all the support needed to carry out important research materials, such as sourcing a videographer and editor, funding for costumes, as well as a performance space for filming. I also received support from professors Brian Shevelenko and Maile Speetjens for equipment and costumes that were out of my budget, such as lending specific costume pieces for a few dancers, a large portable speaker, a power cable, and a set of lights.

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA
Graduate Student Organization (GSO)
Grants and Awards Program

Itemized Budget Form: Research Materials

Item	Estimated cost (US\$)	Fund request to GSO	GSO Approval
A. Research Materials			(For Office Use Only)
A.1. Videographer & Editor	\$1375	\$1375	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fund
A.2. Costumes	\$87.25	\$80	Amount: _____
A.3. Space Rental & Lighting	\$549.73	\$545	<input type="checkbox"/> Deny
Sub-Total A	\$2011.98	\$2000	
B. Page Charges			(For Office Use Only)
B.1.			<input type="checkbox"/> Fund
B.2.			Amount: _____
B.3.			<input type="checkbox"/> Deny
Sub-Total B	0.00	0.00	
TOTAL (A+B)	\$2011.98	\$2000	
GRAND TOTAL (TRAVEL+RESEARCH)	\$2011.98	\$2000	

☐ Check here if an additional list of budget items is attached.

NOTE: You may include additional items on a separate piece of paper. For expenses in currencies other than US dollars, please attach a copy of the exchange rate by specific dates from the following website: <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>

Budget Justification (<100 words):

1. Videographer/Editor: \$1000

A videographer/editor will be hired to film and edit the dance choreography for professional level presentation of the film. After filming, the total cost of filming came to \$900, at a filming rate of \$150/hr. The cost of editing came to \$475 for a 25 minute thesis dance film.

2. Costumes

The cost of costumes was reduced to \$87.25.

3. Space Rental & Lighting

An hourly rental rate (at Linda Melodia's Infinity Movement Studio) of \$75/hour for 6 hours plus tax came to a total of \$549.73.

Figure 10. GSO Itemized Budget

Publicity & Performance

Because the planned virtual concert was set to occur outside of Kennedy Theatre's performance season, Amanda and I organized the publicity and virtual performance ourselves, using resources we had available. We used Youtube as our streaming platform and created an account for the purposes of this concert so that the video could be unlisted, and that way were able to send the link out to people who had registered for the concert. We also created a Google

Survey which was shared via QR code and hyperlink on a flyer that was shared through social media. The survey was our online registration form which allowed us to gather the emails of those interested in attending. The flyer we created was posted around campus and with the support of Jessica Jacob at Kennedy Theatre, we were able to share our flyer to UHM social media pages and email lists. Originally, our concert was set to happen on October 1st and 2nd at 7pm, with a matinee show at 2pm on the 2nd as well. However, due to unexpected delays in Amanda's filming timeline, we had to move the concert back by one day. Our deadline for completing all edits and exporting our films was originally set for Monday September 27th, therefore we discussed pushing our show dates back by one day to allow Amanda time to edit and revise her film. Our revised showing dates were Saturday, October 2nd at 7 pm and Sunday, October 3rd at 2pm and 7pm.



Figure 11. MFA Dance Thesis Concert Flyer

CHAPTER III. Reflecting on the Creative Process

Concept

Throughout the course of my rehearsals and filming, the concept of embodying the stories and memories of one's grandmother through dance has evolved in many ways. The first challenge was to envision what the knowledge is and how it can be accessed. While keeping in mind that the ultimate outcome was to retrieve movement from my dancers that would be crafted into choreography, I first focused on what bodily knowledge my dancers already had. Parviainen argues that bodily knowledge “aims to describe the living body's movement ability, which is not doing itself; however, this learning evolves on the basis of bodily awareness, kinaesthesia, and perception” (19). I devised a series of somatic movement prompts that were inspired by a class I taught during in 2019 as part of *Seminar in Teaching Dance/Theatre* taught by Dr. Amy Schiffner.



Figure 12. Movement Workshop Flyer 2019

Titled *Sensory Mindfulness Workshop*, the class I designed used improvisation as a tool to raise physical awareness by focusing on internal rhythms and energy. During the workshop I acted as a guide for others, letting them direct their bodies and learn and understand ways of expressing themselves through their own range of unique, improvised movements. I used a similar method to approach the concept of embodying one's grandmother. By acting as a guide and facilitator I was able to allow my dancers to enter a thinking-doing space rather than limiting themselves to my aesthetic movement expectations. As the weeks of rehearsals continued and my prompts evolved, my dancers had an internal awareness that gradually progressed and build, advancing to an increased awareness and internal understanding for what the specific memory, story and emotion of their grandmother is as an embodied knowledge. "The living body acquires knowledge by doing, moving itself, by not only aimless wandering, but also practicing socially and culturally shaped skills" (Parviainen, 20). By inviting dancers into this space of intuitive, reflexive practice, I was able to see the insight, guidance, and healing achieved from connecting to one's grandmother in a kinesthetic way. A sense of understanding illuminated my rehearsals during the weeks leading up to the final recording. I witnessed how the concept developed and materialized through each dancer's cultivated a connection to their ancestor.

Choreographic Process

The first step in envisioning what embodied knowledge of one's grandmother is and how it can be accessed involved looking at the broader picture of how each dancer connected to their family. In my early weeks of rehearsal and research, my Practice-as-Research methodology involved movement improvisation, writing and more movement improvisation based on what they wrote. I asked dancers to begin with mindfulness, asking them, what feeling do you have in

your body right now? Then I asked them to think about how they felt when they heard the word *family*. Lastly, I asked, what memory comes to mind when you think about your grandmother? Responding through improvisation first elicited a genuine, unfiltered kinesthetic response that acted as a basis for developing movement. Kinesthetic awareness as a tool in my prompts allows the body to understand one's own movement. As Susan Leigh Foster describes in *Choreographing Empathy*, "The body must perceive simultaneously its position, movement, momentum, and proximity to everything around it, and even its relationship to gravity (74). The process of writing down answers after responding kinesthetically allowed an opportunity for reflection and internalization of what each dancer had experienced. For example, the feeling of anxiousness manifested in the body and reflected on through writing creates a connection between feeling, doing, and understanding. The second phase of my choreographic process involved a closer investigation into who the dancer's grandmothers are. Dancers had to answer the following questions after researching through conversations with their grandmothers or with family members:

What is your grandmother's full name and why was she named that?

What is her date of birth? Where was she born? Where did she grow up?

After the first two weeks of Practice-as-Research based on the knowledge that the dancers already had about their grandmothers, these questions offered a deeper level of understanding and connection to the narratives they were developing about their grandmothers. This information formed the general scope of their understanding of who the person is, but also allowed room for inquiry into what areas of their grandmother's life they felt interested in and connected with. I felt it was necessary to frame the history of the grandmother they chose to

embody, both in terms of their upbringing and how they carried themselves emotionally and physically. The following questions were asked to illuminate an understanding of their character and life experiences:

What was her childhood like?

Who were her friends?

What are/were her hobbies / pastimes?

How does/did she walk? Sit? Eat?

What experiences have they lived that you want to know more about?

What are the gaps in your knowledge/what are your curiosities?

After finding out the answers to these questions, I asked my dancers to respond to a series of somatic movement prompts through improvisation. For example, I asked them to focus on one specific story or memory they learned more about and begin to bring awareness to what parts of their body felt tension, and what parts felt the capacity to move, and in what way.

What does this memory mean to you?

Lean into the next part of the memory and let it lead your body.

What feels comfortable about this action, about this memory?

Imagine the position you're in from the outside-what does it look like? Feel like?

By drawing more attention and energy to the parts of the body that were responding, dancers could explore further and illustrate what that specific memory of their grandmother's lived experience felt like, emotionally, and kinesthetically. For example, Carla learned about her grandmother's sacrifices made for her family, and the hardships that she endured in her youth.

After her improvisational response, she described what she experienced as "flight,

transformation and strength, the feeling of expansion in my upper body, resistance in my lower body. I felt supported.” Written and verbal responses were used to reflect and connect the somatic experience, but I focused more on bodily knowledge and expression, because a lot of what my dancers experienced in their movement research was difficult to put into words. To focus on a specific memory or story, I also prompted dancers to choose two memories, and try to illustrate those memories using their bodies. Then, I asked them to write three words depicting the first memory, and three words depicting the second, and to explore what connections they felt between those words. By isolating words from each memory, dancers contributed an interpretation and conception that created a narrative of their choreography. “We all have a basic need for story, for organizing our experiences into tales of important happenings. Narrative allows researchers to present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness.” (Webster and Mertova, 10). At this stage in the middle of my rehearsal timeline, the narratives of each dancer’s grandmother were beginning to take shape. The next step in my choreographic process was to pinpoint seeds of movement and guide my dancers in developing movement motifs that were specific to their ancestry. Dancers had to isolate a particular gesture that characterized the way their grandmother went through the world. This gesture came from a specific memory that each dancer chose of their grandmother. I chose to have them focus on one memory because it was clear, succinct and a good focal point for the experience of embodying their grandmother. As Neisser and Fivush describe, “Particular events become important parts of our life because they provide some meaningful information about who we are, and the narrative forms for representing and recounting these events provide a particular structure for understanding and conveying this meaning” (136). My intention was to pinpoint these seeds of movement

vocabulary to allow dancers to strip away their contemporary dance training and think about moving in an embodied way. I leaned into the powerful body language from each dancer's unique movement vocabulary and molded the movement to a core motif. This gesture not only represented a particular story or memory of their grandmother but was the core of the choreography that they would develop. I then choreographed a short phrase that everyone would learn and take movements from in their improvisation, as a way of unifying the entire piece. To develop the final choreography, I used the following prompt:

Isolate one gesture from the chosen memory of your grandmother. Perform the gesture once, then step out of the action of the memory. Perform the choreographed phrase in its entirety. Move in reaction to the environment of the memory - where it takes place, what's happening in the background. Like you're reacting to what you just left behind. Step back into the memory and continue performing the gesture from different angles. Repeat stepping in and out/reacting/becoming part of it.

The structure of the choreography allowed the dancer to define their gesture. They were able to journey through the memory and prepare their body to be receptive for connection and to cultivate embodied intuition. With a clear intent of where their movement will go as they repeat it, movement communicates knowledge and embodiment.

Music

My intention was to choose music that supports the environment for a dancer to engage in somatic movement without distracting from it. I found that the original pieces of music I selected by Dustin O'Halloran were too distracting and made the dancers focus on the rhythm

and melody of the music, rather than their own internal timing. Therefore, I chose music that was an atmospheric soundscape. *Space Between Us* by Daniel James Roe, *7 Days* by Hampus Naeselius, *Breath of Life* by Gavin Luke, and *Velvet Uniform* by Cora Zea were the chosen pieces of music for their atmospheric ambience. The songs flowed well in transition from one another, supported meaning in each dancer's actions, and established the setting and atmosphere of each dancer's chosen memory of their grandmother.

Lighting



Figure 13. Lighting Set-up: LED light (left), Oktobox (right) and small floodlights (center, not pictured)

The main studio space at Infinity Movement Studio had two walls of south-facing floor to ceiling windows, which provided an extraordinary amount of natural light. In addition, an LED light and Oktobox produced a diffused soft light that provided uniform illumination across the entire scene, lighting the dancers' faces. The small floodlights were used to provide key light and

warmth. The overhead lights in the studio were adjustable, and after experimenting with cool and warm tones, I set the lights to a dim amber to keep the lighting looking as natural as possible. Overall, the lighting enhanced the dancers' movement, costume, expression and opened the space for the dancer to create a visual composition.

Costumes

Costumes were unique to each dancer's composition. After discussing with each dancer to determine what best represents their grandmother, I asked dancers to choose items of clothing from their own closets, and for costumes they didn't have, I sourced from the costume shop at Kennedy Theatre or purchased using funding. Hair was kept out of the dancers' faces in a ponytail or bun, so that their expressions could be clearly seen. Originally, I had proposed to have all the dancers wear a unifying costume, such as a flowy tunic in an earthy color, as a neutral unifying visual element. However, through my rehearsal process I discovered that I did not want to stray from the genuine unique story of each person. Therefore, each costume fully contributed to the embodiment of each dancer's grandmother.



Figure 14. Alaina and Loleina in Costume

Alaina's and Loleina's costumes were sourced from their own wardrobes. Alaina's floral print blouse was reminiscent of the print and style of shirt that her grandmother wore, and her white, loose pants were also inspired by her grandmother's style but were loose enough to allow room for movement. Loleina's costume included long khaki pants, a neutral brown cardigan, and a pale green camisole. The long pants and cardigan were inspired by her grandmother's style, while the camisole provided some contrast to the loose, flowy shape of her costume.



Figure 15. Katelyn and Greta in Costume

Katelyn's costume was largely inspired by photos of her grandmother and clothing descriptions by her mother. Her top was a floral print white blouse, and she wore a long, dark navy skirt that ended at the ankles. Katelyn's costume, makeup and jewelry choices reflected the time period in the memory of her grandmother she chose to embody. Greta's costume also reflected the memory she was embodying of her grandmother. Her light blue chambray shirt is handed-down from her grandmother, and her gray t-shirt and black pants balance the costume.



Figure 16. Allan and Carla in Costume

Allan's costume was inspired by the sweaters that his grandmother wore. His black pants contrast the light gray, drawing attention to his arms, which supports his movement gesture. His sweater was sourced from the costume shop at Kennedy Theatre, while the rest of his costume including his black pants and t-shirt are from his own wardrobe. Carla's costume was a 50's style dress inspired by the specific time period of her chosen memory. The color and style of the dress was purchased and was inspired by photos of her grandmother wearing dresses of similar pattern, color, and length.



Figure 17. Audrey, Amanda and I in Costume

Audrey's costume included a bright red blouse, black leotard, and dark green pants. The blouse was purchased using funding and inspired by the similarly colored tops that her grandmother likes to wear, and the leotard and pants contrasted the flowy shape of the blouse.

Amanda's costume was inspired by photos of her grandmother when she was younger. Her white sleeveless collared top contrasted her dark shorts and complimented the quality of her movement. My costume was inspired by my grandmother's favorite color, wearing a pink sweater with the rest of my costume in black to make the color and texture of the sweater stand out.

Filming

Filming took place over the course of two weeks. After discussing availability with each dancer, I booked Infinity Movement Studio for approximately 1 hour time slots to film each dancer. Alaina and Loleina were off-island and therefore filmed on Zoom. The beginning of each

in-person filming process began with 10 minutes of setting up the camera, lighting and allowing the dancer to warm up. Then I allowed the dancer to perform the entire length of their choreography on set, while my videographer, Randy Villaver observed their movement. As I was already familiar with the sequence of movement each dancer performed, I narrowed down which specific shots I wanted to capture and collaborated with Randy to find the best way to achieve that. The filming began with a wide shot, capturing the entire dancer's body at a distance. This shot type was used to establish scenery and the relation of the dancer to their space.



Figure 18. Wide Shot



Figure 19. Tracking Shot

Additionally, a tracking shot was used to follow the dancer's travelling patterns. The tracking shot enhanced the momentum of their movement. It also provided a closer view of body language. This shot type frames the viewer's perspective by directing their gaze. "Movement in film is therefore always connected to the gaze, first that of the camera and then that of the spectator. *Movements in film are thus observed movements*" (Hickethier, 151). Randy guided the camera to move in rotation with and parallel to each dancer, which contributed to the overall depiction of each dancer's narrative.



Figure 20. Close-up Shot

The close-up shot was used to show detail in each dancer's gesture. It also showed detail of facial expression. This shot type centralized the dancer in their experience embodying and recreating the memory of their grandmother. By witnessing their expressions and gestures at a close angle, this shot allows the audience to establish a strong emotional connection to the dancer.

Post-Production

The video editing process involved a lot of creativity and collaboration. I worked in collaboration with my video editor, Joseph Weingrad, to produce the final film. The most important part during the editing phase was to keep the narrative intention of the film clear. Instead of having multiple shots of dancers on screen at once, having a side-by-side shot of at most two dancers created a clear and connecting transition from one dancer's narrative to the

next. It also acted as a unifying element in the film overall, to connect everyone's stories as a shared experience. The footage of Alaina and Loleina filmed on Zoom was placed at the beginning of the shots, opening the film. This choice separated the footage of dancers filmed in person to the Zoom footage, which made it so that there was no sharp visual change when watching the film. Each video cut was consistent and supported the dancer's expression. Dancers recorded voiceovers of a few sentences describing their grandmother in context of the memory they were illustrating. These voiceovers were edited at the beginning of each dancer's appearance dancing their section on screen. Names of the grandmothers were edited out of the voiceovers to contribute to the idea of a shared experience, opposed to separating a subjective experience. The voiceover supported the narrative, allowing the dancer to express much physically what could not be represented with words. The choice to edit snapshots or glimpses of each dancer's gesture to appear gesture in the beginning and end of the film gave the narration of the film a sense of start and finish, as well as connecting the embodied experience between each dancer. Lastly, the choice to edit a rolling photo montage of photos of all the dancers' grandmothers enhanced the personal nature of each story while maintaining a shared experience.

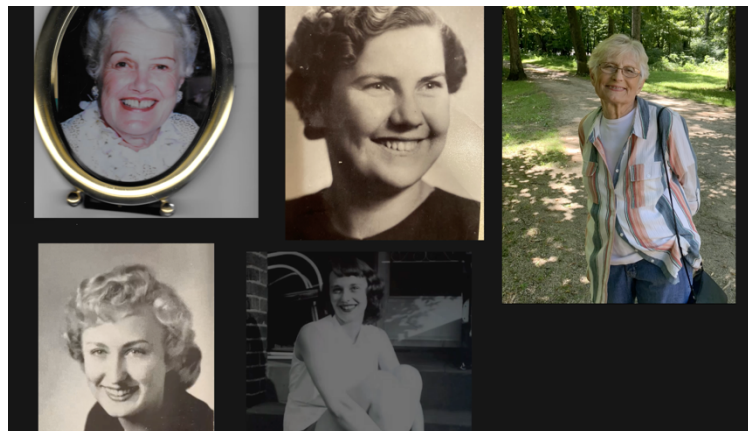


Figure 21. Photo Montage Screenshot

Committee Showings & Feedback

Meetings & Showings	Date
First Meeting	2/12/21
First Showing	4/16/21
Second Showing	5/3/21
Third Showing 5/12/21	5/12/21
Fourth Showing 9/3/21	9/3/21
Final Post-Performance Feedback	10/14/21

Figure 22. Timeline of Committee Showings

The first committee showing took place in April 2021. My committee's thoughts about my choreography and direction of my dancers at this point had more to do with what prompted the movement. Feedback I received included to give more specific prompts, such as yes or no questions, that require little explanation to give my dancers the chance to do something out of the ordinary that might surprise them. I also received feedback to look at each part of my prompts, each section, and how I can develop them further. My committee also advised me to have strong development of the theme and phrase making, rather than the video editing. Other feedback I received included to move dancers away from the concept of the grandmother and move into them and their body, and how their body creates the memory of their movement; focus on places, locations, that the dancer has of memory with the grandmother; considering choreographic tools: such as asking each to have moments of stillness.

The second and third committee showings took place in May. These showings were the last to occur before film production began. The committee's thoughts about the development of concept and choreography were to focus on the motifs each dancer was creating and allow them

to step into that space and become it. I was also advised to ask them to identify a particular gesture or action or shape that they feel they are deeply connecting with, a non-verbal action that is their grandmother. Therefore, when the audience sees it, we know that's their grandmother. I was also given feedback that the dancers need to choose what to distill in their memory and start to develop that more. Questions that came up during these showings included: Where are you leading us to? What are these materials for? What message do you want the audience to take away? The feedback I received during these showings shaped the narrative of my film and developed each individual dancer's experience into a unified experience of embodying and honoring their grandmothers.

The fourth showing occurred after the filming had ended and the editing phase was beginning. Feedback I received from my committee included to highlight the traveling and walking in the film, as something that is just as intentional in the journey; have an external extension that allows the audience to feel invited to step through their story (such as through close-up shots); and to frame the editing to highlight the thread that ties each dancer together.

Final Response

Audience members expressed to me that the film overall deeply touched them. They were reminded of their own grandmothers and kinesthetically and emotionally inspired to think about how they would have connected to their own grandmother in the same way. They expressed that the essence of each movement story, choreography and section was very clear, and the overall premise and structure was powerful. Dr. Amy Schiffner expressed that I could recreate the concept many times over with different populations of people in different locations, which inspired me to think about the impact of my project.

CHAPTER IV. Conclusion

The process of creating, choreographing, researching, producing, and performing *Embodied Memories* provided me with many insights. The intention of my choreography was a collective embodiment of ancestry through movement, and I achieved this through my rehearsals with my dancers, developing a practice of somatic response, and through the collaborative efforts of my videographer and editor. Choices in costume, music, lighting and set supported and enhanced the narrative that each dancer had about their grandmother. Each dancer engaged in embodied knowing by creating a motif from a specific memory of their grandmother and stepping into the space they created to become part of that creation. Block and Kissell's definition, "embodied knowing is the ability to interact with a thought or an experience holistically that involves the integrated power network of the total person" (6) captures how the whole body holds the energy of every single gesture or action. Through my research I learned that generating an internal and external awareness of oneself requires that every part needs to equally commit to that action. Thoughts and emotions that translate through the body can be accessed as a form of knowledge for healing, reflection, and practice. During the creation of my thesis choreography, I was not striving to portray one's grandmother through mimicry or imitation, but an embodiment through kinesthetic and emotional awareness. Ultimately, one of the most valuable insights I gained is the power in connecting to one's own ancestral lineage and tapping into an interconnected, shared experience among humanity.

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