Process Paper

Form(-)ing Reflections

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Theatre, Dance and Film
TDF 490
Independent Honors Project in Dance
Graduation Date: May 7, 2016
May 9, 2016
Form(-)ing Reflections

May 4, 2015: Today is the day that I'm officially starting my senior honors independent ... I know this project is going to challenge me in ways I'm not expecting and maybe not even prepared for. When I think about what is to come, only one thought enters my mind.

I can't wait.

**Begin-ing**

When I wrote this journal entry last May, I could only dream of the journey I was about to take and the product that would result. On that day in May, sitting on an Adirondack chair under the shade of a tree on Hartman Green, holding back tears from the realization that my time at Franklin & Marshall is coming to an exciting close, I thought that the beginning moment of my independent was that first journal entry. Retrospectively, I realize that my independent started long before that.

During the spring semester of my junior year, I launched into a directed reading with Professor Jennifer Conley to study the connections between archaeology and dance. Throughout the semester I grappled with phenomenology, archaeology, geology, anatomy, modern dance, choreography, site-specific art, identity, and more. While I wrestled with these ideas, working hard to find my own connections in the written form of my research, I also engaged with these ideas through my creative process. By the end of the semester I had a paper and a dance to show for it. At the back of my mind throughout this process was the assumption that I would continue this research for my senior independent. The piece that I built that spring, *Stratum*, was going to be the launching point for my choreographic investigations, and the paper I wrote, "The Site: An Integrated Study of Dance and Archaeology," would be the start of my scholarly research.
When I wrote that journal entry last May, this was still my plan. I was going to continue studying the connections between dance and archaeology. But, when I had my first official independent meeting with my advisor, Professor Pam Vail, it was clear that this was not going to be my topic.

September 9, 2015: Today I switched my topic and I'm terrified. This decision was totally out of the blue, but once Pam said it I knew it was the right choice. I greatly enjoyed exploring dance and archaeology, but I've exhausted it for now.

Switching my topic was terrifying, exciting, confusing, comforting... a mix of emotions. Before the switch, I already had *Stratum* and a semester's worth of research from which to build. With a new topic, I had nothing. However, what I didn't have with my original topic was excitement. Uninspired and unsure of what to do, I reached out to my advisor for help and we decided switching my topic was the right decision. I don't know which was harder, letting go of my old topic or choosing a new one. After what seemed like hours of trying to think of an exciting research question, I was reminded of my experience at the Trisha Brown Dance Company (TBDC) Summer Intensive that I had attended just two months earlier. I suddenly knew that the work of Trisha Brown, which challenged me to rethink my ideas about dance and myself, needed to be part of my research. My advisor suggested form and content and I, unclear about what that actually meant, hesitantly agreed.

Looking back, I realize that my research didn't begin when I wrote that first journal entry in May, or with the start of my directed reading, or even with my experience at the TBDC Summer Intensive.

March 9, 2013: Our third movement study showings were on Friday. The assignment was “Chance” and I used the Cube and the
phrase 'Elizabeth Frost’s Cat Yawns' to complete my study. This movement study was easier to create than usual and I was not as nervous to show it as I was during the first showing.

My research on form and content officially began in March of my freshman year during Intermediate Modern, my first dance class at Franklin & Marshall. It was our third compositional assignment on "Chance," a formal device, when I first discovered my propensity and my readiness to explore form and content in dance.

Getting Started

In my original choreographic plans for my senior independent I wanted seven dancers (not including myself), multiple sections varying in style and number of dancers, a "neutral" space, a group of dancers to work with only as creative voices for my process (and not perform in the final work), and a solo set on me by another choreographer. I would be lying if I said all of my ideas stayed exactly the same from September to February, but most of my original ideas ended up in my independent in some way. In the following sections I will describe in more detail the processes for each section of Form-ing—Stratum, Unfold, Unravel, Part I, Part II, Part II, Addendum, The House that III Built, Parallelepiped, Theorem I (sequence of axioms) and Theorem II (chain of reasoning).

Stratum

My process for Stratum, as I said earlier, began in my directed reading during my junior year. The ideas for this piece came out of the research and the discussions I was engaging in about the connections between dance and archaeology. There were several factors that accumulated over a span of time to start the process for Stratum. One was a
collaboration Lyndsey Vader '06 that happened before I started working in the studio.

During the winter break before that spring, Lyndsey invited me to dance with her at the Ohio State University where we constructed a duet based off of a phrase that she had built. We agreed to each take that duet back to our programs, hers at Ohio State and mine at F&M, and develop a piece from it. Another factor was an influential reading from a previous class. In the preceding semester, I read selections from *Chambers for a Memory Palace* by Donlyn Lyndon and Charles Willard Moore. This book introduced to me the concept of layered time in space, specifically in architecture. I was particularly struck by this idea because of its connections to both art and archaeology. Lastly, I was engaging in different writing practices, such as descriptive writing accounts, under the guidance of my professor and project advisor Jennifer Conley.

As these factors started to come together, I knew that layered time was a way into my ideas about archaeology and dance, and that this was the place to expand my collaboration with Lyndsey. However, I was still unsure how to proceed with the material I had from my collaboration with Lyndsey, so I generated three more phrases of movement. After teaching these phrases to the 4 dancers in my cast, it dawned on me that the phrases of material could be the layers and I could use the phrases to construct an archaeological site in my dance.

*Building a site*

January 30, 2015: The layers are obvious, distinguished by their color. The holes are perfectly dug with sharp, clear edges. Alan hands me my trowel. My very first trowel. The weight of it is surprising for its size ... Everyone else gets to begin right away, but I've been assigned to a new area. What's underneath is a complete mystery. I get handed a shovel, my trowel will have to wait, and I start clearing away the
rubble from the old parking lot. Each chunk of cement reveals a new layer underneath. One that hadn't seen sunlight since the early 20th century. No time to stop and marvel, we must continue peeling away the layers of time. -Taken from a descriptive writing account

My "site" (my dance) began with an image of another site (Figure 1). To build the structure of Stratum, I used my experience as a field school student in Italy the previous summer. I sourced my interactions with the site (the process of digging and decoding) and my memories of the physical features of the site.

Looking at the image of the site (Figure 1), I remembered how at the beginning of the season there was only one layer, the superficial layer. We worked for over a week to get through this layer; it seemed like it would never end. Finally, the second layer started to break through. Little by little, the second layer was revealed in small areas around the site until finally it was seen in its entirety. As the second layer was peeled away, features began to appear. Holes, walls, hearths, and other features disturbed the second layer and what once seemed like evenly flowing time became disjointed and garbled. These features, though disconnected, were the third layer. The third layer was loud and busy and it too seemed like it would never end. Under each hole was another hole or a hearth that needed to be investigated. Finally, the site quieted down and the last layer (before bedrock) was discovered. Once again, time flowed smoothly across the site.

This experience with the site was encapsulated by Stratum, I repeated the first phrase for 4 minutes with only slight changes until the second phrase started to enter. The dancers, who had once been working on their own timing, joined together in unison to complete the emergence of the second phrase. The unison was short lived as the dancers broke into their own timing again. The middle section of Stratum played on the loudness of features. Duets and trios would surface then disappear when a different duet or trio would
materialize. Creating this section involved a lot of exploration. I played with layering and intertwining the first three phrases and I experimented with many elements of composition: repetition, phrasing, speed, energy, canon, etc. I experimented with overlapping phrases (one dancer does phrase 1 while another does phrase 2) to simulate the stratigraphy of archaeological sites. I chose to end the piece with a phrase in unison, the last layer before bedrock, finishing in the same position that the piece started in but facing a different direction. When I finished the piece, I intended for there to be more chapters of it, so I intentionally left it open and suggestive of the start of a new chapter.

I was not only interested in physical layers in my work, but also layers of time. The phrases provided entryways for adding layers of time into my work. First, I had the phrase that I created with Lyndsey. This phrase was created in a different context and a different time. Secondly, I weaved my dancers' pasts into one of the phrases; during one of my rehearsals, I instructed my cast to each write one story from their past. There were no other instructions aside from that. I then took descriptive words and verbs from each of their stories to rework one of my phrases so that strings of my dancers' histories were laced throughout Stratum. Just like archaeological layers contain traces of people's stories, so did Stratum.

Titling Stratum was a relatively easy choice. Before settling on Stratum, I explored different words for "layer." Although "layer" was an option that was encouraged by my advisor at the time, I didn't want the title to give away the ideas, just as archaeological sites don't tell archaeologists any information without forcing them to work for it. Some other words that emerged were strata, atarts, and mutarts (strata and stratum backwards). I
debated for a while on "Strata" versus "Stratum," but in the end I chose Stratum because it sounds softer, which matches the overall quality of the work.

Reconstructing Stratum

The reconstruction of Stratum was the first thing I did in my creative process for Form-ing. From the start, it proved to be a much more difficult process than I expected.

November 13, 2015: Progress with this piece is slow because of the complexity of the work. After 11/5's rehearsal, I was starting to regret my decision to use Stratum. My dancers weren't understanding my directions and clarity in directions and dancing felt impossible. I wished so badly that I could have my old cast back.

Immediately I was faced with a problem. My new cast for Stratum was five dancers—partly because of scheduling, and partly due to brewing guilt of excluding a member of my cast—but the piece was built for four dancers. While I taught phrases, referenced videos, and furthered the learning process, the fifth dancer was always at the back of my mind. What was I going to do with her? How would the rest of Form-ing be affected if she wasn't in Stratum? Will she be sad if she's not in Stratum? Is there a way I can make a fifth part? After seeing the cast dance the phrases together, I was struck by how beautiful it looked with five dancers. I also realized that Stratum needed to be connected with the other large pieces of Form-ing which would have five dancers, so I accepted that it was the right decision to make a fifth role. Creating the fifth role was easier than I thought. I attached her to different cast members and showed her places to bounce back and forth between duets and trios. Instead of creating a completely new role, I constructed her part from fragments of the other roles.
The other major problem that I faced during this process was teaching *Stratum*. Teaching the phrases was straightforward, but there was a lot of confusion surrounding the structure. I tried various ways of teaching the structure—instructing each dancer individually, showing the structure as a whole, teaching from the video, using numbers and counting—but nothing seemed to work. Finally, during a rehearsal intensive that I held in early January for the dancers, we discovered the perfect method for the cast. For hours, we sat in front of the TV and each dancer wrote/drew out her part (Figure 2). Then, we would walk through the patterns. We worked in sections, going back and forth from watching and drawing to dancing. For the first few times that we ran the piece from start to finish, the dancers carried their papers with them until they could dance it on their own.

Once the dancers were confident in their parts, rehearsals were like watching a transformation happening in front of my eyes. I could see the dancers finding themselves in the work, and each moment slowly started to become their own.

December 13, 2015: "I recall the sensitivity of the original cast to that movement, to the space, and each other. Looks like you are on a good trajectory with this group to capture something similar." -Written feedback from Jennifer Conley after a works-in-progress showing

For the first half of the process the *Form-ing* cast was *performing* the movement; by the end of the process they were *living* the movement. The patience, sensitivity, breath, subtlety, strength, and care that I intended were embodied by each dancer, and *Stratum* took on a new life.

The process to create *Stratum* was rich with ways to learn and grow. Not only did I gain insight on my own process as a choreographer, but also this process was a practice in problem solving. I was first faced with the challenge of having an additional dancer in the
cast. Second, I quickly learned that the way my brain processes form is different than my cast's way of processing form. While the structure and the way I was explaining it seemed clear and easy to understand to me, my cast had difficulties learning and remembering the complexity of the structure. This reinforced my realization that I am form-oriented and I have a tendency to think and create with formal devices. Because of this, I had to reexamine my teaching methods and discover new ways to lead my dancers to an understanding of the work.

**Unfold, Unravel**

At the same time that I was reconstructing *Stratum*, I started to build *Unfold, Unravel*. Created out of a series of games, chance operations, drawings, and other ideas from the case studies I examined for my research, this piece was the most formal work in *Form-ing*. Additionally, in the true spirit of the ideas I was working with, some of the non-choreographic elements of *Unfold, Unravel* were chosen for me by chance. For example, before rehearsals had even started, my cast for this piece was set by chance. Instead of choosing individuals from my cast for this section, I was limited by the rehearsal schedules and availability of dancers. Because of varying logistical issues, a five-dancer cast was the only option. The structure of the work was the other element determined by real-life chance, which I explain further below.

When I started creating this piece, I knew that I wanted to rely mostly on formal devices. In the first rehearsal for *Unfold, Unravel* I wrote names of body parts on slips of paper, such as arm(s) or torso, and each dancer drew a paper from a hat (really the pouch of my sweatshirt). They were instructed to make one movement for the body part they
chose and when they were all finished, we strung them together to make a phrase.

However, after creating this phrase, I was unsatisfied.

October 15, 2015: I realized that I really don't like the chance phrase we made. I was reminded of Cunningham work because Merce (according to Carol) used to say that with chance sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. In this case, it didn't.

As chance would have it, only two dancers were able to come to my next rehearsal. There was no point to rehearse with only two dancers, so instead we made line drawings a la Trisha Brown. I showed my dancers images of drawings that Trisha Brown had used in her process and then handed them paper and pen and gave them no more instruction other than to draw for as long as they wanted, and to draw at least one image with their non-dominant hand. I wasn't sure what I was going to do with the images, but inspiration struck and two particular images from my dancers gave me the idea for how to turn the chance phrase into *Unfold, Unravel* (Figure 3a and 3b).

Figure 3a, with its steady beat amidst sweeping chaos, led me to the idea of splitting the phrase into pieces to create an accumulation. By using a fast accumulation, I could create the appearance of chaos, but keep a common logic or form underneath. The spatial pattern of *Unfold, Unravel*, two intersecting diagonals, came from Figure 3b. Using overlapping diagonals enabled me to create order within chaos.

For the second section of *Unfold, Unravel*, I decided to keep using the accumulation format, but use it in a different way. On my own, I generated a phrase of movement (the only phrase of movement that I generated in all of *Form-ing* with no formal device to direct me). I split the phrase into three sections, and each dancer completed the phrase as an accumulation in sequential order—1, 1-2, 1-2-3—and then accumulated the
phrase in an individual order, decided by again drawing slips of paper out of a hat. Once the dancers mastered their varying accumulations, I attempted to match them up at certain points to create brief moments of unison. When this didn't work because of inconsistent timing, I encouraged the dancers to find brief moments of unison themselves through improvisation, meaning they would watch each other while doing this section and find times when they could join someone briefly and then go back to their own material.

Originally, the piece ended with the dancers finishing a phrase of movement and walking off stage one at a time. Because the piece overlapped with the previous work (which I explain later), I wanted to end with a blank stage for a different kind of transition. However, during production, the inconsistency in the dancers' timing resulted in lights fading with one dancer still moving on stage. Although this wasn't my original intention, I accepted this ending.

Creating and remembering *Unfold, Unravel* was tiresome and at times frustrating, but the most challenging aspect of the piece was working on the performance quality. Two aspects of the piece impinged on the performance quality: a demanding physicality and a lack (or perceived lack) of content.

February 12, 2016: It seems like everyone is apathetic towards dance and it's driving me crazy. During rehearsals, it feels like I'm pulling teeth to get the dancers to dance at more than 50% energy level.

*Unfold, Unravel* was a physically demanding piece, leaving the dancers out of breath by the halfway point. As the fatigue set in, the dancers' execution of the movement slowly declined in quality, energy, and clarity. The movements weren’t executed as sharply, running became sluggish, and the movement became smaller. I encouraged the
dancers to push through the tiredness, explaining that I liked hearing and seeing the effort in their breath and on their faces. Looking effortless is not interesting to me; I would rather see the demands and the labor. Making this clear to my dancers seemed to help only briefly in rehearsals, but once on stage, their energy levels increased dramatically.

The second element of difficulty with performance in the work was the lack of an identifiable emotional or narrative content. The dancers’ lack of connection to the work was evident in their minimal attention and intention during runs of the work in rehearsals. There seemed to be a disconnect between the dancers and the movement and the work was lacking in presence. The disconnect between the dancers and the movement seemed to diminish as the performance got closer, but even during the performance their presence waned in and out. Looking back, I wonder if this was a product of the way the material was taught, the difference in interests between this group of dancers and me, the nature of the work and its lack of themes to connect with, or a combination of these. In this piece and Form-ing in general, the form was the content rather than a story, narrative, or theme—a cognitive content rather than an explicit emotional content—which was hard for the dancers to invest in. The dancers even called it "the accumulation," which is a very straightforward nickname with no emotional or narrative connotations. For many of these dancers, this was their first time being in a work with this kind of content. I realize that it can take time, practice, and experience to find engagement with cognitive rather than emotional content.

**Part I, Part II, and Part III**

October 31, 2015: During rehearsal I watched this duet unfold in front of me. I suddenly understood who Lily and I are and what world we exist in.
Part I

Creating Part I was the most organic creative process of Form-ing. Unlike the other pieces, I didn't intend to use any formal devices to create or edit my work. I wanted to challenge myself by creating this way, which was relatively new to me, and I wanted to work with a variety of approaches to creating work. My goal was to go into the studio each week and let something emerge naturally. Knowing this, I chose to work with Lily for the duet because we have a productive and positive energy with each other, and our movement styles work well together.

Each rehearsal was fun and exciting; I never knew what was going to unfold. Lily and I worked collaboratively and I strived to keep our roles as dancers and creators as equal as possible.

October 17, 2015: Our rehearsal felt like an hour of playtime. We created without an agenda, following our urges after every movement.

Creating without an agenda was completely new territory for me and it was both exciting and intimidating. Usually, I have a rehearsal plan with ideas for improvisational games or I come with choreography that I made on my own. Choreographing in the moment in front of someone was hard at first. I had trouble making decisions and I was constantly looking to Lily for help, but she also felt nervous and unsure of herself. This rehearsal process was a time of important growth for both of us.

During our third rehearsal, we got over our nerves and hit our stride. Each choice flowed naturally and we constructed most of the duet in just one rehearsal. The remaining rehearsals were spent developing, changing, and refining the duet. But, what would a creative process be without problems? The core of the duet was rich and exciting for us,
but because of that, we couldn't figure out how to begin or end. We would create an option that we both liked, but would come back to rehearsal the next week and it wouldn't feel right. The beginning and ending kept changing and evolving until we discovered an option that felt the most right. I'm still not sure how I feel about the opening of the duet and, with more time, I would like to reexamine it.

Part II and III

The choice to repeat the duet throughout Form-ing came early on in my process. Because I didn't use any formal devices to create the duet, I was interested in using the entire duet in a formal way. Originally, the duet was going to repeat throughout the concert and Lily and I would dance it each time. This choice changed because of some helpful feedback from Pam. She questioned why the duet was being seen more than once? She suggested that maybe something should change about the duet each time. I decided that, since Lily was dancing with the rest of the cast but I wasn't, it was an opportunity to integrate some of the cast into the duet.

I first experimented with Emily's role. I instructed her to watch us and then choose a moment to start dancing with us. For this improvisational score, I asked her to get as close to us as possible without actually touching us. I then led her to raise the question about what "close" means. Does "close" have to mean physical proximity? Or, can you be close by taking on our movement quality or energy level? Or by attempting to be in unison? Or just by focusing all attention on us? I let Emily explore these questions on her own.
Once Emily was well integrated into the duet, I thought the next logical step would be to repeat the same format but switch roles. Emily would take my role and Anna would take Emily's role. Teaching my role to Emily was an interesting and challenging process. Our bodies are very different, so she navigates partnering in a different way than I do. Some parts of the duet didn't work for her, so they had to be adjusted. Also, since she was not the original creator, the movement didn't look as natural in her body at first. At the suggestion of Pam, I embraced these differences and let Emily and Lily make small changes to work for their partnership. With the duet evolving between Emily and Lily, it seemed fitting to evolve Anna's role. Instead of asking her to improvise in the same fashion as Emily, Anna remained as a witness throughout the piece. However, unlike Emily's witness role before, Anna was free to move around the upstage right area. She could make choices where and when to move, but I informed her that the goal of her role was to constantly try to see the duet, just from different angles. She was a witness, an observer, a watcher. While she was physically disconnected from the duet, her walking and watching kept her connected in focus and attention.

The duet (all versions) still seems like it has room to grow. It feels like this work is never done. I think this is in part because it was created with no agenda, so it has space to keep evolving. My only end goal was to let it become something, to let the dance tell me what it wanted to be. If possible, I would like to keep working on this piece in the future.

Addendum

Lily's solo was made and taught in one rehearsal. It was a true test of efficiency. I wanted to give Lily a solo since I also had a solo in the concert. To me, it seemed
necessary that if one member of the duet had a solo then the other half should have a solo as well. The idea for Lily's solo came out of explorations with the structure of the entire work, which will be explained later. My goal was to create a 45-second solo—a short, transitional section. I never timed it after I finished, so I'm not sure if I accomplished my goal, but I think I was close. The point is that it was short, and that it worked to connect the section before and the section after it.

Chance came back into my creative process while creating Addendum. I divided the movement from Part I into four sections and wrote 1, 2, 3, and 4 on pieces of paper. I threw the pieces of paper on the ground and whatever order they landed in was the order of the solo. The order that I got was 2, 4, 1, 3. I chose half of each of these sections to use in the solo (in an effort to keep it brief). As I strung the pieces together, I decided to play with the movement in each section. I took each movement and found a new way to perform it. Stationary moments turned to traveling moments, low energy became high energy, movement on the ground was transitioned to standing, etc. After doing this for each section, the solo clearly belonged in the same world as the duet, but it also became its own piece. To further separate it from the duet and suggest a transition, Lily changed her costume on stage. This happened at the beginning of the solo, when she slowly and thoughtfully added a layer to her costume.

Teaching the solo was easy because Lily learns quickly and she really cared about the work. After learning the material, I provided her with a few prompts to boost her performance quality. I told Lily to channel the feeling of the first time she had to do our duet without me and how lost she felt. I also told her to imagine that she was seeing the
space for the first time and realized that she was the only one in it. These two prompts were all that was needed for Lily to really live in the solo.

**The House that III Built**

The seed for *The House that III Built* was formed at a master class/workshop led by Tori Lawrence '10, and her company of dancers. During the workshop they introduced us to an improvisational game called "House." The simplicity and the effectiveness in generating movement and composition struck me and I knew that I wanted to use the game at some point to create work.

My independent seemed like the perfect opportunity to experiment with House. I chose to use only three dancers for this game (Lily, Emily, and Anna), because the three other dancers in the cast were still fearful of improvising and composing in rehearsal.

To create our house, the three dancers and I each took turns adding movements to a sequence, or the house. In our turn, we could add any type of movement or pass, as long as we could remember what it was. Eventually, I took myself out of the house (I wanted to be in as little of my concert as possible, so that I could maintain an outside eye) and we adjusted it to work for three dancers instead of four. After I took myself out of the house, I had a clearer view of where it was going and continued to shape and tighten the material while the dancers continued to generate more movement.

In our process, contact emerged naturally. During our turns we were not only using contact, but also manipulating each other—picking up an arm here, moving a leg there. This piece and the duet with Lily, which was being created at the same time, were the only two pieces in *Form-ing* with contact. The choice to add contact between dancers was
important because, in my mind, touch instantly added a different kind of content than the exploration of form. Touch establishes a physical relationship between the dancers, a human connection. I wanted this kind of variety of content in the piece, to play with different readings of meaning.

Once the house was built, I deconstructed it and gave it a new form. I played again off the idea of an accumulation, but this time the piece accumulated in dancers rather than in movement. My goal was to simulate the building process of the work. Like a house and like the creative process, each piece is added until the whole can be seen and understood.

In the moment that I made this decision, I was thinking mostly about form and about reintroducing an accumulation. Now, after months of working with and thinking about this piece, different meanings have emerged about it and about Form-ing as a whole. Among other things, I now see a strong connection between this piece and Stratum. In both pieces, I was playing with the idea of how to see something: how an idea or image, or layer in the case of Stratum, can peek through the surface. At first, only a glimpse is available and that bit is incomplete, hard to understand. Over time, more of the bit is revealed or a new piece of information is introduced and that first glimpse starts to make more sense.

This piece embodied ideas of building, but also of process of unfolding and unearthing.

To support the quiet and patient qualities of the piece, I explored different atmospheric music options, as I did for Stratum. I tried a few musical scores with the dancers, but we all agreed that "Up At the Moon (extended)" by Michael Wall was the right choice.

Performance quality was an important aspect of this piece. Because the movement was slow and calculated, unclear focus and disengaged attention were very noticeable. I
Yutzey asked my dancers to be aware of what they were seeing at every moment of the piece. Once they started doing this, their focus and attention became clear. The dancers' crisp focus and active attention lasted for a while, but it declined as they became comfortable and complacent in the piece. I challenged them by making Lily sit out for a run through, which threw off Emily and Anna and forced them to increase their attention to each other (I also sat out of the duet so that Lily could have this experience in rehearsal for Part I). By surprising the dancers with this change, I helped renew their attention and energy in the piece. During the performance, their attention to each other was palpable.

**Parallelepiped**

The process for creating *Parallelepiped* was similar to *Stratum* and *Unfold*, *Unravel*. This piece, referred to by the cast as "the Cube," was produced using the Trisha Brown cube. Going into the rehearsal process for *Form-ing*, I knew that I wanted to use the Trisha Brown cube because of my experience with it during my freshman year in the Intermediate Modern course. I asked my dancers to give me two sentences that I could apply to the cube and then asked each dancer to create another sentence and make their own cube phrase (Figure 4). The sentences I worked with were "the sky is blue" and "I don't like cats," arbitrary sentences that two of my dancers came up with. I applied both of these sentences to the cube to create two phrases of material that would make up most of *Parallelepiped*.

Once all of the phrases were finished, the rest was like putting pieces of a puzzle together. I divided the dancers into two groups and each group focused on either "the sky is
blue" or "I don't like cats." A list of instructions was generated that outlined the entire piece.

1. Original
2. Original
3. Original
4. Original
5. Hold 1
6. Original
7. Hold 2
8. Original
9. Hold 1, 2, or 3
10. Repeat
11. Walk with improvisations
12. "Break free"- individual phrases
13. The sky is blue
14. Traveling #1
15. Repeat
16. Traveling #2
17. Repeat

The creation of this list was not necessarily strategic for me, but rather intuitive, and was highly influenced by Trisha Brown's Solo Olos. In Brown's piece, the dancers were given instructions in the moment of the performance by a caller. The goal was to take a group of unison dancers and jumble them up as much as possible, and then bring them back together. I didn't use the same instructions for my piece, but I used similar ideas. Moments like #9 ("Hold 1, 2, or 3"), where the dancers were assigned different lengths of pauses to take, served to break the dancers off from unison. When the dancers were comfortable remembering the instructions and were able to read each other's energies and speeds, I placed them in formations and various facings. I tried to simulate the dimensionality of a cube by avoiding a purely frontal piece. I have also found that facing the front can feel like a confrontation with the audience, which was not my intention.
Originally, I didn't plan to have music with the Cube. However, in one rehearsal I accidentally played music during a run of the piece and the dancers came alive. Their energies shifted, their attentions were focused, and I knew that we couldn't do the Cube again without that piece of music.

The process for creating *Parallelepiped* was the easiest and most straightforward process for all of *Form-ing*. I only generated two phrases of movement, both of which were created using a set method, I created a short list of instructions, and I found a piece of music by accident. Really, the dancers, who had to memorize the list of instructions and learn to focus their attention on a large group, did the hardest work in this piece.

**Theorem I and II**

From the conception of my independent, I knew that I wanted to have a solo choreographed for me. Until this performance, I had never danced a solo, so I was excited to gain a new experience and challenge myself, to live inside someone else’s movement. I also wanted to dance in a piece that focused on ideas of form and content, not choreographed or directed by me, so that I could use my experience with the work as a dancer in my research. When deciding on whom to ask about choreographing a solo, Pam immediately came to mind. I also thought of asking Lyndsey Vader or someone from the Philadelphia area. In the end, I chose Pam because I enjoy her work and her process, and I wanted the chance to work one-on-one with her before I graduated.

We began working on the solo during a weekend intensive before school started in January, meeting for a couple of hours each day for four days. We also continued weekly rehearsals during the semester until my performance. The entire rehearsal process was rich
with experience. Fear, excitement, frustrations and breakthroughs appeared around every corner.

On that first day, I was not only nervous about rehearsing and dancing alone, but I was also nervous about what Pam was going to create.

January 25, 2016: The second fear that I had at the start came from not knowing what Pam was going to create. I was nervous that the solo she made would have no place in my world.

Luckily, Pam expressed the same concern: that she didn’t want the solo to be a wildly different flavor from my choreography, as it was all going to be in the same concert. Our shared worry immediately put me at ease.

The process of learning *Theorem* was a similar process to other faculty-choreographed works that I have been in; the rehearsal structure was familiar and Pam and I had a clear professor-student relationship. Working in this familiar way was comforting. But, I had the sense that Pam intended to push me. We started by learning phrases of movement, working at a manageable pace and stopping frequently for the hundreds of questions that I always have.

Pam made me aware of the intended form of the piece from the start. As I was learning the first phrase, Pam informed me of the elements of form she was experimenting with in this piece. Her focus on form involved working within the confines of a spatial pattern (a triangle encompassing the stage), using repetition in both movement and pathways, and also sequences of movement elements, such as doing an "arm thing," a turn, then a "leg thing," followed by a "head thing" to create phrases. Knowing the formal elements rather than discussing explicit content or meaning while learning the material influenced the way I learned and experienced *Theorem*. 
Unlike previous experiences working with choreographers, I felt a new kind of freedom in Theorem, which gave me energy throughout the process of Form-ing. I attribute this feeling of liberation to two aspects of the work: that it was a solo and that it focused on form. Being the only dancer in Theorem at first felt stifling. With all attention on me, I was so scared and self-conscious that I could barely get through a run of the solo without making multiple mistakes and getting frustrated, or shrinking back into a smaller, more timid version of the movement. After I built the strength to work through this, I found freedom in being the only dancer. There were no other dancers to share the space with, no other dancers to pay attention to for timing and quality, and no other dancers to keep me from making choices in the moment. Alone, I could play with timing and quality in my own way without needing to be aware of another body. And if I made a mistake, I had more freedom to adapt. Lastly, I was able to focus all of my attention on myself. My energy wasn't shared between myself and my relation to others. All of my energy was centered on dancing in my own way and being present.

Pam's choice to work with a clear spatial pattern and focus on form also gave me freedom in the work. Without the constraint of set content, I was free to discover myself and my own meaning in the work. Throughout the process of learning and performing in showings, I tasked myself with figuring out the world of the solo and how I lived in it. Additionally, Pam allowed me to make choices along the way that helped me to arrive in the work. Working within a clear form and structure gave me the freedom to negotiate my body in the form, allowing me to make decisions in both learning and performing that helped me bring the solo to life.
In addition to the freedom that I found in the solo, Pam also added to my agency by consulting me on three important choices. First, Pam informed me during our first rehearsal intensive that she wanted the world of the solo to be connected to the rest of *Form-ing*. To do this, we found places within *Theorem* to draw connections. We referenced *Stratum*, which followed *Theorem*, by directly sourcing one small movement motif and finding moments to repeat it.

Second, I was consulted on a major decision about the structure of the solo. Originally, *Theorem I* and *Theorem II* were together as one piece. However, we received feedback that the two sections, separated by the two pieces of music, felt disconnected. Pam and I decided that what made the most sense was to split the solo into two pieces and put them at the beginning and end of *Form-ing*. Once made, this decision felt completely right and helped me make sense of the rest of *Form-ing*.

Lastly, Pam consulted me on titling the solos. During rehearsals throughout the process, we discussed our evolving understandings of the work to generate words or phrases. At the end of the process, Pam sent me a few options for titles and I gave her feedback on how I felt they should be structured and which words felt more fitting. In the end, we settled on *Theorem I (sequence of axioms)* and *Theorem II (chain of reasoning)*.

In the short time that I worked on *Theorem I* and *II* with Pam, I grew exponentially as a dancer, student, and person. I learned to manage my fears and work through them, negotiate my way through a work to find myself within it, and find meaning in this form that was given to me.

**Putting it all together**
Although I had choreographed twice before creating *Form-ing*, I didn't realize the amount of energy and planning involved in the production aspects of a show. Figuring out the structure, location, tech crew, costumes, titles, programs, and posters was more challenging than I anticipated, but I learned a great deal.

**Structure**

The structure of *Form-ing* was at the back of my mind throughout my entire process. Over the course of the year, I shifted in my thinking between numerous sequences in the work—but in all of them the overarching structure was to be one piece with untitled sections. I imagined varying versions of *Form-ing*, with the pieces in different orders with different transitions between them. But, they all quickly changed as the work continued to evolve and my understanding deepened. Surprisingly, the structure of *Form-ing* was my biggest point of insecurity and confusion.

November 17, 2015: I'm already questioning this structure. After rehearsal on Sunday I'm more unsure about what this piece is. At first, I was focusing on *Stratum* and how to evolve it. But now, my focus is on the duet. As the duet unfolds and develops, I'm unsure how the other pieces fit in ... I need to listen to what the piece is saying, but right now it's not talking.

Journal entries like this are scattered throughout my process journal. It wasn't until after winter break that I made a breakthrough. This breakthrough came out of a low moment, overwhelmed with self-doubt.

January 10, 2016: When I was finally about to conjure up some thoughts [about my independent] they were overwhelmingly negative. I hated the images I could remember of what my work looked like. My work started to feel disjointed, incomplete with a solution that didn't seem feasible, and generally
uninteresting. By the time I got to school, I was feeling really discouraged, unmotivated, and nervous about my work.

In this low moment, I discovered the direction that my work needed to take. I had in my mind that *Form-ing* was one piece with untitled sections, and this was my problem. Once my work started to feel disjointed, I decided to forget trying to make one piece and instead make the sections into their own pieces. This decision helped me focus on each section independently and let them each develop on their own without having to force them to fit into a larger whole. Also, with this decision came the idea and opportunity to experiment with the form of the overall concert. I wondered what it would be like to mess with the typical format of blackouts and silence in the transitions between pieces. I experimented with a variety of transitions including overlapping pieces, and playing with the relationship of lighting and music to the structure. Choosing to make each section a separate piece and experiment with transitions and the typical concert structure was exciting and reenergized me. However, once the performance came, the pieces felt more connected than ever and I started to consider them one large piece with sections again. By messing with the transitions and letting the pieces bleed into each other, I started to see again that they were all connected.

*Location*

The choice to have my performance in the Green Room Theatre (GRT) was made early on in my process. During one of my first meetings with Pam in September, we brainstormed different options for spaces and came down to either the Holmberg-Eichmann Dance Studio or the GRT. I came to these choices because of the nature of my work. With my focus on form and content, I wanted my work to be presented in a "neutral"
location. Although many argue that there is no neutral space and all locations for dance are site-specific, putting *Form-ing* on a stage or in the studio seemed like the most neutral—or at least provided a clear, traditional viewing experience for an audience. I wanted the focus to be on the form and content of my work and not the space that was holding it.

When I chose to use the GRT, it seemed like the stars aligned. The weekend I chose for my performance was the only weekend that the theatre was free, I was offered technical help from friends who work in the GRT, and there was a dance floor available. I knew that using the GRT would require a good deal of logistical work, but I couldn't pass up the opportunity. Despite the small size of the stage, the GRT was the perfect location for *Form-ing*.

**Tech**

My first task after securing the GRT was to secure a stage manager and lighting designer. I was very fortunate to have two grants that enabled me to hire Joanne Bender, a professional stage manager, and Melissa Edwards, a professional lighting designer. They both came to my showings and I was in contact with them throughout January and February. In addition to Joanne and Melissa, I was tasked with finding a crew of student technical workers. Luckily, there are always dance majors and minors looking for tech hours, so I was able to find a student to film my performance, another to operate the soundboard, and one to operate the lighting board.

The hardest work was communicating with the crew during tech week. I was constantly running back and forth between my dancers, Pam, and my tech crew; I became adept in splitting my attention. Another difficult aspect of tech was communicating what I wanted from lighting and music. While I didn't have many ideas for lighting other than
warm tones versus cool tones, I had specific desires for when the light and music cues were called. My stage manager and I spent a lot of time before rehearsals discussing these desires for lighting and sound cues. Some things I wasn't able to communicate well and I didn't get what I wanted, but I embraced the challenge of adapting. In the end, I was excited by what we had produced and came away with improved communication skills.

Costumes

Of all the production elements, I was the least satisfied with costumes. My original goal was to collaborate with Susan Naramore, a peer who works in the costume shop with me and enjoys designing costumes. I showed her videos and talked about the work with her while she sketched. Unfortunately, our visions were very different and I had a hard time asking her to make changes.

February 19, 2016: It was more difficult to collaborate than I thought. When you have a very clear idea, it's hard to let others in. Sue's ideas clashed with mine and I didn't know how to tell her that I didn't like her sketches.

Instead of constructing costumes with Susan, I chose to purchase costumes. My idea for costumes was more of a concept than a concrete idea. I wanted to mimic the layers of the work in the costumes. The dancers started with their Stratum dresses—which were acquired when the piece was first made last year—and they added a layer after every piece. Lily and I were slightly different. We started with the costumes that the rest of the dancers would be wearing by the end of the work, and we didn't add any layers. I didn't want us to add layers because the world of our duet seemed separated from the rest of the dancers. To further this, I had Lily add a layer to her costume on stage during Addendum as the signifying moment of her entering the other world.
Because I was focused more on the concept of the costumes, I wanted the actual costumes to be simple. I chose a neutral color palette and simple shapes to avoid distracting from the concept. To contrast this, our hair was twisted into complex braids and buns. There were only two problems with the costumes. First, I had wanted the layers to be more obvious. I originally hoped that I would be able to find pieces of clothing that would be loose enough that all layers would be at least partly visible, but that wasn’t always the case. Second, I was dissatisfied because the costumes seemed too pedestrian. I did want the dancers to appear more like people and less like costumed performers, but I worried that what they did end up wearing was too simple and became boring.

**Titles**

Similar to the experience of developing the structure of *Form-ing*, titling the pieces was a stressful process filled with self-doubt. For the first half of my process, I was stuck on the title "In-Situ." But, as strongly as I felt about it, there was always something slightly off about it.

December 17, 2015: I am stuck on the title "In-Situ." I feel connected to it, but I still don't know if it's right. Part of me feels like I'm settling or re-using a piece of my old independent because I can't think of a new title.

Pam encouraged me to keep thinking, reassuring me that something would emerge. With her guidance, I dug through a thesaurus and used free-writes to discover new words. Some of the words that surfaced through this process were unfold, unravel, unearth, expose, excavate, root, frame, hollow, seam, and tier. None of the arrangements of these words that I tried seemed fitting for the concert, although they were useful for titling sections, such as *Unfold, Unravel*. I finally arrived at the title *Form-ing* with the help of Pam again. She suggested the title "Forming" but I was worried that it was too straightforward. Pam
suggested adding a hyphen and instantly I knew it was the right title. I let the idea of "Form-ing" marinate for a day before I settled on it, but I knew the moment Pam suggested it that it would be my title. This title references the research I've been conducting, but it is also emblematic of how my work develops in the concert and continues to evolve in my life.

Once the title of my concert was set, the rest of the titles came with greater ease. Before, I was overthinking my titles and overlooking the simpler options. I was already referring to the duets as "duet part 1," "duet part 2," and "duet part 3," so a friend suggested that those could be the titles. It was such a simple solution, but it felt right. Next, Lily suggested the title "Addendum" for her solo because that's exactly what it was, an addendum to the duet. Similar to the duets, the cast was already referring to *The House that III Built* as "the House" so it seemed only right to title it after that and give credit to the way it was created. Additionally, I chose to use Roman numerals to reference the preceding duet. Lastly, the final group section was naturally being referred to as "the cube" so I searched for synonyms for cube. I came across "parallelepiped" and was intrigued by the word. I looked it up and saw that it referred to cubes that were slightly skewed. A slightly skewed cube was more fitting for the cube that I created, so I settled on using that as my title. Even though I was satisfied with my titles, I was still nervous to share them. Titling always feels difficult for me, so being forced to create so many titles was a good exercise.

*Program*
I never gave much thought to my program until Pam showed me examples of past students' programs. Tori Lawrence’s handmade program and the thought that was clearly put into it particularly struck me. When I saw her program, I knew that I also wanted to make a special program. It wasn't until the Monday before my show that I realized what I wanted. I don't know what prompted the idea, but as I was crossing Harrisburg Avenue it suddenly hit me that my program should be an accumulation—it should be form-ing. Of course I conceived of a program design that was incredibly time consuming to construct only days before my show, but my dancers helped me a lot. Even on the day of the performance, the entire cast was cutting and stapling programs together in every free moment we had. Although I was slightly bothered by the lack of straight edges (you take what you can get when time is tight), I was excited about my program and received positive feedback about it.

Performance

February 26, 2015: I'm excited and nervous for the performance, but mostly just numb. It's surreal that it's finally here and it's bringing up so many questions, worries, fears about the future.

The performance came so much faster than I anticipated. It felt like I wrote my first journal entry, blinked, and then it was time to perform. But, at the same time I could see and feel the year's worth of hard work. This performance was also unlike any other performance that I've been in. Instead of feeling excited and anxious, I felt angry. I was mad that I had to perform when all I wanted to do was keep developing, and growing my work. Although I didn’t feel ready to perform, I knew I had to accept the moment, and I challenged myself to be positive, but also real.
My state of mind altered my performance experience in a way that was completely new to me. I was truly able to live in each moment and I've never felt so honest in a performance. Without the usual pre-performance excitement, I performed as if it were another works-in-progress showing rather than a final performance. This mindset gave me unexpected freedom in my performance—freedom to make choices in the moment about the movement, the performance quality, and my energy. My dancers fed off of this approach and told me later that they too were making more choices in their performance than they ever had before. Through the process of performing I became highly aware of my growth as a dancer, performer, and choreographer, and the growth of my cast as dancers and performers.

February 26, 2015: I realized that my dancers had finally arrived in the work. They were living in it and it was breathtaking.

"Remembering where I have been and where I am going" ¹

When thinking about my project as a whole, where it started to where it ended, three experiences stand out as being major influences to my work, my process, and my research. The TBDC Summer Intensive, the Merce Cunningham reconstruction (which is discussed in my research paper), and Pam Vail's *The Logic of Mutual Inclusion* each influenced me in different ways, allowing me to form new ways to approach and understand my work and my research.

"When I'm doing this dance I'm thinking, 'this is all there is'" ²

² Ibid.
The two weeks I spent at the TBDC Summer Intensive were two full weeks of inspiration and motivation.

July 11, 2015: The first week may be one of the best weeks I've had in a while. I was comfortable, playfully uncomfortable, confident, joyful, and hungry.

It was at this intensive that I discovered what really excites me about dance. I soaked up every nugget of information and inspiration possible, and having to leave at the end of the intensive was painful. I greatly admire Trisha Brown's work and she soared to the top of my favorite artists list, so naturally some of her ideas made their way into my work.

At the intensive, I absorbed Brown's processes for creating and working with form and her idea of visible effort in performance. Both at the intensive and in subsequent research, I learned many of Brown's tools for creating work. As I mentioned before, I used her cube to create *Parallelepipeded*. I also got the idea from her to video improvisations and watch the recordings to find material to work with. I was inspired by her method of creating surplus material and sorting through it to form her works.

Additionally, I was intrigued and captivated by her attitude about effort. On one hand, she and her dancers worked towards using minimal effort in their bodies. The goal was to use only as much energy as any task required. Yet, if something was difficult or effortful, the dancer shouldn't try to hide that. She was also interested in seeing effort of the mind. In her works, you can watch dancers' thought processes shifting and redirecting as the improvisational elements force them to make new choices in the moment. For Brown, dance was not just about the movement. It was also about the thought processes—intellect in addition to emotion and physicality. I became interested in both kinds of effort and played with them in my work.
Trisha Brown's work and philosophies have affected me deeply and inspired me greatly in many ways. I suspect that she will continue to influence me throughout my life as a performer, dance-maker, scholar, and person.

For the Fall Dance Concert, I was cast in a trio, *The Logic of Mutual Inclusion* choreographed by Pam. When our process began for the trio, I was unaware of how influential that piece would be.

The process for creating the trio was very collaborative. Pam would teach us phrases of movement and we would create our own phrases of movement. We also worked with speaking throughout the process. At times, Pam created text for us to say, and other times she pulled text from the cast's tangential conversations. Over time, two realizations became important. First, I noticed how formal this piece was. There was a clear spatial pattern that Pam was working with and our focus was on the movement and the construction rather than on a narrative or theme. Secondly, I realized the lines we were speaking became gestures for us rather than content. Our text was often nonsensical or spoken over each other so that the exact lines could not be understood. The text, which at first seemed like clear content to me, slowly became form.

Furthermore, as I was realizing form in this work I was also discovering a meaning for it. Not only was this work meaningful to me, but it also developed a meaning itself. I realized that meaning emerged partially from the experience of dancing the work, but mostly from the form. My meaning emerged from Pam's choices to make our text

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3 Text from *The Logic of Mutual Inclusion* by Pamela Vail.
nonsensical and follow a clear spatial path. In speaking to audience members at the Fall Dance Concert, I discovered that each viewer had created their own meaning for the work. But, fewer of these same audience members found meaning in the Cunningham work. I wondered what it was about Pam's work that prompted meaning-making. One theory about this relates back to Blom and Chaplin's discussion about natural form versus form for the sake of form. Maybe because the trio had more organic form than the Cunningham work, it was more accessible to audience members, more inviting for interpretations and meaning-making. It was interesting to see how different approaches to form and content prompted meaning-making, or not, for viewers.

**Responses**

Throughout my process, I was provided with several opportunities to receive feedback on my work. Over the course of the year I had feedback from last year's Spring Dance Concert, works-in-progress showings, a showing at a local dance studio, a post-performance talkback, and feedback from adjudicators at the American College Dance Association conference. Each of these opportunities provided me with interesting and helpful information to help me continue working on and understanding Form-ing.

**Pre-performance**

Before my performance, I received feedback from multiple sources and in varying contexts. During my process, I had two open works-in-progress showings where I invited students, dance faculty, and my technical crew to watch my work and give feedback. My work was also shown at a works-in-progress showing for dance in Lancaster at MoveIt Studio, a local dance and exercise studio, and I presented an excerpt at a showing for
Dance Company. Presenting my work in these varying settings provided me with a range of feedback. The feedback on performance was particularly useful, and helped me to help my dancers develop and strengthen their performance.

**Talkback**

The post-performance talkback was held after the Friday night performance of *Form-ing* and it was much more successful than I anticipated. A large portion of the audience stayed and the conversation was rich. The audience asked me questions spanning a variety of topics, such as how I picked my music, how I came up with the idea for the programs, and what my creative process was like. It was interesting to hear the audience's experience with my work and where they did and didn't align with my experience or intention.

During the talkback, one comment stood out among the rest. A viewer (who is also a friend) commented about her experience while watching *Form-ing*, and the breakthrough it prompted. She stated that her usual approach to watching dance is to look for a narrative. While watching my concert she began to look for a narrative, but then realized that's not what this work was. She realized that she could have a meaningful experience with dance without finding a narrative—watching bodies move through and shape the space. I was very excited about this comment and I was honored that my work could lead her to this new experience.

"Am I allowed to give you feedback?"

After the fervor of the production subsided, one viewer gave me feedback that struck me. After seeing a video of the performance of *Form-ing*, he told me that my
independent reminded him of a site. It was like looking at one room evolving over time. In the beginning, he was looking for characters, but then stopped and focused on the form. When he started focusing on the form, he was drawn in by the sense of time. He told me that while viewing my work, he felt like he was jumping forward and backward in time and he was constantly trying to figure out what the present was. The sections were different moments of time happening in the same place, the site.

I was particularly excited by this feedback because he unknowingly described much of my thought process behind Stratum. Until this feedback, I hadn't thought to apply the idea of a site to my entire independent, but it's interesting to look back with that in mind.

American College Dance Association

At this year's American College Dance Association (ACDA) conference, I brought an excerpt of my independent (a conglomeration of Part I, Part II, and The House that III Built) to show at one of the adjudicated concerts. At these concerts, works are presented anonymously in front of three adjudicators with different backgrounds in dance, and following the concerts the adjudicators discuss and give feedback about each piece.

The feedback that I was given was useful mostly in forming reflections about my work, but some of their feedback influenced the way I revised my work for the Spring Dance Concert. Also, the adjudicators were unaware that my work was an excerpt, which I had to take into account in hearing their feedback. In general, the feedback from the adjudicators was very content-oriented. They wanted more information, more "meat," more clarity in relationships, and wanted to understand the intention and the emotions. As I
understood the feedback, underlying their comments and their experience was a desire for more content.

Although much of the feedback centered on the same ideas, one comment stood out as important. One adjudicator mentioned that she felt that she had autonomy as a viewer because she couldn't figure out the meaning of the work. This statement was particularly interesting because I had a similar experience when performing in my concert. In *Form-ing*, I felt I had autonomy as a performer, free to exist within the form I had created, whose meaning was open. If the process wasn’t anonymous, I would have been curious to ask the adjudicator to expand more on her experience. I want to know if, because she couldn't figure out a meaning, the subsequent freedom she experienced made the work *meaningful*, as it had done for me as a performer.

Feedback and audience responses were a consistent presence in my process. The feedback varied in context and in content. Although the responses I received didn't directly trigger any major choices about or changes to my work, it was useful throughout the process for developing performance quality and understanding how my work was being received by outside eyes. Collecting and engaging with feedback enabled me to consider form and content in my work more deeply and to appreciate different perspectives on it that I wouldn't have seen by myself.

**End-ing: Making Connections and Moving Forward**
The process of creating *Form-ing* was long, with the seeds beginning in my freshman year, and spurred growth in many areas of my life. One of the hardest components of this process has been making connections.

*Making Connections*

I struggled at first to find the connections between my creative work and my research from the Fall semester. As I delved deeper into my research and my process, I started finding the connections. There were clear connections to my research in the ways that I constructed my pieces. Whether using chance procedures or a cube, my creative methods mirrored some of the approaches that I explored in my research. Furthermore, because of the diversity of my methods, I developed a spectrum of natural, organic form to form for the sake of form, which is discussed by Blom and Chaplin and Preston-Dunlop.

Meaning also formed a bridge between my concert and my research. Towards the end of my process, I started to discover and develop meaning in my work. Each piece prompted a slightly different meaning for me. Audience members had similar reactions. In the talk-back and in conversations after the concert, many audience members described meanings that emerged for them during *Form-ing*, each differing slightly depending on the piece. Additionally, some pieces motivated more meaning-making than others. Similar to the range of reactions after the Fall Dance Concert to *The Logic of Mutual Inclusion* and Cunningham's *Canfield*, I found that the pieces that employed more organic form tended to produce more meaning for audience members.

Although I was finding connections to my written research, I still questioned the value of what I had made. It seemed too "me." I was frustrated with my "shtick" and felt
that I was stuck and hadn't taken my work in a brand new direction. After more reflections and encouraging words from my mentors, I recognized that I couldn't escape myself and my aesthetic. Even with a heavy focus on my research, the work was being created and directed by me, and I have my own history and experiences that will always be present.

March 13, 2016: I acknowledge that even though I'm expanding my creative process, I am still myself and I can't avoid making something in my own aesthetic. I'm not going to be untrue to myself... I'm like a 5th case study.

Once I let go of feeling apprehensive because I played into my "shtick," I was able to recognize more connections between my concert and my research. I realized that relationships between and investigations into form, content, and meaning can exist in many different forms. After my concert was finished, I plotted each piece on a form-content spectrum (Figure 5). Because of varying creative approaches and types of form and content, each piece had a slightly different spot on the spectrum. At this point in my process, when the work was finished and reflections were forming, my dance started to talk to me. The different sections of my independent told me different things. Some told me about form for the sake of form (how to create it and how to dance it), some told me about content (how many types of content can exist, how they emerge, and how they are experienced), and they all told me about myself (who I am and what my voice is). Now that I've been in this research for a year, I'm finding relationships between, approaches to, and ideas about form and content everywhere, and not just in art.

Form-ed?

In addition to my scholarly research, I feel like Form-ing will never be fully formed. Since my performance in February, I have been continually thinking of new ways to change or develop the work. I was proud of the work I produced, but looking back there
are choices that I question and would like to reexamine. Thankfully, I was able to rework an excerpt of Part I and The House that III Built to present in the Spring Dance Concert, and it has been an exciting process to deconstruct and rebuild the piece. As gratifying as it is to continue working on this piece, it only leaves me hungrier for more. For as long I continue to be interested in dance, I think I will always be thinking of Form-ing and how to continue it. There is something about this work that feels unfinished. Maybe it's my continued interest in the subject matter, or the flexibility of the form, or the structure of the work as unfolding, unearthing, and building. Surprisingly, I don't feel attached to Form-ing, as if it existed only in the past. Rather, it feels like it's constantly in the present. It's still with me and maybe will always be with me, so I don't have to try to hold onto it.

I'm not sure how to end this process paper. How can I end a paper about something that isn't finished? Form-ing will always be evolving. I think about it often— the choices I made, the revisions I would make now, and my ever-changing theories about form, content, and meaning. Knowing what I know now, I would make a different piece. But, that's the point. Right? As Martha Graham said to Agnes de Mille, " [there is] no satisfaction whatever at any time ... There is only a queer dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others." I think I will always be dissatisfied with Form-ing and my written research, but I'm realizing at maybe this is good thing.
Figure 4

don't like cats

"The sky is blue"

"I was that I got to record on 10/32. I made phrases for each of these. They will be used in a later section."

"Want Mexican food"

"Lost score"

"Emily's piece"

"These are initial attempts towards"

Figure 5
"The pieces in forming exist on a spectrum between form and content."

Form | Accumulation | Stratum | Theorem | Duol

Cobe | "Hust"

"The duet (to me) seems like it was..."