

# The experience of discourse in dance and in somatic<sup>1</sup> education

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**Abstract:** An action-research made up of somatic education classes in a bachelor's degree program in dance showed how the dancers negotiate the dominant discourse of the dance and the marginal discourse of somatic education concerning the complexities of body and health issues.

**Key-words:** Attitude towards health. Foucault, Feldenkrais Method. Dance.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

I will remember this action-research because it was an opportunity to wonder about my daily dancing practice and its effects on my health and well-being [...] My vision of body has changed. I have been able to take a stand, however I also had the opportunity of a better understanding and observation of the environment where I gravitate. (Claudine)

Those words express the reaction of a student in the action-research conducted with pre-professional contemporary dancers. The action-research began because we had noticed how much the search for an ideal body and the pressure for an unfailing performance produce challenges in managing the

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health of dance students. Although many authors have shown that the body is built through several dance practices, only a few have tried to understand how dancers negotiate those practices regarding the complexities of body and health issues. The action-research was conducted in a Dance bachelor degree discipline and it was made up of practical somatic education classes and of theoretical reflections from the results of empiric studies about the health of dancers. Hence, we intend to offer a program to challenge the students, as we believe that they play an active role in the construction of their bodies, even when they have limited access to the different discourses and to the several possibilities coming from those.

According to Foucault (1963), discourses are systems of thought made up of ideas, attitudes, beliefs, ways of acting and practices which enable, as well as restrict, that which may be said or done in a certain moment and place. The discourses build the current truth and the power relationships brought by them. In general, the dominant discourse of dance values an ideal body image where beauty, slim, virtuous, devotion and asceticism criteria prevail. On the other hand, the somatic discourse promotes the body awareness in order to allow individuals to make choices for their own well-being, thus in contrast with the fantasy of an ideal body, which is usually absent from the concrete living body. However, those diverse and sometimes opposite discourses may be misunderstood in the students' experience. For us to better understand this, we briefly examined Foucault's notion of discourse, helping us understand why some elements of discourse are used and others are rejected.

## **2 FOUCAULT'S NOTION OF TECHNOLOGIES OF DOMINATION AND TECHNOLOGIES OF SELF**

In his first study, Foucault demonstrated how the institutions may, by monitoring the individuals and making them monitor themselves, discipline them into docile bodies.

He developed the concept of technologies of domination, which refers to the production and knowledge organization methods which determine the individual's conduct and limit their choices to the point of encouraging the activity and the productivity to have an ever growing profit. In such situations, the power relationships are very unmovable, the freedom spaces are restricted and an objectification of the subject is predominant. In the end of his life, recognizing that he had insisted so much on the technology of domination and in the power, Foucault started getting interested in the individuals who act on themselves.

In his last writings, he developed the concept of technologies of self, through which individuals are constituted and recognize themselves as subjects. The technologies of self are constituted by attitudes and body practices:

[...] permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality (FOUCAULT, 1988, p. 18).

Those operations, for which individuals may take advantage for self-construction, enable a higher state of autonomy, making them able to resist domination. Self-construction, however, does not happen in a vacuum, free from context and the coercion of surrounding discourses. The technologies of domination and of self are always interconnected and contribute for constructions, deconstructions and reconstructions of ourselves in the world.

### **3 THE DOMINANT DISCOURSE IN TRADITIONAL WESTERN STAGE DANCE**

Although dance practices may differ in their assumptions of basis about the body, in general, dance is a

place where the subject has been traditionally made into an object and health issues dismissed in favor of the art's aesthetics. According to Huesca (2005), classical ballet offers many examples of technologies of domination, whereas contemporary dance allows the dancers to have more possibilities for the creative construction of self. Dance ethnographers have challenged such point of view when they showed that, even in contemporary dance, a vision of the body as alienated to the self prevails, as something to be subject and managed (LONG, 2002; GREEN, 2001; FORTIN; GIRARD, 2005).

When they describe the aspect of dance culture, those authors show that choreographers, teachers and dancers have been seeking approaches where the sensorial experience may be used to reduce the emphasis in the external form of dancing bodies, serving as a stimulus to the exercise of autonomy.

#### **4 SOMATIC EDUCATION AS A TECHNOLOGY OF SELF**

From several origins, a variety of practices of somatic education have followed the path in the field of dance. Guimond (1999, p. 6) says that somatic education proposes "a new relationship with the others: learning to feel what is done, knowing what one feels, not being considered an object anymore, but the creator of your own life". To Feldenkrais (1972), the human movement is the foundation of thoughts, emotions and sensations of a person; therefore, it offers the best means for concrete changes in life. According to Feldenkrais, individuals cannot experience freedom and be completely creative, unless they are able to recognize their perceptual habits and act on them.

For Johnson (1983, p. 14), a division mind-body in society resulted in a disconnection which affects all the aspects of our life. "The dominant values of culture", he writes, "are suggested in our muscle responses, shaping our perceptions of the world. Changing the morbid dynamics of our culture

demands that we loosen the grip on our flesh". When they recover the capacity to feel and observe what was escaping their critical awareness, individuals may allow themselves to resist the technologies of domination. This idea is also in Shusterman (1992, p. 68): "If it is true that oppressive relationships of power impose a heavy coded identity on our body, then those oppressive relationships may be questioned through somatic practices".

This does not mean that somatic practices, considered as technologies of self, are problem free, as all practices can be potentially emancipatory or oppressive (MARKULA, 2004). What the somatic practice offers is a truth game different from that which is predominantly validated in the dominant discourse. The truth games are connected to the agreed consensus about what the solid knowledge is and the corresponding hegemonic procedures that legitimate the power relations. Foucault (1988, p. 40) supports that the truth games are inevitable, but he emphasizes that the practice of self allows us to "play those power games with as little domination as possible".

## **5 SOMATIC EDUCATION AS TECHNOLOGY OF SELF IN DANCE**

Green (2007) shows a review, where some researchers have chosen to approach the way dance is taught in a somatic way, whereas others opted for studying somatic education as an accessory for the dance education. What those different uses have in common is the recognition of the value of somatic practices in the education of a dancer when it physically refines the perceptions that contribute for technical improvement, for the development of expressive capacities and for injury prevention. However, the dance taught in a somatic way is closer to the development of an interior authority concerning the capacity to take decisions based on sensory discriminations that accentuate the singularity of the

body. To this end, somatic education may be conceived as a technology of self which fights the dominant discourse and supports the transformation of power relations in dance.

As professors, we expect that the seeds planted by somatic education and the possibility of self knowledge as a different way of approaching the body may help dancers. Fortunately, Markula (2004) allows us to better cope with this phenomenon. She explains that new physical experiences are necessary, however insufficient, in the development of the practices which constitute a technology of self that is able to resist the technologies of domination. About the technologies of self being liberating, she states that the person should: [1] nourish a self that is open to change and to constant recreation, [2] increase critical awareness about the dominant discourse and [3] develop an ethical care towards the self which can be translated into ethical care with others.

Thus, it became essential for our action-research to approach those points, as we wanted to discover how it could encourage (or not) the subjecting process that allows someone to be less vulnerable to the effects of the dominant discourse.<sup>2</sup> Our intention, when we added theoretical reflections based on dance research for somatic education classes, it was for the students to broaden their critical thinking and connect to issues concerning the care with themselves for a higher perspective of the world of dance.

## 6 METHODOLOGY

For 10 weeks, the action-research took place as part of a mandatory discipline in somatic education for students in the second year of the dance bachelor's program of the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM), Canada. The study was made up of a "professor action-research" (GOMEZ; FLORES;

<sup>2</sup> Subjectivation processes were studied by other researchers through different body awareness practices, particularly martial arts (BOUDREAU; FOLMAN; KONZAK, 1992), postural education (VIEIRA, 2004) and physical conditioning (MARKULA, 2004).

JIMÉNEZ, 1996) because it was started by the three authors and not by the students. Taggart (1998) says that reflexive pedagogical approaches, which focus the individual emancipation, are well integrated in the objectives of an action-research. For Lather (1991), the objective of awareness may challenge the dominant discourse when it opens a space for the recognition of other discourses.

From the somatic education classes twice a week, one was dedicated to theoretical discussion, whereas the other focused on somatic education practice.

There were 24 students taking part in this action-research (22 women and 2 men) with an average age of 22. They had varied experience in dance, both regarding the time of practice (2 to 15 years) and the styles. Following the ethics code from UQAM for research with human beings, we provided individual authorization forms for each one of the participants.<sup>3</sup>

According to Table 1, the weekly theoretical classes, with 1 hour and 40 minutes, covered the following: exchange of ideas about results of research in dance, discussions about ideal bodies, sharing individual stories and help with making an institutional guide to deal with injuries. The weekly practical classes, with the same duration, had the same format as the classes in the Feldenkrais Method of Awareness through Movement (ATM), inspired by the original written work of Feldenkrais and his partners.

The Feldenkrais Method is an educational system focusing on movement, aiming at expanding and refining the use of self through awareness. In some countries, it appears under the generic term of alternative and complementary medicine. However, the members of the Association Feldenkrais Québec (AFQ) do not consider it as a therapeutic

<sup>3</sup> We thank the 24 students who took part in the study. Reflections from 13 of them appear in this article. With the exception of two individuals identified by pseudonym, they asked to be identified by their first name. When there was a coincidence in first names, the first letters of the patronymic were used to distinguish them.

intervention because they are not working from the medical model.<sup>4</sup> The professors of the Method, supporting that there is no division between mind and body, teach the students how to move better and how to increase their general well-being by exploring the sequences of movement and the sensations created by them.

In the group classes, the professor of the Feldenkrais Method (i.e. the main author of this article) would verbally direct the students through sequences of movement and through several attention focus to allow them to discover new ways of performing movements. Besides the group classes, each student also had the benefit of two individual classes given by a Feldenkrais Method certified professional. In those classes, called Functional Integration (FI), the professionals use their hands to guide the student's movement so that he/she will learn to eliminate the excess effort and move more easily.

The Feldenkrais Method was chosen, among several methods of somatic education, for three reasons. First, the authors have a solid experience with this method. Second, there is literature to support the contributions of the method to deal with dance and health issues.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the method was examined from the post-structuralism perspective and it was suggested that it contributes for a subjetivation process (WRIGHT, 2000).

The data collected from students included: [1] individual written descriptions of their own "physical history"; [2] a report of their experiences regarding issues of body and health, summarizing the action-research in the middle and in the end of it; [3] weekly answers to an open question connected to the subject of the ATM lesson; [4] transcriptions of what was discussed by the group in theoretical classes; [5] the notes from each class by the researchers based on audio

<sup>4</sup> Association Feldenkrais Québec: <http://www.feldenkraisqc.info/>

<sup>5</sup> A compilation of the research about Feldenkrais is available at <http://www.psych.utah.edu/feldenkrais/research.php>.

and video recordings.<sup>6</sup> The data was analyzed according to an adapted version of the “Grounded Theory” (PAILLÉ, 1996). The group of data was inductively analyzed, according to multiple readings and discussions among researchers to allow the

categories to emerge from the data instead of imposing them before their collection and analysis. The reliability of the results is connected to the triangulation of multiple data sources and to the question asked by researchers each week. The results point to the ways students negotiate the dominant dance discourse and the marginal discourse of somatic education.

Theoretical classes	Feldenkrais practical lessons
Welcome	Ti evaluation
	It is connected to the knees
Harmonious and obsessive passions (P. Fortin: ALLERAND 2006)	Pelvis movements (FELDENKRAIS)1972
	Use of arms when <i>Usos dos braços ao girar</i> (SHAFARMAN 1987)
Weekly group Discussion	Creeping
	Sustentar com as mãos e Spporting with the hands (JOLY 1980) <sup>7</sup> Girar
To deal with <sup>8</sup>	Turning (FELDENKRAIS)
Discussion about	Mudança do tonus corporal Change of body tonus (ALON 1996)

6 Most of the data was part of the evaluations of students, as the action-research happened in the context of the mandatory university discipline. Conscious there was no perfect solution for the limits of conducting an action-research in an academic research aiming at decreasing the conflicts which would come from the fact that we used the work of the students both to conduct the action-research and to evaluate the discipline, we discussed the situation with them. It was decided that the notes would be based on a formative evaluation including self-evaluations.

7 JOLY, stage de formation, Amherst. Document inédit, 1980. <http://www.yvanjoly.com/yvan/index.htm>.

8 GIRARD, F.; FORTIN, S. **Guide de gestion des blessures et/ou maladies**, [internal document], Montréal, Département de danse, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2006.

**Table 1:** theoretical classes practical lessons on Feldenkrais

## 7 MEANS FOR THE STUDENTS TO NEGOTIATE DIFFERENT RESOURCES

Our analysis of the data evidenced three non-exclusive trends, each one of them defining analysis categories with the same importance: [1] directed to the *status quo*, [2] between the *status quo and the change*, [3] towards the change.

### 7.1 DIRECTED TO THE STATUS QUO

In the first talks and written works, we observed the importance given to the authority of professors and choreographers and to the right way of reaching the ideal body, without taking the consequences very much into account. It was estimated, therefore, that, in the beginning of the study, about two thirds of the students were identified with the first category, which is aligned with the dominant discourse of dance.

While, for some students, the theoretical classes showed “not great revelations”, for others, “they destroyed their childhood dreams”. Our analysis revealed that the stir caused by theoretical classes was most frequent in that category. Here are the words of Marie- Pière: “Sometimes I would leave the classroom completely depressed. I am very sensitive to those realities that I don’t want to face because I prefer to continue thinking that everything will be great for me.”

The students in that category were the ones who were most upset with the theoretical class which was made of a presentation of results of a study about the relationship between passion and injury in dance students (RIP; FORTIN; VALLERAND, 2006). They spontaneously identified with the obsessive passion and not with the harmonious one. They mentioned the “rigor” and the “perfectionism” that they impose on themselves. Many of them highlighted that the high

demands of the bachelor's program "forces" them in the direction of a type of obsessive passion. Because they see no alternative, those students appeared to show no reaction when facing situations that they thought were dreadful. This corresponds to technologies of domination, which, in general, reproduce the *status quo*. At the end of this theoretical class, Marie-Pièrre wrote in her weekly report:

I have so little time for myself, I am exhausted and depressed. I have no time to spend with my family and my boyfriend [...] But there is nothing I can do! I have to go to university and to work. And afterwards, if I go and work for a choreographer and every day we have rehearsals, it will be the same. I don't want to be asking for less rehearsals, unless I have an injury or really sick.

In this category, pain and fatigue were often noticed as signs of hard work and serious commitment. In general, students could not see those sensations as a sign of excess work which could make them prone to injury, although Audrée has shown some change in her way of thinking:

I realized that my injury was there before I felt sick on Tuesday. I was thinking about the class last Friday when I noticed a pain in the left shoulder, and now I see that I should have taken more time to treat this pain [...] This injury makes me realize that I should develop a greater awareness of my body.

It is interesting that the students *directed to the status quo* were totally committed to Feldenkrais lessons. Most of them, used the proprioceptive explorations from the ATM lessons to solve physical problems which they had at the time of the action-research. However, they did not use the opportunity that they were given to examine the greater physical issues. Patrícia's words about the somatic practice illustrate this trend well:

It is about surviving the discomfort and determining favorable techniques to minimize this situation [...] What is

important is to find our own solutions. You have to understand that pain and discomfort are part of this profession. We might as well tame them!

## 7.2 BETWEEN THE STATUS QUO AND THE CHANGE

A second category emerged from the analysis of data. Differently from the students in the first group, they had the benefit of having two more theoretical classes over the practical lessons. Their written work has many indications of a strong interest in the theoretical classes as an opportunity to formulate opinions. Pascal's comment during a group discussion offers an excellent example:

I am surprised that some still see the body of a contemporary dancer the same way they see the one of a ballet dancer. They have to be injured, to be thin, without any tattoos, perfect. I started contemporary dance because I thought this mentality was over. When I discovered that it was still present, I had to climb up the walls. Could it be that it means that people like me and Emilie do not fit in here?

Many students muttered against the ideal body in the world of dance. They believed it was possible to change the way someone builds an ideal body, whereas, in the first category, the students supported the opinion that this was unfeasible. For many dancers in the second category, the *myth of the ideal body* is unattainable and the way to teach dance must be equally questioned. As the weeks went by, the students in that category increased their criticism to the dominant discourse. Emilie P.'s writings demonstrate this dimension:

The choreographer will try to impose his/her type of ideal body to all dancers [...] We make everything for the creative process and for the choreographer. This becomes a vicious circle; the interpreter wants to live his/her passion, then forcing the body until

the body becomes perfect enough to be hired. Frequently, during the creative process, this is not enough; then he/she goes beyond. They will not complain for fear the choreographer won't like them anymore and won't call them again. The choreographer feels free then to demand more because he cannot find any resistance from the dancer. The interpreter ends up not listening to his/her sensations.

In this category, the students did not act in a concrete way when they faced situations which they considered to be problematic. We noticed many claims with *should* as compared to make. In the next quote, Luc revealed the desire to invest in proprioceptive explorations which would guide him; however, his wish was only an intention:

I should make changes in my behavior. I want to change my habit of trying to make everything accordingly, everything for a beautiful shape [...] I feel enormously influenced by our society, which values the performance. I see my obsession for wanting to be perfect as an obstacle, as having to criticize the movement instead of feeling it.

Eveline's comment on the appearance of the ideal body of the dancer helps us to understand this idea:

In Feldenkrais book, there are certain exercises that work with the bending of the lower back and the relaxing of abdominal muscles [...] This purpose goes against what we have learned since we were children, that I would have difficulty in doing that in front of our peers. Then, being entitled to have a soft and round belly could change my self-perception and even the perception other people have of me.

In Eveline's comment, we may notice an ability to think critically about the body image even if she feels uncomfortable about changing her behavior. If she could afford to act in another way, she would be able to experience the discourse of

somatic education. When they see the *games of truth* being played in the dance studio without opposing them, the students in this category are standing in an intermediary space regarding the technologies of domination and Foucault's *self technology*.

### 7.3 TOWARDS CHANGE

The last category gathers students whose comments express a certain resistance to the dominant discourse of dance. Those students manifested some ease in creating links between their body experiences and their understanding of the dance environment. As Emilie S. expressed:

I became aware that my previous education didn't take the internal sensations of the body into account very much. I am very much thankful for the fact that I became more critical when facing pain. I know I should change those pre-conceive ideas I have about the body of the dancer. That is why I am thankful for the conversations that allow me to question and to become more critical. Of course dance is immersed in a world of sacrifices [...], but I think that the changes start from our own interior world. I like the idea of developing an "internal authority" which dictates the way to go, always respecting yourself as an individual.

It is important to highlight that it was with those students that we noticed, in the beginning of the action-research, the weakest endorsements to the dominant discourse of dance. Some were already engaged in a critical thought and had experiences in somatic education. This was the case of Marie-Josée, who wrote:

I feel divided. I may understand and accept the authority of the choreographer, but the way he directs me is very important; I am not an object. I love taking part in a creative process, but I think it is interesting to learn someone else's gesture. For me, the

choreographer is not above or below the interpreter. For example, there is a choreographer who asks us to spend a lot of extra-class time, but it was accepted because I can find that time and I like his material, and this makes me develop my personal path.

Marie-José referred here to a choreographer invited to give a course of 15 weeks which would lead to the performance of an original play. An anecdote told by Marie-Josée deserves to be mentioned because it illustrates the negotiation happening between the dominant and marginal discourses. After a third of the action-research, the choreographer asked the students lose weight, something Marie-Josée thought was inappropriate. This same choreographer asked the students to rehearse during the periods which are usually free. Taking this request as exaggerated, the students got together to write a schedule of extras rehearsals that all of them would be able to administrate. For that, they took into account the family situation of each one and the income loss they could suffer for having less time available for their jobs. Marie-Josée said that she felt divided between the reactions of resistance of those demands and that of acceptance because "this choreography project also allows me to reach something unique in my interpretation". This report illustrates that the students may cooperate, at least in part, with domination situations, because there are more advantages than sacrifices that they would face. Engaged in a process of reflexive thought, Marie-Josée contextualizes the demands of the choreographer:

He fears the play won't be nice [...], but his reputation in Montreal is not my problem. On the other hand, we are working together and I will do what I can to make a good play [...] This made clear what I want to do in my life. I want to dance, but I don't want just that. I would like to accomplish some projects with young choreographers, to make dance-theater, to have children, to do massotherapy, to travel.

In her double position facing the excess demands of the choreographer, Marie-Josée shows clairvoyance concerning the *rules of the game* of the dominant discourse. Despite the institutional constraints, she was able to make choices inspired by the ethics in taking care of themselves and with the other dancers. During our discussion, some students, such as Marie-Josée, mentioned they had to deal with the body and the health, it is a creative challenge. If health is defined regarding what a group accepts as normal, it may very well be redefined. The dancers may consider the possibility of establishing new norms instead of perpetuating those which already exist.

## 8 DISCUSSION AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The three emerging categories resonate Foucault's positions regarding the dominant discourse — appropriation, accommodation and resistance — in an amazing way which we had not predicted. According to Foucault, the power is viable only on free subjects and, as they are free, they may [1] identify with the dominant discourse and internalize it, [2] adapt to it without accepting it or [3] frustrate it.

The students who constitute the first category repeat the dominant discourse of dance, which they consider to be inevitable, even essential in constructing a dancer's career. Therefore, those students believed that they had to know how to play according to the rules. Hence, their physical experiences in the somatic education classes did not serve the purpose of increasing their well-being, but they were subverted and used to work for what was important for them: forcing the limits of their performance. If this approach may bring great fulfillment, it may also bring pain and injury, as, for most of the students, the ideal body in dance is almost impossible to achieve. What they learned with the marginal discourse of somatic education was used to minimize the negative impacts of the dominant discourse of dance on health. I.e., the participants "directed to *status quo*" did not show a

subjetivation process, because what was learned in the somatic education classes served the dominant discourse.

The students in the second category adopted a position of accommodation regarding the dominant discourse. On one hand, they manifested a critical thought when they verbalized their reticence about certain aspects of the dominant discourse; on the other, they did not seem to physically experience the changes that they professed verbally. One should develop the critical thinking facing the dominant discourse, however, as suggested by Markula (2004), in order to develop a practice of *self* which constitutes a technology of *self* and a practice of freedom, the alternative discourse should also be consciously built making concrete changes in the way one uses him/herself physically. This was a step that the students “between the *status quo* and the change” were not able to give when our action-research finished. In this category, the processes of subjectivation appeared as a cobbling both of the dominant and the marginal discourse.

It is, therefore, with the students who manifested both a critical thought facing the dominant discourse as well as the capacity to make connections with their body experiences that we observed the most complete subjectivation processes. The experience of the somatic education enabled those students to develop an internal authority which would make them less vulnerable to the impacts to health by the dominant discourse of dance. They made choices based on their intimate experiences, respecting the limits of their bodies. For the “towards change” students, the normality of pain or of certain pedagogical practices was not so blindly tolerated anymore, or they were only tolerated under certain conditions and for a short period of time. When the proprioceptive awareness is followed by reflexive thought, the threats for the body which were once considered acceptable in the life of a dancer, then, cease to be.

To all students, this action-research supplied an opportunity to doubt the “truth games” of technologies of

domination. The students “directed to *status quo*” were mostly less inclined to question the dominant discourse of dance, but, when it was given them the opportunity to discuss their several implications, they would take it as a feasible exercise. In the scope of dance education, there is a certain degree of agreement to the demands of rehearsal or of choreography which are, sometimes, physically or psychologically violent. The power, as Foucault explains, is not the result of imposing constraints that are external to the person, but it is rather an internalization of productive targets and norms by the people themselves. Evidently, the dancers cannot abandon all the disciplinary practices during all their education and career, but they may think critically about the benefit or cost of taking part in different physical practices, which inevitably will bring consequences to the health of the dancer.

In general, this action-research offered the possibility of investigating how the dominant discourse of dance and the marginal discourse of somatic education act in the re-evaluation of the body, of art and of health. In their previous experience, some students recorded certain *truths* that they should not deny if they wanted to reach the so desired body perfection. The action-research questioned the rules of the game, showing the dancers a pedagogical approach compliant with health interests.

The somatic approaches represent a conclusive development for contemporary dance, but they should also be contextualized and critically seen, as we don't look at somatic approaches outside historical and artistic discourses from which they are practiced. The dancers build themselves and are built in several ways by many, and, sometimes, conflicting, discourses which operate at a given time, each one of them with different truth games. Although recognizing the possibility of satisfaction resulting from different ways of practicing dance, our focus during the action-research was on a broad notion of health, one which is connected to Foucault's concept of technologies of self. In a short period, the Feldenkrais Method, together with the process of reflective

thought about questions of health in dance, confirmed its potential as a technology of self. Which will be, in the long term, the effects of the action-research in the negotiations of dominant and marginal discourses of dance by the students, here is a question to be answered.

Although we do not support a position according to which theoretical-practical knowledge necessarily leads to changes, we state that it is a pre-requisite. To change, the dancers need to become conscious about the dominant discourse and about how it builds dancing bodies. Unless the dominant discourse of dance changes or the marginal discourse earns a more prominent place, the changes in health and well-being of dancers will continue to be limited. Even though this action-research was conducted with the application of the Feldenkrais Method in a contemporary dance teaching institution, we believe that other somatic approaches, which defend and value a pedagogy of sensorial experience and a critical position, could also be successfully applied to other forms of dance to the benefit of students, who consciously learn to negotiate a number of discourses.

**A experiência de discursos na dança e na educação Somática**

**Resumo:** Uma pesquisa-ação constituída de aulas de educação somática num programa de bacharelado em dança mostrou como os dançarinos negociam o discurso dominante da dança e o discurso marginal da educação somática em relação às complexidades das questões de corpo e saúde.

**Palavras-chave:** Atitude frente à saúde. Foucault, Método Feldenkrais. Dança.

**Uma experiencia de discurso en la danza e en la educación somática**

**Resumen:** Una investigación-acción constituida de clases de educación somática en un programa de bachillerato en danza ha mostrado cómo los danzarines negocian el discurso dominante de la danza y el discurso marginal de la educación somática con relación a las complejidades de las cuestiones de cuerpo y salud.

**Palabras claves:** Attitud frente a la salud. Foucault. Método Feldenkrais. Baile.

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