

CULTURAL/HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

This section of your paper requires library research and is a good place to sound scholarly. It examines the cultural and historical contexts of a dance form. This is your chance to interpret or make sense of your interview responses and library research. Your analysis will be shaped by the information you have collected and by your theoretical considerations: questions about gender roles, kinship, age distinctions, class status, race, body types, the globalization of dance and the politics of appropriation.

Histories help us contextualize dance by showing where and when it originated, how it developed and how it served its various communities. What was the world like in the early history of the dance form? Why did this dance form develop at that time? From there we can consider its place in contemporary society. Without a historical foundation, we cannot determine how it has changed or why it developed the way it did, when it did. You may want to use one or more of the following learning objectives, as required by the University for Advanced Level General Education courses:

COMPARE the functions, meanings, ideologies, cultural values, movement forms, or social attitudes of the people or dances you are researching to similar or different cultural expressions. You may compare within a single dance culture or you may compare across cultures. Our Jonas text is particularly strong in the area of comparison.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: Identify the historical context of the dance practices. This approach requires that you pay close attention to the social and historical moments in which a dance happens. You might examine, for example, why hip hop emerged at a specific time and place. What social, political, racial, ethnic, or economic forces helped to produce this style of dancing?

HOW DANCE CHANGES: Explain how a dance changed in response to internal or external pressures. Emphasize historical continuity and then its change. How did new worlds, new venues, new discoveries or inventions, or new social needs change the structures and meanings of dance?

Context and meaning are inseparable. Here are some questions to consider:

- 1) What is the larger historical and cultural context of this dance? Is it a “New World vs. Old World” phenomenon? Has it been recontextualized from earlier or indigenous practice? How do the practitioners feel about the changes?
- 2) What does this dance tell you about the culture? What does it mean to participants?
- 3) What are the key cultural or sociological influences that support or drive a dance practice? (Religion, identity issues, socializing of the individual, etc.)

Explain your point of view and then use pertinent examples from your research and/or interviews to illustrate your point. Be sure to use literary citations only as they pertain to your specific questions; explain how these quotes/ideas help you interpret the data. Use at least TWO LIBRARY SOURCES and CITE YOUR REFERENCES IN THE BODY OF THE PAPER. **NO WEBSITES ARE PERMITTED FOR THIS PAPER.**

INTERVIEWING SUBJECTS/INCLUDING QUOTES in your PAPER

- 1) Who are you going to interview and how are you going to find them? Conduct TWO IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS for two different perspectives. One interviewee will be a family member, preferably someone older who has a good deal of life memory about your family and culture. The other interviewee will be a specialist in the dance forms of your culture. As a last resort, one telephone interview is acceptable. No e-mail interviews are permitted; they lose the essential give-and-take and surprising twists and turns that the energy of a live conversation inspires. These people are your informants. Make sure they have ample information about the subject you are investigating, and are willing to talk freely to you for 30 minutes or so. Ask them whether they mind if you record the interview.
- 2) Think about what information you are seeking before you meet with them. Are you looking for biographical, cultural and/or historical information? Are you interested in why your interviewee practices – or has never practiced - this particular dance form, or what function it plays in their lives?
- 3) Create a list of 10-20 questions to ask your interview subject. Having specific questions helps to steer the interview towards responses that fit your agenda; they give you something to fall back on if things stall, and makes you look prepared and professional. Here are some ideas:
 - a) Begin with an easy, specific question to break the ice, (“When did you start dancing?” “Why has no one in our family ever danced?”) and then see where that takes you.
 - b) Avoid asking questions that can be answered with “Yes” or “No.”
 - c) Structured questions: “What are the steps in...” “What are the different kinds of...”
 - d) Questions can be open-ended, yet specific. (“Tell me about...” “What do you like best/least about...”)
 - e) Concrete: one answer only; “What is the single most important thing in...”
 - f) Questions may move from general to specific or vice versa.

If they get stuck for something to say, it is your job to prompt them or ask another question.

- 4) **Record the interview**, making sure you test your equipment beforehand. Take abbreviated hand-written notes as well, as these come in handy when you need to locate a quote on your tape. Don't spend the interview with no eye contact, writing down every word they say.
- 5) If you think it appropriate, sending a thank-you e-mail afterwards is always polite.

INTERVIEWS AND YOUR FINAL PAPER: Include references to your interviews and quotes in your final paper. **You are not asked to provide transcripts of your taped interviews**, but please use exact direct quotes whenever possible. You may edit out some of the “ums” and “ahs” but try to maintain the original character of the speaker. These quotes should be relatively short and selected carefully so that they keep to the point of your argument.

INCLUDE AN INTERVIEW-OGRAPHY: Please include the list of 10-20 questions you asked each interviewee, and a list of the names, dates, times and locations of each interview along with your bibliography.