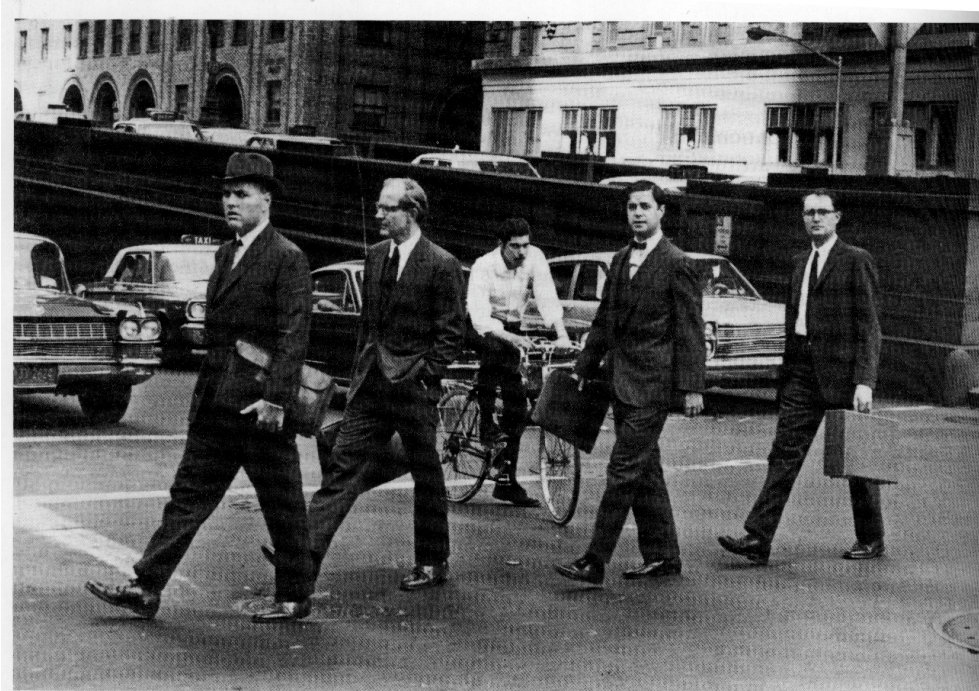


## B

# Appendix B: Compilation of Somatic Practices



*Four Businessmen on Park Avenue* © Bonnie Freer.

All in general phase of weight transference, all show pronounced verticality. Second from left most distinctive (also most unaware of camera) because anticipatory twist in upper body accompanies his Free Flow, Sudden Time, and Direct Space, which is in contrast to the more Bound Flow and Neutral Effort of the others.

**Figure II-1. Laban Effort-Shape Analysis Describes Movement Qualities (from Bartinieff, 1980)**

### Introduction

This Appendix presents a compilation of Somatics bodywork Practices, and provides descriptive material to support Chapter Two's historical analysis of Somatics. The techniques listed are limited to the Western systems illustrated within Chapter Two; they include Structural Approaches, Functional Approaches, Western Movement Arts and a small selection from Convergence Methods. Techniques that are not included here are Eastern forms: Eastern Energetic Systems, Eastern Movement Arts and a number of Convergence Systems rooted in Eastern Practices.

Each of the practitioners identified on the following page in **Figure II-2. History of Somatics Contemporary Influences in Western Practice** is contained within this compilation<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Categories and summaries described here are taken from Mirka Knaster's comprehensive descriptions of contemporary mind-body practices. See Knaster, M. (1996). *Discovering the Body's Wisdom*, Bantam Books.

# Appendix B Compilation of Somatic Practices

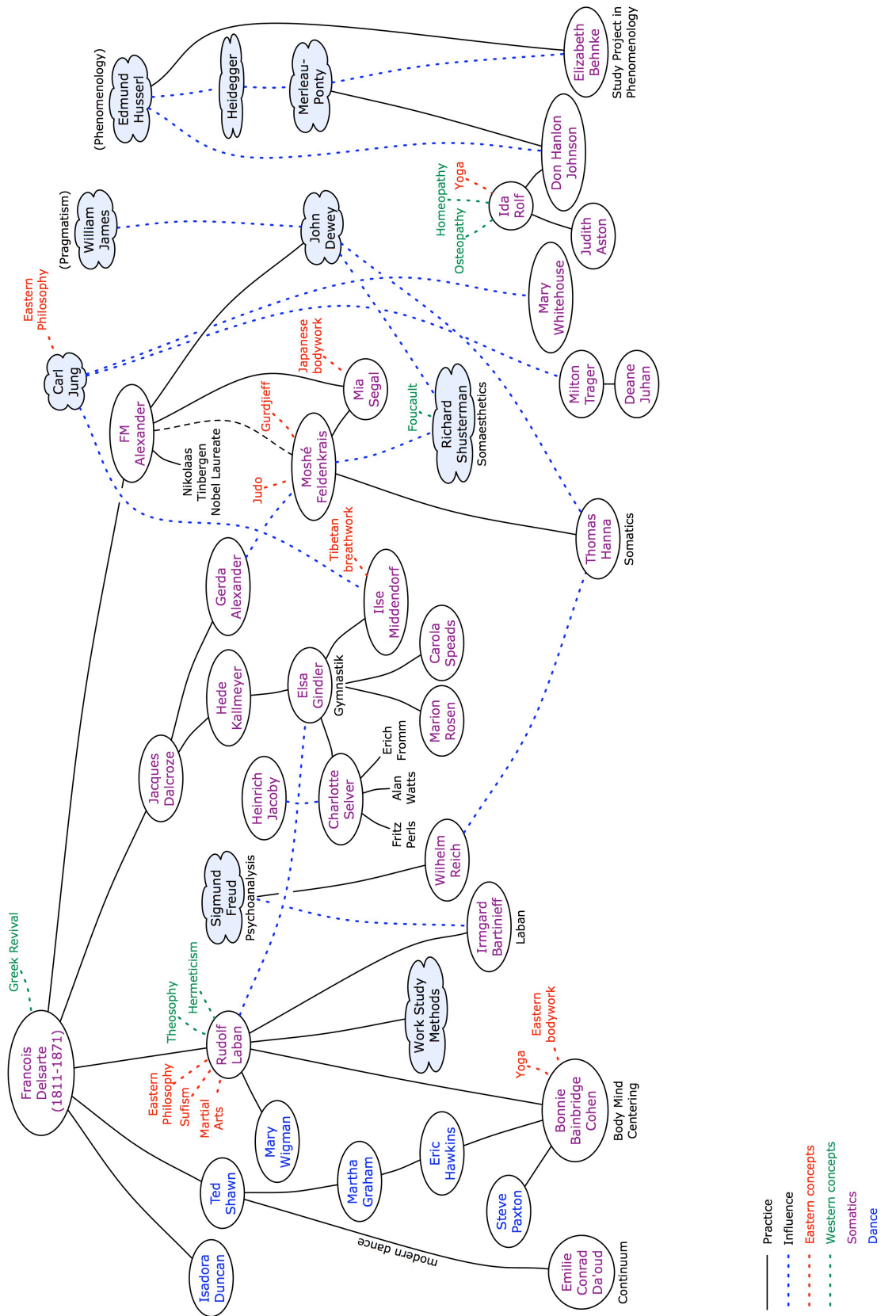


Figure II-2. History of Somatics Contemporary Influences in Western Practice

## Appendix B Compilation of Somatic Practices

### B.1 Structural Approaches

#### B.1.1 Rolfing

Rolfing is the tree trunk from which other structural bodyways have branched. Also known as Structural Integration, it is the creation of **Ida O. Rolf** (1896-1979). It is both a systematic approach to releasing stress patterns and dysfunction in the body's structure and an educational process of understanding the relationship between gravity and the human body.

Rolf viewed the body as an architectural unit made up of several blocks or segments – head, shoulders, chest, pelvis and legs. The position of each one is relevant to the others and is determined by the length and tone of muscles and fascia.

#### B.1.2 Aston-Patterning

**Judith Aston** was teaching movement education to dancers, actors, and athletes at a college when she found her way to **Ida Rolf's** hands because of significant injuries she had sustained in two car accidents. Immediate improvement convinced her of the value of Rolf's work. Building on Rolf's postural ideas, Aston created the first full movement education system for Rolfing. In 1971 she began training Rolfers and others in Rolf-Aston Structural Patterning and Movement Analysis, and she assisted them in learning how to use their bodies with greater ease, which resulted in a "softer" Rolfing style.

#### B.1.3 Hellerwork

**Joseph Heller**, a former aerospace engineer, studied with **Ida Rolf** and **Judith Aston** and became the first president of the Rolf Institute in 1976. Three years later, he left to found his own system for rebalancing the whole body.

Hellerwork is an integrating process that combines three components. Connective tissue manipulation helps realign your body and release chronic rigidities. Movement reeducation teaches you greater body awareness and stress-free methods of engaging in daily activities. Guided verbal dialogue assists you in recognizing the relationship among your body, emotions and attitudes, dealing with memories that surface, and discovering new ways to handle stress.

### B.2 Functional Approaches

#### B.2.1 The Alexander Technique

Australian-born **Frederick Matthias Alexander** (1869-1955) discovered his functional approach when doctors couldn't cure him of the recurring loss of his voice. Given his profession as a Shakespearean reciter, this was not an insignificant liability. Through self-observation and self-sensing, he became aware of an unconscious propensity to pull his head back and down. Once he began inhibiting this pattern of exerting pressure on his neck, he healed himself of throat and vocal troubles as well as of respiratory and nasal difficulties he had suffered since birth. Alexander concluded that the root of these and other discomforts – such as tennis elbow, fatigue, and shoulder pain – is misuse of the body.

Gradually he organized a method for converting faulty "use" into improved coordination; this method became known as the Alexander Technique.

## Appendix B Compilation of Somatic Practices

### B.2.2 Gerda Alexander Eutony

Gerda Alexander Eutony (GAE), the work of **Gerda Alexander** (1908-1993), was originally a method of relaxation, which she developed into a sensory-motor learning process or system of mind-body consciousness. Born in Germany, she was not related to F. M. Alexander. She was a teacher of Eurhythmic Education, a system of education based on music and movement that was founded by **Jacques Dalcroze**.

The word *eutony* – well-balanced tension or tonicity – is derived from the Greek *eu-*, meaning “good” or “harmonious,” and the Latin *tonus*, meaning “tension.” Central to GAE is working with tonus regulation of all the body’s tissues, from the skin and muscles to organs and glands.

### B.2.3 Sensory Awareness

The students of somatic pioneer **Elsa Gindler**, who taught in Germany until her death in 1961, have carried her work to many parts of the world, incorporating it in all kinds of therapies and skills training, from overcoming speech disorders to working with psychiatric patients and teaching music. **Charlotte Selver**, the best-known Gindler student in the United States, coined the term *Sensory Awareness* for her style of teaching. It has influenced many innovators in the evolution of their own disciplines, such as **Fritz Perls** with Gestalt Therapy.

Also known as *sensory re-education* or *conscious sensing*, Sensory Awareness (SA) aims at helping you attain clear, direct perception and authentic experience that goes beyond intellectual understanding. Philosopher **Alan Watts** called SA “living Zen” because of its similarity to meditation and its achievement of a state of mind-body unity. There is neither a set series of courses to complete in Sensory Awareness nor a recipe of any kind, no guided images, structured movements, specific positions, or anatomical training, just simple inquiry.

### B.2.4 The Mensendieck System

The Mensendieck System of functional movement techniques originated at the end of the nineteenth century with **Bess Mensendieck**, a medical doctor. She believed that the postures we assume and the movements we make regularly at work, play, and rest shape and condition our bodies. The results we get – bodies that are slender and lithe or heavy and awkward, vital and strong or weak and racked with pain – depend on whether we use the proper muscles in all our activities. Mensendieck developed a series of “movement schemes” or exercises that require a minimum of physical effort and time for reshaping, rebuilding, and revitalizing.

### B.2.5 The Feldenkrais Method

The Feldenkrais Method is a learning process that brings about new, more efficient, more comfortable, and healthier ways of movement through tapping into the vast potential of the central nervous system. **Moshe Feldenkrais**, its creator, believes that our human capacity for learning, “incomparably greater than that of any other living creature,” provides us with the extraordinary opportunity to build up a mass of learned responses. But along with the gift comes “the special vulnerability” of developing poor behaviours. Using physical experiences, not words, the Feldenkrais Method presents your brain with new information and retrains it to accept an improved image, which replaces the old, distorted one.

## Appendix B Compilation of Somatic Practices

### B.2.6 Hanna Somatic Education

**Thomas Hanna** (1928-1990) was a philosophy professor before he turned to somatic education. After directing the first Feldenkrais training program in the United States in 1975, he founded the Novato Institute for Somatic Research and Training and started *Somatic: Magazine-Journal of the Bodily Arts and Sciences*, of which he was editor. Hanna Somatic Education (HSE) is based on the original ideas of **Hans Selye**, the endocrinologist who recognized stress as a cause of disease, and of physicist **Moshe Feldenkrais**. Hanna noted that in response to the unending stresses and traumas to which we are subjected, the sensory-motor system reacts with specific muscular reflexes. He called them *Red Light reflex* (startle response), *Green Light reflex* (Landau arousal response) and *trauma reflex*.

### B.2.7 Body-Mind Centering

Body-Mind Centering (BMC) is **Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's** comprehensive educational and therapeutic approach to movement to help release the stress, fear, aches and pains, and restrictive habits and perceptions that keep you from functioning at your best. Through a special kind of awareness – “active focusing” – you can open to new options in thinking, feeling, and moving with greater ease, coordination, balance, and integration. In turn, this enables you to prevent injuries, face challenges, and expand your creativity.

## B.3 Western Movement Arts

### B.3.1 Laban-Bartenieff

**Rudolf Laban** (1879-1958) was a Czech choreographer, dancer, and teacher who worked with great figures in European modern dance. He studied the movement process not only in dance (folk and modern) but also in martial arts, factory assembly lines, and everyday actions. While exploring the basic principles of movement structure and purpose, Laban developed an internationally used system of movement notation: Labanotation records body movement like a score records music. He also evolved the system of movement analysis that now bears his name – Labananalysis.

Laban's student **Ingrid Bartenieff** (1900-1981), a German dancer and choreographer, applied his work to physical therapy, particularly with polio patients. Acutely aware of the psychological implications of movement, she also helped found the **American Dance Therapy Association**. Both Laban and Bartenieff abhorred a mechanistic approach to movement, which they considered not only inefficient but also harmful for an individual's self-image.

Formerly known as **Effort-Shape**, Labananalysis or Laban **Movement Analysis (LMA)** is a comprehensive system for discriminating among, describing, analyzing, and categorizing the patterns and variations of how we move – anything from a conversational hand gesture to a complex action. Because its standardized terminology makes possible precise communication about nuances of movement, LMA can be applied in a variety of professions: dance, choreography, athletic coaching, fitness, body disciplines and therapies, psychotherapies, acting and directing, teaching, even ethnology.

### **B.3.2 The Pilates or Physicalmind Method**

For most of this century, the Pilates Physicalmind Method was virtually unknown outside of the performance community, especially dancers, where it produced lithe and lean bodies without aerobics or weight lifting.

Physicalmind is concerned with economical movement. It relies on kinesthetic monitoring in developing balanced muscle use for ease of motion. As an inside-out approach that combines sensory awareness with physical training, Pilates can lead to mental equilibrium as well. **Joseph Pilates**, the method's originator, believed that ideal fitness is "the attainment and maintenance of a uniformly developed body with a sound mind fully capable of naturally, easily and satisfactorily performing our many and varied daily tasks with spontaneous zest and pleasure."

### **B.3.3 Ideokinesis**

**Lulu E. Sweigard**, Ph.D., coined the term *Ideokinesis* to describe her particular approach to neuromuscular reeducation. Taken from the Greek, *ideo-* means "idea" and *kinesis* means "motion." Ideokinesis is thus a process of using mental imagery to change motor patterns. Sweigard based it on the pioneering work of her own teacher, **Mabel Elsworth Todd**, who taught at Columbia University in the 1920s and 1930s. Before her death, in 1974, Sweigard spent many years teaching in the dance department of the Julliard School in New York. Especially in Todd's and Sweigard's time, using imagery was a radical departure from the long-established method of exerting conscious, voluntary effort to "put" and "hold" parts of your body in better alignment.

The premise of Ideokinesis is that the nervous system directs and coordinates all postural alignment patterns, muscle use, and skeletal movement. In order to change your posture or movement patterns, you first have to change neurological activity.

### **B.3.4 Contact Improvisation**

In the early 1970s modern dancer **Steve Paxton** began experimenting with the rolling, falling, and partnering skills of the **Japanese martial art Aikido**. Contact Improvisation evolved out of these explorations as a play between the body and the physical forces that rule its motion – momentum, gravity, inertia. Contact is a movement form, an unstructured dance, or "art-sport" that unfolds spontaneously – you improvise in the moment rather than follow a formal series of steps.

### **B.3.5 Continuum**

**Emilie Conrad Da'oud** studied ballet and non-Western dance in New York before spending five years as a choreographer with a folklore company in Haiti. Through her experiences there, she realized that how we move, talk, and think is primarily a cultural construct, but that beneath culture are essential biomorphic movement common to all life forms. In 1967 Conrad began teaching this primary movement process as Continuum.

"Movement is something we are rather than something we do," she says. "We are verbs, not nouns." But we use only a fraction of our movement vocabulary.

A basic premise of Continuum is that wave motion is fundamental to all living creatures and reflects our evolutionary origins in an aquatic environment. We carry the movement of water in every cell of our body. Deep within us a dance is

## Appendix B Compilation of Somatic Practices

always going on. We are always moving, even if we appear paralyzed (Conrad prefers to call it “hypnotized”). There are micromovements at an internal level that we can’t easily observe externally.

### B.3.6 Kinetic Awareness

Dancer-choreographer **Elaine Summers** was born in Australia in 1925 and raised in Boston. When she was only twenty-seven years old, orthopedic physicians diagnosed her as having osteoarthritis and said that in five years she would be unable to walk. Summers decided to find a way to forestall the doctors’ dire predictions. She studied with **Elsa Gindler’s** students **Carola Speads** and **Charlotte Selver** and experimented on her own. Kinetic Awareness (KA), Summer’s method of body reeducation, evolved out of her response to her own need for healing. Instead of becoming a wheelchair-bound invalid, she resumed her dance career.

### B.3.7 Authentic Movement

**Mary Starks Whitehouse** trained with dancers **Mary Wigman** and **Martha Graham** before developing, in the 1950s, a process she called “movement in depth.” It was an outgrowth of her understanding of dance, movement, and depth psychology. Some of Whitehouse’s students developed the work for use in personal analysis, performance and choreography, dance therapy, education and ethnology. One of them, **Janet Adler**, established the Mary Starks Whitehouse Institute in 1981 to further her mentor’s discipline after her death two years earlier. The work is now commonly known as Authentic Movement (AM).

At the core of AM is the bodily felt sensation of moving and being moved – the conscious awareness of what is happening in your body. That experience is in contrast to everyday habitual, unconscious movements, done automatically for utilitarian ends – for example, reaching to open a door. In an AM session, you suspend that kind of purposeful “doing it” in favour of “letting it happen.” This allows you the possibility of perceiving where movement comes from inside you – the unconscious impulses and images that move you – and what it reveals about yourself. For Whitehouse, the “body is the physical aspect of the personality, and movement is the personality made visible.”

### B.3.8 Skinner Releasing Technique

**Joan Skinner**, a professor of dance at the University of Washington in Seattle, has been dancing since she was a young child. After college, she became a member of the **Martha Graham** and **Merce Cunningham** dance companies. One night, during a grueling four-month bus tour, she ruptured a spinal disc in the middle of a performance. As long as she rested, it would heal, but as soon as she went back to class, it would break down. Working with an Alexander teacher enabled her to dance again.

Combining the **Alexander Technique’s** principles of alignment and movement with imagery, in the 1960s she began evolving the Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT) into a system of kinesthetic training. It employs two categories of images: *specific*, which deals with experiencing effortless movement of specific body parts, and *totality* or *image cluster*, which cultivates an overall state of multidimensional awareness, but it also can be the opportunity for a fresh, unconditioned response to arise, one that allows new kinesthetic patterns of muscle use to emerge.

### **B.3.9 Wetzig Coordination Patterns**

In the 1930s **Jennifer Rathbone** at Columbia University developed a Manual Tension Test to evaluate neuromuscular tension. She found four distinct patterns: assistance, resistance, posturing, and perseveration. In the 1960s and 1970s, New York choreographer and movement researcher **Betsy Wetzig** investigated the effects of these patterns on the styles of creativity and communication in the Wetzig Dance Company and Sound Shapes, her improvisational group. She noted that each neuromuscular pattern uses a different set and order of muscular contractions to create a specific kind of quality of movement – which she calls *Thrust, Shape, Swing, and Hang* – as well as a trigger center or initiating group of muscles, and an alignment of the body.

These four basic patterns designate the four ways our muscles nervous system, and brain organize themselves. Thus, each pattern also simultaneously includes a quality and type of mental processing. That's because the way we move and how our brain processes information are the same neurological event: Each pattern is both mental and physical.

## **B.4 Convergence Systems**

### **B.4.1 Rosen Method**

**Marion Rosen** was born in Germany in 1914 and started taking movement classes seven years later. In the 1930s she studied with Lucy Heyer, one of a group of therapists who used massage and breathwork with patients of Swiss psychoanalyst C. G. Jung. Heyer's influences included, among others, Elsa Gindler and Rudolf Laban. When the Nazis forced Rosen to flee, she learned physical therapy in Sweden while awaiting a visa to the United States; she also graduated from the physical therapy program at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota.

### **B.4.2 Somatic Experiencing**

**Peter Levine**, who holds doctorates in medial biophysics and psychology, developed Somatic Experiencing (SE) as a short-term, biological, body-oriented approach to shock or highly traumatic experience. He believes that trauma is the result of physiology, not psychology. Thus, healing it is possible without long hours of therapy, the painful reliving of memories, or continued reliance on medication. Instead of emphasizing psychological meaning, as in verbal psychotherapy, SE activates intense responses that are both physiological and emotional. But, unlike certain techniques that seem to favour catharsis purely for the sake of catharsis, SE renegotiates these responses without re-traumatizing the person.