THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONSERVATORY CULTURE ON DANCE STUDENTS

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ATTENDING A CONSERVATORY PLACES STUDENT DANCERS IN THE ELITE ATMOSPHERE OF THE DANCE WORLD. TO AN EXTENT DANCERS MUST ADAPT TO ELITISM IN ORDER TO FIT INTO THE TYPE PRESCRIBED BY THE CONSERVATORY PROGRAM AND ENVIRONMENT. FELT SENSE OF EXPECTATION VARIES FROM INDIVIDUAL TO INDIVIDUAL, AS MANY DEVELOP A REPUTATION FOR A MOVEMENT STYLE OR INTEREST THAT MAY OR MAY NOT MATCH THE INDIVIDUAL'S OWN INTERESTS. MUCH RESEARCH ON DANCE TRAINING IS CENTERED IN PEDAGOGY AND THE STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP. ADDITIONALLY, THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL RESEARCH ON THE PERFORMATIVE ASPECTS OF DANCE TRAINING. HOWEVER, LITTLE RESEARCH CONSIDERS PEER RELATIONSHIPS AS AFFECTING THE PRESSURE FELT BY INDIVIDUAL DANCE STUDENTS. THIS STUDY SEeks TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: (1) HOW DOES CONSERVATORY CULTURE AFFECT A DANCE STUDENT’S SENSE OF SELF AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT? (2) HOW DO STUDENTS EXPERIENCE OVERLAPPING PRESSURE FROM THEIR TEACHERS, PEERS, AND SELF? (3) WHAT FACTORS OF CONSERVATORY TRAINING EFFECTIVELY STIFLE OR STRENGTHEN THE INDIVIDUALITY OF STUDENTS? THIS STUDY UTILIZES IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS, MOVEMENT RESEARCH, AND AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF A CAST OF 12 CONSERVATORY DANCE STUDENTS TO REFLECT ON THE FELT PRESSURES OF CONSERVATORY DANCE TRAINING AND THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES THAT CREATE THEM. I ARGUE THAT FELT SENSES OF PRESSURE FROM TEACHERS AND PEERS CAUSE STUDENTS TO FEAR DEVIATING FROM THE ARTISTIC NORM OF THEIR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY.

**Keywords:** movement research, illegitimacy, peer relationships, conservatory culture
I started dancing at the age of 2. My training has been constant, and became much more focused and professional during my early adolescence when I began studying at several dance institutions with high affiliations in the professional world, including the Rock School, the Harid Conservatory, the Pacific Northwest Ballet School, and Carolina Ballet. I spent a total of 8 summers away from home studying ballet. I began the high school ballet program at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts at age 12, where I boarded during the school year. Upon completion, I was admitted to the Conservatory of Dance at Purchase College, SUNY, where I spent 2 years in the conservatory. During those 2 years in the Purchase conservatory, I noticed that I was experiencing similar pressure and expectations acting on my artistic development, student-teacher relationships, dancer-choreographer relationships, peer relationships, and sense of self. Disturbed and conflicted, I found my way to the sociology department where I took classes on gender and sexuality, race, public health, consciousness, bodies, surveillance, art, and theory. In these classes and from these professors, I began to understand my loss of self under the institutional guise of conservatory dance education. Further continuing my dance education alongside sociology, has led me to this project. A week in the dance building at Purchase does not go by where I do not hear a complaint on workload, exhaustion, low self-esteem, student-teacher issues, or peer conflict. Conversations with my peers led to me notice isolated dissatisfaction and social anxieties we were all experiencing. The project explores the universality of our dissatisfactions as students, by listening and empowering student voices.
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Introduction

In dance conservatory training, students are measured by teacher expectation, personal goals, and in comparison to peers. Most academic literature focuses on authoritative teaching methods in dance education, while little research focuses on the conforming and self-erasing aspects of conservatory training, and possible peer influence, on young, growing artists. Conservatory environments are socially dense spaces, where students compete with one another for teacher attention, stage time, and professional experience. I am curious about several questions: (1) How does conservatory culture affect a dance student’s sense of self and artistic development? (2) How do students experience overlapping pressure from their teachers, peers, and self? (3) What factors of conservatory training effectively strengthen the individuality of students, and what aspects diminish creativity, artistic agency, and safety? I utilize Foucault’s theory of docile bodies to describe the conforming effects of technical training and peer comparison, and Goffman’s theory of the presentation of self to describe how external expectations and classroom atmosphere affect a dancer’s self expression (1977). Application of both theories proposes to explain feelings of illegitimacy as a consequence of defying conservatory standards. I hypothesize that pressure, expectation, and competition, from peers and teachers, cause dance conservatory students to conform to common appearance, movement style, and creative methods. Consequently, conservatory training may thereby stifle innovation and place dancers into vulnerable positions where they feel less able to advocate for their creative visions, and even their safety.
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Dancers are held accountable for their own bodies. Beyond medical attention and diagnosis, only an individual can determine when something is wrong with their body, or if they have been asked to do something they are not physically or emotionally comfortable/able to do. Theoretically, consent will be asked of the individual, whether regarding touch or comfortability performing a task, but there are many cases in which pressures acting on an individual strip them of their bodily autonomy. Student dancers are put in a specifically vulnerable situation, because their physical participation in conservatory programs dictates a number of the opportunities that will unfold in their future. Often times, injury, sickness, and mental health problems do not feel like an option under the demands and pressures of conservatory training. This has the potential to put the student dancer and dancers entering the professional world in danger. Dancers often forget that they are allowed to say no to a choreographer, a given movement, another dancer, or a teacher. Internalizing, and projecting, the pressures of conservatory training put dancer’s bodies and minds at risk of injury, mental health issues, physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, etc.

For data collection, I conducted interviews with dance students in their second, third, and fourth years of conservatory training. Participants were interviewed over the summer break and once again upon return to conservatory training. Alongside interviews, the students participated in a movement research-oriented choreographic work that explored the research questions and theories specific to this study. The discussion and conclusion of my observations and interviews were informed through getting to know the dancers in the creative process. I would like to note that specific identities are more susceptible to feeling external pressures, such as black dancers, female dancers, gender non-conforming dancers, and dancers with less training. These
biographical aspects of each participant were considered in relation to how they navigate and experience pressure from teachers, peers, self, and body.

Expectations of the Conservatory Atmosphere and Dancer

Dance conservatory programs function to boost the physical and artistic abilities of students through disciplined training. In many American conservatories, training physicality takes precedence over critical thought and artistic development. Professional and pre-professional dancers train endlessly to gain physical virtuosity. Thereby many conservatory training programs employ structured dance regimens to train student’s bodies in virtuosic movement. Conservatory programs are curated to challenge student physicality and ability in order to push and grow students, with hopes of creating successful dancers. Among the attitudes of the dance world and conservatory culture, many recognize success in the image of a company dancer. Today, modern and contemporary dance companies are looking for dancers that are well rounded and able to perform a variety of dance styles.

Expectations for the conservatory dance student are shaped by an ideal, or standard, that is upheld by the dance faculty, peer relationships, and the individual dancer. American dance training is focused on shaping the physical body of the dancer, with less conversation concerning the dancer’s individuality as an artist. Looking at American dance training from a phenomenological point of view, we would describe the student dancer as one who listens and applies the corrections and rules of their teachers, by demonstrating their understanding through virtuosic physicality. Under this definition, dance training is primarily focused on influencing the
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body of the dancer, and not the dancer’s mind, mind/body connection, or self. Regardless of intention, conservatory training impacts the self of the dancer. This research is not a criticism of individual faculty, teachers, or authority figures in dance training, but is intended to emphasize the positive, negative, and neutral influences that American conservatory training has on dance students. Similarly, what follows cannot be said to be absolutely universal to all, or any, American dance conservatories, but only to the experiences of the study’s participants.

Apart from natural structure and flexibility, technical ability and understanding of different movement styles influence a dancer’s physicality. Foucault notes that the institution exerts overarching power by correcting each individual on the technique of their bodily movements and behaviors (1977). On a wide scale, dance technique is taught using authoritarian teaching methods. Most dance instructors teach under the framework they were taught under. This creates a cyclic pattern of authoritarian pedagogy from generation to generation (Lakes, 2005). Since many programs do not require teachers to have formal pedagogy training, teachers enter the classroom unconscious of the ideologies ingrained in their teaching methods, and the messages that they send to impressionable students. Dance teachers are social beings in the classroom, and can, therefore, utilize social manipulation in their teaching methods. Dance students believe that the purpose of their training is to “‘teach us to follow rules, respect authority’, ‘to do things even if we don’t want to’, ‘to sacrifice pleasure’, and ‘to do the right thing’”. It was found that dance pedagogy students have a much different perspective on the purposes of dance, showing they believed “dance should prepare us for jobs that will allow us to help others or make us loyal” (Nieminen et al, 2001). The trend of most conservatory dance
professors not have pedagogy training and most dance conservatories not having a pedagogy track, perpetuates the mindset held by conservatory students to rigidly follow rules and sacrifice pleasure.

Teacher correction and attention is primary to student improvement. Teacher attention not only provides the student with personalized corrections but is viewed as a compliment, even if the attention is negative. Dancers “view teacher abuse as a compliment -- that it is an honor to be attacked” (Lakes, 2003). Once corrected by the teacher, or in witnessing peer correction, students are expected to reinforce the correction on themselves from that point onward. Adaptable and attentive dancers make quick corrections, thereby increasing their rate of technical improvement and practicing physical versatility for auditions and job opportunities. Dancers cherish all of the personal attention they receive from their teachers. Teacher attention is a commodity, treasured and coveted for validation and the opportunity to receive personalized correction for the individual's body type. In the long run, complying with teacher demands of behavior and dance will result in greater attention from the teacher, giving the student corrections, explanation of corrections, personal corrections, hands-on corrections, and verbal validation of their work ethic and progress. This leaves a lot up to the teacher in determining the learning atmosphere. Whereas, studies by Dyer (2010) and Alterowitz (2014) showed that the majority of students were positively engaged in a collaborative, democratic approach to teaching dance. Similarly, both studies resulted in a few students opposing collaborative teaching. Instead, the students valued the binary of power between teacher and student, in which the student is a silent party. Alterowitz (2014) found that students who reacted negatively were previously
trained by teacher with strict authoritarian teaching methods, and were therefore less open to new teaching methods. These students had adopted the ideology of their prior authoritarian teachers to the extent of believing it to be the most valuable way of learning dance. This mindset inherently closes these students mind off to creativity in learning, and likely also their own creative endeavors (i.e. choreography, teaching, and performing).

Additionally, in the studio, there are places that are higher in social status and visibility to the teacher than others. The social geography of the studio can be described as follows. Often dancers eagerly seeking teacher attention will choose to stand at a center barre in the ballet class and towards the front of the room in a modern class. Students in the front and center barres are more visible to the teacher who is primarily at the front of the studio. Students in the front have a better view of themselves in the mirror, giving them more chances to self-correct or be seen by peers and teachers through their reflection in the mirror. Dancers are able to situate themselves in any available position in the classroom, thereby giving them more control over this mode of status. Arranging of students in the space, with dancers evenly spaced along the barres and then in the center, allows the teacher to watch every student, quickly take attendance, and provides an opportunity for teachers to compare students to each other. The teacher then gains control over the ranking of students in their peer “network of relations” (Foucault, 1977). Singling out students is common in the dance class and teachers are known to ask individual students to move to the front of the room, or center barre, because they require more technical supervision and correction than others in the class. Rearranging the students by announcing a student's need for improvement, validates the students that are not singled out, while asserting the teachers
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Technical values. The social geography allows students to evaluate each other, in terms of effort to be seen, and allows the teacher to evaluate the students in relationship to each other, based on the student’s self placement in the room. Hyper-awareness of behavioral expectations motivates students to behave as if the teacher sees their every move, even though the teacher is not always watching.

Dancers are made into docile, adaptable bodies that measure their own movements and behaviors according to the perceived expectations, requirements, and creative environment they are in. Lakes (2005) says “when dancers are being utilized for an artistic vision, their thoughts and feelings do not matter”. In other words, dancers are a medium of expression for choreographers, and not artistic beings themselves. Stripping dance students of their agency of sense of self in the presence of a superior (e.g. teacher or choreographer) produces the docile dancer, who is able to comply with the needs of others but not necessarily the personal, health, or artistic needs of themselves.

Foucault describes a docile body as “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (1977). The docile body is meek and easily manipulatable. Foucault takes this definition and uses it to describe institutional control of bodies, and minds. The conservatory, an institution of learning, controls, and surveils students in order to uphold them to a standard of behavior and performance. Generally, students receive punishment in the form of a bad grade, different treatment from the teacher, academic probation, or removal from performance opportunities for not meeting the standard. Docility to the conservatory training does not only have negative consequences for students. A level of docility must be accepted in order to allow oneself, body
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and mind, to learn new styles and information. Thus similar to Foucault's description of military training institutions (1977), conservatory requirements are a vessel to use, transform and improve the student. Dancers hope, desire, and crave to be “used, transformed, and improved” (1977), in their time in conservatory, but dangers arise in the when they lose their voice and freedom of self under the ideology and felt expectations of conservatory culture.

On a macro scale, student dancers are divided into technique levels. Depending on the program, levels are arranged by year (first, second, third, fourth) or by technical ability. Grouping in a conservatory generally assigns a few teachers per grade. This way teachers and students spend enough time together to get to know and really dig in to the material together. The passing of ideology from teacher to student is inevitable (Lakes, 2005). Students have the opportunity to disagree with the teacher, but opposing opinions are unwelcome in the classroom, for the sake of respect for the teacher. Students become accustomed to the treatment that they receive from the teacher, and the treatment that their peers receive from the teacher. From here a student gains insight on how they measure up to the rest of the class, from a rather competitive point of view. Based on personal analysis of the teacher's conception of their peers, and themselves, a student internalizes a self conception underneath the teacher’s ideology.

Performing the Role of Student Dancer

Performing on and off the stage, dance students must adopt the social role of the successful dance student to prove their legitimacy as a dancer, student, and peer. Erving Goffman’s (1956) theory of presentation of self explains the mechanics through which
individuals adopt ‘fronts’ when taking on a social role. In the conservatory, students adopt the role of ‘dance student’. The front is categorized by behaviors the students perform in order to legitimize their sense of self in the role of student dancer. Therefore, the individual does not create a unique front for them/him/herself, but adopts behaviors that correspond to their notion of success in the field of dance. The front of the successful dance student comes with an array of tasks: the student should arrive to class early, warm up, stretch, have an attractive and professional appearance, and be attentive to the teacher.

It is difficult for students to conform to the strict social script of the dance classroom without conforming to the artistic methods and styles trending in the conservatory. Whiteside and Kelly (2015) showed that ballet students dress for the part of professional dancer in order to affirm their legitimacy in the elite atmosphere of the ballet class. Preference for behavior varies from teacher to teacher. Some demand that female students wear traditional leotard and tights and the male students wear a tight fitting shirt and tights. Other teachers allow students to wear athletic clothing of their choice. Generally, Graham technique teachers expect students to stand, facing front as the teacher walks into the studio, as they await the teachers cue to start floor work sequences. In Dyer’s study a student wrote, “Dancers are actors while on stage, so their values, personal identity, and social identity are not necessarily reflected in how they present themselves onstage or how they take class” (2010). This student ideologically believes that, as a student, their personal values are not important in the dance classroom. The student expresses that, for them, dance is not about the dancer’s sense of self, but rather about performing different emotions and social fronts that the student may or may not identify with. This perspective
mirrors the idea that dancers are containers to place feeling, emotion, and storyline of a controlling choreographer. This ideology implies that dancers are actors. This is not to say that acting is not a valuable skill for the dancer, but instead to points to themes that shroud the dancer from their own identity and sense of self.

Goffman writes that individuals adopt different social roles that vary by environment. Within these roles, a social script becomes apparent to the individual. The script consists of appropriate behaviors, presentations, and mannerisms that aid the individual role in the environment and often require the individual to be concerned with their reputation amongst others in the same environment. The social script informs the individuals social front, which they then perform with the given environment and role (1956). Dance students understand their social role through rules and discipline enacted by conservatory leaders (e.g. professors, teachers, administrators). As teacher expectations vary from class to class, teacher to teacher, and choreographer to choreographer, the student must be constantly aware of their ever changing setting and it’s applicable role.

Students are expected to maintain consistent in their appearance and behavior within each individual class. Technical and professional consistency demonstrates a dancers dependability to teachers, directors, choreographers, and peers. Varying expectations from different educational and professional relationship (student-teacher, dancer-choreographer, etc.) can create a dysphoric relationship of the dancer to their sense of self and creativity. Varying influences in values, ranging from aesthetic to moral, can motivate dancers to perform to the values of others and ignore their own. Difficulty arises when the student is confronted with a myriad of ideological
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influences and is unsure about where they personally stand in the midst of them. Students who struggle to adapt from technique to technique and teacher to teacher are likely to fall behind and experience frustration from professors. Performance in class creates a hierarchy of status in the eyes of the student, the teacher, peers, and peer groups. Such performances are graded on the values of the conservatory (Goffman, 1956).

Relationships among peers often causes dancers to perform to the way they perceive their peers to view them. An internalized judgment towards the self as perceived by peers motivates dancers to fulfill the perception of others, in order to succeed in the eyes of others (Cooley, 1902). Students are confronted with this pressure in class and working with student choreographers. A student may feel the desire to dance a specific way in class, rather than explore other textures, styles, corrections, and expressions than those that they feel are associated with them by the peer gaze. Such peer culture contributes to the cultivation of cliques, where dancers will become friends with those of a similar “type” in the conservatory. Additionally dancers may feel desire to be accepted by peer cliques and alter their artistic interests and movement style in order to fit in.

The hierarchy of individuals is mirrored through reaffirmation of standards, including peer acknowledgement of aesthetic through recreating movement styles and trends. Grouping of dancers in peer groups and casting demonstrates that many of the same dancers are used in trendy student works. Goffman (1956) says that in generalized systems of stratification “there is an idealization of the higher strata and some aspiration on the part of those in low places to higher ones” (p.23). Individuals who have achieved success and praise in this aesthetic, through
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peer validation and constantly consuming work of similar taste are idealized within their peer groups. Dyer cites Rudolf Laban’s belief that “communities tend to stress a common aesthetic idea of beauty that is esteemed, which can lead to normalizing movement behaviors and perspectives” (2009). Those lower in status among peers, either unwilling or unable to conform, often grapple with some level of aspiration to experience validation from this group (Goffman, 1956). This experience comes in altering the aesthetic creative choices of students. Their movement vocabulary and choreographic methods are quickly effected.

Maintenance of the social script and front of the dance student, with ever changing expectations, causes students to seek outside validation from teachers and peers rather than connecting to their own ideologies, values, and sense of self. When prompted many dance students became aware that they blindly comply to the goals and value systems of their teachers. Several students noticed that their values in their lives outside of dance were not correlating with the values being taught (Dyer, 2010). The authoritative pedagogical model, prominent in dance training, teaches students to take criticism and attention from the teacher, but not to question or demonstrate a sense of agency in the student-teacher relationship (Lakes, 2005). Dyer writes, “in an atmosphere where learners are concerned with securing social position and receiving praise, the desire to be right in order to prove one’s self worth can overshadow meaningful inquiry” (2010, p.119). Dress, behavior, and visible compliance to rules and expectations of the teacher assists the student in securing high praise from their teacher, and in turn their peers.

Along with weighing themselves against a variety of teacher expectations, students must maintain an optimal level of health, wellness, and physicality. Often this requires warming up
before class, cross training, physical therapy, massage therapy, and exercising active injury prevention. These tasks consume time, and make it difficult for dancers to explore avenues of expression specific to their own interests or interests outside of the dance conservatory. Accessibility to health and wellness resources and courses has increased, Cardinal (2009) explains that many schools do not offer well rounded information for students to learn about their bodies and health through somatic and academic investigation. A student’s chosen commitment to the conservatory, a blind consent to the prescribed social script of what it means to become a professional dancer, has the potential to deplete the agency of the individual. Accepting the risks of the job in the dance often comes with job security. The stress of a dance job alone contributes to a dancer's potential for injury, depression, burnout, and illness (Hernandez, 2012).

Dance teachers are often unconscious of the impact that their behavior has on students' confidence. Research shows that dance teachers believed themselves to behave more positively towards their students than students reported (Rafferty & Wyon, 2006). For example, a teacher may think that they are providing adequate support and care for their students, while the care interpreted by the student feels inadequate, or even destructive. Teacher comments and attitudes are shown to influence bodily dissatisfaction among conservatory dance students. Bodily dissatisfaction is a leader in contributing to a dancer's desire to control their weight, lose weight, and develop an eating disorder under the belief that it losing weight will improve their “technique and performance” (Dantas, 2018). Teacher validation in a dancer’s legitimacy as a contender for a professional dance career is the ultimate validation of one’s social role/front.
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Pressure to perform one’s self according to standards and expectations limits the dancer’s agency to create dialogue and relationship with teachers. The learning environment requires an empathic relationship from both teacher and student. From a critical perspective, dance teachers are expected to take the initiative to create communicative relationships with their students, but the student must also give to the conversation (Gose & Siemietkowski, 2018). While both parties share a responsibility to development and quality of the teacher-student relationship and learning environment, the power of the teacher’s position in the dance classroom is often hard to escape. Students see themselves through the looking glass of their teacher(s) (Cooley, 1902). Cooley (1902) explains that we present, deplete, and exaggerate parts of ourselves depending on who we perceive is judging us in terms of: “the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification”.

Dancers self regulate their performance based on the imagined expectations of their audience. In the classroom, the audience consists of teachers and peers. Conservatory students have a tendency to have a “broad internal focus”, causing them to become easily overwhelmed by their thoughts. Personality profiles on conservatory students should that conservatory students experience much higher levels of internal distractibility, external distractibility, behavior control than professional company dancers (Solomon et al, 2001). External factors cause dance students to internalize the judgments of others and change their behavior to their perceived judgments of themselves and others. If a student believes their teacher expects flexibility, the student is more likely to dismiss proper alignment to achieve a perceived standard, sometimes at the risk of
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injury. Additionally, if a dancer believes a peer to expect a specific aesthetic from them, they are more likely to perform to the expectation than push their own creative and physical exploration.

Many dancers are raised with the mindset that the dancer needs to go through harsh training in order to prepare for the ‘real world’ of dance, which is competitive and brutal. While this has merit for generating strong, hardworking students, it creates a standard that is difficult, and potentially unhealthy, to attempt to live up to. It creates a constructed front of what one needs to be line in order to be successful, causing students to strive for an ideal types and are weighing themselves and others against an unattainable standard.

Environmental Standards and Fear of “Deviance”

The described expectations of the dancer, from themselves, their teachers, peers, and institutional requirements all create a standard that is upheld by the environment. An art world is composed “of the people and organizations who produce those events and objects that world defines as art” (Becker, 1976). In the Dance conservatory, the learning environment is composed of teachers, peers, administrators, technique styles, teacher ideologies, standard curriculum, performance opportunities, choreographers, costume designers, and the individual histories of training and influence of each individual involved. In the artistic training world, the student becomes an object for improvement that the “world” or learning environment influences (Foucault, 1977). The environment and process of creating is absolutely inseparable from the artistic “product”, whether that be the dancer as them/she/he emerges from a conservatory
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program or the student’s artistic work (Becker & Faulkner, 2006; Green, 2001). The dance student trained within a specific conservatory is a result of their experience in that conservatory, and their life experiences while attending the institution. Experiences as individuals, i.e. relationships, trauma, bodily image, and identity, affect the dancer in their approach to training, and especially their relationship to their body. Social support from teachers, peers, parents, significant others, etc. become integral to the development of students along the many transitions in dance training and professional careers (Chua, 2015). A positive or negative experience in any number of relationships or parts of life can affect a student's trajectory of well-being and success.

Students can, and often do, deviate from their training, or social influences. The risks of deviant behavior varies by individual, reputation, teacher perception, peer perception, and academic standing. Rules exist, but are never exclusive to all (Becker, 1976). Exceptions are made for certain individuals based on many aspects of their identity (i.e. work ethic, socio-economic status, choreographic style, talent, gender, race, etc.). Similarly, rules exist formally and informally (Becker, 1991). Students have a specific number of requirements that they must fulfill in order to finish a conservatory program. But since students belong to different social groups, inside and outside of the conservatory, the path through these requirements varies immensely from dancer to dancer. Those who accept a behavior as deviant without questioning are blindly accepting the values of “the group making the judgment” (Becker, 1991). For example, students experience pressure to attend and take class under all circumstances, even when sick or injured. Categorizing missing class, under any circumstances, as deviant behavior may cause dancers to feel they could lose status in their peer and teacher relationships.
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As previously mentioned, the social front of the student dancers requires docility to teachers, choreographers, directors, and sometimes peers. Rules are set in place as a professional standard that dancers are expected to maintain, regardless of mental health issues, injury, and illness. Internalizing standards of appearance, extreme physical exertion, etc. motivate dancers to self-regulate their behavior without questioning authority. Dancer practice docility and submissiveness throughout their training, and it should be no surprise that has lead to sexual harassment and assault to persist without frequent questioning, call out, or consequences.

The extreme docility that dancers are trained to maintain in their professional relationships, with teachers and choreographers, stifles creative power. To this effect, dancers are expendable according to their willingness to comply with choreographer demands. Recent events in the dance world, following the rise of the Me Too movement, have called for greater respect for the artistic dancing body and have put teachers, choreographers, and movement facilitators in a more vulnerable position than ever before. Consensual practice is coming into conversation within the dance community. The contact improvisation community has recently taken up discussion on consensual practices in the contact jam scenario, when the space is open and it is generally assumed that it is okay to dance and touch other people. The Dance/NYC 2019 Symposium included “Consent in Today’s Dance Landscape” as part of the conference schedule. Dance/NYC’s website shows that they are concerned with the following questions:

“What do dancers need to feel safe on stage, in rehearsal, and at institutions across all dance forms? What has the power to make consent possible? What are the role of choreographers, dancer and institutions in building a consent culture?” (“Agenda”, 2019).
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This discussion challenges the boundaries of hands-on corrections, costuming, choreographer-dancer relationships, and student-teacher relationships, while challenging the traditional authoritarian teaching methods of the dance world.

The Me Too movement has brought the discussion of consent, abuse of power, and sexism to the forefront of the dance world. The dance industry is gendered, elitist, and dominated by white artists. The extreme pressure on bodies to look, present, and move in specific ways causes the industry to be in direct conversation with socialized issues surrounding bodies (i.e. sexism, racism, classism, ageism, etc.). This issue makes it more difficult for dance to advocate for themselves in the professional setting. Pressure to maintain any artistic group, in the wildly competitive dance job market, makes it less likely that a dancer will risk a job, or performance. Aside from reporting or confronting sexual assault, simply denying a choreographers request because it is painful, risky, mentally taxing, triggering, or even traumatizing could result in being fired and replaced (Ghekiere, 2018; Wingenroth, 2018b). Everyone is replaceable.

In 2018, Peter Martins the Ballet Master in Cheif of New York City Ballet for 29 years and Chairman of Faculty at the School of American Ballet for 35 years retired following a year of sexual harassment accusations. He continually denies all claims, both physical and verbal. Martins took a year of leave from the company before finally retiring (Schrock, 2018). Since his retirement, the press has backed off the case and Martins has disappeared from the public eye. Numerous dancers made posts on social media that expressed their solidarity with Martins. Such dancers had likely experienced the support and mentorship of Martins in his career (Flack, 2018),
and their support for him during the initial scandal was likely made with the intentions of maintaining job security.

Expectations and pressures train students that this behavior is acceptable and manufactures values that perpetuate these problems. Ignoring abusive behavior silences victims. Training of dancers to follow every move of their teachers, mentors, and choreographers has made silence endemic to the dance world, confusing the willingness or unwillingness of dancer to come forward to stop harassment and to share their stories of harassment (Ghekiere, 2018). The movement’s #WeToo and #DancersToo became of conversation around the popular rise of the Me Too movement in 2017. The movements have since lost momentum, while perpetrators remain employed and problems persist. Performers in “Sleep No More”, an interactive theater and dance show in New York City, have reported and confirmed 17 instances sexual assault by audience members (Wingenroth, 2018a). The production remains one of the most popular shows in the city and one of the most “dependable” and well paying for dancers. Sadly, executives and producers of “Sleep No More” have no made comments toward the issue and no obvious signs of change have been implemented. The show risks the safety and well being of the performers. Arguably, artistic choice and the interactive/immersive nature of show serve as excuses for the artistic staff to continue to put their performers at risk. This suggests that the audience and integrity of the show are more important than the performers. If this is the standard of a community of working artists, then anyone following outside of this norm is in danger of being ostracized, misunderstood, excluded, or fired.
Since success in art is widely determined by the popularity and conventionality of the work there is monetary incentive to create “work regarded as unoriginal and worthless and of artists and work regarded as first-rate” (Becker, 1976). Artists are much less likely to risk a months rent, grocery budget, or emergency funds to make something vital to the visibility of themselves and other artists. Motivated invisibility paired with endemic silence does not encourage dancers to prompt change (Ghekiere, 2018; Wingenroth, 2018b).

Data and Methods

This project relies on interviews and participatory action research (PAR) with dancers in a conservatory program. PAR is a reflective research practice that requires action from both the researchers and the participants, in order to activate change (Baum et al, 2009). The aim of this study is to switch the power dynamics in peer relationships and dancers-choreographer relationships. I took the role of the researcher and choreographer, in order to guide the dancers in an exploration of self, conservatory experience, and peer relationships. The dancers then took to role of dancers or collaborators, and the research participants.

Recruitment methods for this project mirrored my intentions to give agency back to dancer’s and their bodies. I sent an email out to second, third, and fourth year students with a brief summary of the project, including time commitments that come with participation. Through asking dancer’s to reach out to me, I immediately created dialogue with dancer’s based on their own interests, desires, and, rather than measuring them by physical appearance and impression in the audition setting, or choosing dancers I know personally. I aimed to recruit a more diverse cast
with a variety of experiences in the conservatory. Along with interviews, I worked with participants on a choreographic dance work that will be shown in November of the Fall semester. I utilized the rehearsal process to get to know the participants better and to explore the themes of the study in an intimate setting, through movement and group reflection. In this setting, I took ethnographic field notes my observations of the participants as well as engaging the participants in group conversation regarding topics that came up in the process.

All participants in this study are students in the Purchase College Conservatory of Dance. They are older than 18 years old. I conducted one round of official interviews before the start of the semester. Later in the semester and choreographic process, I checked in with each individual about their thoughts, feelings, and experience in the rehearsal process. Interview questions pertained to the amount of time they spend dancing, interests outside of dance, felt pressures from teachers and peers, and trends they notice or feel affected by in the Conservatory. I have compared the dancer’s attitude and experience from summer break to their feelings when re-immersed in the program and during the front half of my rehearsal process.

I interviewed five sophomores, two juniors, and five seniors. Prior to the study, I was personally close to only two of the participants. Nine of the participants are female, two are male, and one is genderfluid and AMAB (assigned male at birth). Nine of the participants are white, two are white-passing Middle-Eastern, and one is black. Nine of the participants attended a performing arts highschool, one attended a performing arts middle school, all were actively training in their adolescence, and ten mentioned studying away from home and conservatory training for summer intensives in their interviews.
This study comes with a number of limitations. First, the social atmosphere of the dance conservatory, and my personal involvement and participation in the dance program, will inform the students that feel comfortable reaching out to me about participating in the project. I am a senior, underclassmen that are unfamiliar with me may experience hesitation in reaching out to me even if they are interested in the project. Additionally, the type of dance student that expresses interest in this project may not reflect the mainstream point of view of the conservatory first hand, but will certainly have experienced other points of view and attitudes in their peers. That said generally, students interested in this work were passionate and open in engaging with the academic and creative materials. This will strengthened the ability of the group to engage in the material with authenticity and care, both for themselves and the group.

Discussion

Students at the Conservatory of Dance at Purchase College displayed feelings of inadequacy and illegitimacy primarily due to expectations from their peers. Additionally, many felt that they had to go the extra mile to please their teachers. The theories of Foucalt, Goffman, and Cooley, help to explain the internal and external social forces acting on the students. Primarily students felt stifled by the aesthetic pressures to conform their fashion choices, movement qualities, creative interests, and emotional behaviors in order to gain the social standing they needed to feel seen and valuable to their peers, teachers, and self. Some students felt excited by the social trends of the conservatory, noting that they experienced a draw to push themselves toward an aesthetic that they had not yet considered. Docile Bodies (Foucault, 1977) provides a base for understanding the institutional role that teachers play in their relationship to
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students. Further, monitoring of students by standards of attendance, body type, technical ability, amount they perform, etc. by teachers and faculty charges the student body with an urgency towards institutional and peer praise. Study participants showed that they highly valued peer acknowledgement and praise, saying they felt most validated by encouraging peer interaction and most isolated by discouraging peer interaction. Goffman’s *Theory of Presentation of Self* (1956) and Cooley’s *Looking Glass Self* (1902) provide theoretical insight on the effects of external pressure and expectations on an individual's sense of self and self worth, as determined by internalized peer influence and perceived status among the social, technical, and artistic hierarchy of the conservatory.

Struggling to Meet Expectations

All of the study’s participants felt affected by the aesthetic properties of the conservatory. They described the pressures of fashion, social life, movement qualities, and creativity. A number of participants noted the following trends in their description of the conservatory: wearing cool clothing, dancing or improvising in a specific way, and partaking in party culture. A big part of these aspects of social performance is financial wealth, it requires money to buy cool clothes, alcohol, and drugs. Adopting these behaviors and presentations creates the standard social front for the Purchase conservatory dancer, who stereotypically is illustrated wearing Adidas pants, a loose fitting shirt, smoking a cigarette while posting an edgy improvisation video on their instagram. The dress and behaviors exhibited by stereotyping the Purchase dancer demonstrate the performativity of the social role of the student. The trend of posting improvisation videos on instagram, shows the dancers need to be seen in their “private”
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practices. To this effect, dancers are never alone with their dance practice, or bodies because of a compulsive need to validate their social role. Goffman discuss the “backstage” and “onstage”, by saying that there is a private self and a self that we present to others (1956). Student dancers lose their “backstage” life by practicing dance and their personal lives in a way that is always intended to be shared with others.

Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors had a lot to say about cliques forming in the Conservatory. Seniors looking back on their time as freshman found that they felt pressure to conform to a “Purchase” or “cool” aesthetic in order to fit in. Sophomores expressed more anxiety about their current social groups and situations in the conservatory, while Juniors and Seniors most felt they had overcome their social status as an issue they encounter in their peer groupings. This shows that students who had spent less time in the conservatory were feeling more pressure to conform for acceptance and visibility, while the older students already had somewhat of an understanding of what they were willing to accept in terms of the social groupings and fronts in the school.

Several participants noted that the “popular” or “cool” way of dancing that has consumes Purchase’s conservatory. One dancer describes the movement quality as “flowy with accents”. Another notes that the Purchase aesthetic motivates dancers to “put on a face instead of just genuinely expressing who you are”. She expresses that this practice is okay, but she is irritated by the number of people she feels chose to be trendy in order to experience social acceptance, by a specific peer or clique. The dancer performs in the same aesthetic dressing, social mannerisms, etc. that they see their respected peers as exhibiting. Another sophomore participant, noticed
dancers in her class all “looked the same” when she filmed a video for them. She also mentioned that she has not experienced the Purchase aesthetic influence negatively, but instead feels like it pushes her to move differently than she would otherwise, using the aesthetic as a positive influence.

Seven participants noted that the culture of athleisure, Adidas, “cool”, baggy clothing contributed to their frustrations in the conservatory. Two of the studied dancers mention that their first semesters at Purchase, they felt the need to change their wardrobes to accommodate their new environment. Further, they felt that doing so would contribute to their social and professional success while in the Conservatory. If they were able to conform to the aesthetic demands of the school, they would be cast in senior project and conservatory productions.

Many participants found that the “cool aesthetic” was affecting the personalities and emotions of their peers. One dancer says “there’s a trend of wanting to seem calm, or seem aloof. I look around and everybody is chilling, looking around, seeming cool. It’s like everybody feeds off of each other’s emotions and pick one for the day.” She expressed that she cannot handle this someday, because instead of being aloof she just wants to scream.

Several dancers also mentioned that dressing in tune to the popular aesthetic impacted the pressure they felt in their movement expression, especially improvisation practices. A senior dancer said “it is really hard for me to improv now without catching myself doing these freaking trends and being mad at myself for it’. Sophomores and juniors expressed similar plights, but seemed much less bothered by the aesthetic trends in their personal work than the seniors.
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The seniors all seemed very aware of the categories they had been pigeonholed into as dancers, and were deeply craving to branch out for something new. On the other hand, a number of the sophomores mentioned that they were interested in this project primarily because they were not offered performance opportunities in their freshman year, by their teachers, choreographers, or their peers. This divide in intention between the older and younger parts of the cast created a different dynamic that I expected. I expected to come into a room with individuals hungry and passionate about the specific topic of research, and many were. The mix of individuals driven by the topic and individuals driven to perform made for a space where everyone was invested in the work, but from many different sides. Half of the cast came in with a critical attitude, while others came in excited to be involved in dance performance. The older dancers expressed a greater awareness for the topic and issues at hand while the sophomores were mostly taking things as they came, with a few exceptions.

One of the sophomores was very vocal about her agitation with the inner workings of the conservatory. She expressed feelings of isolation from her class, even when making a visible effort to engage with them. She noticed that most of the dances made were friends dancing with friends, where there was little diversity in the casting in terms of friend groups. Her isolation grew from not feeling comfortable conforming to the emotion, aesthetic, and behaviors prominent in the conservatory. She thought that maybe if she changed the way she was, she could make friends and be okay, saying, “I think maybe if I immerse myself into these trends I’ll have friends and it will be easier. But I don’t think I can actually bring myself to do something”. 
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By not feeling comfortable adopting the social front of her peers, she felt isolated, unwanted, and alone in an environment that is supposed to harbor creative growth and experimentation.

Most participants had little to say about their teacher relationships, mostly noting an overall positivity, negativity, or neutral attitude towards their student-teacher relationships. Technical pressure to remain physically able to meet the standard of dance technique as displayed by their peers and under the guise of the faculty. One participant noted that she felt “tagged” as a Graham dancers by her peers though she expressed interest in many other less technical styles of dance. She felt that this pressure was fueled by other dancers in her class that acted competitively towards her. In this scenario, it is likely that student-teacher relationships between the two students involved were at play, such that the dancer feeding the competition was striving to exceed the standard set by the study participant in order to fulfill a higher standing in the eye of the teacher. It is also likely that this participant received the reputation as a Graham dancer through praise from her teachers, that her peers then interrupted as her trajectory as a dancer.

Several participants expressed that they cared much more about their peer relationships than their teacher relationships. In her interview one participant states that she feels much greater pressure from her peers than her teachers. She says:

“I feel that in class. I feel that all the time. These are the people, your peers are the people that are about to go on this journey, not necessarily alongside you, but in the same world. Feels like they matter more.”
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Pressure to be accepted by your peers, motivates dancers to perform for their classmates, in some cases more than for their teachers. This can cause confusion for the student, in that many said they had different levels of peer relationships. First there are peers that dancers exist with, go to class with, but do not necessarily connect or communicate with. Second, there are peers whom students communicate with about daily, impersonal topics, mostly relating on the topics of dance and class. Third, there are peers who are close friends that communicate frequently and about personal matters. Within these three different levels of peer relationships and closeness, students may feel misunderstood by distant peers. This feeling can create a divide between the peers dancers connect to and the peers we do not, thus perpetuating the formation of cliques. In the class setting all of these peers are mixed together. Competition and confused personal intention are fueled by the confusing overlap in the rules of each group, and feelings of being judged by several different standards (Becker, 1976; 1991).

Another dancer describes watching a classmate have a panic attack during ballet class. In which she describes the rest of the class and the teacher completely ignoring the situation. Overcome with empathy and dismay, she describes not knowing how to act when no one else in the room was acknowledging that one of their fellow peers and student was not okay. Stories such as this one and the yeast infection, suggest that the ability of dancers to speak for themselves, to enforce that their community provides them with care and support, is compromised by the power structures that exist and the competitive nature of the field.

One of the studies participants had very passionate, informed thoughts and feelings on the topic at hand. At the end of our discussion, I asked if she had anything else she felt she needed to
say. And she did. She told me about having to skip class and lying to a teacher because she had a yeast infection. The infection lasted several months. She was on medication for awhile but developed a resistance to the antifungal she was taking. She said the infection likely persisted due to her uniform requirements, leotard and tights, and stress. The infection reached a point where she could not make herself take class in leotard and tights. Instead of informing the teacher and requesting that she be allowed to take class out of dress code, she told the teacher that she was nauseous and couldn’t come to class. She recalls not wanting to explain why she was out of dress code to peers. After telling me this story she said “You have to be a masochist, you have to be in line. You have to be, you know, to be seen and not heard”. Her experience notes the conflicting pressures felt from peers and teachers.

Embracing Deviance from Conservatory Culture

The unconventional-ness of this project greatly reflected in the way I ran rehearsals and interacted with the cast. As a result, a number of the dancers came to me feeling that we had really created a community. Most rehearsals started with a simple check-in with how everyone was doing. It felt important that everyone's voice was heard before we made a shift where mine became the most important, or arguably authoritative.

I made the point of expressing the need to be comfortable being stupid in front of the group because the kind of work we would be diving into in the coming weeks required that we trust ourselves and the group. Making choices that seem stupid is okay! We explored “silliness”
and "stupidity" in the form of an acting game. I had two dancers stand in front of the group. Someone in the group, not of the duet, would ask them a question. The individuals in the duet were to answer the question for themselves, then continue to answer, while slowly attempting to merge their answers until they all had the same answer. In order to “succeed” in this task participants need to let go of a number of expectations, such as just saying what is immediately on their mind, forgetting how to “properly” answer the question, etc. Many found it difficult to answer the question for themselves, instead they were slowly answering as a team. This was not the task. In order to merge your own thoughts and feelings with another person, you must quickly decide and share your thoughts and feelings. Otherwise the duet was left with nothing to work with. One of the dancers noticed that there was a tendency for one person in the group to take the role of “leader” and the other become a “follower”, creating a power dynamic that would get the group successfully through the task. We practiced this almost every rehearsal. As the duets became more skillful in the task, they developed rhythm and patience with each other. Eventually the rhythm and patience made the task less performative and more ritualistic, of course until we added an audience into the mix.

In the final work, one of the dancer’s recited lines from *Where I go when I’m not here*, a poem she wrote in response to her experience in the conservatory and this project. The poem uses the inner workings and thoughts that occur throughout the Conservatory dancer’s day, along with the topics of conservation between the two of us and the entire group of dancers. Out of order the following are a few lines from the poem:

“Do I exist beyond the context of a mirror?  
Or does the mirror fail to reflect my existence?”
Count the number of times you refill your water bottle.
Hold your pee until center.
Bigger.
I get overwhelmed a lot.
Check yourself out in the mirror without anyone noticing
Notice someone else doing it too
Check your phone
Get nervous that you haven’t taken class
Someone will notify the higher ups that you’re slacking
Quickly make something of yourself
I sometimes forget that other people think of me when I’m not there.”

The poem does a compelling job of encompasses the internal and external pressure placed on the individual dancer. She reflects on the compulsive behaviors she’s developed such as counting the number of times she refills her water bottle, waiting until the middle of class (in between barre and center exercises) until she can go to the bathroom, and checking her phone for schedule updates. These little behaviors are ways that she has to alter her thinking in order to meet the demands of her training, the institution at large gains control of the whole of the student body through enforcing rules on individual bodies (Foucault, 1977).

Further, the poem reflects on presentation of self, self-existence of self, and internalized characteristics of presentation for the self of a dancer. Her discussion of the mirror in respect to her existence expresses and forgetting that others think of her express is reminiscent of feeling disposable or replaceable as a dancer, something she discussed with disgust and discomfort during her interview. The looking-glass self creates a system by which individual measures their appearance and presentation to be either positive or negative in the eyes of others (Cooley, 1902). The mirror in the dance studio focuses the dancer on their physical appearance and visual quality of their dancing at the current moment, allowing them the opportunity to judge their
physical appearance and performance. Management and judgement of appearance in the mirror “without anyone noticing” employs Goffman’s theory of presentation of self, where there is a private self that is only experienced in the “backstage” before it adopts a social front as dictated by social role “onstage” (1956).

Additionally, a great deal of the project was an improvisation score. An improvisation score is a map of improvisational tasks and cues that dancers move through. A majority of the movement done by the dancers was left up to them. Throughout the rehearsal process, we played with a “baseline” phrase that dancers were able to use as movement inspiration, a common place of return and relation, disorder, reorder, or discard. They could use any, all, some, or none of the phrase I gave to them. This allowed them the freedom to be as virtuous as they desired, or as simple as they desired. The power to choose how they moved their own bodies and related to other bodies, created an evolving work that lost social, personal, and external expectations as we progressed. This gave the dancers a new social script to their role in the creative process. They held more autonomy and a different kind of responsibility to the group that other processes.

We explored a more traditional way of teaching movement, when I tried to set a unison phrase on the dancers. I become very uncomfortable with the shift in the group’s dynamics. I felt I was taking something away from the dancers, for the sake of creating a “better” piece. My initial interest in setting unison was to create a direct contrast to the freedom in the rest of the work. I thought it could express the absurdity of asking dancers to all look the same. I found the rigidity of getting our bodies to that point did not feed the process, myself, or the dancers the way I wanted to. The process of setting material, setting counts, and unifying the group so that each dancer had similar understandings of the movement gave me a lot of anxiety as the
rehearsal director. I experienced both guilt for asking the dancers to think in a different way than I had before. It did not feel right to take an authoritative role in the process where we were trying to discover other ways of collaborating. I eventually moved on from the idea of unison for the work, and we forgot the phrase all together. I believe this was a relief not only me, but to the dancers as well. They maintained their freedom.

Towards the end of the process it became evident that I needed to be clearer about who the “leaders” of the group were. From a choreographic standpoint, this would allow the work to develop quicker and make cues clearer between the dancers. My composition teacher informed me that he felt he was ahead of the development of the work as he was watching. He felt as if he was waiting for the piece to make an exciting shift as he was watching, rather than experiencing the typical excitement that comes with live performance. Feeling discouraged by this feedback and a recent head injury, I brought the feedback to the cast. They could not have disagreed more. They felt that they wanted more time to explore the relationships and tasks that had become the work. We decided together that the point of the work is to demand that the audience members engage with the performers in a way that requires patience and sensitivity, rather than expecting to be entertained. This dialogue with the dancers was validating to me as a choreographer/director because it showed that we had formed a deviant community within the conservatory, and were actively saying no to feedback that would make the piece more uniform to student work in the conservatory. My experience in composition class, as a student, was a constant reminder that there was a performative standard that I needed to meet, and hoped to
exceed as a student-choreographer. This conflicted with my intentions as a researcher and aspiring role model for the dancer in the cast.

After our first performance, and an hour before the second, the cast met to warm up and check in. I asked the dancers to reflect on the performance from the night before, and to share any thoughts and feelings they’d like to. Dancer’s expressed that they felt joyful, playful, comfortable in performance. Several noted that it was a relief to not be nervous or anxious before a performance. Another dancer said that throughout the process, she in the back of her mind that we were working towards a performance, but that she had almost forgotten that we were going to show this to people in a formal setting. All of their experiences and comments in performance expressed a true support they felt from each other. As we discussed there were many moments of remembering funny, fun, exciting moments that happened throughout the process, including the first performance. I asked a few of the dancers when they felt empowered during my creative process, to discover what aspects of the process were making a noticeable difference to them. One dancer told me that she felt empowered when I chose to use movement she’d created in the presented work. Another felt empowered by the dialogue I engaged her in, which she later performed.

One of my dancers entered the process later than the rest of the group. She came to me with interest on the topic in the midst of the semester. She was not interviewed, but instead entered into conversation with the cast upon her arrival. The effect of her late entrance to the material and the group, she only danced at the end of the piece. She performed a solo improvisation score that explored her chosen “safe place”. When she exited her safe space the
other dancers became obstacles to her, presenting her with the opportunity of how to interact with them. Prior to our second performance, she told the group the first performance of the piece was the first time she’d performed without pain for 6 years. The nature of her ability to choose how she needed to move and dance because of the improvisation, tone of the piece, and community we built created a support space for her to make healthy decisions for herself.

Conclusion

These stories are particulary pressing due to the visibility of sexual assault survivors in dance. I did not ask any of the dancers if they’d experienced sexual assault from a teacher, choreographer, or peer in the conservatory. From observation and my personal relationships, I know that the physical and sexual wellbeing of students has been compromised by those in superior positions of power in the conservatory. This predatory presence is not always explicit, but can come from simple commentary from teachers that gender, sexualize, or inappropriately critique a student’s body. It should be no surprise that an industry surrounding relationships and feelings with the body, reflects social issues that wider society is confronting at the same time. The pressure and expectations discussed in this study are evidence enough on the capacity that students dancers feel they need to perform to the requests of others. #WeToo and #DancersToo need to be heard as legitimate movements that could completely alter the way we teach dance, learn dance, choreograph, and collaborate by holding institutions and perpetrators accountable
for their actions by changing the standard of pedagogical and institutional care to the benefit of
the student dancer and working dancer. The dancing body is not asking for it.

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