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## A Dancing Paradox: Oral Histories of Dance Pedagogy

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A DANCING PARADOX: ORAL HISTORIES OF DANCE PEDAGOGY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Stephanie Marie Anderson

December 2013

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The Designated Committee Approves the Thesis Titled  
A DANCING PARADOX: ORAL HISTORIES OF DANCE PEDAGOGY

by

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## ABSTRACT

### A DANCING PARADOX: ORAL HISTORIES OF DANCE PEDAGOGY

by Stephanie Marie Anderson

This research investigates how dancers constitute and make sense of themselves and the worlds they live in through the interstitial, and intersectional processes of remembering. I investigate the following two research questions within this thesis: 1) How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? 2) What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and when they are literally danced? I frame the first research question within my literature review and I investigate what I call Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. While the characteristics of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy are not universal, unchanging, and absolute, they are important markers of the dominant pedagogical practices in dance environments. I frame the second research question within my chapter on method and methodology. My research method moves through five steps: 1) Qualitative In-Depth Interviews. 2) Collaborative Rehearsals. 3) Live Public Performances Question and Answer Sessions. 5) Wrap-up interviews. I discuss how the steps of my method shaped the results of both research questions. I then present the results of both research questions and deconstruct the research. This research was greatly shaped by the intersecting contradictions of past histories, and the productive unplanned tensions that moved each story to the future.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

. . . a vision that accounts for how power is at play within the moment of our bodies in contact, our experiences in dialogue, with others. (Fassett & Warren, 2007, p. 103)

. . . public education does not serve a public. It *creates* a public. (Postman, 1995, p. 18)

This stranger's strange story became part of my body, my experience . . . I found myself (beyond myself) at once taming and containing the impact of this story through the accumulation and comparison of other stories. . . . (Pollock, 1999, p. 3)

My mother enrolled me in my first dance class when I was two and a half years old. I have spent the past 24 years of my life as a dancer, and I have built various memories in the process. Some of my memories echo with aspects of passion, love, and joy, while other memories exude hints of competition, jealousy, and heartbreak. My memories of those days were shaped by the stories and photographs others shared with me. My family performed the choreography and the lyrics of my first dance performance back to me numerous times. I have also seen videos of myself performing the same choreography and the same lyrics in front of an audience. As a result, I can remember the exact costume, the exact choreography, and the exact lyrics I performed on stage when I was two and a half years old.

In contrast, I do not remember much about my experiences in the studio at that age or whether I enjoyed going to class. My parents were not allowed in dance rehearsals, and I have not been exposed to any pictures taken during class. I am unable to remember these moments because I have not heard stories of what I did in these moments, and I have not reflected on my dance classes in pictures or videos. Since I did

not externally nor internally reflect about these moments, they are difficult for me to recall. Although I have been told I “instantly” fell in love with dance, that “instant” was constructed during my performance on stage, rather than during rehearsal. While some of my memories constituted a love and passion for dance on the stage, there were also many moments of heartbreak, frustration, deceit, anger, objectification, and competition within the studio.

My graduate work in communication studies taught me that memories are co-constructed through the ever-changing, constitutive process of dialogue. As Pollock (2003) explains:

. . . oral history is a process of *making history in dialogue*, it is performative. It is cocreated, co-embodied, specifically framed, contextually and intersubjectively contingent, sensuous, vital, artful in its achievement of narrative form, meaning, and ethics . . . . (p. 2)

Social realities are created through internal discussion with self and external discussion with others. *How* we remember and *who* we remember with affects *what* we remember. History is constituted through the process of reflecting, and sharing experiences. Each time a person presents a history, the history is (re)constructed based on the context in which it is shared and the responses it elicits.

I began to wonder how my dance memories were built and what kinds of dialogue played a role in the process. I began to question how the style of pedagogy practiced within dance traditions shaped my discussions with other dancers. I began to wonder whether – and to what extent – my memories continued to transform as they were presented to new audiences and through different means of communication. I began to question how other dancers built their realities through the process of dialogue. I began

to reflect on my own positive and negative memories as a dancer, but I also wanted to know more about how other dancers remembered their pedagogical experiences in the studio.

This study investigates how dancers constitute and make sense of themselves and the worlds they live in through the collaborative process of remembering. More specifically, it investigates how dancers shape and reshape their realities about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy through the interstitial, and intersectional processes of communication. It examines how oral histories continue to transform as they are co-constructed with different audiences and as they are performed through different means of communication. I did not aspire to find definitive, generalizable “Truths” about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy; rather, I aimed to consider how some dancers constitute their realities through the collaborative and contextual process of sharing oral histories. I moved towards this research in hopes of understanding how we might remember our experiences more productively, and how we might engage in more humane pedagogical practices. I aimed to co-create specific shared spaces where other dancers and I re-membered our histories on stage and in the studio.

I focused my inquiry around two research questions. My first research question was: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? I hoped for this question to generate knowledge about how Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy shapes the way dancers make sense of their lives inside the studio. My second research question was: What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances and

when they are literally danced? I hoped for this question to generate knowledge about how various forms of communication (re)constitute memories.

As I conducted the study, I gradually discovered that dancers remember their pedagogical experiences as intersecting paradoxes. Dancers commonly intersect negative moments in dance environments with positive moments. The dancers I interviewed intertwined all of the positive and negative qualities in ways that engulfed each other. Each of the negative qualities constituted the positive qualities and vice versa. For example, moments of pain intersected with aspects of joy. The dancers' pain and sacrifice demonstrated their love and passion. They could not separate one from the other because without the pain, their love would not be as intense, or may not exist. The dancers described each of their memories of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy in ways that sounded like complex, multilayered, paradoxes.

This study also provided information about what happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances and when they are literally danced. I gradually noticed various productive unplanned tensions arising while I investigated this research question. I encountered unexpected moments of turmoil as I moved through each step of the method. The interviewees and I produced significant results within these moments. The interviewees, the audience, and I were forced to instinctually respond to each other in ways that exposed even more information about the stories. Everyone involved in the research approached the stories from intersecting lenses that exposed various layers of information about the stories. As a result, the stories became much fuller, and everyone involved in the research really paid attention to each others' bodies in ways that required

trust and compassion. In sum: Each person involved in this study exposed intricate intersecting qualities of her/his identities and contributed to the stories in ways that made them much fuller than before.

As I previously mentioned, each person involved in the study contributed to the research that emerged. Since I was also involved in the research, I contributed to the information that emerged. I did not overpower this study with my own personal agenda, nor did I attempt to overshadow the interviewees' stories with my own experiences. In contrast, my interpretations of this research were politically, morally, and intersectionally shaped by my past. My intersecting experiences and identities shaped the way I interpreted this research. My voice and the voice of my intersecting past can be heard within the interpretations I made while analyzing this research. My voice and the voice of previous teachers, peers, family members, and friends, can also be heard in the words I write on these pages. Although I am only one person, I have been shaped by the people I have interacted with throughout my lifetime. Each person, and each of those moments have shaped this research in very specific ways.

For example, my dance training not only shaped my body, but it also shaped my mind. I now approach my writing as a choreographer setting a piece. I view each sentence as a "phrase" of movement. I use choreographic devices while choosing each word I write. I consider where the rises and falls will land on the page. I think about how I can use aspects of theme and variation to really get my point across. I vary the time, space, and energy of each sentence by using symbols of punctuation, instead of symbols of movement. I intersect the world of academia and the world of dance in ways

that construct one another. I am guided by my desires to display the correct technique of the past, while aiming to still move more freely to the future. Although I strive to break away from the traditions of the past, those traditions can still be heard within the intersections of my life and the intersections of this research.

## **Preview**

I make these opposing desires apparent within my writing. Although I include moments of passion and expression, I also display moments of discipline and technique. While my disciplined training can be heard in every chapter, I particularly emphasize aspects of discipline within the second chapter of this research. I articulate each idea, just as a dancer would attempt to clearly articulate aspects of technique on stage or in the studio. I organize my writing in ways that are apparent and precise so the audience can follow along. I let the discipline of my past greatly be heard within the structure of chapter two.

More specifically, within chapter two, I offer a literature review investigating what I call Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy<sup>1</sup>. While the characteristics of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy are not universal, unchanging, and absolute, they are important markers of the dominant pedagogical practices in dance studios. I take a critical stance while researching the role of sorting, banking, alienation, technique, privilege, pain, power, gender, and joy within this style of pedagogy. I use this segment of my research to explore the types of spaces where dancers have conversations, and

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy is the term I will use to describe the most common form of pedagogy traditionally used within Western dance studios. This style of pedagogy can be seen within ballet, jazz, lyrical, tap, and hip-hop classes. Although dancers perform different technique in each of these styles, dance teachers practice very similar models of pedagogy within each class.

construct their memories. This chapter also investigates how the structures of these spaces influence the dancers' memories. Finally, this chapter locates my study within broader conversations taking place about pedagogy within the field of communication studies. I hope the sequential organization of my analysis will offer some insight into how different contexts affect the processes and products of remembering.

I also display the discipline of my past training within my third chapter. I organize each step of the process, just as a dancer would move from first position, to second position, to third position, to fourth position, and to fifth position. I categorize my method in ways that are clearly structured so the audience can follow along. I created the method in ways that would produce the clearest and most precise results. Although I write with the specificity of a trained dancer, the methodological perspectives I describe in this chapter intersect and contradict with the rigidity of my writing style. I ultimately begin to display how these intersecting paradoxes make themselves apparent within my research.

More specifically, I use chapter three to discuss my research method and locate my study in conversations about performance and oral history. This chapter frames my second research question about dancing oral histories, and also outlines the steps I took while conducting my research. My method includes five steps. 1) In-Depth Qualitative Interviews: I conducted an initial interview that was approached as a contact improvisation. I more fully explain this process within the chapter. Since most dancers had extremely full schedules, the qualitative interviews lasted 1-2 hours. These sessions explored how memories were discussed and constructed during in-depth qualitative

interviews. 2) Collaborative Rehearsals: Once the interviews were conducted, the respondent and I co-choreographed performances about the ideas we explored in the interviews. These sessions investigated how – or if – oral histories transformed as they were discussed through movement. 3) Live Public Performances: My collaborators and I performed these dances on stage, in front of an audience. These sessions explored whether oral histories continued to transform as they were shared with new audiences. 4) Question and Answer Sessions: The audience and I participated in question and answer sessions after the performances. These sessions provided some insight about what the performances constituted for everyone involved. These sessions also investigated how the audience discussed and constructed their memories about various forms of pedagogy after the performance. 5) Wrap-up interviews: Finally, I interviewed the dancers again after the performances and discussed how – or if – the oral histories transformed after they were danced. These sessions explored how the respondent's memories of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy progressed during the process.

As I move to the fourth chapter, I gradually include moments of full bodied liberation. Although I still rely on the structure of my disciplined past, I also begin to see more intersecting identities and histories emerge. I use these intersections to more critically investigate the various layers of history explored within this research.

More specifically, I present a discussion of my research findings in chapter four. This chapter describes what happened when I put my research methods into practice. It also discusses themes that emerged within each step of the method. I first discuss how the dancers remembered their pedagogical experiences within dance studios as

intersectional paradoxes. I then discuss the productive unplanned tensions that contributed to the intersectional histories presented within each step of the method.

After, I discuss how these intersections made the stories fuller than before.

I begin to more fully embrace moments of expression and freedom as I move into my fifth chapter. I am reflexive about the research, and the results produced. I investigate how my own interpretations intersect with the research. I deconstruct aspects of my own identity and the identities of others in order to fully investigate how each person contributed to the results. I break away from the ridged structure of my previous writing techniques in order to give a voice to the complex moments that humans experience inside and outside of the discipline.

More specifically, I summarize and deconstruct my research in my fifth chapter. I also offer implications for broader conversations within communication studies. I first discuss how communication scholars interested in pedagogy may benefit from research about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. I then discuss how communication scholars interested in oral histories may benefit from research about dancing oral histories. I then present possibilities for future investigation about these topics.

Although I use each chapter to present my research, my research also intersects with numerous other voices of my past. I present moments of strict discipline and liberated freedom within my writing. Although I did not intend for my writing to display these opposing intersections, they still made themselves visible. I have been shaped by the intersections of these opposing views, and these opposing views can be seen within

my writing and my research. I am now aware of how these paradoxes continue to fuel each other in ways that transcend to the future.

I am also aware of how non dancers may benefit from this research. Although this study specifically explores dance pedagogy, it also demonstrates how human realities are constructed through the intersecting paradoxes of life. Memories and realities are built within liminal moments of intersecting tension. I faced many of these liminal tensions as I transitioned from my dance career, into the world of academia. I unintentionally displayed these transitional moments within my writing as I moved through this study. Each chapter demonstrates who I was within that liminal moment of my life. The same can be said about each person I interviewed. Each interviewee provided me with a glimpse of the reality being created through the interstitial process of moving through intersecting histories and paradoxes. This study begins to explore how we co-constitute our past, present, and future as we move through intersecting paradoxes, and it also investigates how we might move through such paradoxes in new, meaningful, interesting, and productive ways.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Education is . . . part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and disorganize a people. (Apple, 1996, p. 22)

Education has traditionally been a way to acculturate the young, to socialize them into the larger community and thus perpetuate it; this is the reproductive function of education. Traditional methods for teaching dance technique fulfill this function. (Stinson, 1998, p. 27)

This chapter presents a collection of literature that critically analyzes how dance teachers and students perform Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy<sup>2</sup>. Although critical communication pedagogy scholars have examined similar aspects of pedagogy within academic settings, I will specifically discuss how these pedagogical practices are performed within dance studios. I structure this chapter with the technique and discipline of a dancer and an academic. I use this disciplined style of writing in order to make the traditions of my past training apparent. I first present ten main qualities that I have witnessed within Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. These ten qualities are: Sorting, banking, alienation, technique, privilege, pain, power, internalization, objectification, and joy. I hope each of these sections provide insight about my first research question: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? Each portion of this chapter describes the types of discursive spaces in which dancers create their memories about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. Lastly, I discuss how the

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<sup>2</sup> Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy is the term I will use to describe the most common form of pedagogy traditionally used within Western dance studios. This style of pedagogy can be seen within ballet, jazz, lyrical, tap, and hip-hop classes. Although dancers perform different technique in each of these styles, dance teachers practice very similar models of pedagogy within each class. I am capitalizing here for the sake of discussing a set of discursive trends. I recognize that not ALL dance teachers do ALL of these things ALL of the time. The capitalized phrase is useful shorthand for talking about dominant trends.

information explored within this chapter can contribute to broader conversations about pedagogy within the field of communication studies.

### **The Tradition of Sorting**

Students are shaped through everyday performances practiced within systems of education. Teachers and students reward some performances with praise and other performances with punishment. Cultural, political, and socio-economic surroundings determine what behavior is acceptable and what behavior is not. Those who have “mastered” the desirable behavior move up within the system. Often, those who naturally perform within the status quo do not find fault in the process because they have benefited from the experience. In contrast, students who have been marginalized, labeled, and ignored are frequently punished for questioning or resisting such structural standards. As Gallegos (2005) explains, education is a sorting process and some students need to fail in order for other students to succeed (p. 108). Students are sorted by their ability to perform in ways that align with their teacher’s expectations. This sorting process can be seen in academic classrooms and in studio settings.

Dance teachers use the process of sorting to rank their students. They commonly praise dancers who comply with their rules and perform adequate dance technique. Dance teachers also sort their students based on their appearance. Dance teachers, judges, and casting directors commonly place a heightened awareness on physical characteristics such as age, gender, and race. Dancers are expected to perform accurate dance technique, and they are also expected to look the part. Even if a dancer has adequate technique, her/his appearance, gender, age, or ethnicity may not be ideal for the

open position. Ultimately, dance teachers sort their students by rewarding dancers who replicate the teacher's agenda, perform accurate technique, and physically appear as the teacher desires.

### **The Tradition of Banking**

Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy is very similar to the style of pedagogy commonly seen within Western classroom settings for hundreds of years. Freire (1993) labels this method of teaching as the banking model:

1. the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
2. the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
3. the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
4. the teacher talks and the students listen –meekly;
5. the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
6. the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
7. the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
8. the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
9. the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
10. the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects. (p. 73)

Teachers who practice this style of pedagogy are viewed as “experts” who deposit information into their students’ bodies and minds. In response, students become passive objects who are trained to memorize and regurgitate information. If students struggle with this style of learning, they are typically provided with negative labels and are marginalized. As a result, dance students continuously strive to replicate the information their dance teachers present.

Dance teachers who use Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy commonly locate themselves as Subjects, and their students as objects (Freire, 1993, p. 71). This means dance teachers position themselves as the source of knowledge within the studio. Dancers are taught their human experiences and realities are insignificant in comparison to the dance teacher's knowledge about the discipline. As Freire (1993) describes, "His task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance" (p. 71). Dance teachers educate students about dance technique that has been passed down for centuries, but they do not discuss where that technique comes from, how it relates to the students' lives, or how it perpetuates various ideologies.

Dance teachers also commonly deposit their choreography onto students' bodies. Dance students strive to replicate the teacher's movement, rather than creating movement of their own. Dance teachers reward students for being passive objects who replicate ideas and performances commonly seen within the discipline. Even when dance teachers encourage their students to relate the choreography to their own lives, the dance teacher's movement is still positioned as the Subject. Although some dance teachers may advise their students to connect to the choreography, the students are still required to fit their experiences into the dance teacher's predetermined movement. Even though dancers may identify with other people in these moments, their own experiences are always put second to the teacher's experiences. The dancer's embodied knowledge is gradually shaped by dance teachers choreography and the technique surrounding the art form.

Dance teachers condition their students to express themselves in specific ways through this process. Even though the dancers may be able to relate to the emotion within the dance teacher's choreography and technique, the dancers are continually shaping their own experiences around the dance teacher's life, and the dance technique required. Dance students are not encouraged to choreograph movement that puts their own experiences first; rather, dance teachers encourage their students to find ways to perform the journey of the teacher's life. As the dance teacher's agenda is put first, the dance students are expected to find resonance within the movement being explored.

### **The Tradition of Alienation**

As dancers embody the dance teacher's choreography, they may begin to feel distanced from the work they produce. Every time a dancer performs, the dance teacher still lives within the labor the students manufacture. According to Marx (1977, 1983), the workers' efforts become "things" that are owned by the capitalists. The dancer's success becomes property of the dance teacher, rather than the student. Dance students commonly become alienated from their work because they feel that it does not belong to them. Dancers may also feel that they are performing in ways that benefit the success of the dance teacher, rather than themselves. Dancers ultimately disconnect from their work as they embody their teacher's choreography and traditional Western dance technique.

### **The Tradition of Technique**

Western dance technique is the backbone of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. Dance teachers have passed this technique down to their students for

centuries. New dancers who attempt to perform this technique quickly discover how unnatural the art form feels on their bodies. Hamera (2007) explains, “The illusion of two dimensionality is the ideal, as in ‘turn out,’ which rotates the upper thighs and, in turn, knees and toes away from the body so that, when feet are positioned with heels together, they form a line at a perfect 180°” (p. 67). Although many dancers strive to appear two dimensional, their bodies are not naturally made to perform this ideal. Dance teachers and dance students push, mold, and restructure their bodies through the dance pedagogy they practice. Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy is ultimately shaped by the standards the dance technique demands.

Dance technique is the direct component that connects trained dancers to their history. On the one hand, dancers aim to perform dance technique the same way it has been performed for generations. On the other hand, dancers also aspire to surpass the previously established limits of technique. Dancers are constantly attempting to overcome their own limits. Once a dancer is comfortable with one step, s/he will make the step more difficult, and attempt to master it again. If the dancer is able to master the more challenging step, s/he again will make the step more complex, and strive to perform the step adequately. Hamera (2007) explains:

The voices of and in technique are not only those of the here and the now; they are also those of the there and then. Protocols for reading and writing bodies look forward and backward at the same time, to performers who might be and performers who were. Technique in this view is an archive. (p. 6)

Dancers aim to both replicate and surpass previous dance technique. As a result, each generation of new dancers replicate technique of the past, and make technique of the future more virtuosic.

Dancers are able to connect to the past, present, and future as they embody dance technique. In many ways, dance technique is the language that holds Western dance cultures together. As Hamera (2007) explains:

In critical terms, ‘technique,’ like ‘aesthetics,’ is a useful synecdoche for the complex webs of relations that link performers to particular subjectivities, histories, practices, and to each other...technique inserts its object bodies into language, offering a common idiom through which these bodies are examined, described, and remade. (p. 5)

Dancers are held together by the technique they perform. Young dancers learn how to speak the language of movement through the dance pedagogy used within studios.

Dancers also learn the requirements of this language by applying corrections from their teachers, and by witnessing the performances of other dancers. Most dancers become acculturated to the language of technique by following the guidelines presented by the status quo.

Although many dancers learn how to replicate the technique expected by teachers, students are not encouraged to ask critical questions about the movement they perform. Many dancers do not question their teachers about this information because Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy commonly discourages dialogue. Dancers learn to replicate their teachers’ movement in order to fulfill the demands of the discipline: Dancers learn *what* to do, but unfortunately, they are not informed *why* some movement is classified as beautiful and other movement is considered ugly. Dancers rarely have conversation

about *who* established such standards. Shapiro (1998) criticizes this approach to pedagogy by stating:

. . . our educational systems do little in the ways of relating knowing, in connecting students' lives to the curriculum, in valuing students' voices, in processing self- and social understanding in relationship to the dominant ideology, or in assisting in their development as critical and creative human beings concerned with broader social issues. (p. 13)

Since dancers are not commonly encouraged to think critically about dance technique, they do not investigate the ideologies that have shaped the art form. Dance teachers who practice Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy do not commonly encourage their students to push against the norms. Instead, dance teachers strive for their students to replicate the traditions of the art form. Dancers do not typically examine these practices because they learn they are praised when they follow directions, and rewarded when they perform their teacher's desires. Dance teachers who use Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy do not encourage students to dialogue about who shaped the standards of dance technique.

### **The Tradition of Privilege**

Dance technique is the foundation of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy, and it was created in spaces of privilege. In many ways, dance teachers require their students to perform correct technique, just as English teachers require their students to perform correct grammar. Ironically, both configurations were created in spaces of privilege. People of privilege were responsible for creating "correct" grammar, just as people of privilege were responsible for creating "correct" dance technique. Ultimately, dance teachers strive for their students to perform technique that embodies privilege.

The very first ballet dancers were wealthy, White, straight, able-bodied, and commonly male (Speck & Cisneros, 2003, p. 11). King Louis XIV was particularly fond of dancing and was responsible for making ballet more widely known. Although people with less wealth did participate in “peasant” or folk dances, ballet was reserved for the elite. Most common people were unable to replicate the style without training since ballet required technical skills that did not feel natural for the body to execute. The elites’ ability to perform privileged dance technique separated them from the peasants. Privileged people were able to observe and learn the style first hand, and have an advantage in mastering the art form. These people demonstrated and embodied privilege as they performed Western dance technique. Similarly, people who currently perform Western dance technique embody a history of privilege.

Although many dancers strive to perform technique accurately, it is important to note that this art form was created on privileged bodies. The people who shaped this technique had different bodies than many of the people who perform the technique today. Dancers with various ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds currently perform this art form. Even though these dancers may have very different bodies, they still aspire to perform the same ways the white, straight, wealthy, privileged, able bodied pioneers of ballet performed in the past. Hamera (2007) explains, “The archive of technique, like the closets filled with the clothes of a dead relative, are haunted places that beckon with the promise of rediscovery or beg for exorcism” (p. 8). As dancers aim to perform adequate technique, their performances perpetuate whiteness within the discipline. Dancers are not typically encouraged to

investigate this ideology within the culture, and they are punished if they perform outside of the status quo.

As dancers perform technique that echoes with whiteness and privilege, their bodies are shaped and reshaped by their teachers' feedback. Dancers' bones, joints, and muscles are molded to perform the specific ideal. Even though dancers are expected to demonstrate white ideologies within ballet technique, (in)visible aspects of culture, sexual orientation, and wealth, are at times overlooked by the dancer's ability to perform the technique accurately. If a dancer fully embodies the ideologies of whiteness seen within dance technique, s/he is praised. Dancers who resist ideologies of whiteness within Western dance technique are often marginalized. As a result, even white bodies are marginalized if they cannot keep up with the demands of the ideology. Hamera (2007) states "we're all coming together but every single one of us is from a different city, different life, different culture . . ." (p. 86). Even though all dancers may be very different, they are all united within their ability to perform ideologies of whiteness through their dance technique.

### **The Tradition of Pain**

Dancers commonly push themselves to unbearable limits while they learn how to perform accurate dance technique. Dance teachers may advise their students to listen to their bodies, but on the other hand, dance teachers also explain that every day is a day to improve. Many dancers put their health at risk by dancing on extreme injuries, or attending class while severely ill. At times, dancers may find commonality while

discussing the pain they work through during dance rehearsal. Fassett and Warren (2007) describe this process in an academic setting by stating:

I wore each of my illnesses like a badge of honor, as did my colleagues... It's not so much that these are things to be proud of – I don't think anyone would go there – but more about what we had to sacrifice to achieve our goals . . . a life of the mind means sacrificing the body. (p. 138)

Dancers also commonly discuss what they have sacrificed in order to accomplish their goals. Although dancers are living a life of the body, they continue to sacrifice their bodies as well. For example, dancers roll up their pants to display scars as decorations, and they engage in conversations about their latest torn muscle. Even though dancers show off these injuries in order to display their dedication, they silence their complaints as soon as rehearsal begins.

Dance teachers and students aim to prove their determination by working through the pain during rehearsal. If a dancer is able to walk with a limp, then s/he is expected to perform on stage with a smile. Dancers commonly feel pressure to perform on injuries because they do not want to let their fellow performers down. They also commonly believe their fellow dancers could be experiencing the same amount of pain, or more. Hamera interviewed a dancer who (2007) explains:

When everybody's legs are hurting nobody wants to hear whining about it in class. Just work it out. We're all hurting and we all get through it. Pain is background noise. In rehearsal especially you don't want someone calling your attention to it. You just deal. (p. 99)

Dancers commonly look down on injured students for sitting out because they typically feel as if they are experiencing just as much pain as the injured dancer. The students also

commonly compare their current pain to the injured student's claims. It is common for dance students to believe their pain is just as intense as the injured students, or worse. The injured student may also feel as if s/he is causing everyone more stress by having to re-block the entire dance. Finally, dancers commonly perform on injuries because they feel they have worked too hard to miss out on the rewards of performing. Dancers continue to dance on injuries – and generate new injuries – in order to avoid criticism and shame from fellow students and teachers.

### **The Tradition of Power**

Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy is interwoven with various dynamics of power. Dance teachers, dancers, and the physical surroundings built into dance studio allow power to consistently move around the space. Dance teachers and dancers do not particularly own or “hold” power; rather, power is a fluid force created through the embodied, mundane performances expected within the discipline. Fraser (1981) explains, “power is instantiated in mundane social practices and relations” (p. 280). Mckerrow (1989) further states, “Power, in this context, is not a *possession or content* – it is instead an integral part of social relations” (p. 99). As dancers embody everyday actions, they establish what a dancer's public performance should look like. If a dancer does not perform accurately, then that dancer is marginalized. Similarly, dance teachers embody mundane actions that establish how dance teachers should perform. As dancers and dance teachers perform repetitive and stylized acts, they build the social norms of that culture. If dancers or dance teachers do not perform within the social norms, they are punished and marginalized.

Dance teachers also use many of the same bases of power that take place in academic classrooms. McCroskey and Richmond (1983) use French and Raven's (1968) bases of power to describe the types of power that take place within classrooms. They describe five different bases of power that shape the classroom experience. Those bases are: Coercive Power, Reward Power, Legitimate Power, Referent Power, and Expert Power (p. 176-177). Coercive Power convinces students that they will be punished by their teachers if they do not follow her/his rules. Reward Power takes place when the teacher rewards students for complying with her/his requests. Legitimate Power has to do with the teacher's ability to convince the class that s/he is the only person in the classroom allowed to make demands strictly because s/he "holds" the position of power in the room. Referent Power has to do with the students' desire to please the instructor because of their admiration toward him/her. Finally, Expert Power takes place when students believe that the teacher has obtained her/his position because s/he is an expert in the field being studied. Although academic teachers may experience these types of power, dance teachers encounter these experiences as well.

Dance teachers also commonly use many of the Behavior Alteration Techniques (BAT's) that Kearney, Plax, Richmond, and McCroskey (1985) examine. Although dance teachers practice these BAT's in the studio, they also commonly perform techniques that Kearney, Plax, Richmond, and McCroskey did not mention. Dance teachers typically use teaching techniques that encourage competition between students. They also use techniques that make their favorite students visible. It is common for dance teachers to say things like, "You need to be performing as well as Katie," or "If

you want to be in front, you need to perform your technique as well as Johnny.” Dance teachers do not only encourage competition between students when they use this technique, but they also draw attention to their favorite students.

Dance students perform in ways that comply with the teacher’s expectations in hopes of being named the dance teacher’s favorite. James Scott (1990) describes these performances as public transcripts, and states:

The public transcript . . . is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation . . . The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear. The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail. (p. 3-4)

Dance students perform the way their dance teachers request in order to move up within the system. Although dancers perform public transcripts that display the dance teacher’s desires, it does not mean these performances display the entire experience of the dancer. Dancers may comply with the performances expected by their teachers, but they may also perform differently when their teachers are not around.

At times, dancers may resist the performance they display in the studio by performing differently when their teachers are not present. Scott (1990) describes these performances as hidden transcripts, and states:

I shall use the term *hidden transcript* to characterize discourse that takes place “offstage,” beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript. (p. 5)

Dancers commonly talk about their teachers when their teachers are not around. The dancers may discuss their experiences differently than if the dance teacher was present during the conversation. In many ways, dancers create and shape their perceptions of the teacher as they share these private transcripts with each other. Although dancers may become united while performing these hidden transcripts, they may also continue to perform public transcripts that fulfill the dance teacher's desires in hopes of moving up within the system.

### **The Tradition of Internalization**

Dance students experience a significant amount of tension as they move between these public and hidden transcripts. Although students may feel close to their peers while they discuss their hidden transcripts, they may also experience a significant amount of competition towards each other while they perform their public transcripts. One of Hamera's (2007) interviewees explains this process by stating:

We were on the same wavelength. Different backgrounds, different personalities, and we each pretty much found ourselves. It's something the ambience of the school [Le Studio] brought together. We were allowed to be very friendly – very competitive – but we were dear to each other. (p. 86)

While dancers are united in their struggles, they still experience a significant amount of competition between each other. As dancers aim for their teachers to reward them as the favorite, they are united in their struggles, yet distanced by their rivalry.

Although dancers commonly become very close to their peers while discussing hidden transcripts, they also learn to despise their classmates while in the studio. Freire (1993) explains, "Because the oppressor exists within their oppressed comrades, when

they attack those comrades they are indirectly attacking the oppressor as well” (p. 62). Dancers can still see the oppressor within their peers regardless of whether their dance teacher uses competition as a teaching technique. Dancers commonly fight, resist, put down, or insult each other in an attempt to attack the oppressor that lives within one another. Dancers again display the behavior of the oppressor as they participate in these performances. The most successful dancers are the ones who manifest the desires of the oppressor within themselves. These dancers also commonly experience the most conflict with other dancers who wish to push against the oppressor.

The oppressor can also be seen within the dancer herself. The dancer eventually begins to see herself the same way her teacher does. As a result, she begins to engage in the process of oppression upon herself. Dancers are able to participate in self policing through the process of observing themselves in the mirror. Sadono, R. (1999) explains:

During ballet class, the student projects herself into the mirror as a screen which frames the Ballet Myth, forming a kind of self-policing gaze that merges with the omnipotent gaze of the teacher to colonize the dancer’s body and her being. The mirror plays a role whereby the dancer lives out a sense of incorrectness and strives for an ideal correctness which is awarded by the teacher/mirror. (p. 167)

Dancers continue to oppress themselves through the act of self policing. The oppressor’s voice lives in the corrections the dancer applies to herself. The oppressor manifests in the dancer as she strives to perform the way the dance teacher and the technique demands.

Dance students who encounter Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy ultimately experience a vast amount of internal conflict. Dance students may actually despise their teachers, but will still work endlessly to win the teacher’s approval. Dance teachers push their students beyond their limits by encouraging the students to earn their spot as the

favorite. As dancers aspire for the dance teacher to name them as the best dancer in the room, they do not question what is being demanded. Dance students graciously comply with whatever the dance teacher says in order to hopefully be named the favorite. Once dancers are rewarded with that title, they experience envy and respect from everyone in the studio. Although dancers may work continuously to earn the respect of their teacher and classmates, it does not mean that dance teachers are required to provide every student with the opportunity to be the favorite.

Although it may appear as though the dance teacher is the person to blame, this is not necessarily true. Dance teachers and dance students are all expected to perform the social norms that previous generations of dancers established. If anyone – including the dance teacher – does not fulfill such performances, s/he may be criticized. Dance teachers and dance students learn how to perform within dance cultures by witnessing and recreating the performances they observe within the discipline. They then attempt to replicate such performances in an effort to fulfill the status quo, and avoid punishment from teachers, students, and parents.

Since dance teachers are not typically taught how to teach dance, many of them replicate the “banking” model of pedagogy their own dance teachers displayed. Although it may appear as if the dance teacher is the oppressor and the students are the oppressed, the truth is dance teachers are still oppressed by the traditions the art form. As Freire (1993) describes, “Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity” (p. 45). In this sense, the dance student’s ideal is to be a dance teacher; but for her/him, to be a dance teacher is to be an oppressor.

In the end, dance students grow up to be dance teachers who replicate the oppression their own teachers modeled.

Dance teachers commonly receive their position of power because they are capable of performing correctly. Although many dance teachers obtain the ability to perform well, it does not always mean that they are born with the inherent ability to teach well. While some new teachers strive to create their own style of pedagogy, others follow the same models their own teachers used. The dancers who are most likely to become dance teachers are those who most benefit from existing pedagogical models; they are thus those most likely not to question the status quo.

### **The Tradition of Objectification**

Dancers also experience heightened moments of objectification within dance settings. Many dancers' bodies and genders are objectified within of the mundane, stylized acts they perform. Since more women participate in Western styles of dance, their gender performances continue to shape the space. Dancers are surrounded by pink tights, satin ballet shoes, glittery tutus, and form-fitting leotards. Dance teachers encourage their students to wear makeup that accentuates their femininity during performance, regardless of the dancer's age, or gender. Women dancers are expected to perform highly feminine gender roles that place beauty as the predominant focus. Dance teachers encourage their female dancers to perform beauty within their technique, and through their physical appearance.

In contrast, male dancers commonly have a very different experience as they move into these highly feminine spaces. As men are submerged into highly feminine

environments, dance teachers still expect them to perform in overly masculine ways. Male dancers are expected to perform dance technique with virtuosity, strength, and a type of power that sets them apart from their female counterparts. Men are expected to lift women above their heads, jump higher than basketball players, and play the role of superheroes within performances. While women dancers are expected to perform delicate beauty, male dancers are expected to perform muscular intensity. As dancers continue to perform these roles, they perpetuate Western ideologies of gender, and their bodies continue to be objectified.

On the other hand, men and women dancers also complicate many Western performances of gender. Although Western styles of dance are usually practiced by more women, the standards and expectations of the discipline are very masculine. Women are expected to perform technique originally created on male bodies. Women aim to eliminate their curves in hopes of being able to execute technique more exceptionally. Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy also does not encourage students to display any sort of negative sentiment towards their teacher's opinions. Regardless if the teacher makes the student feel like an outcast, a disappointment, or a failure, the student is expected to show no emotion. This can be viewed as a very male dominated style of pedagogy.

Stinson (1993) states:

[I]n most dance technique classes, emotional feeling (again, regarded as feminine) is repressed, as students are required to leave any personal concerns outside the studio door. In some classes, even physical feeling is to be ignored no pain, no gain. (p. 29)

Students are expected to suppress these feelings rather than to explore them. As a result, the student's personal voice is again silenced and internalized. Female dancers are encouraged to think like men, while displaying heightened femininity.

Male dancers also experience moments of conflict while moving through dance environments. Dance teachers expect their male dancers to wear traditional dance clothing that suppresses their masculinity. For example, men are expected to wear dance belts that restrict and hide their genitals, to wear tights that objectify their bodies, and to wear makeup that accentuates their femininity. While male dancers perform hyper masculine dance technique, and hyper masculine roles in shows, they also display these performances in highly feminine ways. Even though male dancers may feel comfortable performing femininity within these spaces, they may experience extreme criticism from men who are outside of these environments.

Although non-dancers may criticize male dancers, other dancers often praise men who move through dance spaces. Men are commonly very successful in dance environments because they are able to execute technique with more virtuosity than women. Most men are able to do this because they are naturally born with more strength in their legs, and less curvature to their bodies. Men benefit from these characteristics because they are able to jump higher and turn longer than women. Men also are not required to wear pointe shoes that restrict their ability to move freely. An interviewee of Hamera (2007) explains:

The guys have it so easy – not just in performance but in class too. You know, they don't have to wear pointe shoes, that's the big thing, so they don't have all this pain. And they don't have a clue! And they can be older and fat – well, not

really fat but, you know, a [professional] company will still take them if they're, bigger [ . . . ] And they get all this attention: 'Oooo! *Guys in ballet!* How *special*. ' It sucks (p. 103).

Since men are rarely seen practicing Western styles of dance, they are viewed as being somewhat exotic. Women are more likely to practice the art form, so when men are present in the studio, they stand out. Men also do not typically experience a great amount of pressure to achieve a specific weight because only women are traditionally lifted. Men and women ultimately experience dance environments very differently because of the mundane performances that construct their genders and objectify their bodies within these spaces.

### **The Tradition of Joy**

Although Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy clearly has many negative qualities, there are also many positive aspects of this discipline. Dance students who experience Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy typically begin to form very intricate connections with each other. A dance student interviewed by Hamera (2007) explains:

We don't need to explain it: injuries, aches, we're in tears because our feet are dying and we've got two more hours of rehearsal. We give each other support. We share stories. 'I know. I've had that happen.' There's a huge connection. It's more intimate, especially when you're growing up. (p. 85)

Dancers who live through the pressure of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy are brought together by the experiences taking place within the studio. Students find comfort and support within their own community by discussing their hidden transcripts. Dancers connect with each other because they experience similar moments in the studio. Dancers ultimately form intimacies within their community by discussing the pressure and pain they experience during the process.

Dancers from diverse backgrounds also find comfort in talking to each other about other aspects of life. A dancer describes this scenario by stating:

It's actually so much easier managing teenage stuff with ballet. I don't know where I'd be without it. My girls, we were so close. Whether it was talking about sex or about school, about money, college. (Hamera, 2007, p. 86)

Although dancers may be somewhat competitive within studio settings, they still form intimate relationships through this process. Dancers are brought together by their acts of labor, and discover commonalities within the stories they share. They form intimacies within these spaces, and are continuously connected by these events.

Many dancers also find comfort in practicing Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy because they recognize what is expected of them. Dance teachers demonstrate how technique must be performed, so there is no question about what is being asked of the dancers. Hamera (2007) describes, "the adolescent ballerina who calls barre work 'meditating' because 'it's history, it's not personal'" (p. 7). Many dancers find security in the objectivity of the technique, and enjoy the structure Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy creates. Regardless if the dancer accepts or rejects this style of pedagogy, it is important to note the realities that these methods create.

## **Conclusion**

I consulted some important works of scholarship on pedagogy and dance within this chapter. This literature offers context for my first research question: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? Although dancers may have different memories of their experiences, these are the most common pedagogical

traditions I have seen within dance studios during the past twenty-four years of my dance training. The traditions of sorting, banking, alienation, technique, privilege, pain, power, internalization, objectification, and joy are important markers of the discursive terrain I explored in my interviews. I hope this chapter demonstrates how these traditions also resonate with important themes seen in critical communication pedagogy, as articulated by Freire and others. I do not offer them as absolute, universal, and unchanging rules of dance pedagogy, but as a framework to understand the results of my proposed study. I also hope this chapter demonstrates the disciplined traditions of my academic and dance training. I hope these are the beginning points of generative conversations and improvisations with other dancers, and scholars.

### **Implications**

Although this chapter discusses Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy in particular, I aspire for my research to contribute to broader conversation taking place regarding kinesthetic and embodied learning in classrooms. While new instructors may strive to include more of the body in the classroom, it is also important to discuss how this decision can still be used as a form of discipline. For example, I participated in kinesthetic learning throughout the course of my dance training. I also experienced a vast amount of discipline during this experience. My teachers' pedagogical techniques shaped my body to perform in very specific ways. Although my body was kinesthetically moving, the teacher was the person responsible for breaking and remaking my body. I was not positioned as the Subject within the classroom, and my own ways of knowing and moving through the world were not discussed within the studio. Regardless whether

communication studies instructors include kinesthetic learning in the classrooms, it is crucial for teachers to consider how their pedagogical techniques continue to shape their students' bodies in specific ways. It is also vital for teachers to be reflexive about how their pedagogical techniques continue to shape their students' bodies in ways that serve the teacher's agendas, and perpetuate ideologies that resonate with the teacher's views.

Communication studies instructors interested in including kinesthetic and embodied learning within the classroom must also consider how their students' bodies have been previously disciplined to perform in very specific ways. Even if teachers encourage their students to embody movement that resonates with the students' lives, the students may continue to perform in ways that demonstrate previous discipline. For example, when I am in classroom settings where my teachers decides to engage in kinesthetic or embodied pedagogical techniques, I have an extremely difficult time finding my own way to move through these exercises. My body automatically wants to perform the way it has been disciplined to perform in dance classes. I recognize the oppressor within my body as I try to find my own ways of moving and knowing. I usually wait to see how other non-disciplined dancers naturally move through the space. I then use their bodies as guiding points of how to behave in the classroom environment.

Kinesthetic approaches to teaching and learning are not resistant to oppressive pedagogical models. One's ways of knowing and moving are not strictly speaking one's "own" rather, they are part of a larger community, and a larger ideology. Regardless if a student's body has been shaped by soccer practice, gymnastics, or (dis)ability, it is important for communication studies instructors to recognize their students may not be

able to locate authentic embodied movement. It is also important for instructors to recognize that their students may specifically shape and alter their movement in order to satisfy the teacher. Even if a teacher includes kinesthetic learning in classroom settings, the students may continue to perform in ways the teacher considers satisfactory. Communication studies scholars interested in pedagogy and kinesthetic learning may benefit from critically investigating Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy, and considering how students may perform discipline as they embody movement. I hope the results of my study contribute to this important disciplinary conversation.

### **Chapter Three: Method**

I previously presented ten main traditions commonly seen within Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. These traditions included: Sorting, banking, alienation, technique, privilege, pain, power, internalization, objectification, and joy. I articulated these characteristics the same way a dancer would perform correct technique on stage. I also articulated these characteristics the same way a social scientist would perform correct writing techniques. My structured writing style exposed and perpetuated the traditions practiced within dance spaces and academic spaces. More specifically, the previous chapter helped frame my first research question: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? The current chapter seeks to detail how I went about answering this question. This chapter also frames my second research question: What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and when they are literally danced? I more fully frame this question as I describe the method and the methodological perspectives I chose to use within this research.

#### **Preview**

I begin this chapter by presenting the subject population, the recruiting process, and previewing each of the research steps. These steps are comprised of qualitative in-depth interviews, collaborative rehearsals, live performances, question and answer sessions, and wrap up interviews. I move through each of these steps just as a dancer would move through first, second, third, fourth, and fifth position. I then discuss the method in greater detail, and I provide rationale for each step. After I provide rationale, I discuss the nine different methodological approaches I used within my research. These

nine methodologies encouraged my work to be: generative, reflexive, dialogic, culturally located, constitutive, collaborative, performance oriented, and momentous. Finally, I examine the limitations to this method, and I discuss how this project may contribute to larger conversations within communication studies.

### **Subject Participants**

The subject population was composed of three dancers between the ages of 20 to 35 years old. The sample consisted of dancers from various ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds. The first interviewee, Dani, was a 21-year old, straight, able bodied, White woman. The second interviewee, Corinne, was a 29-year old, bi-sexual, Latina woman with a non-visible disability. The third interviewee, Mike, was a 35-year old, gay, able bodied man who identified as half White and half Vietnamese. All of the dancers were experienced in Westerns styles of dance such as ballet, jazz, lyrical, and contemporary. They also obtained at least 10 years of training from studios near San Francisco, California. The sample represented a small but diverse population in order to recognize how various people remembered their pedagogical experiences in dance studios.

The rationale for using dancers within this age range had to do with their availability. Typically, dancers within this age range do not perform in many shows. This ideally meant the dancers would have more time to participate in the study. Also, dancers under the age of 18 and dancers who had not experienced pedagogical techniques from a variety of environments such as studios, competitions, conventions, and auditions were not used within the study. These dancers were excluded from the study in order to

gain a wider representation of the types of dance pedagogy commonly practiced within a variety of settings.

Although the dancers within this age range did not have as many shows to perform in, they still had very busy schedules. I used a small sample of dancers for this reason. I also used a small sample size in order to allow time to work in depth with each respondent. I frequently met with each respondent, and I interacted with them over an extended period of time. More participants would have hindered my ability to complete these in depth encounters in a reasonable time frame. I aimed to locate useful information during each step of my method, and to compare the various steps. I also strived to investigate how meaning was (co)created through this process. Even though this method produced limited generalizeable findings, it still generated a significant amount of knowledge about my two research questions.

### **Recruiting**

I have come in contact with numerous dancers during my lifetime. Although I have become acquainted with many dancers, I did not know each of them on a substantial level. I targeted these “dance acquaintances” as study participants. I began recruitment by asking the acquaintances if they were interested in participating in my research. I contacted these dancers via email, text message, phone, or Facebook (however I could get a hold of them). I then select dancers who best represented a diverse sample. All of the subjects were dancers who had trained in a variety of formal settings in the Bay Area.

I chose not to interview close friends in this study because I had already engaged in numerous conversations with them about this topic. If I were to interview close

friends, I could end up reproducing the same information I already knew. I wanted the research to surprise me, so I interviewed people who I do not know a great deal about. In contrast, I did not think it was a wise decision to choose random dancers I did not know. I was hesitant to use complete strangers because the respondents and I were in physical contact during rehearsals. I chose dancers who appeared credible and reliable. I made these decisions based off my previous interactions with the dancers. I personally would feel somewhat threatened if I were asked to be in physical contact with a stranger, so I did not want to encourage that sort of environment within my research. In sum: I did not use close friends because I hoped to learn new things about this topic, and I did not use strangers because I hoped to achieve a sense of intimacy within the interviews.

#### **Method: Specific Steps and Rationale**

The research was a five step process. 1) Qualitative In-Depth Interviews: I conducted an initial interview that was approached as a contact improv dance. I explain what I mean by this as the chapter continues. We engaged in the interview process for 1-2 hours. 2) Collaborative Rehearsals: Once the dancers and I completed the in-depth interviews, we choreographed performances about the stories that emerged. 3) Live Public Performances: My collaborators and I performed these dances on stage, in front of an audience. 4) Question and Answer Sessions: The dancers and I followed the performance by participating in a question and answer session with the audience. This step generated insight about what the performance constituted for everyone involved. 5.) Wrap-up interviews: Finally, I interviewed the dancers again after the performance to discuss how – or if – the oral histories transformed through this process.

**Step 1 – in-depth qualitative interviews.** I began my study by conducting 1-2 hour in-depth qualitative interviews. I first greeted the respondent, and I then went over the consent form. After I reviewed the consent form, I asked if s/he had any questions. After the respondents agreed to proceed, I then asked her/him to sign the consent form. I also informed the respondent that s/he was not required to participate in activities that made her/him uncomfortable. Finally, I let the respondent know that s/he could withdrawal any of the information that s/he wished to keep private.

Although I approached these interviews with the mindset of a qualitative researcher, I also explored what happened when these interviews were approached as contact improv dances. Dancers who practice contact improv must learn how to relinquish control over the co-created dance. Dancers are encouraged to silence their predictions and interpretations of what the dance dialogue will produce. They must practice trust with their partners while suppressing their own thoughts of where to move the dance next. They avoid thinking about the movement while their bodies explore the natural flow of the improv. Every action – even stillness – causes a reaction, and further generates the dance. When dancers predetermine their movement rather than allowing the dance to naturally unfold, the improv becomes static and awkward.

Dancers who practice contact improv thus invest a great amount of trust in their partners and the process. They learn how to let each others', and their own bodies surprise them. The dancers merge together to create something that is far more than they

could have produced or predicted by themselves. I wanted to explore what would happen when interviews used the same sort of logic as contact improv.

Although this concept seemed like a simple task to accomplish, it was actually very difficult to learn how to let go of the minds demand for control. The respondents and I participated in contact improv exercises before the interviews began so we could distance ourselves from own anticipations and predictions. These exercises encouraged mutual trust and effort while creating the dance dialogue. We performed these exercises at the beginning of the interviews.

The first exercise took about five minutes to perform. One person began by standing in front of the other. The person in front closed their eyes and relinquished her/his control to the person behind her/him. The person behind placed both of her/his hands on her partner's shoulder blades. The person standing behind guided her/his partner through the space. The person guiding varied the speed and direction of her/his movement. Most people naturally felt the need to open their eyes when the speed increased. The people being led were encouraged not to open their eyes. Instead, they had to fully trust their partner to move with them through the space.

It was important for the guider to gently rest her/his hands on the partner's shoulder blades rather than controlling the partner by clasping onto her/his shoulders. It was also important for the person being guided to always stay in contact with the person guiding them. At times, the person guiding slowed down unexpectedly, and the person being guided allowed the momentum to carry them away from their partner's hands. When people allowed this disconnect to take place, it ultimately displayed how one

person in the partnership was trying to predetermine the movement, or was not fully listening to her/his partner.

The interviewees and I then performed a second exercise that focused on weight distribution and balance after we completed the first warm-up. The respondent and I began by holding both hands, and shifting our weight as we leaned away from each other. If one partner shifted her/his weight too far, the balance of the partnership was destroyed. The respondent and I then attempted to practice this activity while only holding onto one hand. Finally, the respondent and I practiced equalizing our weight as we grabbed onto various parts of our partner's body. We achieved balance by pulling away from each other, and we explored how much of our own weight must be used in order to achieve balance.

These activities encouraged the interviewer and me to silence our ideas of how we were expected to perform in front of each other. Although there were times where both the respondent and I wanted to "open our eyes" and control where the interview went, we always relied on each other to move through the interview together. Each person shifted her/his weight in order to achieve balance through tension. Every action generated a reaction. Those reactions created something new, and generated further reactions. The respondent and I aspired to co-create something new as we worked together during this process.

I began the in-depth interviews after we completed the contact improv exercises. I videotaped the dialogue in order to investigate how our bodies, and our voices danced and created meaning. I used some of the follow questions during the interview:

1. Can you describe the first person that you think of when you think of a dance teacher?
2. (Complete the sentence) Blocking is like...
3. Can you describe an average day in the life of a dancer?
4. How do you feel while learning and performing your teacher's choreography?
5. Can you describe the role of dance technique in the studio?
6. If dance technique were an animal, what animal would it be and why?
7. (Complete the story) Once upon a time I injured my knee the week of a show...
8. Can you describe the most powerful people in the studio?
9. If you were to think of the relationships you've built with other dancers, how would you describe them?
10. Can you describe the thoughts going on in your head during an average rehearsal?
11. Can you describe the role of gender in the studio?
12. Why do you dance?
13. Can you recount a specific day in the studio that you will never forget?
14. What advice would you give to young dancers?

These questions served as guiding points for the interview. I also asked new questions as I was inspired by the interviewee's responses.

In many ways, the interviews resembled an everyday conversation. I did not attempt to extract the respondent's answers from her/his head; rather, I explored how we both contributed to the conversation taking place. Wang and Yan (2012) explain, "Interview questions are unequally distributed as interviewers are endowed with the power to ask questions but interviewees are confined to doing so if invited" (p. 234). I worked against this model of power within the interview by encouraging the respondent to present their own questions as they arose. I did not lead the respondents, but I included my own experiences within the conversation. The respondent and I both played a significant role in shaping the developing research.

**Step 1 – rationale.** I explored my first research question within this step: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in the studio? I designed my interview questions around the ten areas I presented within my literature review: sorting, banking,

alienation, technique, privilege, pain, power, internalization, gender, and joy. I investigated how the respondents remembered these aspects of their pedagogical experiences. I also asked questions that provided insight about new areas worth investigating. Finally, the respondents led the conversations to places I did not consider in my literature review. I discuss these qualities within my next chapter.

I also explored part of my second research question within this step: What happens when oral history interviews are approached as dances? The respondent and I generated research about this question as we engaged in contact improv exercises before the interview began. This step worked against the pedagogical techniques practiced within Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. I explored what happened when dialogue was encouraged rather than silenced. I also examined how people embodied the stories they shared. This research could be useful for communication studies scholars interested in oral history interviews.

**Step 2 – collaborative rehearsals.** After the dancers and I completed the oral history interviews, we scheduled a time to co-create dance performances. The respondent and I met for another two hours to co-create a performance together. The respondent and I participated in three different rehearsals over the course of this study. I recorded the performance rehearsals in order to have something to look back on if we forgot the choreography. I began the first rehearsal by asking the respondent to identify the three key moments that stood out to her/him during the interview. I also provided three key moments that stood out to me during the interview. We then worked together to create a dance performance about the predominate themes. The second rehearsal took place

closer to the live performance date. The respondent and I finalized our performance within this rehearsal. The third rehearsal was held right before the show. The respondents and I used this last meeting as a tech and dress rehearsal. The dancers and I then performed the pieces in front of a live audience.

**Step 2 – rationale.** Again, I examined my first research question within this step: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in the studio? The respondents again provided insight about their memories as they present concepts that stood out to them during the first interview. The respondents re-presented their memories as they discussed these moments. Again, I examined how the respondents further remembered their pedagogical experiences in the studio.

I also examined part of my second research question in this section: What happens to oral histories when they are literally danced? This step investigated how –and if - memories changed as they were discussed through movement, rather than words. I also used this step to examine whether words more accurately described some memories, and movement more accurately described others. Finally, I observed how the respondent and I (re)constituted the stories we previously shared.

**Step 3 – live public performances.** The respondents and I performed our co-created pieces in front of a live audience. We did this through presentational aesthetics. What this means is the respondents and I did not attempt to replicate or mimic the interviews exactly as they took place. Instead, the respondents and I worked together to develop performances that left room for the audiences response. We accomplished this

by asking the audience to participate in the performances. The audience did not passively sit behind the fourth wall while actors attempted to mirror characters that were different than themselves. Instead, everyone in the room played a significant role in shaping the performances that emerged. The respondent and I achieved this goal by using Boal (1979) theatre techniques. These techniques include:

First stage: *Knowing the body*: a series of exercises by which one gets to know one's body, its limitations and possibilities, its social distortions and possibilities of rehabilitation.

Second stage: *Making the body expressive*: exercises by which one begins to express one's self through the body abandoning other, more common and habitual forms of expression.

Third stage: *The theater as language*: one begins to practice theater as language that is living and present, not as finished product displaying images from the past.

Fourth stage: *The theater as discourse*: simple forms in which the spectator-actor creates "spectacles" according to his need to discuss certain themes or rehearse certain actions. (p. 126)

The audience located and embodied their own ways of moving within these stages. They also investigated how their bodies had been shaped to perform in such ways. Although the respondent and I arranged our own performances, the audience also held responsibility in shaping what emerged.

**Step 3 – rationale.** My first research question was again explored within this step: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in the studio? The respondents constituted more information about their memories as they shared their histories with new audiences. I also examined part of my second research question within this step: What happens to oral histories when they are literally danced? I

investigated how – or if – the stories moved as they were danced in front of new audiences. I also explored how the oral histories and memories continued to move as they were presented to new audiences. I examined how the respondents’ oral histories moved, and how the audience’s oral histories about their own pedagogical experiences also moved.

I maintained ethical responsibility while presenting this research, and I consistently evaluated whether I was putting the interviewees well being first. I also repeatedly considered the consequences that could arise from the discourse I produced. As Madison (2012) explains “our acts and our words have implications beyond ourselves and are part of a larger web of human communication” (p. 108). I persistently considered the effects of my research, and I always kept the respondents intentionality in mind. I aimed to present the honest intentions of the people being investigated.

Although I strived to maintain ethical responsibility in these performances, I also hoped to demonstrate ethical response-ability. Oliver (2001) describes response-ability by stating, “We have an obligation to not only respond but also to respond in a way that opens up rather than closes off the possibility to respond by others” (p. 18-19). If an interviewee presented information to me, and I experienced a deep human response to that information, then it was my ethical responsibility to present that information in ways that generated future responses. As I aspired to provide people with the opportunity to have their own responses, I was aware that their responses may differ from my own. I did not intend to impose my responses onto other people. Instead, I hoped for people to experience responses that generated their own future responses. I believe this approach

was useful because it allowed people from various backgrounds to connect and relate to the stories being shared.

In order for us to be response-able while sharing oral histories, we left room for the audience to have their own responses. When people explain every exact detail of the story, and perform the stories in ways that mimic the time and place of the story, they shut out the audiences ability to have their own responses. The stories then become isolated in history. When people isolate their oral histories, they create distance between themselves and the audience. In response, the audience may not identify with the stories. The oral histories become foreign, different, and exotic when they are not presented response-ably.

I attempted to avoid isolating the responses to a specific time or place; rather, I aimed for the stories to move forward each time they were presented. I aspired to leave room for diverse audiences to connect to the stories, regardless if they had dance experience. I aimed to generate future responses that allowed the stories to keep progressing through time. As Madison (2012) explains:

This conversation with the others' brought forth through dialogue, reveals itself as a lively, changing being through time and no longer an artifact captured in the ethnographer's monologue, immobile and forever stagnant. (p. 11)

I did not wish to isolate the story to a specific time or place because that could have caused the respondent to be perceived as the Other. I hoped for various audiences to locate themselves in the stories, and connect to the stories in ways that generated future responses. I hoped to demonstrate response-ability by performing our stories in ways that were momentous, and continued to move through time.

I practiced response-ability by performing the stories in ways that left room for non-dancers to have their own responses. Ellis and Burger (2003) explain “we try to understand others by comparing our experiences to theirs” (p. 177). Although the interviews were focused on dance pedagogy, the stories themselves encouraged response-ability in ways that allowed various audiences to respond. Anna Deavere Smith (1992) describes:

American character lives not in one place or the other, but in the gaps between the places, and in our struggle to be together in our differences. It lives not in what has been fully articulated, but in what is in the process of being articulated, not in smooth-sounding words, but in the very moment that the smooth sounding words fails us (p. xli).

People relate to each other when they leave gaps for others to fill with their own experiences. As the respondent and I performed the oral history dances, we left holes for the audience to fill with their own experiences.

When audience members felt compelled to re-tell oral histories, the stories continued to progress forward. As Pollock (2005) explains, “performance is not so much an interesting or entertaining option as it is an obligation” (p. 4). As the respondent and I co-created the oral histories, we discovered stories we felt compelled to share with new audiences. As we shared the stories with new audiences, the new audiences also felt obligated to retell the stories again. When the audience shared the original story again, the story not only continued to move, but it also transformed. We passed oral histories down through these human responses.

In many ways, I used response-ability as a form of advocacy about the issues that arose. My response ignited future responses that could lead toward social change.

Madison (2012) explains:

Response, response-ability, and responsibility become aligned with ethics as it relates to advocacy. To be an advocate is to feel a responsibility to exhort and appeal on behalf on another or for another's cause with the hope that still more Others will gain the ability to respond...As advocates, we aim for a cycle of responses that will set loose a stream of response-abilities that will lead to something more.... (p. 98)

I presented my research in ways that encouraged responses from future audiences. I hoped for the performances to ignite responses that would lead people to re-examine their own pedagogical experiences.

**Step 4 – question and answer sessions.** After the respondents and I completed the performances, we participated in a question and answer session with the audience. I directed my own questions to the audience as well. I asked the audience to describe how – or if – they related to the performances. I also asked the audience if they had any kinesthetic responses to what was performed. I took note of the audience's responses, and I explored how – or if – they connected to the stories. If audience members shared their own oral histories, and they also described the need to retell their own stories about the topic, I concluded the performances were presented in a response-able manner. Ultimately, I used this step to observe how the original oral histories continued to move as new audiences related, shared, and (re)shaped the stories.

**Step 4 – rationale.** My first research question was again explored in this step: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in the studio? I examined how the dancers discussed their stories during the question and answer session. I also

examined part of my second research question in this section: What happens to oral histories when they are literally danced? The audience provided insight to this question during the question and answer session. The audience had similar responses to the danced oral histories, and their responses provided insight about what happens when oral histories are danced. Also, this step of the method was needed in order to determine whether the performances were response-able. Finally, I explored whether the dancers' oral histories transformed during this process.

**Step 5 – wrap-up interviews.** After the respondents and I completed the question and answer session, we scheduled individual follow up interviews. This step of the method investigated how the respondents discussed Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy after the study had been completed. This step explored whether oral histories transformed as they were shared with new audiences, and through different forms of dialogue. I recorded these interviews, and I asked the following questions:

1. What was this process like for you?
2. Have any of your responses changed because of this process?
3. How do you feel about your dance training after completing this process?
4. How do you feel about your dance teachers after completing this process?

Again, I used these questions as guiding points for the interview. I aimed for these wrap up interviews to last less than a half hour.

**Step 5 – rationale.** I again explored my first and second research question during this step. I examined how dancers remembered their pedagogical experiences in the studio, and I also investigated what happened when oral histories were approached as

dances, and literally danced. Although this method had many steps, each step provided new insight about both of my research questions.

### **Coding**

Although I coded emerging themes throughout the process, I did not want to predetermine what those codes would look like. I had some key terms that sparked my interest in this project such as: sorting, banking, alienation, technique, privilege, pain, power, internalization, gender, and joy, but I was open to altering these categories based on the dancers' responses. Although I focused on these areas within the interviews, I was also excited to discover how I might be surprised by themes that emerged. I had my own interpretations of experiences with dance pedagogy that informed my study, but I did not want those experiences to *determine* my research. I left room for the respondents to surprise me with their responses. If I were to predetermine where the conversations may go, I would ultimately be "opening my eyes," rather than allowing the interviewees to move with me towards co-creating something more than I could have expected. I am aware that my own experiences greatly shaped how I responded within each interview, and also affected the way the interview developed. In contrast, I hoped for the interviewees' experiences to equally shape the stories that were constituted. I coded the interviews based off of the common themes that arose, and I allowed these themes to surprise me.

### **From Method to Methodology**

The specific steps above are grounded in an overall approach to qualitative research, oral history, and narrative theory. I further examine these methodological

approaches within the following pages of this chapter. I used these methodologies to create: generative, reflexive, dialogic, culturally located, constitutive, collaborative, performance oriented, and momentous research.

**Generative research.** Although I approached this research as a dancer, I also approached it as qualitative interviewer who understood the constitutive nature of communication. I used the mindset that “answers are not meant to be conclusive but instead serve to further the agenda for discussion” (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003, p. 37). Although I strived to discover more information about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy, I was also aware that communication is processual and constitutive. I did not aim to present hard facts about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy; rather, I aspired to co-construct various truths during the interview process. I explored how each person involved – including myself – had been shaped by her/his cultural, political, and socio-economic surroundings. I also attempted to investigate how the respondent and I worked together to co-create new knowledge.

**Reflexive research.** I was conscious that my responses, questions, and interpretations played key role in shaping the research that emerged. As Madison (2012) states, “We are always inseparable from the theory we create” (p. 10). Although I would have loved to approach these interviews from a neutral position, I was aware that my interpretations were continuously shaped by my positionality within the world. I repeatedly question my interpretations in order to more fully investigate how the interviews could be perceived differently if approached through alternate lenses. I was frequently reflexive about how such interpretations had been constructed by the intuitions

and ideologies that have shaped my life. I also considered how my actions continued to shape future discourse.

Although I was reflexive about how my own interpretations had been morally shaped, I also relied on my interpretations as valid components of research. Black (1965) states:

The most plausible and reliable source of information we have is our own experience. To become convinced that our experiences have no validity, that the things we see and feel have no justification in fact, would be to undermine our sanity (p. 145).

I made visible the responses I experienced during the interviews, and I explored how those responses constituted new truths. I aimed to be honest about my interpretations of the experience, and I investigated how my truths were culturally, institutionally, and morally shaped. I did not attempt to mask my responses, because ultimately, I played an equal role in co-constructing the knowledge that emerged.

**Dialogic research.** As previously mentioned, I did not attempt to locate one definitive “Truth” about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy; rather, I co-constructed multiple truths with the respondents. As Madison (2012) states:

The [qualitative] interview opens realms of meaning that permeate beyond the role of information or finding the ‘truth of the matter.’ The interviewee is not an object, but a subject with agency, history, and his or her own idiosyncratic command of a story. Interviewer and interviewee are in partnership and dialogue as they construct memory, meaning, and experience together. (p. 27-28)

The interviewees and I built new stories as we participated in dialogue. We created new histories as we dialogically constructed and reconstructed the memories we share. We

generated new truths about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy that provided insight about broader ideologies that have shaped the stories.

I not only focused on the words shared within dialogue, but I also investigated how the respondent and I embodied and performed the histories during the interview. As Madison (2012) explains, “The concern here is the mutual importance of *how* something is said along *with* what is said or with the telling and the told” (p. 34). I considered how the respondent and I embodied the stories we shared. I also investigated our use of movement, breathe, pauses, and eye contact. I explored how our embodied performances generated new meaning about what was being discussed. The respondent and I generated new truths about the oral histories as we embody the performances together.

Although the respondent and I both constituted the oral histories, we also investigated the stories from different points of view. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) explain, “Ideally, what emerges is a richly expressive inter-view that neither person could have produced alone” (p. 171). The respondent and I both made sense of stories by relating the narratives to our own experiences. The respondent and I interpreted multiple views of existing stories and constituted new stories that represented multiple interpretations. As we both attempted to make sense of the stories shared, we both co-constructed a new story.

Although I strived for the interviews to be accurate, honest, and reliable, I was also interested in exploring how the respondent’s “truths” were shaped by her/his past, and the process of the interview itself. Qualitative interviewing complicates the notion that respondents are always providing “facts” Lindlof and Taylor (2011) explain:

people are *not* always a sound source of witness information. People often forget aspects of what they see and hear; they exaggerate, repress, and make mistakes about their experiences; and they lie about still others. (p. 173)

Regardless if respondents attempted to be accurate, the stories themselves were constantly being shaped and re-shaped by life experiences and the context of where they were remembered. In many instances, the interviewees did not just recall facts; rather, they constituted new truths within the interview process.

**Culturally located research.** I was also aware that language is subjective, culturally specific, and personally invested. People from various cultural or political backgrounds interpret the connotative meaning of words differently. Lindolf and Taylor (2011) explain, “Even when these issues of human fallibility and hubris are accounted for, there is an even bigger problem with the referential view of language: people do not narrate their lived experiences from a neutral position” (p. 173). The interviewee’s positionality shaped the language they performed within the interview. It is also important to note that I did not always interpret the respondent’s language from a neutral position. My position in the world caused me to interpret the interviewee’s language differently than someone else. I was reflexive about how my interpretations of language were morally shaped, and I investigated how the respondent and I used our language to co-create new histories.

**Constitutive research.** Identities are constructed through the political, cultural, and socio-economic environments that surround people. Since the dancers were from various backgrounds, those backgrounds also played a role in determining the respondents’ interpretations of their experiences. Even if two interviewees were raised in

the same exact environment, each person would assemble her/his own interpretation of the experience being examined. Regardless if a respondent considers her/his answers to be truthful, another person who lived the same exact moment may have a very different truth about the story. I did not attempt to capture a definitive “Truth” about the stories; rather, I hoped to gain insight about how people established their own interpretations of experiences. I also investigated how new realities were created through the actual interview process itself.

People also create their identities through the act of sharing narratives. This concept reinforces the notion that narrative interviews are not only a type of method used to collect research, but they are also a practiced ontological belief. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) explain:

[N]arrative interviews have a dual nature as both an empirical method and an ontological paradigm. In other words, the narrative interview is not only a method for “capturing” stories; it also assumes that people understand who they are partly through their everyday performance of narrative. The act of storytelling thus holds as much interest as the story content in a narrative interview. (p. 180)

Respondents not only provided significant information about their lives; they also created an identity for themselves through the act of discussing narratives. The respondent and I co-created new realities about ourselves through the interaction taking place.

**Collaborative research.** The respondent and I shaped our narratives through the process of dialogue. Chase (2008) describes, “the narrator’s story is flexible, variable, and shaped in part by interactions with the audience” (p. 65). My responses to the interviewee’s narrative caused the narrative to move and take on new shape. The audience also located themselves within the narratives shared during the performance.

Corey (1996) explains the personal narrative “[creates] a dynamic interplay between self and others” (p. 57). As the respondent shared her/his narrative, the story continued to transform. The respondent kept the story alive by leaving room for the audience to have their own responses. The respondent did not intentionally alter the story; rather, the story itself continued to transform as it was presented to different people and was surrounded by different contexts.

My responses to the stories ultimately caused the histories to change and move forward. The respondent and I both came together to create new narratives about the experience being remembered. It is important to note that one person did not own the story; rather, the interviewer and I played an equal role in shaping the story that emerged. This process created what Ellis and Berger (2003) describe as “our-stories” They explain:

The interviewing process becomes less a conduit of information from informants to researchers that represent how things are, and more a sea swell of meaning making in which researchers connect their own experiences to those of others and provide stories that open up conversations about how we live and cope. (p. 161)

In this sense, I also contributed to the research being explored. I did not overpower the respondent’s story with my own experiences; rather, I found moments of commonality and difference in the stories being (re)created. I was reflexive about how my experiences shaped the stories, and I also took note of how the stories continued to move as they were shared in the future. I identified with the interviewees through this approach, rather than seeing them as the Other.

As that respondent and I co-constructed the oral histories, the stories themselves were created through the performance of remembering and re-remembering. Pollock (2005) explains:

Anyone story is embedded in layers of remembering and storying. Remembering is necessarily a public act whose politics are bound up with the refusal to be isolated, insulated, inoculated against both complicity with and contest over claims to ownership. That's her story, we might say, ostensibly valorizing the teller by remaining at arm's length and failing to recognize, much less reckon with, our place in the network of social relations her story invokes. (p. 5)

Oral histories are remembered from highly political spaces. The histories were shaped by the politics surrounding the story as it was remembered and shared. Interviewees did not own the stories; rather, the stories were re-membered (reshaped) through the dialogic processes taking place. In response, I was reflexive about how my experiences shaped my interpretation of the story. I also identified or related to aspects of the story being constructed together.

**Oral histories as performance research.** Although the respondent and I co-constructed the stories, we also self regulated the information we shared. Pollock (1999) describes oral histories as performances, “the artful, inventive, changing, interstitial, corporeal process of negotiating the meaning (p. 8). People decided what to share, and how to share that information with different audiences. This caused the oral histories to transform each time they were presented. The audience's responses shaped the oral histories. The audience's responses were shaped by their own beliefs, values, standpoints, and experiences. When a person shared an oral history, the story was reinvented as the audience responded to what was being shared. The interviewee and I co-constructed oral histories through the interstitial performance of dialogue.

The interviewee held responsibility in deciding what would be shared. Pollock (1999) explains, “the narrating self authorizes new selves, alliances, and norms of relation, even as she reveals the deep impress of norms and expectations on herself” (p.

8). The interviewees performed differently in front of different audiences. For example, the respondent left out certain aspects of the story during the first round of interviews. They more deeply examined those aspects as they shared the histories with other audiences. While they decided how to present themselves for the audience, they created new selves. This process exposed new realities about the interviewees, the way she/he sees the world she/he is living in, and also where she/he sees herself/himself within that world. The respondent and I co-created new realities as we performed the oral histories together.

**Momentous research.** As people shared oral histories, the stories were embodied and took on new meaning. Della Pollock (2005) explains, “The performance of oral history is itself a transformational process. At the very least, it translates subjectively remembered events into embodied memory acts, moving memory into remembering (p. 2). The respondent and I embodied the stories we shared, and we explored what happened when we relied on movement more than words. I explored whether people remembered the stories differently when they were more fully embodied.

The respondent and I first discussed the histories through words, and then discussed the stories through movement. I also examined how our bodies, voices, and thoughts moved through the interview process. As Pollock notes,

... words enter into viscerally charged debates about both *what* and *how* to know, and words shimmer with what may be unsaid, felt, withheld, stammered, introduced in a pause, caught up in a breath, a sigh, and expressive rhythm, a physical or tonal gesture. (p. 4)

At times, the movement communicated memories in ways words could not express. In contrast, words were very difficult to translate into movement at times. I used dance to explore how the stories changed as they relied on movement more than words.

### **Limitations to this Method**

Although I have explained the benefits of this method, I also understand that this method – like all methods – has limitations. The first limitation had to do with the dancers themselves. Most successful dancers were typically very busy, and lived outside of the area. I interviewed local dancers who were not as busy. I made this decision in order to finish my research in a timely manner. This meant I interviewed dancers who were not currently very successful. Even though the dancers may have encountered previous success, their current success was most likely not as great. This may have potentially caused the respondent to be more critical during the interview. In contrast, many of the dancers being interviewed may have considered themselves successful, regardless of their current position. This could have caused the results to vary.

The small sample size was the second limitation to this study. Although the research may not be generalizable to broad audiences, it still produced a significant amount of information about my two research questions: 1) How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? 2) What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and are literally danced? The information produced within this research contributes to larger conversations taking place about pedagogy and oral histories.

The final limitation was that this method was very time consuming. Although my method was time consuming, it was also very compatible with the type of work I aspired to produce. Each step of the method played a significant role in my research. I used each step of this method to investigate both of my research questions from different perspectives, and in multiple situations.

## **Conclusion**

The previous pages of this chapter discuss a qualitative approach towards dancing oral histories. I organized this chapter with the strict discipline of a dancer, and gradually aspired to explore the constitutive desires of qualitative researcher. Although I began this research with the voice of a disciplined dancer, and a social scientist, my methodological approaches moved me toward a more qualitative perspective. These intersecting paradoxes were displayed within the disciplined structure of my method, and the collaborative fluidity of my methodological approaches. I began by describing the subject population, the recruiting process, and previewing each step of my method. I then discussed the five steps of my method. These steps included: 1) In-depth qualitative interviews 2) Collaborative rehearsals 3) Live public performances 4) Question and answer sessions 5) Wrap-up interviews. I practiced these five steps while exploring my two research questions: 1) How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in the studio? 2) What happens when oral histories are approached as dances, and are literally danced? I then discussed the nine different methodological approaches that shaped my research. These nine methodologies encouraged my work to be: generative, reflexive, dialogic, culturally located, constitutive, collaborative, performance oriented,

and momentous. Finally, I presented the limitations of this method. Although my method has limitations, I aspired for each step of this process, and each methodological approach to generate substantial knowledge about my two research questions. I also hoped for the research to contribute to larger conversations about pedagogy and oral histories.

### **Implications**

Although my first research question focused on Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy, I aimed for my second research question to contribute to scholarly conversations about oral histories. Oral historians commonly place an emphasis on the *oral* quality of the method. As researchers engage in this approach, they again favor the mind over the body. The respondent's verbal knowledge is more commonly examined than their embodied knowledge. For this reason, I wanted to see what happened when people embodied stories. Communication studies scholars could potentially use this approach while investigating research questions in various arenas.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

I previously detailed the method and the methodologies used within this research. Although my method was structured, my methodologies were collaborative and constitutive. These opposing approaches intersected and contradicted one another while I explored my two research questions: 1) How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? 2) What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and when they are literally danced? I approached these questions with the specificity and discipline of a trained dancer. I also approached these research questions with the constitutive and collaborative desires of a qualitative researcher. The results of this research were greatly shaped by the intersections of these opposing approaches. The results of this research were also greatly shaped by the intersections of past histories, and the productive unplanned tensions that moved each story to the future.

### **Preview**

I begin this chapter by presenting each step of the method and describing how the results of this research aligned with my previous assumptions. I then describe the discoveries that arose during each step of the method. I also discuss major themes that emerged within each step. The first step of my method produced results that contributed to my first research question: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? The main theme of intersectionality emerged within this step. The second, third, fourth, and fifth step of my method provided information about my second research question: What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and when they are literally danced? I encountered numerous productive unplanned

tensions within the last four portions of the method. Although some results align with my previous assumptions, I will also discuss the new discoveries that emerged.

### **In-Depth Qualitative Interviews: Aligning Assumptions**

I explored my first research question within this step of the study: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? I asked the interviewees fourteen questions. These questions were:

1. Can you describe the first person that you think of when you think of a dance teacher?
2. (Complete the sentence) Blocking is like...
3. Can you describe an average day in the life of a dancer?
4. How do you feel while learning and performing your teacher's choreography?
5. Can you describe the role of dance technique in the studio?
6. If dance technique were an animal, what animal would it be and why?
7. (Complete the story) Once upon a time I injured my knee the week of a show...
8. Can you describe the most powerful people in the studio?
9. If you were to think of the relationships you've built with other dancers, how would you describe them?
10. Can you describe the thoughts going on in your head during an average rehearsal?
11. Can you describe the role of gender in the studio?
12. Why do you dance?
13. Can you recount a specific day in the studio that you will never forget?
14. What advice would you give to young dancers?

I created these questions around the ten qualities commonly seen in Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. I hoped each question would provide insight about one of the ten pedagogical qualities used in this discipline. I was pleased to see each of the ten pedagogical qualities emerge during the interviews.

All of the dancers agreed there is a large amount of sorting within dance communities. Each of the dancers discussed being sorted by appearance, technique, and gender. The dancers also discussed being sorted by her/his ability to comply with

authority, make sacrifices, and internalize corrections from teachers. All of the dancers felt this sorting process created a heightened sense of competition for dancers. They also all believed the competition was healthy and made them work harder. Although the dancers felt a sense of competition with their peers, they also formed very close relationships with each other. All of the dancers also described their friendships with other dancers as more special than friendships with non-dancers. All of the dancers also described frustration with the sorting process, but they also felt the process brought people closer together.

Each of the interviewees discussed sorting a great deal, but the most common type of sorting they discussed revolved around technique and privilege. All of the interviewees described technique as the backbone of dance. They also discussed how the technique privileged certain bodies over others. All of the interviewees agreed that male dancers were commonly praised more than female dancers. Each of the interviewees also felt there was a heightened sense of competition for female dancers. They each stated this was because of the increased number of female dancers in the industry. The interviewees unanimously agreed that male dancers were able to goof around more than female dancers. They also noted this behavior was commonly accepted because male dancers are in high demand. All of the interviewees mentioned how men commonly begin their dancing much later in life, but are able to surpass female abilities in a matter of months. Both of the female interviewees discussed their admiration for male dancers and envy of their inherent strength. The male dancer agreed that men are treated much differently than women. All of this information aligned with my previous assumptions

regarding Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy, but I was also fascinated by the other results that emerged.

### **In-Depth Qualitative Interviews: Discoveries**

I was surprised to discover I had left out one key quality of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. I hinted at this quality in my literature review, but I did not address it in great detail. I personally was experiencing a great amount of tension with this quality, but I failed to explore the concept. I believe the concept hit a little too close to home for me, and I subconsciously attempted to avoid the conversation. As I moved through the research, I heard Corinne and Mike consistently discuss the concept of age in regards to their experience with dance.

Corinne and Mike brought up the concept of age in almost every response. Dani, who was 21 did not discuss the role of age in dance environments, while the two interviewees over the age of 29 both consistently discussed this concept. There were various moments when Corinne and Mike stated they were getting old, or they felt pressure to keep up with the younger dancers. There were many stories that began with, “When I was younger...” and “Back in the old days....” I found it very interesting for people between the ages of 29 and 35 to use these phrases since, realistically, they were still fairly young. Since dancers do not experience a great amount of longevity with their careers, it is important to note the significance of age in this process.

Corinne and Mike also discussed their age in comparison to the demands of dance technique. They explained how technique and choreography have significantly increased over the past 10 years. They both consistently mentioned shows like *So You Think You*

*Can Dance* and *Dance Moms*. They used these shows as a means of comparing and contrasting their own technique and pedagogical experiences. Corinne and Mike believed the demands of these shows altered the artistry of dance. They also mentioned how these shows were shaping the art form to revolve around tricks. They both stated how the shows made it difficult for them to keep up with the unrealistic demands of the new technique. Although I was experiencing this concept first hand, I failed to discuss how significant the process of aging is within the context of increased technical demands.

The interviewees surprised me by presenting the concept of age, but they also surprised me by responding to the pedagogical traditions differently than I had expected. For example, while all of the interviewees described their dance teachers as “experts” in the field, they did not explicitly discuss the banking model of pedagogy. Each of dancers mentioned the process of copying their teacher’s choreography, expecting to be silent, and following the directions of the teacher, but none of the interviewees considered this a poor model of pedagogy. All of the interviewees described their dance teachers as people who were strict, but nurturing. In many ways, the interviewees saw their teachers as mentors who taught them the required discipline to be successful in dance environments. All of the interviewees described their dance teachers as supportive people who helped guide them toward success.

Only one of the interviewees mentioned being slightly opposed to the banking model used within Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. Corinne believed dance teachers should allow their students to make mistakes, and should be aware that people learn differently. She also mentioned the dance teacher should allow students to be

themselves, rather than demanding them to replicate a mold. Although she believed dance teachers should possess these qualities, she said it was rare to see dance teachers do this.

Even though I found it interesting to hear the interviewees discuss banking in such ways, I was also surprised to hear the interviewees discuss alienation in regards to learning choreography. All of the interviewees preferred to learn their dance teacher's choreography rather than creating their own. The interviewees mentioned a heightened vulnerability while sharing their own choreography. Two of the three stated they did not like choreographing because they feared the reactions they would receive from their peers. In contrast, all of the interviewees unanimously agreed they enjoyed the process of choreographing for other dancers. Although they all stated they preferred to learn their teacher's choreography, they also discussed having difficulty connecting to their teacher's choreography. Ultimately, all of the interviewees preferred to choreograph for other people rather than themselves.

**Intersections of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy.** I found it very interesting to hear the interviewees explain their preference for choreographing on others, but I was also surprised to discover my ridged method had produced a theme of intersectionality within this research. Although the interviewees' responses about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy were noteworthy, I was equally intrigued by the complexity of this process. I originally planned to organize my interview questions into categories that would produce results about each quality of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. I hoped to compartmentalize the results and provide answers for each

pedagogical quality, but this is not what happened. The questions lead to multilayered conversations that explored many of the ten qualities all at once. Although I found definite themes in this research, many of these themes addressed the ten pedagogical qualities at the same time. I was not expecting the intersectionality and complexity that emerged.

For example, when I asked the interviewees to finish the sentence, “Blocking is like...” I assumed they would discuss aspects of the sorting process. Specifically, I thought the interviewees would only discuss the process of being sorted based on ability, and appearance. One interviewee, Corinne, first addressed these characteristics, but then branched off into other pedagogical qualities. She initially stated, “I mean you just have to have the look and that’s the best thing I can tell myself. Because I mean, I know I’m capable but there’s nothing I can do.” Corinne addressed appearance and ability in this response. I assumed she was going to finish her statement there, but she then went on to describe many other factors of the sorting process.

I was surprised to hear Corinne layer and overlap aspects of age, power, gender, technique, and privilege while responding to the sorting process. The interviewee presented these concepts in ways that constituted one another. The interviewee stated,

...and now, at my age, because I’m older, I know it’s politics. When I went to a Disney audition there were these two guys who were goofing off the whole time, and they *sucked* and both of them made it farther than me and Josh. I mean I know I’m not the most technical but Josh is ridiculously technical and how could he not...I mean that just shows that it’s politics and there’s nothing you can do about it.

Although I anticipated hearing a response about sorting, I did not anticipate hearing Corinne intersect so many of the pedagogical traditions during this question. She also introduced the concept of age within the response. Each of her statements built on each other in ways that constituted a multilayered reality about the sorting process.

Corinne then went on to describe more aspects of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy while responding to the same question about sorting. She addressed the aspect of joy when she stated,

And that's why I've stepped back from auditions and competitions...because when negativity surrounds what you use to free your soul, that's when you know you need to take a step back.

Corinne reflected on the intersections of joy, and privilege within this statement. She evaluated the collision of these pedagogical traditions when she stated how the process drains joy out of the experience. She described how the intersection of each quality made her want to take a step back from the experience. Although Corinne stated dance brings her joy and frees her soul, the collision of these pedagogical traditions makes her want to take a step back from dance.

I was again surprised to hear Corinne include another quality of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy as she continued with her statement. She explained:

I mean, about 95% of dancers who are successful have become successful because they know the right people. It's not because they're really good...I mean sometimes they are, but other times they're just really good at kissing peoples' asses and I'm just too real of a person to do that.

Corinne internalized and reflected on the intersections of her experience and then constructed a specific identity for herself when she stated that she was too real of a

person to kiss peoples' asses. She internalized the intersections of the entire process and described how she views Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy and herself within that setting. Corinne constituted her identity through the process of internalizing the voices of others, reflecting on her perception of the memory, and telling me about the event. She created her identity as she described how she viewed herself and how the intersections of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy relied on one another. Dancers constitute their views of themselves and Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy when they describe how these pedagogical traditions intersect. They also construct their identities by internalizing and reflecting on the intersections of their experiences with sorting.

The topic of sorting also intersected with various other questions. For example, when I asked interviewees to complete the sentence, "Once upon a time I injured my knee the week of a show..." I assumed many people would discuss the concept of pain. To my surprise, Corinne and Mike intersected sorting during this question. Corinne stated:

I mean you're still gonna dance. But I mean, let's be real. You're gonna end up having surgeries down the line and a hurt ankle for the rest of your life, but that's just how it is. I mean, when I see someone else sitting out I think, that sucks, but depending on the position I'm in, I'm glad I don't have to compete with them for spots.

This statement not only discusses the pain involved in dance, but also emphasizes the notion that sorting is a predominant pedagogical device consistently present in dance environments. Although I assumed many of the ten pedagogical traditions would emerge in the interviews, I failed to recognize how each of these pedagogical traditions continuously engulfed each step of the process.

**Intersections of internalized voices.** As the interviewees continued to layer their responses, I also began to notice numerous moments where the dancers intersected their experiences with the internalization of their teacher's voice. The interviewees' teachers could be heard through each multi-layered response. For example, Corinne previously discussed how she would still dance through the pain and she also discussed being in competition with other dancers. She did not mention the dance teacher pressuring her to perform or encouraging her to compete with other dancers. Her previous experiences with dance teachers may have influenced her perception of how to behave during this sort of situation. She then carried this logic with her to future dance environments. While the interviewee responded to one pedagogical device, the internalized echoes of previous teachers could be heard intersecting with various other pedagogical traditions at the same time. Although she felt all of these things, many of these feelings may have been internalized from previous experiences.

Dancers who interacted with different styles of pedagogy may have internalized different voices. Although two of the three dancers stated they would keep dancing through injuries, one of the interviewees, Dani, had a very different response. I was shocked to hear Dani explain she would sit out and rest if she got injured. She mentioned nothing about competition with other dancers and did not express any feelings of guilt for her decision. My initial response when I heard this was that she must not be a dedicated dancer. I immediately flashed back to my own dance injuries and instantaneously considered her a less serious dancer. Other words that flashed through my mind were

selfish, lazy, and weak. Although I respected and envied her choice to listen to her body, I began to question her response and my reaction.

I gradually began to realize Dani may have internalized a different voice than I had internalized. As I reflected on my own experiences with teachers and injuries, I could not recall one of my teachers pressuring me to dance on an injury. I began to realize most of the pressure I felt to dance on an injury was self inflicted and also learned by other dancers. Dani may not have previously interacted with other dancers who put this sort of pressure on each other. Even if she did interact with such people, she may have internalized the voice of the teacher who told her to listen to her body. Although many of my own teachers said very similar words, I had internalized the voice of my peers instead. This is significant because fellow dancers commonly play the role of the peer and the teacher. Many dancers learn a great deal by watching and listening to their peers. Their peers' voices also can be internalized as the teacher's voice, and can those voices can lead to self policing.

I began to realize I could hear the voices many of the interviewees' peers and teachers in their responses. One of the interviewees, Mike, further displayed this idea when he stated:

Put on a smile and keep going. Don't tell anyone. And I know it's kinda selfish, but I'm glad it's them and not me. It's kind of, "well what did you do wrong" ya know? And it's going back to technique. The worst thing is when you're partnering, and you're in mid lift, and your partner goes, "Oh this isn't going my way" and then just gives up. So it's up to the guy to save it so she doesn't get hurt, but you injure yourself trying to save her.

Again, Mike intersected and internalized many different pedagogical traditions within this response. He intersected technique, gender, and pain while internalizing the voice of his teachers and his peers. He acknowledged how these pedagogical qualities manifest during the moment of injury. He also gave hints of information regarding previous experiences with peers and teachers that shaped his perception of injuries. The voices of others were heard when the interviewee stated, “It goes back to technique.” It is as if he was repeating the concept the same way his dance teachers and peers had told him. His idea of an injury had been shaped by the intersections of previous experiences. He then internalized those experiences and the words of others while thinking of the concept. He put on a smile and kept going because he believed injuries intersected with incorrect technique. He internalized what dancers and dance teachers had told him about injuries and he applied those concepts to himself.

Each of the interviewees’ responses were multilayered and complex. They each constructed their memories at the intersections of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy. The voices of their teachers and peers could be heard within each response. Their multidimensional responses were framed and shared in ways that constructed their identity. They constituted their place and role within Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy through the process of reflecting and sharing their experiences and how they view themselves within that space.

**Intersecting paradoxes.** Although I did not account for the ten pedagogical traditions to intersect, I also did not plan on hearing the interviewees intersect the pedagogical traditions in such opposing ways. The interviewees presented intersecting

paradoxes<sup>3</sup> within many of the responses they presented. For example, the dancers described their dance friendships in ways that contradicted ideas of friendship. The dancers stated they were very close with each other, but also very competitive. They would discuss moments of friendship, and then discuss being pleased their friends were injured instead of them. They also would discuss dance friendships, and then discuss how those friends were successful because they were good at kissing each other's asses. The dancers would move from discussing other dancers in positive ways, to discussing dancers in negative ways. Each of their responses sounded like contradictions.

The dancers also presented intersecting paradoxes while they discussed the politics of the art form. The dancers would describe being frustrated by the sorting process, but they would then state the art form freed their souls. They would also describe their admiration for male dancers, and their envy. Many of the dancers also described their dance teachers as nurturing, but strict. The dancers also stated they would put on a smile even though they were experiencing pain. It was as if the dancers were internally arguing about these contradicting views while they responded. They would talk about moments of love and passion, followed by moments of confusion, frustration, and anger.

Although I planned on addressing this sort of complexity within my second research question, I was surprised to discover dancers remember their pedagogical experiences as intersecting paradoxes. The dancers intersected negative and positive qualities in ways that constituted each other. The dancers' friendships were stronger than

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<sup>3</sup> I conceptualize paradoxes as a statement that is essentially self-contradictory. As people move through these contradictions, they do not jump from one polar to the next in a clearly structured manner. They consistently move through the opposing views in ways that constitute and build off of each other in complex ways.

other friendships because of the intersecting paradoxes displayed within these relationships. Similarly, the dancers' frustrations toward the art form made those moments of passion even sweeter than before. I planned on co-constructing the stories with the interviewees through the second, third, fourth, and fifth step of my method, but I had not considered how complex the interviewees' stories would be on their own. Although I did not plan on exploring such complex intersections within the first portion of my method, I was pleased to see these concepts emerge and provide insight to my first research question.

### **Collaborative Rehearsals: Aligning Assumptions**

After I explored these intersecting paradoxes, I moved into the second step of my method. I anticipated addressing my second research question within this portion of the method: What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and when they are literally danced? I was pleased to discover many aligning assumptions in our collaborative rehearsals.

I initially assumed the rehearsals would be a great way to build trust. I was delighted to see the interviewees and I grow very close during this stage of the process. We began to let our guard down and explore things in ways that made sense to us. The interviewees and I all clicked right away. We all spoke the language of dance and understood common jokes about dance spaces. We worked hard, had a good time, learned more about each other, and got to what we love to do; we got to dance.

The interviewees and I both played an equal role in creating the performances. We discussed many of our performance ideas and continued to tweak them until we felt the performance accurately displayed both of our interpretations of the memory. We added more information to each of the stories as we continued to move through the rehearsal process. The interviewee and I ended up co-creating performances that were much fuller than our original stories as we moved through this step of the process.

The stories themselves moved as the interviewee and I attempted to produce performance ideas. The memories began to transform as our interpretations of the event merged. We each created new insight to the moment by approaching the story from multiple perspectives. We learned a little more about how we saw the world, and we also slightly reconstructed our interpretations of the stories after being introduced to new information during the rehearsal process. We co-constructed and re-constructed our memories of the events by attempting to create performances that matched both of our interpretations of what took place. All of our interpretations were shaped by the politics surrounding our own lives. Each of our interpretations were seen within the performances and caused the performances to be layered with multiple truths that continued to transcend as they were shared with new audiences. I was pleased to see this part of the process align with many of my assumptions about what would take place.

### **Collaborative Rehearsals: Discoveries**

Although I was thrilled to observe many of my previous assumptions play out within this step, I was also ecstatic to discover new information. I initially began this research in hopes of exploring the dialogic process involved in constructing memories. I

was excited to work with other dancers and co-create performances because I thought it would take some of the pressure off of me. I am huge fan of collaborating with other people because they provide perspectives I never previously considered. The collaborative rehearsals sounded like a logical and enjoyable way to approach the research. I was shocked to discover how intricate this process became.

The first thing I was surprised by was the dancers' willingness to participate in the process. I had a very difficult time recruiting dancers because they did not want to be involved in collaborative rehearsals or performances. I found many dancers who were willing to be interviewed, but most of those dancers did not want to dance. Many of the potential dance interviewees were highly critical of their abilities and told me they did not want to dance because they felt they were not in performance shape. I assured the potential interviewees that the performances would not be physically demanding, but they were still hesitant to participate. I found it interesting that so many dancers were willing to talk, but not willing to dance. I thought they would feel more comfortable dancing rather than talking.

Even when I was able to find dancers who wanted to collaborate and be part of the performances, many of them had scheduling conflicts. Many of the dancers were moving to New York or Los Angeles in hopes of developing professional careers. The dancers who were still in the area had extremely busy schedules. As the dancers listed off their weekly schedules in an attempt to find a time to rehearse, I greeted them with my own equally busy schedule. I began to worry I was never going to find three dancers who had time to meet with me. I eventually began to find significance in this struggle.

I have learned over the past twenty-four years of dancing that busy dancers are considered successful dancers. Many dancers take on a lot and leave little room for free time because it demonstrates their passion, drive, and success. In many ways, this notion was introduced in the pain portion of my literate review. Dancers not only wear their injuries as badges of honor, but they also wear their sacrifices. Since everyone involved in the study – including myself – believed this mentality, it made it very difficult to conduct the study. I eventually found three available dancers after two months of searching.

**Discoveries with Dani.** My first interviewee, Dani, was scheduled to go back to school in Los Angeles three weeks after the interviews were conducted. She would not return back to the Bay Area for another three months. We decided to quickly put the performance together in order to avoid a three month delay. We began our rehearsal process by individually writing out the top three moments we each remembered during the interview. Interestingly enough, we chose specific moments and words that were shared during the interview rather than major overlying themes that continuously emerged. After we chose our top three moments of the interview, we shared our results.

While I originally planned to explore the six major moments that took place within the interview, I did not account for a few different complications. The first problem I ran into was that our responses overlapped. We both wrote down one of the same moments, so that lowered our six major moments down to five. The second thing I did not account for was how difficult it would be to create cohesive performances from fragmented moments. We had a very difficult time creating transitions from one moment

to the next. We chose to eliminate a second moment from our list because we could not figure out a way to transition into the moment, and the moment also didn't mesh well with the rest of the performance. We also eliminated that moment because we had a very difficult time trying to create a performance about that concept.

We ended up with four major interview moments to explore through performance. These four moments included statements such as 1) Dance is my religion. 2) Dancers are always in competition with their fellow dancers. 3) Dancers connect with each other differently than they connect with non-dancers. 4) Dancers run into complications if they skip the small basic steps before they move to the large complex steps.

Dani I felt very comfortable bouncing performance ideas off of each other. We were both open and accepting of various ways of performing. Our ideas inspired each other, and led us both to a performance we could not have produced alone. We chose to use the presentational performance aesthetics I described in my third chapter. We abstracted ideas a great deal, and we also relied on symbols, images, and gestures throughout our performance. Overall, the collaborative process of the method worked very well with this Dani.

**Discoveries with Corinne.** The second interviewee's name was Corinne, and her schedule was much more manageable. She lived in the area and we had a fairly simple time setting up a rehearsal schedule. We began the rehearsal by writing out each of our top three interview moments. We again experienced a great deal of overlap. We ended up writing down two of the same moments. We decided to keep both of those moments, and also one of the other individual moments. Again, we decided to eliminate one of the

moments because we had a very difficult time making the moment fit within the performance. We ended up with three main moments to explore in our performance. Those moments included conversations about: 1) Not fitting within specific dance styles. 2) The sacrifices made while being a dancer. 3) The politics involved in the audition process.

Corinne and I also worked really well together. We both listened to each other's ideas and helped the performance develop together. We both contributed a great deal and would continuously provide feedback after each run. Each time we practiced the performance, it continued to evolve. We changed the order of everything numerous times. We also continue to slightly alter portions of the performance right up until the actual performance took place. We both worked very well together and produced something more than we could have created alone.

**Discoveries with Mike.** I ran into some challenges while working with the third interviewee, Mike. He was very sweet and talented, but was also extremely busy. He was in the process of completing a performance while I was working with him. He had a week of rehearsals, followed by two weeks of performances. I interviewed him before his schedule became full and was not aware of how busy his schedule would be over the next month. I attempted to contact him after his performance ended, but I heard no response. I began to worry I was going to have to find another interviewee. I finally attempted to contact him again a week later. He responded and said he would be available to rehearse and perform within the next week. This meant Mike and I only had two hours to create the performance and rehearse it before we went on stage.

I was slightly concerned about how rushed we would be, but I assumed the rehearsal process would go smoothly since the first two were fairly easy. I was surprised to discover the rehearsal process with him was much different than the first two. Mike had a strong background in musical theater. He spent a great portion of his life acting on stage and using representational aesthetics similar to what actors use. We had a very hard time seeing eye to eye on performance ideas.

We chose to discuss the following three memories: 1) Boys are more privileged than girls in dance spaces. 2) You must keep dancing through injuries. 3) Dance technique has become about tricks rather than artistry. He typically used mimesis as a performance choice and wanted to replicate these specific concepts just as they would have taken place. On the other hand, I typically use poesis, kinesis, and a great deal of abstraction within my performances. I prefer presentational aesthetics and Boal techniques that allow the audience to contribute to the performance. I discussed these aesthetics and techniques in the third chapter. We had a very hard time seeing eye to eye on our performance choices.

I gradually experienced a heightened sense of vulnerability as we worked through the rehearsal. I had to trust Mike in this process and allow him to co-create a performance that would be seen by family, friends, committee members, and colleagues. Although we both struggled to agree on performance ideas, I think a lot was learned through the experience. I was urged to think and perform differently than before. This encouraged me to produce research that pushed me outside of my comfort zone. It also helped me avoid producing research that commonly followed the same sort of

performance aesthetics I would typically use. Although we both struggled during the rehearsal process, we learned a great deal from each other. We also produced something far beyond what we would have produced alone.

**Productive unplanned tensions.** The interviewees and I learned a great deal about each other, Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy, and ourselves during this step of the process, but I also noticed a common theme worth mentioning. I will discuss this issue in greater detail within my next chapter, but it is an important unplanned tension that arose during this step of the method. I found myself somewhat concerned about the quality of the performances. I really wanted to produce “good” performances that my peers and committee members would appreciate. I had to continuously remind myself that these performances were a form of research rather than a form of entertainment. I also had to put my ego aside and allow my interviewees to generate performance choices I did not particularly endorse. I had a difficult time relinquishing so much control to my interviewees.

I also felt a heightened sense of internal pressure for the performances to be amazing. I wanted to demonstrate how much I had learned about performance studies throughout graduate school and for all of my knowledge to culminate in these performances. I was worried the audience would expect much more from the performances, and they would not be impressed. I had a really hard time silencing these concerns, but was finally able to take a step back and see these performances as a form of research. I began this research in hopes of co-creating new knowledge and generating research that surprised me. It was crucial for me to put aside my ego and need for control

in order to produce results that did not replicate my previous knowledge of the topic. Even though I had a difficult time with this step of the method, I think it was a highly critical and significant moment in the research process. I was forced to move through my method in ways that produced different results than I would have produced by myself.

Although I had a difficult time working through this tension, it really contributed a great deal. The research became much fuller because of this step and I also grew significantly. I was forced to perform outside of my comfort zone. I learned how to navigate my way through tensions and trust other people to lead me to results I may not have ever considered on my own. I also learned a great deal about my second research question during this step. I discovered that people gain a heightened sense of pressure for their oral histories to be significant when they are performed in front of people who hold great value in their lives. People feel the need to construct the performances in ways that are perceived as “good” performances. People who feel heightened pressure to perform well in front of significant audiences put a great amount of stress on the story and the performers. If people are not willing to put trust in other people, they may ultimately be reproducing the same results they have always produced.

### **Live Public Performances: Aligning Assumptions**

Although I had not accounted for these unexpected tensions in my research, I was pleased to discover many aligning assumptions within the collaborative performances. Most of the interviewees and I used many of the Boal techniques described in chapter three such as: First stage: *Knowing the body*, Second stage: *Making the body expressive*, Third stage: *The theater as language*, Fourth stage: *The theater as discourse*. These

techniques helped generate many of the presentational performance aesthetics I discussed in my previous chapter. The audience contributed a great deal to the performances and co-constructed very specific realities in the space. The audience played a key role in the development of the performances, and we were unable to predict the performances they would execute within the space.

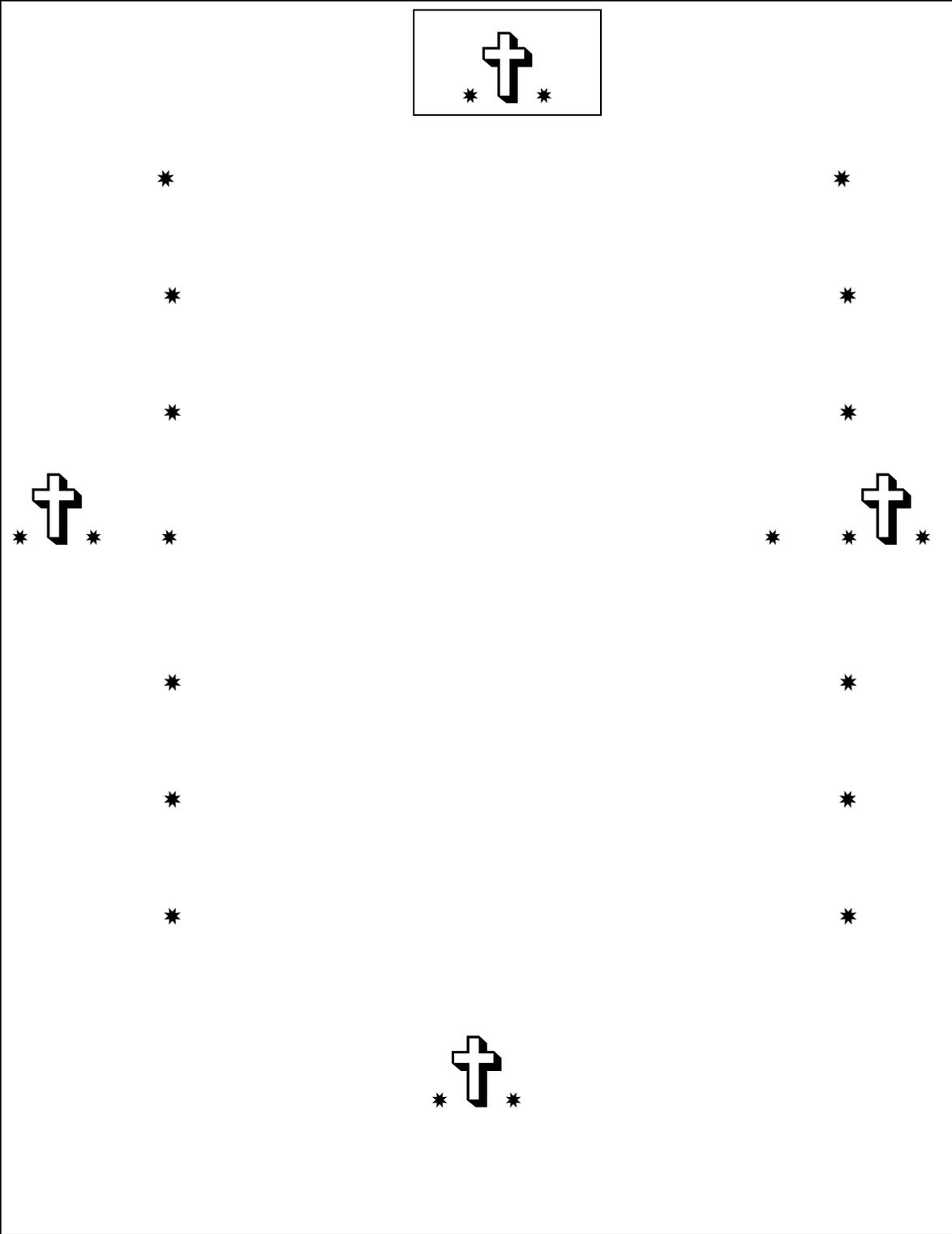
### **Live Public Performances: Discoveries**

I originally assumed we could not predict all of the audiences' responses, but I failed to recognize we also could not predict our own responses to the audience. I had no idea so many unexpected moments and unplanned performances would take place, but I believe they were extremely significant. I learned a great deal by encountering mistakes and unplanned tensions during the performances. I did not anticipate having to reconstruct the performances in front of the audience, but this is what happened.

I thought the collaborative creative process would only take place in rehearsals. I had no idea we would end up using many of the initial contact improv exercises during the actual performance. I thought these exercises would serve as inspiration during the creative process, but they actually began to take place during our performances. We were forced to listen to each other and trust each other in ways that made both of us very vulnerable. The audiences' presence also added a new element to the exercises that had not previously been encountered. We had to account for their performances and it was impossible to predict their responses, or our responses to them. We were forced to listen to their interpretations, as well as our own. We all exposed and created elements to the

stories that had not been previously discussed. The interviewees and I all performed much differently than we anticipated during the rehearsal process.

**Discoveries with Dani.** Dani and I performed on Thursday, September 13th, 2012 at 8:00pm. The performance lasted about fifteen minutes, and seven people were in the audience. I did not want to over advertise the event because the performer and I would not have enough room to move if audience members filled the space. The audience was composed of undergraduate students, my parents, and two professors. We used a room that was painted completely black, and had black flooring. We also removed all of the chairs and tables from the space. I constructed crucifixes out of wooden 2X4's, and we placed one large crucifix in the center of each of the four walls. We then draped old pointe shoes, and old rosaries over the crucifixes. We also put two candles at the base of each crucifix. We arranged fourteen other candles in two parallel lines. We also had an overhead projector flashing a movie onto the front crucifix. The layout of the space looked like this:



Dani and I decided to make the performance as simple as possible. We thought it would be a good idea to avoid using a great amount of technology. We chose to use candles with religious markings on them in order to avoid complicating the performance with multiple lighting cues. We also decided to have only one movie and music cue in order to avoid possible technical difficulties. Our decision to avoid technology helped us generate creative performance ideas that contributed to our interpretations of the original stories. If we had not agreed to use these limitations, our performance would have been much different.

We ultimately hoped to gain more control over the performance by limiting the use of technology, but that is not what happened. Candle light can be very unpredictable. We were surprised to discover each of the candles gave off far less light than we had imagined. We also had a hard time blowing out our candles during the appropriate cues. The flicking light from the candles also cast interesting shadows that continued to move. I believe the performance of the candles ended up contributing far more to the story than we had predicted.

We were also surprised by other elements of the performance. For example, we had all of the audience members walk in and stand within the parallel lines of candles facing the projector. We originally planned to have me kneeling in front of the cross while the movie played. I was overcome by an overwhelming need to move as soon as the movie began. I felt extremely awkward with all eyes on my back, and instantly began moving through prayer motions. I raised my arms out to the side, and up over my head. I gradually began to rock side to side as the movie continued. I had no idea I would feel so

compelled to move in this moment, and I was surprised by the movement my body needed to express. I also was surprised to see the audience as soon as I turned around.

The audience was positioned much differently than the interviewee and I had planned. They were much closer together, and very close to the back wall. The interviewee and I had originally planned to move through the audience, but our performance had to instantly change because they were so close together. I was incredibly aware of how connected the performer and I were in this moment. We were both speaking to each other about what to do, but we did this without words. I felt as if we were again practicing the weight distribution activities we performed prior to the interview. We were both following each other's lead, and trusting each other to guide us to a new place.

I ran into another complication as soon as I bent down to write on the floor with chalk. I attempted to draw a circle in front of an audience member, and I broke the chalk in half. I then moved to another audience member, and the chalk broke in half again. I was stuck with little slivers of chalk in no time. The interviewee also had the same problem. We both frantically looked for pieces of chalk in order to complete our performance as rehearsed. We managed to find enough chalk to get the point across, but it had turned out much differently than we had planned.

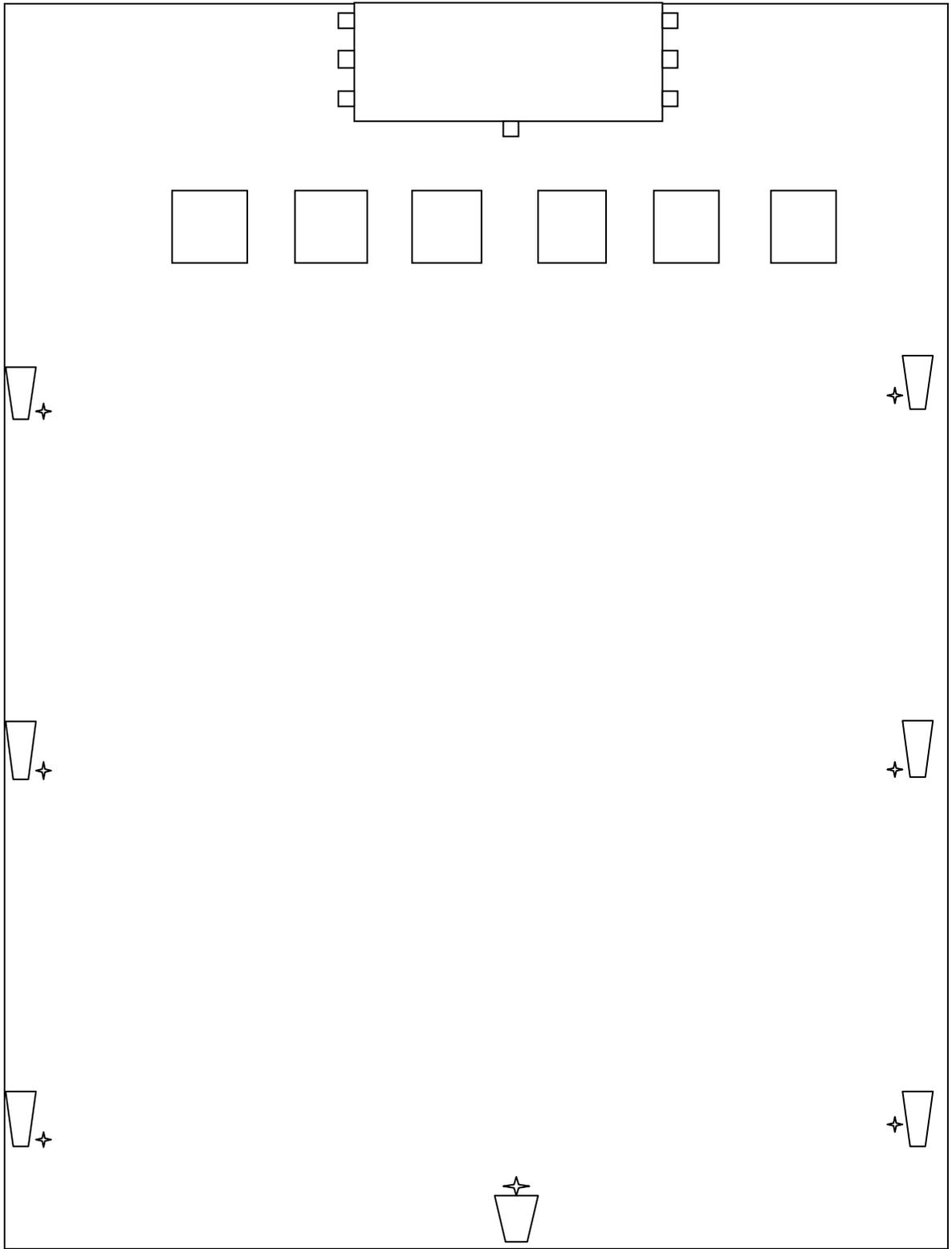
I was again thrown off as we moved to the next portion of our performance. We had decided for the interviewee to dance in front of the audience, and for me to dance behind them. I barely had any room to move because the audience was standing so close to the back wall. I attempted to replicate the interviewee's motions, but I had a very

difficult time since there was not enough room. I also noticed a majority of the audience was looking at the interviewee in the front. I thought the audience would move out of the way if they saw me dancing close to them, but a majority of them were all positioned to the front, and did not notice how close I was to them.

We encountered our final unplanned tension at the very end. We had rehearsed the piece numerous times, and we always had a significant amount of music left at the very end. We were surprised that the performance had taken much longer than we had planned, and we were now moving through the space in silence. Again, we were extremely aware of each other as we moved. I felt again as if we were speaking to each other in front of everyone without any words. We both looked at each other at the very end and blew out our candles in unison. Our performance ended up transforming into something much different than we had planned.

**Discoveries with Corinne.** Corinne and I ran into similar complications during our performance as well. We performed on Thursday, September 20th, 2012 at 8:00pm. The performance lasted about fifteen minutes and there were about fifteen people in the audience. I attempted to advertise the event a little more than the first performance, but I was still cautious of the space. The audience was mostly composed of graduate students and professors. We again used a room that was painted completely black, and had black flooring. We also took removed all of the chairs and tables from the space. We set seven baskets around the perimeter of the space and we set a pair of dance shoes in front of each basket. The types of dance shoes included tap, jazz, ballet, pointe, hip hop, lyrical, and character. We also taped sheets of paper on the front of the basket. Each sheet of

paper had a word on it such as family, friends, free time, food, sleep, money, and relationships. We used painters tape to draw out six small squares on the floor right in front of the projector and we played a video of Adolf Hitler giving a speech to thousands of people. We then transitioned into a black screen where music played in the background. We lined the perimeter of the video with seven pictures of dancers. The set up looked like this:



Corinne and I decided to begin the performance as soon as the audience walked through the door. I informed the audience they would be contributing to the performance. I told them they were required to run laps in the room until we told them to stop. I also explained we would reward the best runner with a special gift. I stated the performance depended on them running. My tone during the briefing and during the running performance was cold and harsh. I continuously yelled at them to keep going. The interviewee and I gave dirty looks to the people who were moving slowly and we also pointed people out or whispered about them. Many of the audience members chose to stop running after a few minutes. We finally instructed the audience to stop and to line up in a straight line. Corinne and I then moved down the line discussing which person to reward with the gift. We ended up choosing an audience member who stopped running fairly early in the performance. We instructed everyone to give her a round of applause, and we brought in a chair for her to sit. She was the only person who was allowed to sit during the performance. We required everyone else to stand.

Corinne and I then transitioned into the next portion of the performance. She stood in the painters tape square farthest stage right and I stood in the square farthest stage left. The Hitler video began to play and we began to dance in two different styles. I danced ballet and she danced hip hop. We designated each box as a different style, and we transitioned into the style each time we stepped into the box. We gradually began to pick up the tape and connect boxes together. We also began to merge styles as we did this. We eventually merged all of the lines into one giant box and moved through the box

while dancing various styles. We then ripped up the tape, walked up to the audience member sitting in the chair, and threw it at her.

The video of Hitler ended and piano music began to play. Corinne and I each went to separate baskets. We picked up the basket, grabbed an audience member, led them to a straight line, and had the audience member hold onto the basket with the piece of paper facing the rest of the audience. We eventually had seven audience members holding all seven of the baskets with words on them such as fun, friends, free time, food, relationships, family, and sleep. The interviewee and I then went down the line, crushed each piece of paper, put it in the basket, and put the dance shoes on top of the paper in the basket.

We then went to the pictures that were around the perimeter of the video that had played. I had written out letters on the back of the words. We placed the letters on the front of the baskets. We intended on spelling the word passion, but I was in a rush prior to the performance and forgot to write out the last two letters. We ended up with the letters P A S S I. The interviewee and I were again in a position where we were forced to silently communicate with each other about what direction to take the performance. We danced around with the blank pieces of paper for a while, and then we eventually ended up placing the two blank pieces of paper on the last two baskets. We went behind the line of audience members holding baskets, and we danced while the music and lights faded out.

Corinne and I both looked at each other with wide eyes, laughed, and shook our heads while the audience applauded for us. She then whispered to me with a smile, “We

meant to do that.” I smiled back and nodded my head. I had no idea this one “mistake” would bring us so close together, and make the performance so much more than we could have imagined. Again, we were really forced to listen to each other in that moment of uncertainty, and make decisions without vocalized conversations. We both had a heightened awareness of each other, the audience, and the performance that was playing out. We both contributed to the decision that was made, and it ultimately helped generate even more truths about the original memory being explored. The audience really helped contribute to these truths during the question and answer portion following the performance, but I will go into more detail about that when I discuss the results from that step of the method.

**Discoveries with Mike.** Mike and I also ran into similar unplanned moments during our performance. We held our performance on Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 7:30pm. The performance took place in the same black room that was used for the first two performances. The audience was composed of seven people who were a combination of professors and undergraduate students. The performance lasted about seven minutes in total.

We began by informing the audience of their responsibilities during the performance. We explained the performance would begin as soon as the audience entered the room. We also told the audience they must follow along the movement of whoever was closest to the screen. We had the audience enter the room while a video played. We chose to use the same video we used in the first performance, but it was used in a different context. We used the video in the first performance as a means of worship,

and we used the video in the third performance as a means of consumption of the past and present. The video showed the progression of dance technique over the past seventy-five years. Everyone in the room stood in silence as they stood watching the video together.

I noticed myself feeling extremely uncomfortable standing there. I felt as if I should move through the space or do something. I also gained a heightened awareness of everyone else watching the video. We were all just standing there in silence. I then began to move toward the front of the room after the movie ended. We chose to flash painful images of dancers stretching and dancers' feet up on the screen. We accompanied these images with the sound of a heart beat. I assumed the audience would follow along with my movement since I was the person closest to the screen. I was surprised when I realized the interviewee was the only person following my movement. We continued with the performance as we had planned, but we both knew we would have to make some changes to the performance as it progressed.

Mike passed me up and stood closer to the screen. I again waited for the audience to join in, but they all just stood there. I ran back to the red fabric I had previously placed in the middle of the room and began to rip it into small strips. We originally planned for the audience to fill the center of the space, but they were standing against the back wall. I ran to each person, gave them a strip of fabric, pulled them to the center of the floor, and motioned for them to take a seat. I did not intend to place them in a circle, but that is the formation we formed. We originally planned for the interviewee to still remain in front of the audience once I had handed them the red strips of fabric, but since the audience

had not participated the way we had planned, the interviewee and I had another non verbal conversation about what to do in that moment. He moved toward the center of the circle, took off his black sock to expose his red sock, and the heart beat transitioned into the sound of a heart monitor flat lining. He looked around the circle, and then slowly continued to move until the sound and lights faded out.

Again, we looked at each other, laughed, and shook our heads while the audience applauded. Mike and I never discussed what we would do if the audience did not comply. We were forced to make decisions in the spur of the moment. Our decisions altered the original stories, but in a way that made them fuller. We were forced to approach the story from a different perspective. We ultimately exposed aspects of the story that were very true to both of us, but had not been previously discussed. Although we did not replicate the exact story that was originally shared, we did expose our interpretations of the story. We were forced to work together and think on our feet in order to create a performance that communicated our interpretations of the original story.

**Productive unplanned tensions.** Although we did not anticipate encountering these moments during our performance, they actually contributed much more than we could have imagined. Each of the unplanned moments continued to move the performance to the present. The interviewee and I were forced to really listen to each other, and make decisions without hesitation. These unplanned moments generated more truths about the original story. We were able to explore the memories in ways that drew from our instinctual responses, as well as from a means of care and respect for the other person's voice. Our human responses to these unplanned moments exposed a great deal

about our own memories and experiences. These unintentional moments generated multiple truths about the specific story that had not been previously discussed during the interview process. These moments did not transform the stories in ways that made them less accurate. They actually made the stories even fuller than before because they were interpreted and created through multiple complex lenses.

We ended up learning more from the unplanned moments than the planned moments. Mike and I discovered more information in regards to my second research question: What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and when they are literally danced? We discovered the stories became fuller when performers left space for the audience to see themselves in the performance. We also learned oral histories become fuller when performers are surprised by unexpected tensions during the performance. The performers are forced to be silent and really listen to each other in ways that constitute even more information about the previously discussed story. People can learn a great amount of information about themselves and other people when they are caught off guard and forced to listen to each others' bodies.

### **Question and Answer Sessions: Aligning Assumptions**

I was very pleased to see these unplanned moments constitute new research, but I was also happy to discover many of my previous assumptions about the fourth step of the process to be similar to my assumptions. I was ecstatic to hear many of the audience members discussing concepts of the performances long after the event ended. Many former audience members would approach me and discuss ideas that emerged during the performance. They would also discuss how they related to the performance. One

audience member even told me three months later that she hated my performance. I was actually pleased to hear her response. She told me she hated the performance because it made her feel extremely uncomfortable. I interpreted her response as a good thing because the interviewees and I hoped the audience would feel many of the uncomfortable tensions we felt in the studio. I also thought her response was a positive thing because it meant the performances were response-able. I previously discussed this concept in chapter three. The interviewees and I encouraged the audience to have a response to the performance that stuck with them. I was very pleased to hear so many people talking about the performances months after they took place because it meant the performance generated responses within the audience that stuck with them as they moved through their lives.

### **Question and Answer Sessions: Discoveries**

Although I was pleased to hear the performances were response-able, I was completely blown away by what emerged during the question and answer session. I had no idea how vital this step would be to the method. I assumed the audience would ask about performance choices, but I was so excited to hear them present their interpretations of the performances. They picked up on ideas the interviewees and I explored during the interviews, but we chose not to focus on during the performance. They also mentioned various concepts and feelings the interviewee and I had experienced during our dance training, but had not articulated during the interview process. The interviewee and I looked at each other, smiled, and nodded as audience members discussed aspects of the performance in ways that were true on multiple levels.

**Discoveries with Dani and the audience.** I was slightly concerned during the first questions answer session because I began the discussion in a way that did not generate a great amount of conversation. I informed the audience about my method and the research I was exploring. I explained the interview session, and described the collaborative rehearsals. I then asked the audience if they had any questions or guesses in regards to what the performance was about. My framing made the audience hesitant and I noticed puzzled faces looking back at me. One audience member broke the silence and finally asked, “So what were the top moments you performed?” I pushed back by explaining there was no “right” answer and asked what they thought the performance was about. They again looked at me with hesitant faces. I realized I had set up the conversation in a way that was not very dialogic. I realize now my framing made the audience much more cautious about their responses. They were worried they would have the “wrong” answer and their interpretations would be incorrect. I again stated there were no wrong answers, and they eventually began to discuss their interpretations.

I was surprised to hear the audiences’ interpretation of the first performance. They thought the first performance was about negative moments in the studio. Many audience members felt the performance symbolized death and crossing over. They also believed the performance was very similar to joining a cult. Although the interviewee and I had not articulated these concepts the same way, they were still very true realities many dancers experience. Dancers commonly sacrifice a great deal in order to be accepted in dance communities. One might interpret this as the death of one life and the birth of another. Dancers also have very specific norms, traditions, and rules within their

sub cultures. Cults also have their own sets of norms, traditions, and rules. The interviewee and I had no intention of painting such a negative picture about our experiences, and we actually thought the performance would be somewhat joyful. We were surprised to discover the audience interpreted the events differently.

We were also surprised to hear one of the audience members bring up a very significant concept during the question and answer session. The audience member stated she noticed a theme of striving for perfection. She explained many people strive to be perfect Christians, just as many dancers strive to be perfect dancers. She also explained how these goals were very difficult to achieve because everyone has a different perception of perfection. I was completely blown away by the audience member's comments. Although the interviewee and I never discussed this concept in our interview, many dancers commonly experience similar feelings. I will provide more information about this concept in the next chapter, but I found it fascinating to hear the audience member make these connections from our performance. I also thought it was interesting the audience noticed this concept even when we were attempting to focus on other ideas. This audience member's comment reinforced the complexity that emerged within the initial interview process. Each story and each memory is multidimensional, and although we may not be aware of the politics consistently shaping us, they are always present.

The audiences interpretations also helped expose another very interesting concept. Our multidimensional stories portrayed intersecting paradoxes. For example, the interviewee and I discussed how much we loved dance, but we also communicated these ideas in ways that appeared very morbid. Many dancers commonly experience these

opposing truths throughout their training. We ran into these moments during the interview process when dancers expressed how much they loved dance, but they also criticized various aspects of dance institutions and the art form itself. Many of the dancers also provided opposing truths when they discussed the relationships they held with their dance peers. Although the dancers were close, they were also very competitive with each other. The dancers also provided evidence of opposing truths during the interviews when they described dance as an outlet full of freedom, and an institution filled with strict rules. The interviewee and I performed many of these contradicting intersections at the same time, and the audience formed their own interpretations about the performance.

The audience was drawn to some truths over others. The audiences' life experiences shaped what truths were created for them. For example, we used the metaphor of dance being a religion. Many people commonly discuss religion and spirituality as a positive thing. The audience interpreted religion as a negative thing in this instance. Both opposing truths are very common realities about dance and religion. Their prior experiences and interpretations shaped their perceptions, but both could be considered true for various reasons.

**Discoveries with Corinne and the audience.** The second question and answer session also generated a great amount of information. I attempted to frame the discussion in a way that encouraged more dialogue. The audience was still a little hesitant during the process, but they contributed to the conversation more quickly than the first group. I

provided the audience with a brief description of the research and asked them to share how the performance made them feel.

Most of the audience members said they felt a large amount of anxiety, competition, and guilt during the performance. Many people also said they felt highly uncomfortable performing the movement I required them to execute. They said they felt this way because they were not dressed in workout attire, and they had a difficult time moving through the space. They also felt uncomfortable because they were asked to perform high intensity exercises that required a great amount of energy. Although the audience members did not have a very pleasant experience during the performance, the interviewee and I considered the event a success. We hoped the audience would experience these tensions during the performance. We wanted them to feel some of the same discomforts we experienced during our training.

Corinne and I ended up encountering our own unpredictable moments of discomfort during the performance as well. I had forgotten complete the set up for our performance, and we were both surprised to discover the mistake during the performance. I was supposed to spell out the word P A S S I O N on the back of seven pieces of paper. I forgot to write out the last two letters, so we ended up with P A S S I. I was worried I had ruined the whole performance, but I was pleased to discover what happened during the question and answer session.

I asked the audience what they had thought about the word that was spelled out. One audience member started discussing how she related to the word because she used to be a dancer and she remembered how *passive* she felt during the experience. She had

interpreted the word P A S S I as *passive* instead of *passion*. Another audience member quickly spoke up and said how she thought the word was supposed to say *passing*. This audience member had a great deal of experience with intercultural communication, and explained how she interpreted the letters as a means of passing, or blending in with the crowd. I was surprised the audience created so much meaning about the letters.

Although we had not intended for the performance to create these interpretations, they were still very true realities. Dancers are commonly passive objects that teachers attempt to fill with knowledge. I previously discussed many of these ideas in chapter two.

Dancers also commonly attempt to fake it until they make it, or pass as a good dancer.

Although the audience picked up on these very interesting concepts, we did not intend for them to be part of the performance. Although we did not strive to perform these concepts, they still took place and exposed very specific realities.

**Discoveries with Mike and the audience.** The audience also generated even more realities during the third question and answer session. I began this session much differently than the other two. I asked the audience to describe moments or images that resonated with them. I hoped I would generate even more discussion by approaching the conversation this way. I was pleased to hear people begin to describe specific moments of the performance. Many of the audience members discussed the disturbing images of feet that were projected onto the wall. The audience members also discussed how painful it was to watch many of the images. One audience member said he was extremely aware of how focused we all were on the images being projected. He stated it was if we were

consuming a product. Again, although we did not intend for this message to be communicated, it was still a very true reality about the dance world.

The audience then began to discuss many of the shows we had discussed during the initial interview. They brought up a very good point about injuries on shows like *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Dance Moms*. They discussed how many of these shows portray injuries in suspenseful and exciting ways. They also discussed how we contribute to this behavior by consuming these shows. They felt as if they were supposed to consume our performance. They believed they were supposed to watch us because it was so enjoyable to watch rather than to participate. They wanted to be observers in that moment rather than participants. I began to gain a better understanding why the audience felt compelled to stay still during the performance rather than move.

**Productive unplanned tensions.** Although I could see why the audience did not participate, I was still concerned about the meaning created. The audience seemed to identify with the concept involving injuries and dancing through pain, but their lack of performance greatly altered the meaning of one element we discussed during the interview. The interviewee and I spent a great amount of time discussing male privilege in dance settings. We chose to have the male interviewee demonstrate more difficult moves to perform. We hoped the audience would not be able to follow his lead, and would understand what it felt like to be a female dancer. This concept was not portrayed because the audience did not participate.

Although the audience did not pick up on this concept, I became extremely conscious of the male privilege in the space. I looked around the room and I noticed a

majority of the audience members were male. I wondered if the performance would have been different if more females were in the audience. The male audience members may not have seen or created this concept because it was not a concept that greatly impacted their lives. Even though most of the male audience members did not see the male privilege in the space, it was still a very strong reality for me. They manipulated the performance in ways that contributed to gender politics and masked their male privilege. Many male dancers may also not be aware of their privilege in dance environments, so I actually found the lack of performance to be very meaningful. Although the audience did not comply with my request, they still were performing in a very specific way that shaped the outcome of the performance. The audiences' lack of compliance reconstituted many truths about male privilege in dance spaces.

### **Follow-Up Interviews: Aligning Assumptions**

Although the audiences' lack of performance reconstructed very specific truths about dance spaces, the interviewees' responses in the follow-up interview also provided a great amount of information that aligned with my assumptions about what happens to oral histories when they are danced. The interviewees and I explored this research question by engaging in a conversation about the process. The interviewees and I co-constructed answers about the process in order to help generate even more information about my research question. The questions I asked the interviewees during the follow up interview were:

1. What was this process like for you?
2. What happened to your stories as we moved through the process?
3. How do you feel about your dance training after completing this process?

4. How do you feel about your dance teachers after completing this process?

The interviewees and I were able to co-construct some interesting insight that aligned with my assumptions about the second research question within this step of the process.

I assumed the interviewees would enjoy the process, and I was pleased to hear them confirm this notion. All of the interviewees began the conversation by explaining how much they enjoyed and appreciated the process. All of the interviewees said the questions helped them investigate their everyday dance lives more critically. I hoped this process would have a similar impact and was pleased to hear this response. All of the interviewees also felt their stories transformed as they moved through the process. I previously assumed this would happen and discussed this concept in my third chapter. Two interviewees described how the audience impacted the original stories. Overall, the interviewees believed the stories moved as they were shared with new audiences.

**Follow-Up Interviews: Discoveries**

Although the interviewees' responses aligned with my previous assumptions, I also found it interesting to hear their responses regarding their dance training. Many of the interviewees felt the same way they originally felt about their dance training. Some dancers even said the process helped them appreciate dance even more. I thought this was interesting because many of the interviewees stated they viewed their training more critically as they moved through the process. I would think the interviewees would change their initial views after interpreting their experiences through a critical lens, but all of the interviewees stated they loved dance and appreciated all their teachers. I think this is very significant to note because many dancers discuss dance as an intersecting

contradiction. They commonly complain about various aspects of dance, but still praise and appreciate the process.

The interviewees continued to present very opposing views about their experiences with this research as they moved through this final step of the method. The interviewees believed their stories moved and developed as we moved through this method. Although the interviewees felt their memories and stories moved through the process, each of the interviewees ended up feeling the same exact way about their dance training in the end. I would think the interviewees stories would move and encourage them to think differently about their training, but they all felt the same way. The interviewees' responses during this step of the process helped me realize many dancers are already critically aware of their dance training, but they do not let their training impact their love for the art form. The interviewees' critical awareness of their training actually demonstrates their love. For example, a dancer might be aware of the power structures in the studio, but they interpret the power, pain, and sacrifice as a demonstration of love. Although the dancers may feel moments of tension and frustration through the process, they consider these moments of success and love. Dancers intersect paradoxes such as pain, power, and love in an intricate way.

**Productive unplanned tensions.** I was pleased to hear the dancers share some surprising information about what happens when oral histories are danced, but I also experienced another moment of unplanned tension during this step of the process. Although I found this step useful, I felt it was somewhat repetitive. I do not think it was a necessary step in the process. Future researchers may not gain a great amount of

information within this step because the interviewees' perspectives did not greatly change. The interviewees did investigate their pedagogical experiences more critically, but their opinions about their experiences remained the same. Overall, I feel this step of the method could be eliminated in the future.

### **My Two Research Questions: Results**

This method greatly helped me explore my two research questions: 1) How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? 2) What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and when they are literally danced? I was pleased to hear many aspects align with my previous assumptions, and I was also thrilled to discover new insight that contributed to my research. Overall, I was able to constitute significant information about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy and dancing oral histories as the interviewees and I moved through each step of this process.

I discovered quite a bit about my first research question: How do dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance studios? The interviewees provided insight about the ten pedagogical traditions intersecting at the same time. The interviewees also introduced the concept of age into the conversation. I also discovered dancers remember their experiences with Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy as intersecting paradoxes. The dancers grappled with their intersecting memories, and expressed opposing views about the process. They remembered moments of joy intertwined with moments of pain, and they reconstruct these various aspects into one. The dancers ultimately intersected their memories of Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy in contradicting ways. Their experiences of joy, passion, and love were

inseparable from moments of sacrifice, pain, and frustration. Dancers remember the good and the bad of their pedagogical experiences as one contradiction that continuously fuels the other.

Although I appreciate the information this method generated about my first research question, I was also pleased to co-construct information about my second research question: What happens to oral histories when they are approached as dances, and when they are literally danced? All of the oral histories became fuller as they moved through each step of this process. The stories did not necessarily change; rather, they just became more complete. I formed strong connections with the interviewees through this process. We both listened to our bodies and the bodies of the audience on much deeper levels than usual. We were all put in vulnerable and unpredictable situations that required a significant amount of trust. We surprised each other and ourselves as we moved through this process. We also gained a heightened awareness of ourselves, others, our stories, and the performance as we moved through these steps of the method. Overall, the interviewees and I discovered oral histories become fuller when they are danced and shared with new audiences through various means of communication and performance. We also discovered danced oral histories allow people to learn from tensions, and participate in much deeper forms of embodied communication.

## **Conclusion**

I examined the results of both research questions within this chapter by discussing each step of the method. Although I strived to break away from the traditional discipline of my past, that training could still be heard within each portion of this chapter. I began

by exploring my first research question within the first step of my method and presenting the theme of intersectionality that emerged. I then addressed my second research question within the analysis of the second, third, fourth, and fifth step of my method. I then discussed the theme of productive unplanned tensions that emerged within this portion of the method. I organized each step of the method by first discussing aspects of the study that aligned with my previous assumptions. I then described discoveries that arose during each step of this method. Although I was pleased by the discoveries found within this research, I am excited to see how this research contributes to future conversations.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

Although I noticed many of my interviewees present intersecting paradoxes while discussing Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy, I did not realize how I was also displaying many intersecting paradoxes of my own. As I looked over the previous pages of this research, I began to notice my writing style, my research method, and my methodological approaches expose numerous intersecting paradoxes. I did not intend for the intersections of my past dance and academic training to be heard within my research, but the voices made themselves apparent. As I looked over each chapter, I saw my writing style transform. Similar to the oral histories, my writing became fuller as I approached it from multiple lenses. I began my literature review with the discipline of a dancer, and I aimed to perpetuate the traditions of dance and academia. As I moved into my third chapter, I gradually began to infuse my dance identity with my identity as a qualitative researcher. I then began to explore these contradicting views within my fourth chapter. I now am reflexive as I examine how these intersecting paradoxes shaped my research, and became apparent within my writing. Again, although I did not intend for these interesting paradoxes to be seen within my research, these opposing intersections were still always colliding within me. I now am reflexive about how the words on this page have been shaped by the intersecting paradoxes of my past. I am also reflexive about how these words will shape the paradoxes of the future.

### **Moving Through Me**

Each of the interviewees and I co-created new histories as we moved through each step of this process. Although I strived to discover how dancers remembered their

pedagogical experience, I also contributed to the research that emerged. I was the medium in which all of the results traveled through. I did not overshadow the stories with my own experiences, or alter the stories for my own personal agenda, but my interpretations of the stories were shaped by the politics and intersections of my own life. As the interviewees and I constituted realities about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy, we also each interpreted the results of each story differently. As I discussed in chapter three, I aimed for this research to be collaborative and generative. I wanted to co-create new stories with the interviewees, and that is what happened. Although I did not overpower the interviewees' responses with my own personal agenda, I also did not interpret these events from a neutral place. I will quickly discuss how the intersections of my memories constituted my identity during this process, and how such intersections became part of the research itself.

I am fortunate enough to have a job I love more than anything in the world; I get to teach dance to a variety of people. I give my two and a half year old students colorful scarves to dance with and watch them investigate aspects of movement for the first time. I am overcome with nostalgia as I share the history of pointe shoes with my five year old students. I laugh as my eight year old students and I sing One Direction and Taylor Swift songs at the top of our lungs during warm ups. I am overwhelmed by feelings of love as I watch my ten year old students have "silly face" contests in the mirror. I am inspired by the talent, dedication, passion, encouragement, and love my competition dancers exude every day in rehearsal. I am continuously thankful as I watch each student grow and contribute to the art form I love. My students and I co-construct new memories in dance

spaces, and my identity continuously transforms through the intersections of these moments.

Although I have spent a great deal of my life identifying as a dancer and a dance teacher, I now also believe I am made up of many other intersecting layers. If you would have asked me about my identity two years ago, I would have only identified as a dancer or a dance teacher. Although I have been greatly shaped by various aspects of my life, my dance identity overshadowed every other quality. As I grew older, injuries caused my identity as a dancer to slowly fade away. I encountered similar tensions my interviewees presented involving the role age. My body did not perform the way it used to and I was pissed off I could not do what I had spent my whole life doing. I turned to teaching, theory, and research as a means healing these wounds. I was surprised to see these aspects reshape my identity in new ways.

I began to critically investigate my dance training as a means of understanding my identity and memories in comparison to other dancers. I displayed my critical lens within the literature review portion of this research and I attempted to deconstruct the power dynamics that took place during my life as a dancer. I was drawn toward understanding more about how dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in dance environments. I reflected on ten major pedagogical traditions I commonly observed in dance environments. The ten qualities were: Sorting, banking, alienation, technique, privilege, pain, power, internalization, gender, and joy. As I critically investigated each aspect, I failed to recognize the key aspect of age within this process. I also failed to recognize how these ten qualities intersected, contradicted, and constituted new realities as they

built off each other. I gradually began to realize dancers remember their pedagogical experiences as intersected paradoxes. For example, pain and sacrifice collided with aspects of joy and love. These qualities build and constitute one another. As I discovered these answers to my first research question, I began to understand my own colliding memories and identities more clearly.

Today, I am so much more than just a dancer and a dance teacher. I am a scholar, a graduate teaching associate, a daughter, a partner, a sister, and a part time parent. I am also a low income, “at risk,” first generation college student who has struggled with a mood and anxiety disorder for the past twelve years. I have built memories within the intersections of each of these identities. Although I knew I was a dancer, and a dance teacher, I ignored the other layers. My life revolved around dance, so I believed all of the other layers would point back to that source. As I spent more time in graduate courses, I began to use my research to investigate the numerous layers of my past. I finally felt I had answers to so many haunting questions. I found a voice as a scholar and a dancer, and I was happy with my new formed identity. I did not realize the other intricate layers of my identity were still intersecting within me.

I had turned to research and theory in hopes of healing the wounds of my past, but I ended up carrying the wounds with me through this process. After I finished my graduate course work, I was trapped in a liminal space where each identity intersected at the same time and revealed abrasions of the past. I struggled while the intricate layers of my memories built on each other in ways that constituted new identities. Similar to my

interviewees, I was not just one or two of these things; I was all of these things at the same time, plus so much more.

As I turned to my own research as a form of healing, I was faced with even more tension. I thought I had overcome my mood and anxiety disorder while in graduate courses, but they were again staring me in the face. I repeatedly found myself in situations where I could not accomplish what I hoped. As I mentioned in chapter four, my method continuously inflicted failure upon me and everything I tried to accomplish ended up going terribly wrong. I had spent two years researching how to reframe failure as something positive, but once I encountered it, I was again debilitated by its forces. I was failing at overcoming failure. I struggled to work through the feelings of shame, guilt, and embarrassment as each performance slowly fell apart. I also encountered family hardships that completely pushed back my research deadlines. My feelings of failure became so intense that my mood disorder completely relapsed. I saw myself as failed dancer and also a failed academic. My intersecting identities shaped the memories the interviewees and I moved through. Everything I had worked so hard to overcome and heal was still a cancer within me.

As I revisited each of the dancers' interviews, I eventually began to find moments that destroyed the infection. I gradually heard each of the interviewees present intersecting and contradicting information. I found myself greatly identifying with the opposing and colliding information they shared with me. I began to understand my own intersecting memories and identities more clearly as the interviewees and I co-constructed new truths about the ways dancers remembered their pedagogical experiences

in the studio. I slowly began realize my dance identity and my academic identity were still within me. Although I felt as if my failures had tarnished these identities, I began to realize they would always play a role in constituting my future identities.

My dance identity and my academic identity were still intersecting within me the same way my mood and anxiety disorders were still always present. As I mentioned in chapter four, the audience picked up on complex truths the interviewees and I did not even plan on presenting during the performances. The audience noticed these qualities because our intersecting identities and memories were always present even if we could not see them. For example, the audience members noticed aspiring feelings of perfectionism even though the interviewee had not discussed this concept. The audience members picked up on these aspects because they were qualities of my identity that were intersecting within me while I performed. The audience picked up on my mood and anxiety disorders within these performances even while the interviewee and I attempted to present other ideas. My mood and anxiety disorder also caused me to feel a great amount of pressure for my performances to be strong. Each of my intersecting identities shaped the memories and became intertwined with this method and this research. I am the person I am today because of these intersecting identities, and I look forward to seeing how future intersections shape my experiences, qualities, and my memories.

Although I still embody the echoes of my past, I am also continuously becoming more than I was before. In many ways, my method runs parallel with the construction of my identity and my memories in the sense that we both keep moving. I am not bound by my past and current identities, but rather, I build on the intersections of these memories

and co-constitute a new history for myself and my students in the process. I constitute new identities for my students the same way my teachers have co-constructed new identities for me. Those identities and memories have shaped every word on this page, every motion I exude, and every question I ask. I have been constructed by every memory, and every label that has been placed on me. My interviewees' memories were also shaped by intersecting moments in their lives within the dance studio, and beyond. I now am reflexive as I see my students move through similar situations.

### **Moving Toward the Future**

I now realize that my students and I have a choice in how we constitute our memories and our identities. I also realize the style of pedagogy I use influences those identities and those memories significantly. My own dance teachers intersected many of the ten pedagogical qualities I discussed in the literature review portion of this research along with the aspect of age. Many of the interviewees' dance teachers also intersected these qualities. I wonder what would happen if dance teachers intersected various other aspects into their lessons? For example, the interviewees discussed moments of love and joy intersecting with moments of pain and sacrifice. I wonder how dance teachers could go about using intersectional styles of pedagogy in ways that constitute various other identities and memories. For example, dance teachers might ask students perform their dance technique as horribly as possible while asking them to display the strongest facial expressions they are capable of performing. Dancers may begin to link feelings of joy and love with other aspects rather than pain and sacrifice.

Academic teachers may also greatly benefit from using intersectional styles of pedagogy. Although dance teachers and academic teachers are not teaching the same subjects, they often use very similar styles of discipline. What would it be like for academic teachers to use intersectional styles of pedagogy in the classroom? Teachers might investigate how the intersections of their lesson plans constitute new identities for their students. For example, teachers may encourage students to intersect aspects of writing with aspects of playing. The student may gradually begin to intersect these qualities and see the process of writing as something they enjoy. Students may also investigate and constitute new identities and memories as teachers use various intersections within the classroom.

Academic teachers and dance teachers may also greatly benefit by intersecting moments of success with moments of failure. Many students are afraid to take risks because they fear their teachers' responses. Most dance students and academic students commonly intersect moments of failure with moments of sorting. For example, if dance students and academic students fail to comply with their teachers, they are disciplined and sorted lower. I wonder what would happen if teachers intersected moments of playing, failure, and growth in the classroom and in the studio? I wonder what would happen if teachers provided students with more low risk moments to fail in positive ways? I wonder if more students would be less apprehensive to take risks and break out of their norms? I also wonder what new sort of identities would be constructed for students if they linked failure to something more positive? Although I spent two years of graduate school learning how to reframe aspects of failure as something positive, my

previous experiences also intersected moments of failure with numerous other negative aspects. I was still restricted by the intersections of these negative links to failure.

Although I had a difficult time deconstructing the negative intersections of failure, this process helped me realize all dancers and all humans are destined to fail at some point. Humans encounter mistakes, but those mistakes help them become more than they were before. Dancers encounter failure, but those failures are inherent. The human body can only perform for so long and dancers eventually have to face the reality of their bodies failing them. Teachers could greatly benefit their students by having them practice aspects of failure in their classes. People could transition into their failures more easily if they were to experience these moments of as something positive within the classroom and the studio. I had a hard time coping with aspects of failure because they intersected with various other negative qualities. I attempted to avoid failure, rather than to learn from the process.

### **Moving Toward Growth**

One way I attempted to avoid failure was by creating a method that was very structured. Although I intended to avoid failure within this research, I still encountered it numerous times. In many ways, my fear of failure generated more failure by restricting my research. I originally compartmentalized each step of my method in order to achieve maximum success. I had a hard time controlling the discipline of my past during the creation of this method. I attempted to structure the method in five simple steps and I did not leave any room for overlap. I believed each step would provide information that was easy to follow along with and generative. I was surprised to discover this did not happen.

I was also surprised to see this approach limit my results. My decision to specifically isolate each section restricted the research. I let the discipline of my past intersect with my fear of failure and ultimately limit the results of this research. Although the method itself forced me to encounter moments of failure, I feel variations of the method may also be productive.

Future researchers may want to put themselves in situations where more failure takes place. My experiences with failure during this research generated the most amount of information. Although I struggled through these moments, I am beyond thankful this method inflicted so many of these experiences. I learned the most about my two research questions during these moments. I would not have produced nearly as many discoveries if I had not failed during this process. I was also forced to adapt in new ways because of the numerous moments of failure. I gradually learned to accept failure in my life. I also slowly learned to stop caring if other people considered me a failure. Although I had a very difficult time being confronted with so many situations that went differently than I hoped, I was changed by those moments. I gradually began to intersect moments of failure with something positive again, and I am proud of myself for surviving much better than I would have two years prior.

Although I am very proud of my growth during this process, I feel the method also could have produced even more growth. My strategically planned method restricted the fluidity of this process. The interviewee and I were bound by the process of moving through each step in a linear fashion rather than moving through the process in a natural way. I wonder what would happen if researchers moved through these steps in a more

fluid manner? For example, maybe the interviewees and the interviewer could engage in a conversation while moving. The interviewer and the interviewee may constitute even more information about oral histories when the body and the mind more equally intersect at the same time. The interviewer and the interviewee may also gain more insight about the oral histories if their bodies more predominantly intersected with their words.

Although the interviewees' bodies did begin to intersect with their words, I would like to see how researchers could intersect these qualities even more. I wonder what would happen if the interviewee and the interviewer danced their oral histories first? I also wonder what would happen if the interviewee and interviewer attempted to describe her/his interpretations of the danced oral histories? Researchers may generate and co-construct even more information about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy and the construction of memories if they moved through the method this way.

I had a hard time co-constructing as much information because of the rigidity of this method, but I also had a hard time finding themes because of the small sample size. Each of the interviewees described very specific memories. Although I identified some themes, I had a hard time generalizing much of the information. I felt the need to discuss each interviewee in detail within the results portion of this research because each person had a different interpretation worth mentioning. Researchers would actually have an easier time with the method if they used a larger sample size.

Although researchers may benefit from using a larger sample size, they may also have a hard time finding a significant amount of dancers who are willing to participate in this research. Researchers may greatly benefit by using this method on non-dancers. The

interviewer also would not need to have any dance training to participate in this method. Future research may benefit by using this method while exploring various other topics. Academia may greatly benefit by incorporating the mind and the body during the process of conducting oral history interviews.

### **Moving Through Past Implications**

I previously aspired for my second research question to contribute to scholarly conversations about incorporating both the mind and body into oral histories. Oral historians commonly place an emphasis on the *oral* quality of the method. As researchers engage in this approach, they again favor the mind over the body. I attempted to push back against this approach by using more of the body during the interview process. Although I incorporated aspects of the body as I moved through this method, I could have included more of the body in the initial interviews. The interviewees and I focused on specific words that were shared during the interviews and we then attempted to reconstruct the words with movement. I believe researchers could greatly benefit by looking at the larger themes that emerge during the interview process, rather than specific words or stories. I also believe future researchers could greatly benefit by focusing more on the body during the interview process. Communication studies scholars could potentially use this method while conducting oral history interviews about various topics. I look forward to hearing future researchers include more aspects of the body within their methods.

I also look forward to hearing researchers contributing to broader conversation taking place regarding kinesthetic and embodied learning in classrooms. I believe this

research hit the tip of the iceberg in regards to such conversations. Many of the interviewees used embodied and kinesthetic learning in their dance spaces. Although the dancers participated in kinesthetic and embodied styles of pedagogy, they experienced these pedagogical practices in disciplined ways. Their bodies were specifically shaped, and reshaped by their teachers. All of the interviewees discussed banking styles of pedagogy intersecting with embodied learning, kinesthetic learning, and feminist pedagogy. All of the interviewees described feeling nurtured and supported by their dance teachers and also viewed this style of pedagogy as a positive aspect within dance environments. Future researchers may greatly benefit by examining the intersections of these styles of pedagogy beyond dance spaces.

Academic teachers who teach subjects such as math and science might greatly benefit by using this style of pedagogy within the classroom. These subjects of study commonly require students to look for one “correct” answer. Many dance teachers also require dancers to perform one “correct” motion. Researchers may discover significant information about how to use aspects of banking in a positive way. Math and science teachers may greatly benefit from the discovery of this research.

Although dance teachers may provide academic teachers with greater insight about intersecting banking models of pedagogy with embodied learning, kinesthetic learning, and feminist pedagogy, all teachers could also greatly benefit by using critical pedagogy while teaching. Every subject of study requires some form of discipline. Regardless of how hard teachers try to resist the banking model of education, aspects of it are still always present. All teachers could greatly benefit their students by making those

moments of discipline visible. Dance teachers, communication studies teachers, and any other type of teachers could use banking models of pedagogy, feminist styles of pedagogy, critical pedagogy, embodied learning, and kinesthetic learning at the same time. Teachers could encourage their students to think more critically about the moments of banking they use while teaching, and they could be nurturing and supportive while students include their bodies in learning environments.

I still strongly believe communication studies instructors interested in including kinesthetic and embodied learning within the classroom must also consider how their students' bodies have been previously disciplined to perform in very specific ways. Even if teachers encourage their students to embody movement that resonates with the students' lives, the students may continue to perform in ways that demonstrate previous discipline. Teachers might encourage their students to perform differently than usual in these spaces by setting them up to fail in low risk ways. As I previously mentioned, students can learn a great deal by failing. It is important for teachers to intersect these moments of failure with moments of growth. Teachers could encourage their students to embody new ways of moving through the world as they experience moments of low risk failure. Although I have begun to explore intersecting styles of pedagogy within this research, I look forward to hearing future researchers continue to contribute to this important disciplinary conversation.

### **Reviewing Our Movement**

I began this research in hopes of understanding more about Traditional Western Dance Pedagogy and the process of constructing memories. I was surprised to see the

research process become a dance of its own. The interviewees and I intersected aspects of our memories and identities as we moved through each step of the process. Our memories and stories also continued to build on each other as we moved through this research. This document has been infused with all of the intersecting identities and stories within me and my interviewees. That being said, my dance training, my academic training and various other identities can be seen within every word of this document.

Although the words on this page are stationary, the meaning made through this process continues to transcend. Our stories continue to intersect and build on each other in ways that progress and reconstruct our identities and our realities. Although our realities may convey opposing messages, they support each other in ways that constitute new meaning. Every teacher and every student plays a role in the construction of memories and identities. Teachers and students intersect pedagogical techniques in ways that build on each other. People ultimately remember their pedagogical experiences in intersecting ways. People also may encounter moments of failure as those intersections manifest. Teachers can reconstitute the concept of failure by intersecting the experience with moments of joy. Teachers and researchers can also generate significant information by including aspects of the body within academia. Although I am pleased with the results of this research, I look forward to seeing how future researchers contribute to this important conversation.

### **Moving Within Paradoxes**

I am very similar to most other dancers. I am a walking contradiction. I am many things taking place at the same time. I love dance more than anything in the world, but I

am also frustrated by the politics involved in the discipline. I let the frustration of my past steer me away from my passion. I took a two year break from my dance training while in graduate school. Although I was still teaching dance classes, I did not participate in dance classes as a student. I turned to theory and research as a form of healing through the loss of my dance identity, and I constructed a new identity in the process. As I previously mentioned, I saw myself as a dancer and a scholar.

Last week, I finally returned back to dance class for the first time in two years. I was the same person, but I was also very different. My body remembered much more than I expected and I was proud of my technique. Although my body had aged and somewhat restricted my movement, I felt freer than ever. I was not bound by the internal criticism of my mood and anxiety disorder, nor was I concerned with my rank in the class. Although I still recognized those aspects of my identity within me, I did not let them consume me. I was dancing because my body needed to move. I watched 18 year olds compete for their teacher's attention with hearts full of pride. I noticed 16 year olds glance at the older students with envy, love, admiration, and frustration. I remembered all of those tensions as I moved through the space, but I did not allow them to reside within me. I sculpted my way through the tensions and frustrations of my past, while setting an example for new students of the future. I laughed at my body when it did not comply and I whole heartedly supported each person in the space. I did not care about my placement in the class because I was just thankful to be moving. The dancers and I began to co-construct new histories within that space.

Dancers remember their pedagogical experiences in contradicting ways, but those memories also continue to transcend as they are shared with new audiences through various means of communication. The interviewees and I continue to share our stories beyond these pages. Our bodies and our words continue to perform our stories, even during moments of silence and stillness. We co-construct and re-construct our histories and our identities as our bodies, minds, and words are move through our lives and beyond.

As I now conclude my research, I wonder how my identity as a dancer and a scholar will continue to manifest and transform? Although this research will remain positioned within a specific period of time, I believe it will continue to progress as it moves through new audiences. This document has been infused with the echoes of intersecting histories and identities. It displays the disciplined technique, and desired freedom of a dancer. It is bound by the correct techniques of writing, while dreaming of the constitutive freedom of self expression. It aspires to follow the lead of previous researchers while aiming to break away from the traditions of the discipline. I wonder how this document will play a role in the construction of future researchers' identities? I wonder how the oral histories explored in this research will continue to move through each reader, audience member, interviewee, and myself? Although I am a walking contradiction, each opposing view I embody fuels the other in a way that continues to transcend. Our histories keep moving forward through moments of failure, success, frustration, and compassion. Our histories shape our identities and the identities of our

future selves. We create our reality and our future through the intersections of the stories we share.

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