The Experience, Cultivation, and Expression of Somatic Perception: A Curricular Design

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to design and assess a dance pedagogy curriculum intended to cultivate private sector dance educators' somatic perception. Research questions were framed to understand the nature of knowledge encouraged by the curriculum and each educator's experience of knowledge formation and application to each participant's pedagogical context. The study was conducted in four overlapping stages: 1) Philosophical inquiry, 2) Curricular design, 3) Limited case-study, and 4) Data analysis. The stages employed mix methodologies that included: action research, autobiographical reflection, ethnographic and phenomenological approaches. The limited case-study explored two private-sector dance educators' experiences of the curriculum. Data collected during the limited case-study conducted with the dance educators revealed thematic clusters about the nature, cultivation, expression, and experience of somatic perception. The themes suggest that the nature of somatic perception reflects an individual educators' lived experiences that shape values, movement patterns, and phrasing. The expression of somatic perception aligns with the individual educator's narrative and was evident in patterns and phrasing of movement and learning. The cultivation of somatic perception is an ongoing process that requires active engagement to acquire, assimilate, and integrate the knowledge of content, context, self, and student. Finally, somatic perception manifested itself in each educator's unique expression of confidence, empathy, creativity, and spontaneity resulting in skillful enactment of knowledge within an immediate pedagogical context.

DEDICATION

To my family, for your love, support, encouragement, and patience. I love you.

To my students and mentors, past and present, for all you have taught me.

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I am grateful to the many individuals who directly influenced the direction of this research project. My M.F.A. committee, Becky Dyer, Christina Saidy-Hannah and Karen Schupp for remaining interested in the ongoing research. Jessica and Amy, the research participants, whose passion, knowledge, and vulnerability resulted in discoveries and deepened my love for all that is involved with dancing, teaching, and learning. To my editor, Harper Piver, and project editor, Anamarie Brandon, for asking me to explain, clarify, and make sense. Finally, thank you to Joan Wisniewski, for your time, experience and expertise.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

My career as a dance educator began when I was only 14 years old. Alone in a dance studio, seven or eight tiny ballerinas looked at me as though I was infallible. I was entrusted with the responsibility of teaching the basics of classical ballet. For the precise and accurate transfer of information, I felt well prepared. My teacher-mentor had provided a solid foundation regarding the technical explanations, the order in which to present material and anatomical knowledge related to each movement. A vague feeling that I was going to be transmitting something more significant than pliés and tendus filled me, and for that I felt inadequate, unable to identify what knowledge I lacked. This sense of inadequacy placed me from the beginning of my career as a dance educator in the fortunate role of teacher-learner. I was young enough to openly acknowledge, at least to myself, that I did not understand everything that was occurring in that first class, nor in the classes that followed, and I was intrigued with the challenge of discovering how best to identify and participate in the experiences of my little students.

The vague feeling that I could not explain on the first day of my pedagogical journey was that teaching dance is more than mechanics. I have since had numerous opportunities to observe this at play in both myself and others. According to Norman Doidge, a clinical psychologist who has done extensive research in neuroplasticity, personal experiences occurring within specific cultural contexts develop habits of thought (2007). These cognitive habits are formed over time and, in turn, impact the way individuals use their physical body (Doidge, 2007). Today we see these principles applied

in the field of social somatics, which addresses the impact of environment and social structures on individuals in shaping habituated responses (Carpenter, 2010). I have seen students find support in the somatic formation inherently available through the delicate interplay between structure and freedom of personal expression in dance education. Conversely, I have observed a diminishment of potential and confidence in students when the balance of a dance learning environment is compromised. The uniqueness of each student, however, accounts for differences in perceptions to similar cultural experiences. One dancer may thrive in a particular class, while another student may struggle in the same environment.

In response to the challenges presented by individual students over the years in my role as a teacher in a dance studio, I began to amass pedagogical knowledge. Each engagement was perceived as an opportunity to learn skills or knowledge that could enhance the student's learning experiences. The earliest example occurred in the class previously mentioned. It puzzled me why one light pink-clad ballerina was running wildly around the room while the others carefully followed my instructions. I made numerous incorrect guesses and applied an equal number of ineffective strategies. The answer came in two parts. I learned later in the semester that the running ballerina was two years younger than the other students. Her mother could not wait two years to put her daughter in dance class because the little girl was always dancing at home. I then understood that the child was too young to be in a ballet class.

What I lacked, however, were the internal resources to graciously explain to the mother that the developmental needs of her child differed from the expectations

associated with the class. Such a conversation would have allowed me to initiate a developmentally appropriate decision. As my career continued, I acknowledged my limitations in knowledge and experience when faced with student behaviors I did not understand. Each challenge reinforced my learner's stance and motivated me to build knowledge to address in-studio needs. The ongoing pattern of seeking answers to pedagogical complexities eventually resulted in a return to Arizona State University to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Dance.

Graduate studies began to give language and perspective to my in-studio experiences and observations. I realized that I had been an active agent in my own education. A constructivist pedagogical approach (Dewey, 1938) was, and continues to be, an essential factor in refining and adapting my teaching to the unique needs of individual students. My constructivist approach to pedagogical development was born of necessity mixed with a fair dose of curiosity as a private-sector dance educator. My experience has been that exploration and reintegration are not one-time events, but instead have recurred throughout my teaching career.

Many private sector-dance educators are current or retired professional dancers, or like me, young dancers who have grown up in a particular dance studio. Their knowledge of a specific genre and ability to demonstrate and explain the movement is refined. However, the skills and knowledge required to teach are very different than the skills necessary to be a successful performer. While in residence with the Bill T. Jones Dance Company at Arizona State University, Christina Jane Robson taught a master class for an undergraduate dance education course. After the class, she confided, "It is assumed

that just because you can dance, you can also teach, but really they are two very different skill sets." Speaking of teaching, she added, "I feel like I just have to figure it out" (personal communication, Nov. 2017). Dance educators, regardless of their background, are faced with countless decisions while teaching. Each decision has the potential to affect each student's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.

Often dance educators lack the somatic sensibilities or physical attunement to gather, assess and interpret information about students' development. Many dance educators are unaware of the potential they have to make pedagogical choices that may encourage positive somatic formation in their students. Is it possible to develop educators' somatic perception and their ability to identify the interrelatedness of student individuality, community dynamic, teacher well-being, and rigor of the art? My research was fueled by the hope that developing the educators' ability to perceive, interpret, and respond to learning situations with the support of learning and developmental theories will facilitate optimal student outcomes. In turn, the benefits of dance education will extend beyond the dance learning context, positively influencing each student's overall development.

The framework I created for the curricular model emerged from my attempt to identify and articulate the ongoing development of my own teaching praxis. It is from this reflective exploration, informed by the privilege of pedagogical studies supported by faculty and colleagues, that this theoretical framework emerged. The theoretical research, curricular design and associated limited case-study was intended to identify needs of educators in diverse contexts and stages of professional development. It was my intent to

tease out what I perceived to be the essential elements of pedagogical understanding, in order to identify individual topics that could be deeply explored and reintegrated into the larger curricular framework.

As the curricular framework evolved, I decided to recruit a focus group to test the curriculum. This decision led to further developments to the framework as I considered best practices for facilitating a study with well-established professional dance educators. With the accumulation of knowledge to meet the new challenge, the project developed into a limited case study. The case study provided me with a privileged perspective from which to observe dance educators' learning processes. I became fascinated with the phenomenological experiences of dance educators from the onset of their careers that influenced expression and cultivation of somatic perception during and prior to our shared time together in the study.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of my research project was twofold. The first objective was to create an embodied dance pedagogy curriculum built on theoretical foundations of learning theories, developmental theories, cognitive science, dance science and somatic theories. Individual and collaborative experiences within the curriculum were intended to foster educators' inter- and intra-personal skills needed to work with students from various backgrounds ranging in age from early childhood through adolescence. The curriculum was made applicable to dance education settings served by private-sector dance educators. The second purpose was to apply and assess the potential impact of the curricula on teacher effectiveness and student learning and identify areas for further

research. A limited case study project supported participants' ability to connect bodies of knowledge presented in the curriculum to their personal teaching situations.

Research Questions

The research investigated what curricular approaches most aptly facilitate an educator's ability to merge knowledge from the above listed disciplines. The research addressed the following questions: What nature of knowledge did participants acquire from their participation in the study, and how might it be useful to them? In what ways did the participants integrate the information and knowledge offered through the study to their dance teaching practices? What experiences of affectability did educators notice in their ability to make informed judgements, based on observation of student behavior? How did the dance educators' flexibility in decision making impact dance learning environments? How did the dance educators' integrated understanding of embodiment, cognition, and socio-cultural experiences impact their sensitivity, adaptability, spontaneity, confidence, or somatic perception in teaching? How did application of the developed curricular framework and its theoretical foundation impact dance educators' awareness of possible pedagogical choices and how they might affect student development?

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions

I assumed that dance educators chosen for this limited case-study, like myself, desire positive student outcomes for all their students, and that their definitions of positive outcomes align with my own. For example, I assumed that we share a belief that

a positive outcome for dance training includes technical and artistic development implied by dance education and more far-reaching outcomes such as increased confidence, alertness, emotional intelligence, and attentiveness across all domains of the students' development. I also assumed that many educators do not realize that incorporating knowledge from disciplines outside of dance may positively affect their teaching practices. Therefore, I assumed that an educational curriculum that incorporated developmental theories, learning theories, dance science and somatic theories with application to the educators' specific teaching context would address this knowledge gap. It was my assumption that the curricular design needed to be accessible and adaptable to educators' unique needs as a resource to help them meet the varying requirements of individual dance students and the learning communities. Finally, I assumed that increasing educators' abilities to integrate theory and practice through experiences in the case-study and curriculum would result in a direct increase in positive student outcomes.

Delimitations

I delimited the proposed research and resulting curricular design by assigning specific durations to each phase of the research. The scope of the curricula was the development of a design model which represented a single learning thread formed by the integration of two separate content strands. I conducted research with four private-sector dance educators. Two participants participated remotely through an online platform and two participated in a face-to-face format. For the purpose of this study, I chose to focus on the experience of the face-to-face participants. All participants were recruited based on specific criteria of teaching in a private-sector dance studio. Further delimitations

included condensing curricular content into an appropriate format for the study which included, a two-week workbook for independent study in conjunction with two three-hour pedagogy workshops. Finally, the number and length of interviews conducted with each participant included one preliminary interview, one follow-up interview, and one group interview which concluded the limited case study; each interview was approximately one hour.

Limitations

I openly acknowledge that my background and temperament affected my choice of literature, theorists, and interpretation of data. Pedagogical development is an ongoing process, and this type of research could span many years. Because I conducted the research for my MFA applied project, I devoted a year and a half to formal stages of research which included creating curriculum, recruitment of research participants, conducting interviews, hosting workshops, transcribing data, and writing the supporting document. I had no direct interaction with the students of the research participants during the limited case study. Data gathered about student experiences were collected from my interaction with the adult dance educator research participants. Therefore, each account reflects the participant's first-person perspective.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES INFORMING THE RESEARCH

The theories informing this research were used to design the curriculum, and many of the theories were presented within the curriculum as a knowledge base for educators. I anticipated that as each learning strand was isolated and developed, topics for further investigation would present themselves. At the onset of the project, the individual disciplines addressed were developmental theories, learning theories, dance science, somatic theories, knowledge formation, and content knowledge. As a young dance educator, I lacked an understanding of how children develop and learn. A theoretical foundation and introduction to learning and developmental theories would have situated my students at the center of my past pedagogical practice. At later stages in the research project, additional theories influenced the design and implementation of the curriculum and the interpretation of the data collected during the limited case-study.

Constructivism

Many of the strategies I had unwittingly employed to address the challenges throughout my career as a dance educator were formally introduced during my graduate studies. First, I discovered constructivist pedagogical approaches. A constructivist pedagogical approach deepens learning and cultivates assimilation of skills by offering experiences that provoke interest within a supportive educational environment. This method allows learners to construct meaningful knowledge both independently and collaboratively within the learning community (Dewey, 1938). Many educators

implement a constructivist approach in traditional academic educational settings. However, knowledge of educational and developmental theories is often lacking in private-sector dance education. I believe this knowledge gap limits the ability of private-sector dance educators to create learning environments that will fully support each student in reaching his or her full potential. There is an agreement among educational theorists that optimal learning and development occur in a prepared environment (Beloglovsky & Daly, 2015). According to Dewey, if the educator cultivates an organic connection between knowledge and experience, learners attain a level of engagement conducive to forward momentum (1938). Therefore, design choices for the curriculum were guided by a continuous scaffolding of knowledge and perception. Knowledge content was connected in meaningful ways to the larger context of dance education, as well as personal pedagogical development.

Pedagogical Responsibility

A common obstacle in dance education is the imbalance created when the physical diminishes the other domains of experience. Students' dancing bodies and physical development easily become the central focus of attention, creating a learning disadvantage. According to Harry Daniels, author of *Vygotsky and Pedagogy*, there is an increase of interest in the possible application of Lev Vygotsky's dynamic sociocultural constructivist approach to pedagogy in the field of education (2001). I believe that Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist from the early twentieth century, offers theoretical perspectives that may offset the potential complications resulting from a limited understanding of pedagogy. Vygotsky began his work with the charge of creating a state

system aimed at the needs of the most pedagogically disadvantaged (Daniels, 2001). A Vygotskian perspective differs from traditional dance education, which isolates pedagogical responsibility to the domain of physical development. Vygotsky perceived pedagogy as a human activity, which encompasses all of the actions of the teacher. These actions include teaching and teaching difficulties (Daniels, 2001). The isolation of pedagogical choices to one domain of student development leaves social, emotional and cognitive development unacknowledged, which I feel creates a pedagogical disadvantage. According to Vygotsky, development occurs through the pedagogical process (Vygotsky, 1978). Equal attention to each domain of development deepens student learning.

In order to understand pedagogy as a process of formation, dance educators may benefit from the ability to perceive relationships among many factors. An understanding of the relationship between teacher, classroom, and context is an essential factor in a learning community. Perception of the interconnectedness of the above elements and their potential effect on students' overall development indicates the importance of an educator's willingness to assume responsibility for pedagogy as encompassing all of teaching and learning. However, it would be naive to imagine that the application of theory will predetermine an outcome. Many factors affect the process of formation, and each student is an active participant. As I stated earlier, individuals may have very different experiences within the same cultural context. The variance in outcomes is explained by the mutual influence Vygotsky observed between the individual and the factors that influence them (Vygotsky, 1978). Individual development occurs in dance education, but each student also shapes the studio environment that affects him or her.

Integrative learning

The research project evolved from an attempt to identify and articulate elements of my own practice. In the process I recognized that integrative learning, the integration of theoretical knowledge to teaching practice, played a significant role in the development of my teaching praxis. As my practice matured, bodies of knowledge or information from fields beyond dance emerged, which allowed me to isolate individual strands of knowledge and then use them to interpret and respond to teaching experiences. This realization guided the original curricular model. Two curricular strands aligned as parallel bodies of knowledge. The two parallel strands combined to create a single learning thread. Essentially, the isolation allowed for in-depth exploration and reintegration. The experiential process offered dance teachers the opportunity to clarify how the two bodies of knowledge inform one another. I created activities that encourage engagement in the ongoing process of perceiving the interrelatedness of pedagogical knowledge (Wrenn &Wrenn, 2009). *(see Figure1)*

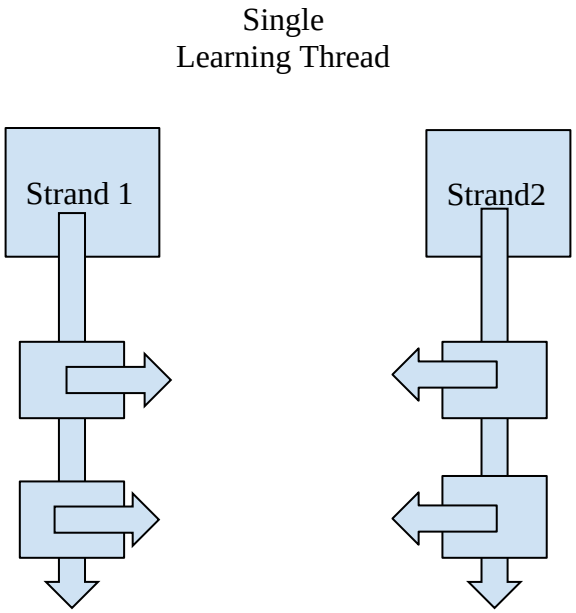

Figure 1

The integrated learning design was intended to make the dance teachers, who participated in the study, more perceptive of relationships and skilled at weaving theoretical knowledge into their teaching practices to establish supportive learning environments. Knowledge of integrative learning theory was useful in discovering how an embodied understanding may develop somatic perception. Stephen Nachmanovitch, in his book *Free Play,* illustrates the significance of relational qualities by describing the variables created for a musician solely by the size and shape of the human hand (1990, p. 82). He goes on to explain how understanding the existing relationships and possibilities created by variability in structure facilitates the ability to work instinctively and discover new possibilities. Nachmanovitch puts forth knowledge and understanding as the tools of technical artistry. As a young dance educator, I believe that my students and I would have

benefited from theoretical knowledge to support my decisions and responses as I guided dance learning experiences. The ability to integrate theory and practice may help dance educators more accurately discern students' current stages of development in order to practice student-centered instructional approaches.

Transformational Learning

Transformational learning, like integrative learning, unfolds in a cyclical pattern and reflects the process I used to build the knowledge and skills I needed as a dance educator throughout my career. Laura Foote, a doctoral student in adult education, like myself, re-entered higher education later in life (2015). She described her experiences as an adult learner undergoing a learning transformation as a pattern of spiraling. In her reflection, Foote first identifies the unique characteristics of an adult learner as one who exhibits these qualities: having a need to know, a readiness and motivation to learn, and prior learning experience (Foote, 2015). All four characteristics describe the teacher-learner position most dance educators encounter on a regular basis by the continually changing nature of dance learning environments. Foote's reflection on the stages of transformational learning she experienced emphasized to me the value of reflection, impressions, and the experiential in pedagogical development within a shifting landscape. I adopted the terminology provided by Perte Howie and Richard Bagnall in their article *A beautiful metaphor: transformative learning theory,* drawn from Jack Mezirow's theory (2013). First, the learner must be engaged in an activity. Engagement infers active participation in constructing knowledge. Returning to Vygotsky's sociocultural constructivist approach, the engagement will occur within a specific dance educational

context. Something within the activity causes a "disorienting dilemma," which challenges the individual's frame of reference. In an effort to regain equilibrium, the individual then makes sense of their experience through personal reflection and interacting with others. Ultimately, the process leads to a perspective transformation which, according to Howie and Bagnall, was the original name for Mezirow's theory (2013).

A dance educator's frame of reference, or perspective, becomes the lens through which he or she interprets student behavior. These impressions shape pedagogical decisions. I believed the stages of transformative learning would be useful in broadening educators' perspectives and creating a new understanding. The variable nature of perception has resulted in challenges regarding scholarship on transformative learning as a theory (Cranton & Kucukaydin, 2012). For the purpose of this research, I was interested in the personal nature of dance education rooted in educators' perception, which involves emotions, feelings, intuition, and imagination. Therefore, I adopted the metaphorical concept of transformational learning suggested by Bengall and Howie (2013).

Perception

The interest in perception, specifically perception in dance education, called for a deeper exploration of the topic. Perception is the ability to make sense of what we are noticing in our environment through our senses. Perception is studied quantitatively in the fields of psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience. Application of perception is evident in the social sciences, education, advertising, and the arts. Little has been published on perception in the field of dance education, therefore, I turned to theorists from other fields to enhance my understanding of the experience, cultivation, and

expression of perception for the dance educator. Perception in dance education is cultivated in the body of the dance educator. The body is a conduit where past information and immediate lived experience merge, are processed and responded to (Noë, 2015) by the dance educator.

Philosophy and Cognitive Science

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a French philosopher, viewed the body itself as an integrated whole through which perception occurs. He was critical of philosophical perspectives that separate mind and body, and the opposing empirical perspective that denies the importance of relationships in shaping perception (Reynolds, n.d.). Much like the constructivist learning theories, Merleau-Ponty believed that experiences result as the body interacts with the environment (Reynolds, n.d.) and experience is essential to cultivate perception. Merleau-Ponty gave rise to phenomenology, a philosophical study of consciousness and first-person experience (Matsen, 2019).

The goal of phenomenology is to ground the experience of perception in the complexities of lived experience because the body is inherent in every relationship. It is always present and as such it is the site of understanding (Reynolds, n.d.). The phenomenological methodology requires simultaneous immersion and observation of the immediate experience. A specific experience is marked by bracketing or analysis, followed by a comprehensive description. Complete immersion paired with acute observation characterizes the attunement demonstrated by effective dance educators. It is necessary, however, to place the immediate experience in an ethnographic frame that

acknowledges the subjectivity of the description. An ethnographic frame or contextualizing behavior prevents the observer or educator from assigning labels.

Philosopher and cognitive scientist Alva Noë asserts that philosophy is the process of transformation (Hoff, 2010). Noë's description of the transformative influence of philosophical inquiry resembles Mezirow's structure for transformative learning (1991), however, substitutes verb phrases for descriptors. The static terminology of "disorienting dilemma" is replaced by "grappling" while "equilibrium" translates to a matter of "finding our way around." Noë positions the philosopher or learner as an actively engaged meaning maker, (Noë, 2015), stating that movement is an essential biological activity; the body is inseparable from experience (Noë. 2004). From a biological perspective, we gather information through our senses, an activity that begins in the earliest stages of life. Gradually layers of information add to an accumulative image (McBeath, 2019). Through accumulated images we organize recognizable patterns. Noë refers to the ongoing organizational process as a necessary biological activity (2009). New information is gathered through sensory input using the organs of sense, which include mouth, nose, eyes, ears, and skin. These organs provide direct contact with the physical environment. The sensory information, imagined as data, is processed by another magnificent physical structure, the brain. Visual processing suggests a model. An array of visual information is gathered and sorted by the brain based on accumulated and recognizable patterns. New information that aligns with existing patterns does not evoke a neurological response, thus what is seen can be ignored. The situation changes, however, when the acquired information disrupts or contradicts preconceived images. A

neurological response initiates a chain of biological events (McClure, 2019). Assigning labels obscures perception (Eisner, 2002). Accurate perception requires the ability to notice and draw analogies between patterns of actions, principles, and models of behavior.

Art and Education

Elliot Eisner, a painter, and art educator for 35 years, offers a nuanced understanding of the nature and refinement of perception. According to Eisner, relationships exist between things that seem to be unrelated (Eisner, 2002, p.76). The artist learns to pay attention to the finest detail and to notice the interrelationship between seemingly unrelated parts (Eisner, 2002, p.76). The artist must develop a state of heightened awareness. Acute awareness allows the artist to make physical adjustments within the body in order to gather further sensory input to the brain in order to change their perspective. Eisner believes that "what we see is not simply a function of what we take from the world but what we make of it" (2002, p. xii). The dance educator intuitively takes information from their knowledge of the dance form, lived experience, values, and observations of students. From the information gathered the educator perceives what pedagogical choices are needed. The artist's knowledge Eisner describes, like the dance educator's, is felt rather than seen, it is a sensitivity to embodied affects. Awareness is not enough; skills and tools must be exercised and refined so that the artist can make slight changes to alter the arrangement of details (Eisner, 2002).

The perceived relationship between mind and body is manifest in curricular design, pedagogical choices, and teaching and learning dynamics. In dance learning,

typically the student's body is isolated for modification. Conversely, in a pedagogy curriculum for adult educators, learning is often directed toward the mind. Both teaching and learning curriculums segment body and mind. I found it essential in design, content, data collection, and analysis to address the physical and cognitive in relation to one another. Personal transformative interaction calls for an ability to listen with one's whole being, to observe, and to be aware of one's surroundings. I believe that it is a training of the senses that allows us to take in sensory information and make use of it (Root-Bernstein, 1999).

Like the artist, the private-sector dance educator attunes to the changing landscape of movement and learning (Munker, 2010) embodied in developing dancers. Whether invited or required, noticed or unnoticed, internal or external, collective or individual, rapid changes require a felt knowledge by the dance educator to facilitate subtle adjustments. Homer believed that good teaching is the result of the ability to make connections (Palmer, 1998) or perceive the relationships between seemingly unrelated details (Eisner, 2002). Parker Palmer, senior associate of the American Association for Higher Education, believes that it is the identity and integrity of the teacher which allows an organic weaving of knowledge to occur (1998). Although seldom acknowledged, the inner life of the dance educator is an ever-present detail in the dance teaching context. Therefore, the cultivation of perception, the sensitivity to embodied affects, described by Eisner, includes self-awareness (2002). Attunement to internal thoughts, needs and emotions, and embodied affects facilitate the dance educator's ability to connect the

dance content he or she is teaching with developing students in meaningful and sustainable ways.

CHAPTER 3

APPLICATION AND EXPLORATION OF DANCE SCIENCE AND SOMATIC THEORIES

Peggy Hackney, dance artist and somatic practitioner, places a similar emphasis on connectivity (1998). Somatics can be used to delve deeply into the role of the body in perception (Dyer, 2018) and to discover what pedagogical knowledge is embedded in our bodies from the earliest stages of development. I observed the inherent scaffolding in Bartenieff Fundamentals, which is based on the early stages of human developmental movement patterns. I also drew from somatic knowledge in order to explore more deeply and to better understand the concepts of inner and outer connectivity. Cultivation of internal knowledge, connectivity, and first-person awareness is central to both the principles of developmental movement and the Alexander Technique.

Embodied activities within the curriculum were derived from somatic principles in order to translate theoretical knowledge into physical experiences.

The interest in developmental movement led to a deeper, physical inquiry guided by Peggy Hackney's *Making Connections: Total Body Integration through Bartenieff Fundamentals* (1998). From the physical explorations I created a collective warm-up for the workshops. Hackney states, "fundamental patterns of Total Bodily Organization underlie our patterns of relationship and connection in our lives" (1998, p.17). The collective movement became a way to explore inner connectivity, to harvest internal

knowledge of teaching, to manifest patterns of interrelationship, and encourage educators' perceptual transformation.

Developmental Movement

Movement is essential and fundamental to patterning. Movement begins in utero. The inevitable changes, created by movement, establish relationships and relationships develop into patterns. From the patterns evolve habits that develop to meet needs (Hackney, 1998). The process through which habits are formed, described by Hackney, precedes the formation of developmental patterns. The process of neural patterning bears similarity to the metaphorical design of transformative learning. The six developmental patterns-- breath, core-distal, head-tail, upper-lower, body-half, and cross-lateral—scaffold in the way they emerge, develop and support each other. Each pattern supports the development of the next relationship and connection. Relationships are connections that begin within one's own body (Hackney, 1998) and then extend outward as we learn and create. The dance studio learning and teaching environment is an intricate interweaving of associative bundles. Neural patterns within the body emerge because the "neuromuscular system has developed a plan or model for executing movement sequences which has become a habitual firing of neuromuscular pathways that come into play to fulfill an intent" (Hackney, 1998, p.17). The neural connectivity, which is the aim of Bartenieff Fundamentals, involves differentiation or isolation, followed by integration or weaving, in order for patterns to assimilate based on a person's ability to respond to change and make behavior choices (Hackney, 1998). Hackney, a student of Irmgard Bartenieff, quotes from Bartenieff's unpublished manuscript, *The Art of Body Movement*

as a Key to Perception, to explain, "The main object of all this material is to suggest additional modes of perceiving yourself and the world around you, using your live body totally -body/mind/feeling- as key to that perception" (Hackney, 1998, p. 3).

Integration of Dance Science and Somatic Theories

Knowledge of developmental theories may have a meaningful impact on in-studio teaching practice when educators can integrate it with knowledge of the human body. In order for movement to be taught efficiently, I believe it will be valuable to interpret and investigate dance science and somatic theory in relation to student development. In their book, *Early Learning Theories Made Visible,* Miriam Beloglovsky and Lisa Daly define developmental theory as the knowledge to inform decision making, the ability to contextualize that knowledge, and being able to use that knowledge to interpret experiences (2015). The authors present developmental theory as a way to organize and reflect on behavior and establish connections (2015).

In the curriculum, the fields of dance science and somatic practice were presented as an individual learning strands. Margaret Wilson and Pamela Gerber, in *Teaching at the Interface of Dance Science and Somatics*, show the benefits of integrating dance science and somatics, both of which have their roots in and through the body. For the educator, dance science provides knowledge of how the body works in movement (2010). The integration of knowledge of the human body in reference to a student's development will establish healthy training habits, which inhibits harmful habits and reduces injuries. A frame of reference that encompasses each domain of the students' development, emphasizes the individuality of each student, and safeguards against possible

objectification (Green, 2001) was emphasized in the curriculum. It was my point of view that an educator who can identify and appreciate the individuality of each student as well as themselves as an educator is better equipped to deal with the many factors shaping a learning culture and negotiate their students' experiences.

Throughout my career, I have repeatedly observed that experiences within dance learning cultures affect students' self -perception. For this reason, principles of good use from the Alexander Technique (AT) were integral to the research and curricular design. I am particularly interested in the value placed on process in the methodology. Process is referred to in the Alexander Technique as the means-whereby. According to *Body Learning* by Michael Gelb, the AT process values thinking and adaptability above end-gaining, or grasping for results (1994). An emphasis on process cultivates inner freedom and encourages each student in his or her ability.

The Alexander Technique

Principles from the Alexander Technique influenced the pedagogy curriculum in two ways. The first benefitted the educator; the second emphasized the relationship of the educator to the student. In order to prioritize the process above results, an educator must trust the process. For example, the repeated pedagogical exercise that prioritizes student-centered decisions over immediate results will bring about increased student engagement, more in-depth learning, and improved student outcomes. Trust in the process of student-centered dance education affects the educators' relationship with time and pressure created by a myriad of expectations experienced by dance educators. An altered relationship with time and pressure creates space for educators to inhibit, or to stay calm

in response to the inevitable interruptions encountered in dance education. The small space of time created by inhibition provides the opportunity to use what the AT refers to as direction, which can be thought of as waiting for a clear picture of what is needed in a given situation before taking action. A window of processing time prevents misuse. In the context of dance education, I would consider misuse to be the educator's habitual responses to stress and pressure, often unintentionally transferred to the learning environment and ultimately to the students. Rather than stress and pressure the educator is prepared to quickly and calmly make student-centered decisions drawing from his or her own constructed pedagogical knowledge.

I have observed a tendency for students to unintentionally employ a startle reflex, which is an instinctive reaction to fear or surprise when end-gaining influences the learning environment (Cohen, 1993). For example, an educator may unwittingly communicate an urgency that a skill should be learned quickly. If a student is having difficulty mastering the new movement skill, they may begin to exert too much effort and involuntarily tighten the muscles in the back of their neck resulting in subtle misalignment. The student's protective instinct may make learning the skill more difficult. According to Vygotsky, a fundamental responsibility of teaching is preparing the environment, so it is most conducive to learning (Daniels, 2001). I sought to discover how dance educators can develop the abilities to inhibit the culturally established desire for immediate results and instead lay foundations for the creation of healthy dance learning environments. Therefore, the curricular design was process-based and allowed

educators to discover through active participation, thus acquiring knowledge, skills, and confidence in their abilities to exercise conscious control in the midst of teaching.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH INQUIRY PROCESS

Methodology

This qualitative research project involved mixed methodology, philosophical inquiry, autobiographical reflection, ethnography, action research and a limited case-study, all of which overlapped through the four research phases. There were two aspects to the research project. First was the development of the curriculum, then I decided to recruit a focus group for a limited case-study. Rich data emerged from the case study as the most salient aspect of the project. The investigation of the data collected resulted in a form of grounded theory.

Research design

Phase One of the research project integrated philosophical inquiry, autobiographical reflection, and ethnographic approaches. These methodologies were present at each stage of my project. First, I examined existing literature in the fields of dance pedagogy, education, and learning theories. I reflected on my pedagogical practices and experiences with previous students to consider how they aligned with specific theoretical knowledge. I contemplated how my choices in each situation contributed to my development as an educator.

Consideration of the values and practices of other private-sector dance educators added to my philosophical inquiry. Informal observation and dialogue with educators in both private-sector and public dance education settings provided perspectives beyond my

own. The data collected in Phase One included theoretical frameworks and practical in-studio evidence of their relevance and application to the field of dance education. The above research data was used to identify specific bodies of knowledge, theories, and philosophies that, when present, may contribute to positive student outcomes. I articulated values and themes of importance that I wanted to investigate further and carry into curricular development.

Phase Two involved the development of the curriculum. During Phase Two, specific bodies of knowledge, identified in Phase One, were isolated as potential content strands. Beyond identification, I researched each strand as a single topic looking for sources within and beyond the field of dance. Available resources on the selected topic were considered for use within the curriculum based on applicability, accessibility, adaptability, and reliability. A second content strand was developed, and points of connection between the two strands were explored within the design (see figure 1).

The merger of the two strands created a learning thread. The original thread was designed as a ten-week program, then streamlined in order to adapt the original thread into a two-week curriculum. A workbook was designed based on integrative and transformative learning theories. Theoretical concepts were framed with reflection, observation, and contextualization to challenge and illuminate current values and practices. A two-day pedagogy workshop was created to accompany the workbook material. In creating the workshop, I implemented movement analogies intended to reinforce the workbook content. Each movement experience was followed by an open discussion to facilitate the assimilation of knowledge.

Phase Three of the research involved action research, praxis-oriented methodologies, within a limited case study. For this phase, I recruited research participants, conducted preliminary and follow-up interviews with each research participant, and prepared for and conducted a two-day pedagogy workshop.

First, I went through the Institutional Review Board to obtain approval to conduct this research project and to recruit participants. The project status was deemed exempt. I began the recruitment process with the following recruitment criteria: 1) Private-sector dance educators; 2) Non-degreed dance educators; 3) Non-accredited educators; 4) Extensive technical knowledge of the genre they teach. The recruitment process began by emailing an invitation to participate in the project to 75 directors or owners and faculty of private-sector dance studios. The responses indicated an interest by 7 studio owners; however, existing schedules and responsibilities prevented their participation. By redefining the recruitment criteria to include degreed dance educators and including an option for remote participation through an online format, four research participants were recruited. All four participants met the following criteria: 1) Private-sector dance educators; 2) Degreed dance educators; 3) Extensive technical knowledge of the genre they teach.

Using a limited case study methodology allowed me to examine data closely within the specified population. Once the recruitment had been finalized, preliminary interviews with each participant began. The interviews covered demographics, pedagogical philosophies, and teaching and learning encounters. Each participant was

invited to discuss his or her answers and or reactions to the questions. I allowed the discussion to unfold naturally, guided by the participant's own thought process.

After the initial interview, each participant completed five workbook activities from two learning strands over a one-week period. Participants then met collectively for a three-hour workshop, during which they engaged in group activities that built on and integrated the content from their workbook. Following a two-week break, the process repeated, as research participants completed five more daily workbook activities followed by a second three-hour workshop. I then met with each educator after a three-week break for a follow-up interview to explore how the curricular design facilitated each educator's ability to identify intersections of knowledge.

Phase Four involved the assimilation of data. My direct interaction and participation with the research participants during stage three of the research resulted in a continual overlap between stages three and four. While simultaneously immersed in and observing the research activities, the assimilation of data was on an ongoing process. My observations and interpretations of immediate individual and collective experiences during the research resulted in spontaneous curricular revisions and adaptations to the research design. After the conclusion of the action research, I systematically reflected on data and identified emergent themes.

Ongoing Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected from the following sources: participant pre- and post-interviews; workshops which were video recorded and transcribed; workbook responses and teaching notes from the participants; and any relevant data participants collected

from their own interaction with dance students. The data collection and analysis occurred during each research phase. The limited case study was video recorded for data. I was physically present and deeply invested in each stage of the project. I transcribed the video data and recorded both the words spoken and the accompanying gestures. The process of transcription provided me the opportunity to relive the experiences and notice fine details.

The data was prepared in two formats. The first was a chronological documentation that detailed each specific research participant's experience during the limited case study. Following individual documentation, a horizontal comparison allowed me to compare the experience of the individual research participants within the same activity. The comparison highlighted each educator's experience, developing patterns, and interaction throughout the study. The data revealed emergent thematic clusters and determined the direction of the next phase of the research.

The themes that emerged resulted in a decision to use only the data collected from the in-person research participants. While the online participants contributed to the overall group dynamic and created lively conversations throughout the workshop, movement patterns, expressivity and embodiment became an important element in the face-to-face experience. The online format limited my access to the nuances of participants' physicality. The in-person participants' experiences and resulting knowledge provided rich data that enabled me to refine the curricula and develop grounded theories from the research.

The thematic clusters discovered will be discussed in the following chapters. Chapter 5 will discuss the personal evolution of participants' teaching careers. Chapter 6 will discuss participants' interaction with the curriculum. Chapter 7 will discuss the spirals of learning, both observed and experienced. Finally, Chapter 8 will address the body as a sight of knowledge formation.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: THE EDUCATORS' NARRATIVE

This research project evolved from and was influenced by my own personal experiences as a dance educator. The journey began, as I described in the introduction, at the age of 14, when I found myself with all I knew and did not know, face to face with my students (Palmer,1998). Perhaps it was only the beginning, but the experience influenced my teaching career. My earliest experiences inaugurated my relationship with teaching that developed in stages as I gathered and organized information to acquire layers of pedagogical knowledge. Parker Palmer posits that teaching occurs at the interface of public and private, which makes teaching a vulnerable experience (1998). In my case, the students were young children who looked up to me. I found them to be adorable and puzzling. We were all mesmerized by our roles. They adored me for being their teacher and were in awe of being themselves, ballerinas. I adored them for being my students; small, eager and impressionable. They loved what I was offering them. Surely, at the age of 14, I did not stop to list everything I valued about teaching: the mentorship I received in preparation, the fascination with learning anatomical terminology, the detailed syllabus and lesson plans, and above all else, the pleasure the students and I shared in the experience.

The same pleasures repeated as I prepared for and navigated the limited case study portion of this research project. The detailed planning and preparation of curricular materials, and mentorship in the graduate program were as invigorating as they were

challenging. It was, however, the shared experience with the research participants that filled me with immeasurable pleasure. We shared personal stories of journeys that resulted in our current careers as dance educators. Although both research participants teach at the same studio, each traversed an exquisitely unique journey.

Preliminary Interviews

Amy Wudel teaches beginning through advanced levels of Contemporary and Broadway Jazz classes at Ballet Etudes School of Dance in Gilbert, Arizona. Jessica Blonde is also a faculty member at Ballet Etudes, where she teaches three beginning to advanced levels in the school's pre-professional ballet program. I worked with both Amy and Jessica at BE School of Dance, so I have known them for several years, yet I still felt it was essential to understand their backgrounds and the experiences that led them into their current roles. Without an ethnographic frame (Matsen, 2019), any data collected would be de-contextualized and interpreted based on my own values, experience, and understanding.

Amy jumped into teaching with both feet while Jessica felt her way forward as the path unfolded, yet both currently teach at the same pre-professional ballet studio. Ballet Etudes offers early childhood, or preparatory dance classes, for students between three and 8 years of age. Once students enter the pre-professional division, the program provides young dancers rigorous technical training that includes the opportunity to audition for the school's company. Company members have extensive performance opportunities, which includes performing two-full length ballets each year. During the preliminary interviews, I asked both Amy and Jessica, "How did you find yourself at

Ballet Etudes? How did you travel from your first class to where you are now?" For both, the path was paved with education, experience, and mentorship.

Amy Wudel

The first preliminary interview occurred on May 29, 2019, at 9:30 am. Amy chose to meet me at her home. Our conversation was inspiring, challenging, and deeply emotional. We settled into the soft sectional in her living room, which was filled with light from large windows looking out on a pool area with rich foliage surrounding it. In two days, Amy would be directing the Ballet Etudes Showcase at Mesa Arts Center. She told me, "this year the show has 39 pieces, making the show order like a jigsaw puzzle…" Despite the pending pandemonium, Amy was warm and open. Our conversation flowed naturally without a need to refer to the prepared interview questions. Her story spilled out as though she had been waiting for someone to ask.

Amy's teaching career was marked by a clear starting point. She stated:

> Ok, so um start from the beginning. When I was 16 years old, my mom, took all of the furniture out of our dining room and told me I had to teach (dance classes to) little girls in the summer. And I did. That was when I realized how much I love teaching. It wasn't just dancing that I loved. I loved teaching. And, so, I ate up just getting to be with little kids. That actually brought me more joy than just doing it [dancing] for myself. So, when I went to college, I wanted to be a dance educator. (personal interview)

At the age of 16, in her dining room turned dance studio, without a moment's thought, Amy began her teaching career. The enthusiasm did not wane. The 16-year-old

produced *The Little Mermaid in Dance*, which her students performed at the end of the summer. As a young teacher, Amy mirrored her teachers and felt no pressure to be perfect. With her teaching career launched by her mother and fueled by her passion and love for her students, Amy went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Dance Education from Brigham Young University.

Her dance pedagogy professor from BYU, Sarah Lee Gibbs, was her first mentor. Gibbs encouraged her young pedagogues to give their students the way and the how of what the aspiring educators were teaching. Gibbs challenged the future educators with the question, "How will you know that they (your students) know when you are gone?" Gibbs taught through connection. She cared deeply about her students, and Amy thrived on that relationship. The connection and investment modeled by Gibbs remains essential to who Amy is as an educator. Under Gibbs' mentorship, Amy developed a student-centered focus and understanding, "as a teacher you are developing the whole person." With tears in her eyes Amy continued, "She gave me such a gift, the ability to truly see people. It's really a different perspective. It's soul filling."

Amy had two more stops on her path to where she currently teaches. The first was American Fork High School in Utah, where she was a full-time high school dance teacher. She laughs as she recalls, "I taught ballet, modern, competitive jazz, ballroom, and aerobics. I taught all the things. I was there literally from 6:30 in the morning to 6:30 at night. It was a lot!" Out of curiosity I asked, "which of those classes did you feel prepared to teach?" Amy replied "ballet, modern, and jazz." Motivated by a need to know, as characteristic of an adult learner (Kuhne, n. d.; Smith, 2002), Amy would learn

the unknown genre on her own, and then consult an expert in the genre. After consulting the expert, she shared, “then I would fake it.”

Amy left Utah and relocated to Texas. When she became pregnant with twins, Amy chose to step away from high school dance education. The move necessitated a slight change of direction, which Amy actively navigated by applying for a teaching position at Payne Ballet Academy. The school was a good fit and she stayed there for seven years. Jim Payne, the school’s director, reinforced Amy’s student-centered values as an educator. When faced with difficult pedagogical decisions, Amy sought guidance from Payne, who echoed Amy’s first mentor, Gibbs. Payne would tell her, “as long as you make it about the students you will always be right.”

Jessica Blonde

Two days later, Wednesday, June 1, 2019, Jessica and I met at Wildflower Deli at 2:00 pm. Her teaching day for Ballet Etudes’ Summer Intensive had just ended. She arrived with her hair in a tidy French twist, black tights, and leotard under a loosely draped long black shirt. We ordered lunch and chatted for a moment with three mothers of students in Jessica’s classes who were enjoying a leisurely lunch. We then excused ourselves to settle into a quiet corner booth. After a polite inquiry about our respective summer plans, we transitioned systematically into the preliminary interview. The discussion was guided by the prepared interview questions. Jessica thoughtfully considered each question. A physical quietness indicated her consideration. As I sat with her, I felt her gather and organize her energy and attention inward, as though looking for evidence, before offering an answer.

Jessica's teaching career was marked by evolution and discovery. As a student, Jessica had never anticipated teaching. She trained in the Vaganova technique at Ballet Iowa. Ballet was her first love but "it didn't love me back," she said. "I always struggled to make ballet fit my body. It was an unrequited love." The struggle did not diminish her love. Jessica originally enrolled in Texas Christian University's Dance Program as a ballet major. During her time at TCU Jessica auditioned for Paul Taylor's *Arielle,* which was being set by guest artist Mary Cochran. The freer movement suited her in a way that ballet never had. The experience resulted in her changing to a double major in ballet and modern. The discovery of modern dance ushered her into teaching. On summer break, Jessica returned home where she taught her first modern dance class, at a local studio. Although she does not remember the details of that first class, she does remember the students. "I remember their displeasure of dancing with bare feet. It was primarily a ballet studio." Talking about the experience, Jessica chuckles as she admits, "I still have the original notebooks with my lesson plans, but I probably couldn't decipher them." According to Jessica, the lessons in her original notebooks echoed the combinations her teachers in college had taught her.

Jessica's starting point, her love of dance, influenced her academic career, during which Jessica made a series of discoveries. One, academia suited her. She said, "I realized that I didn't just love to dance. I really loved talking about dance, reading about dance, thinking about dance, and writing about dance." The realization planted the seed that she would eventually like to teach in higher education. After completing her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at TCU, Jessica spent 13 years in New York, where she

earned a Master of Arts in dance with an emphasis in Higher Education at New York University. She also seized the opportunity to dance with Paul Taylor and other companies as a freelance dancer. Her dancing career resulted in intermittent opportunities to teach. Jessica's teaching career continued to emerge as a by-product of her performing and academic careers.

During graduate school, Jessica received formal mentoring by completing a semester long internship with Mary Cochran. The relationship challenged Jessica, who describes herself as a "rule follower," by introducing her to a teaching approach that was much freer and more spontaneous. The apprenticeship created for Jessica a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991) that required her to consider her own taught values and perceptions. According to Jessica, Mary did not directly influence her pedagogical practice. Instead Mary was present at pivotal moments. The relationship was, "one relationship in the whole stream of things that influenced a change of direction," Jessica adds, "The teaching influences I pulled from more directly were from Texas Christian University."

Current Practice

Arizona and Ballet Etudes would be the next destination for both Jessica and Amy. Amy moved to Arizona in 2008 and began immediately seeking an outlet for her teaching passion. Discovering Ballet Etudes, Amy thought that the studio would be a good fit for her because of its strong technical and artistic emphasis. Undaunted by the ballet emphasis, Amy reached out to the school's artistic director and asked to teach an

audition class. The class went well but Amy was told that the studio did not offer contemporary dance. Amy responded, “hire me anyway and we will see how it goes.”

Jessica’s move from New York to Arizona in 2015 created a need to build connections with the local dance community, a process that took time. In an effort to do so, Jessica taught a contemporary ballet class at a regional American Dance Association Conference. The conference was held at Scottsdale Community College, where Jessica met a faculty member from Ballet Etudes who was preparing to leave Arizona. The woman needed someone to assume her classes at Ballet Etudes’ Summer Intensive.

Tenuous beginnings evolved into a dynamic outlet for pedagogical growth for both Jessica and Amy. Jessica was faced with teaching children, a prospect she had never considered. Meanwhile, Amy found herself introducing modern and jazz dance forms to resistant ballet students. Both women felt their way through the situation. In the process, their values, skills and knowledge base grew.

Amy began her modern/jazz program with two consistent students. This humble beginning grew into a strong contemporary dance program at Ballet Etudes that now offers six levels of contemporary modern and three levels of Broadway jazz. During our interview, she picked up a pillow from the couch, squeezed it to her chest and confided that the advanced classes are her favorite to teach, “because I have had some of them for six or seven years.” Amy paused as her eyes welled with tears. “At that point,” she said, “they have given me so much and I dearly (her throat catches) love them.” Amy’s answer illustrated her love for her students and dance as she described the act of connecting the subject, self, and student in her teaching practice.

Jessica was surprised to discover that she enjoyed teaching ballet, which she had considered an “unrequited love.” Jessica had veered away from ballet, prepared to teach adults rather than children, and teaching at Ballet Etudes was the first time she had the longevity to cultivate relationships with her students. Initially, Jessica relied heavily on her carefully prepared lesson notes. The preparation took her hours and she followed the notes exactly stating, “at that point, I really hated doing anything on the fly...I think I had imposter syndrome.”

I asked, “What is your favorite level to teach?” Jessica became very still, her head tipped slightly as she gazed upwards, thinking carefully about the question. I suspect now looking back over the data from the interview that she was looking for evidence of what she was about to say. She responded*:*

> I plan level 5 [intermediate] first. I feel like there's not a lot I cannot ask of them and we can really delve into the meat of the mechanics. With level 6 [advanced], I feel a little more pressure to make sure the class is challenging enough for them. I get that little voice in the back of my head nagging me. I think it is imposter syndrome because those dancers are so proficient at that point. Level 3A (the first level of the pre-professional division) is difficult for me; It's harder to plan their combinations in a way that won't bore them to death or rely too strongly on muscle memory because they do not have it yet.

Familiar with Jessica's extensive professional and academic career and having seen her teach, I found the idea of a voice in her head accusing her of being an imposter fascinating. “What inner resource do you draw on when the voice is challenging you?” I

asked. Again, I observed the stillness that indicated deep reflection before Jessica answered. “I believe that my modern dance experience both in college and New York informs my understanding of ballet.” She recalled that during her time dancing with Paul Taylor there were no mirrors in the studios, as “he just really wanted us to feel the movement in our own bodies.” The time away from mirrors really developed the ability to understand how her body was working, and she has been able to apply that knowledge to ballet. What I heard was that Jessica feels most connected to her values and what she enjoys about dance when she teaches level 5. I stated this to her, and with a thoughtful stillness and tip of her head, Jessica responded, “that may be true.”

Amy and Jessica’s individual interviews revealed consistent patterns of processing that developed during their careers as dance educators. Jessica was systematic in her approach to teaching, communication, and navigating new challenges. She drew inward to gather and organize information before acting. From the satisfactorily organized information Jessica created a framework of support that allowed her to be responsive and open to discovery. In contrast, Amy regained equilibrium through action motivated by her passion to invest in the lives of her students. Action and feelings were intricately intertwined to process information throughout her teaching career. The patterns remained consistent throughout the research project.

Just as patterns of transformation were evident as Amy and Jessica recalled the earliest stages of their teaching careers, so too were their values. Amy’s definition of success is “to impact students' lives; to offer them something like a springboard so that they can do more than I did.” Jessica, who struggled between love and frustration with

ballet until she discovered modern dance, defines success as helping her students discover three things: how ballet can serve them [the student], what positive benefits they can take forward with them, and how to foster a love of dance in her students.

As we near the end of our interviews, I feel as though I have been allowed entry into the inner lives of these two very different dance educators. I perceived the unique values that have accompanied them throughout the stages of their careers. Jessica's path was lit by unexpected discovery, choice, and joy. Amy was guided by love, collaboration, and connection. I asked two more questions: "How would you describe the ideal student?" and "How would you describe the ideal teacher?" Jessica described her ideal student as the one who struggles but has a strong work ethic and is inclined to discovery. Amy answered that her ideal student is humble, hungry, ready to learn, and eager to discover. In defining her ideal teacher, Jessica offered a carefully thought out answer. Stating her preference for teachers for whom "physical corrections are not necessarily their first go to... allow students to discover on their own...asks questions...give students ownership, freedom, and choice." Amy's response was immediate and emphatic, "the ideal teacher is humble, always discovering and generous." Their answers suggested to me a relationship between an educator's lived experiences and their pedagogical values. Amy and Jessica had all but forgotten the stories each shared, however, the formative influence of lived experiences (Doidge, 2007) remained present throughout their careers.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: CURRICULM AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Prior to the recruitment process, I created a curriculum that would be applicable to private-sector dance-educators with diverse lived experiences, value systems, and teaching contexts. As the project developed, the curriculum included the workbook as well as the movement explorations, discussions and warm-up experiences that comprised the workshops. I adapted the original ten-week curriculum to a two-week format and associated workshops, with no specific knowledge of the research participants. Because curriculum is a potentially mind-altering device (Eisner, 2002), the content and design decisions were guided by knowledge of adult learners and my own values. The intention at each point in the decision-making process was to offer experiences that would expand the participants' perspectives and skills within their existing value system, thus honoring the identity and integrity of the dance- educator research participants (Palmer, 1998).

Design Considerations and Individual Expression

The philosophical inquiry stage of the project provided representational knowledge of the research participants derived from theory and experience. As both an adult learner and private-sector dance-educator, I was able to vividly imagine responses to subtle choices framing each aspect of the experience. I wanted to communicate respect for the participants' time and contributions. As the central component of the curriculum, I did this visually with the presentation of the workbook. It was important that the

workbook was visually appealing and easy to navigate. Therefore, I sought temporary copyright permission from Redleaf Press and Human Kinetics to embed excerpts of copyrighted material used in the original curriculum within the workbook. The page layouts were balanced with images and content while the entire workbook was housed in an attractive binder with a matching pen.

Adult learners are autonomous, self-directed and have a foundation of life experience and knowledge (Smith, 2002). Therefore, I adopted language to acknowledge the participants' starting point, stating in the introduction:

> The amount of time you invest depends entirely on what works for you, or, more accurately, how you prefer to work. The time and suggested activities are yours.... Our time together will be an opportunity to move and share your knowledge, research, observations, and questions. Thank you for your participation, I look forward to learning with and from you.

In addition to formulating representational knowledge of the research participants through philosophical inquiry, I also considered the nature and cultivation of artistry in teaching. I explored the refinement of artistry as a "form of practice informed by the imagination that employs a technique to select and organize expressive qualities to achieve ends that are aesthetically satisfying" (Eisner, 2002, p. 49). Teaching is an art form. It requires the artistic, perceptive interaction of the educator with the many distinct and nuanced elements of individual bodies, personalities, lived experiences, content, and context.

Multiple layers of scaffolding, or the alignment of theoretical content in the workbook design built knowledge in a systematic fashion. The content provided a foundation, which evolved into representation. In the workbook, the process began with a reading. After the reading followed a reflective question and then a creative activity. The participants' responses to these activities expressed each participant's soma-psyche, or individuality (Hackney, 2002). For example, a reading on the role of the mind in dance technique paired with a reading on children's cognitive development, was followed by the question "What role does the mind play in what and how you teach?" Jessica wrote the following detailed response:

> I strive to keep students, who are in the operative stage of learning, actively engaged through brain teasers, exercises, self-reflection, my goal is to promote agency and independence that can serve students well in dance as professionals or in any walk of life.

Amy responded, "I try to use visuals as much as possible. I believe positive corrections create a positive change. Instead of 'don't bend your back' I say, 'lengthen your back,' to create positive images that allow dancers to visualize the direction I want them to go."

Next a creative activity prompt suggested "draw an image that represents the role of the mind in your teaching practice." Again, Jessica's and Amy's responses illustrated their individuality as educators. Jessica's image suggested a deep inner connectivity *(see Figure 2).* Amy's response reflected inter-connectivity *(see Figure 3).*

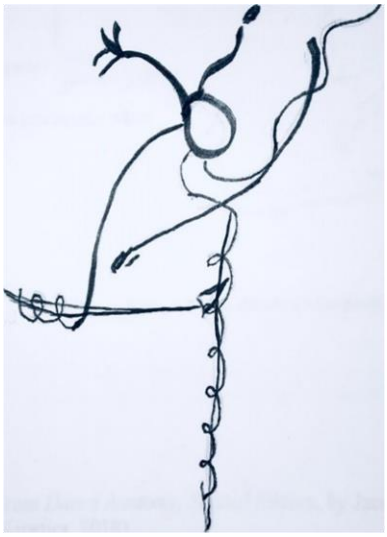

Figure 2

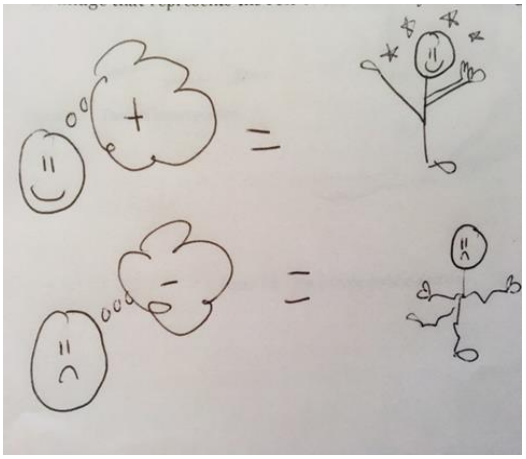

Figure 3

The curricular content needed to be relevant and practical (Smith, 2002). I knew that the research participants would have established themselves as professionals in a specific dance context and culture. Applications derived from the time invested in this research project needed to be pertinent to and benefit the participants and their dance community immediately without an orientation period. Applications occurred at each level of the curriculum. For example, after reading of a specific developmental theory in the workbook, the following exercise was offered*:*

> Write a letter to a future student, the age of 5. Give your student a name, try to imagine what he/she looks like and his/her personality. Explain to your student the developmental stages he/she will go through as the student progresses through the years and levels of dance at your studio. Encourage your student by telling him/her how you plan to support them as they grow and learn.

Like the mind-body relationship example, the letters offered support and direction in a manner distinct to the nature of the educator. Amy's letter was filled with passion and energy. She challenged her student to develop socially and emotionally as well as technically, to "go at your own pace and enjoy the journey. Accept corrections and humble yourself to try something new. As you grow stronger, help those around you…" Jessica's imagined student received an honest and straightforward account of the pending challenges, accompanied by the rewards of hard work. "You will have more asked of you than many your age…these will be balanced by a sense of accomplishment, and pride knowing you have tested your limits. You will understand your body and what it has to say…"

Learning experiences are inherently vulnerable because the learner is faced with the unfamiliar. Like their students, the encounter with the unfamiliar created emotional barriers for the adult learners (Malalmed, 2019). The private-sector dance-educator assumes the role of teacher-expert and with the role feels a pressure to "perform." As one research participant stated, "you build yourself up and create an image of being a professional." In order to alleviate performance pressure, the workbook narrative offered multiple approaches and spaces for each activity. For example, the workbook contained reflective activities which offered choices so participants could complete the assignment using modalities such as writing, drawing or movement. Space was provided for the sharing of resources, ideas, and experiences ranging from uploading materials to a shared drive to a private journal for more intimate discoveries. Options and choices within the design allowed participants to adapt the experience to their own needs and complete them

at their own pace, without coercion (Palmer, 1998). The workbook provided each participant with an opportunity to deepen their theoretical knowledge of students in the studio context, through personal reflective exploration and without external influence.

The workbook activities were designed to heighten the sensibilities of the teacher-educator. The initial presentation of concepts via the workbook served as preparation for dialogue followed by imaginatively conceived application in the workshop setting. Activities and discussions in the workshops became an editing process as details of teaching were precisely examined through peer interaction. The process allowed for refinement of skill, perception and fine adjustments of qualitative details (Eisner, 2002, p.76).

During the workshop, each participant gave a presentation on their learning theory and the possible application to the dance student. The themes of the presentations and discussions were further explored in role-playing activities in which one participant served as the teacher, and the rest as students. The opportunity to embody different teaching approaches and imagine the students' experience of each brought to life the theoretical applications, created empathy toward specific students and fostered a new understanding of students' potential emotional barriers to new challenges.

As the curriculum developed beyond the workbook and into the studio, a physical warm-up served as an essential component of the workshop. The warm-up provided participants with an introduction to developmental movement through a pedagogical lens, weaving knowledge and experience. Anatomical and contextual information combined with gentle tactile aid, scientific and metaphorical imagery directed the experience

through three stages. Each stage highlighted a different perspective and potential pedagogical application of the developmental movement patterns. The stages were intended to increase participants' ability to observe and respond to their internal and external environment as a source of knowledge and support. The three-stage structure was derived from principles for teaching and repatterning set forth by Peggy Hackney. Stage 1 introduced "the development and anatomical organization common to all humans;" Stage 2 focused on "the individual person soma-psyche;" and Stage 3, "his or her creative interaction with the world" (1998, p. 49).

As described above in the design choices, the curriculum refers to all content and activities included in the workbook as well as the movement, discussion and warm-up experiences that comprised the workshops. From each of these experiences, data was collected from multiple perspectives. The first-person accounts were offered both spontaneously and during in-person interviews. Each participant's interaction with the workbook was documented based on written responses and types and quantity of textual annotation. As a researcher-participant, I also completed the workbook and made notes of my own experiences. Participants' responses to formal presentations and sharing of resources were documented. Finally, my observations of movement and dialogue that related directly to the curriculum during workshop discussions and activities were noted.

Workshop Discussions

Amy arrived about ten minutes before the start of the first workshop. We greeted one another and gradually found our way to the studio floor to chat while we waited for Jessica and the online participants to arrive. With a note of concern in her voice, Amy

referenced the workbook content, “I don’t think I get the theorists.” Almost apologetically she added, “I am just not sure how it relates to dance.” I nonchalantly replied, “That’s okay, that is the kind of thing I need to discover. Maybe the workshop will help bridge the concepts.” We were soon joined by Jessica, followed by the two online participants.

Participants were invited to offer a brief presentation and share the resource they had created outlining the learning theory they had researched with the other participants. Jessica came well prepared to discuss Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and its application to the dance studio context. She had generously created two diagrams that conceptualized Maslow’s theory. Jessica was situated happily within her comfort zone. The same was not true for Amy, for whom the theoretical content had not made an essential connection to her existing knowledge.

The warm-up allowed Jessica and Amy to shift roles. Jessica admitted to being initially resistant to the warm-up, she confessed, “It took me back to college when I would have to improvise.” Jessica expressed her desire for a deeper understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the warm-up during the follow-up interview, stating, “I would have appreciated more time in the warm-up and more information. I wasn’t sure where it was going.” In contrast, the warm-up served as an entry point for Amy to make connections to the learning theories presented earlier in the curriculum. She drew meaning from the movement itself, which enabled her to begin finding connections to the theoretical concepts. For Amy, the warm-up tapped into her strong kinesthetic intelligence. She said, “I was curious and just wondered where it would take us.” The

curiosity evoked by the movement transferred to Amy's openness toward exploring theoretical aspects of the curriculum.

The second week of the limited case study offered further evidence that embodied knowledge might require different pathways. Week 2, Day 2, Strand 1 of the workbook began with the reading of *Being a Doorway* by Bob Clay. Jessica chose, as suggested in the workbook introduction, not to complete the reading. She said, "The Clay article did not connect to any of my existing knowledge." Amy's text for the same article was heavily annotated. The statements Amy consistently underlined aligned with her own existing values. Two activities in the second workshop, one visual and linguistic, and the other kinesthetic, reinforced the content of Clay's article. The visual/linguistic activity involved creating a poster with a representation of a typical student on it. On one side of the poster each participant made a list of typical corrections given in a technique class. On the second side, Jessica and Amy attempted to translate the corrections into questions to affirm the student's agency. Amy later said, "I don't understand the point of the posters," while Jessica, acknowledged her preference for visual representation, and said the poster activity made a powerful impact on her. From the visual list, she imagined the impact of corrections students receive over the course of days, weeks, and years. The kinesthetic/somatic activity that followed was adapted from the Alexander Technique. Jessica and Amy were guided through embodiment of different combinations of resistance, insistence, intention and connection. The activity was followed by an engaging conversation about partnerships between teachers and students and how they

might be cultivated in the technique class. It was in the physical activity that Jessica and Amy met on common ground for an understanding of the reading.

I hoped the curriculum would expand pedagogical knowledge within individual's value systems, be flexible to use, and be relevant. I asked each participant about the workbook itself. Jessica particularly appreciated Strand 1 as an opportunity to revisit learning and developmental theories at a point in her career when they are immediately applicable. She recalled exposure to the theories in college, "but at that time the information was not relevant." Amy did not remember learning about how children grow and develop in college. For her, Strand 1 was really important because it improved her ability to meet her students' learning needs. Amy felt that the Strand 2 content is traditionally emphasized in dance education; however, she appreciated having the two strands integrated, stating, "like a marriage, they support one another."

The relationship of the workshop to the workbook was essential to the experience. Jessica felt that the workshop could almost stand alone. Amy agreed but felt the workbook made the workshop more meaningful for her. For Jessica the curriculum was "a reaffirmation of [her] values and practice...it gives me the confidence to continue in the face of other perspectives." Amy also reported a re-affirmation of values and increased confidence. Amy felt the curriculum gave her "the ability to clarify concerns and bridge the knowledge gap on behalf of [her] students."

CHAPTER 7

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: SPIRALS OF LEARNING

The limited case study, which included the curriculum, framed by individual personal interviews, and culminated with a final group interview, allowed me to observe each participant's experience of spirals of learning. I am using the term “spirals of learning” to describe the stages that each participant negotiated while interacting with new information as they actively engaged with the curriculum (see chapter 2). The spirals overlapped in prismatic knowledge formation. The unfolding spirals of learning culminated in heightened perception.

Four distinct and observable stages of the learning process emerged. Stages of learning themselves are not a new discovery. They have been identified and explored by many scholars before me: Jack Mezirow’s stages of transformational learning (1991), the four phases of integrative learning (Cranton & Kucukaydin, 2012), the 13 thinking habits of the world’s most creative people presented by Root-Bernstein (1999), and Alva Noë’s philosophical views on perception. Many of these concepts overlap, which suggests commonalities in the experience of learning. Disequilibrium, equilibrium, assimilation and perception are the four primary stages I will discuss.

Confrontation with an unfamiliar concept creates a state of disequilibrium. For Noë, disequilibrium is associated with being lost, or confused (Hoff, 2010) and therefore requires skillful probing (Noë, 2004, p. 216). Mezirow’s disorienting dilemma evokes an image of losing balance. However, a loss of balance can be productive. For example,

walking illustrates the need to sacrifice stability in order to progress. In the context of the research project, I watched attentively as the research participants experienced disequilibrium. Discomfort was a companion of their disequilibrium. Turned outward, the disequilibrium manifested itself in resistance toward a given activity. Internalization of discomfort correlated with self-doubt. The disequilibrium occurred at moments of disconnection. Disconnection might be thought of as an interruption; a moment when a piece of information did not align with an existing knowledge structure or pattern that had been cultivated both intentionally and unintentionally over time through lived experience (Hackney, Palmer 1998).

Knowledge Disconnect

Indications of disequilibrium were distinct for each participant. Amy's initial uncertainty about the workbook material, specifically, Piaget's theory on children's stages of development, provided a disorienting dilemma. Amy expressed her uncertainty shortly after arriving for the workshop when she stated, "I don't think I get the theorists." The theoretical information did not align with her existing knowledge structure of dance pedagogy. The lack of connection made it difficult for Amy to imagine applications of the theoretical knowledge to a dance specific context, which she expressed when she said, "I am just not sure how it relates to dance." During the theorist presentations, Amy's body remained uncharacteristically still. Her knees, drawn toward her chest seemed to be held in place by her arms that enclosed them. Although verbally quiet, energy emanated from the still body. Slightly withdrawn from the group interaction, she scanned the external environment, almost as though looking for cues to grab onto for stability.

Jessica, too, expressed disequilibrium during the theorist presentations. While presenting Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Jessica paused. Like Amy, she became quite still as though responding to an internal alert. I saw no evidence of panic as she leaned forward, toward the other members of the group. With sincere concern Jessica said simply, "I am not sure that the need for self-esteem aligns with ballet."

Equilibrium, or regaining balance, can be achieved in various ways. In walking, the body's center of gravity falls forward and is caught as the forward foot connects to the ground. The foot to ground connection is followed by a series of neural connections within the body. Stability is achieved as the body is realigned over the supporting foot. Thus, a brief moment of equilibrium is achieved and the cycle repeats. Activity allowed Amy, Jessica, and me to transition into the next observable phase of our learning spiral. A series of internal and external connections resulted from verbal and physical processing followed by the exchange of ideas.

Amy's uncertainty about the relationship of learning theories to dance education and Jessica's doubt that ballet could align with a student's need for self-esteem hung in the air. I made no attempt to offer answers. Amy listened as Jessica spoke about Maslow and the need for trust. Amy began to nod her head in agreement then shifted her weight several times. As she blinked rapidly, Amy reached to release her hair from a ponytail. The sudden increase in physical movement suggested emerging insight. During the presentation on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, Amy sat up very straight with her eyes intensely focused on the speaker. The theory produced a knowledge connection. "When [students] do not get something, they are told that they are not trying.

It is such an emotional thing for them because they feel like they are stupid," she said passionately describing the recurring phenomena. Through verbal processing, Amy stabilized the concepts, and affirmed her values as she suggested an application, "teachers need to understand that each student has a unique learning style rather than assuming all students will respond in the same way to a particular style of teaching."

The discussion built as Jessica noted a connection between Gardner and Maslow. She stated, "Just to backtrack a little bit, you [Stacy] were just talking about the kinesthetic intelligence dance cultivates transferring to engineering. Maslow was a huge proponent of arts education because," she paused, to look for the quote she had underlined in her workbook and read aloud, "It [the arts] fosters people who are creative, inventive and courageous…" (Beloglovsky & Daly, 2015, p. 22).

The passage from disequilibrium to equilibrium required effort, patience, and trust. Faced with challenges to existing thoughts and practices influencing their teaching careers, Amy and Jessica could have dismissed new information as irrelevant. Declining to engage with the quandary would have alleviated the discomfort of disequilibrium, however, it would also have impeded passage. Engagement required individual and collective effort. The effort required did not yield instant results. Often more questions emerged, and the discomfort lingered. Allowing questions to remain unanswered required patience. The patience produced an increase in trust. As trust gradually developed within the research community, individual contributions and perspectives became increasingly vulnerable. A lively, engaged, exchange of ideas was the fruit of trusting effort patiently exerted.

Knowledge Connection

In the exchange of ideas, individual values, experience and curricular content connected. Increased connections suggested the dawning of the next stage, assimilation. Knowledge connections shifted to contextualization, in which theoretical concepts were imagined within actual pedagogical challenges derived from lived experience. Contextualization infused meaning and value to otherwise static information.

Commonalities in the experience and expression of assimilation were punctuated by an individuality that mirrored the personal journey each participant traversed to become a dance educator. For both participants, increased physical and verbal energy, even excitability, marked the onset of knowledge assimilation. Jessica created potential group-specific applications around larger issues in the field of dance. She drew applications from internal knowledge illuminated through the introduction of new perspectives. Meanwhile, a student specific application rooted in her deep capacity for empathy facilitated Amy's assimilation process.

Workshop Discussion

Workshop 1 concluded with a cumulative activity entitled *Role-playing, From Theory to Practice,* followed by a meaningful guided discussion which illustrated the assimilation. First participants collectively summarized the key points of each the learning theories presented during the workshop. Following the re-cap, participants alternated the roles of teacher and student during short technical combinations. Each "teacher" taught the same combination twice. The first time, the "instructor" offered students only procedural, outcome-based instruction. The "teacher" re-taught the

combination a second time by integrating age-appropriate anatomical imagery and addressing students' social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. The opportunity to teach and assume the role of student led to the following interaction.

"I always tell my students dance is a feeling as much as it is a technique. When you feel it, you dance correctly," Amy said passionately, after experiencing a kinesthetic teaching approach to the Charleston intended for a class of ten-year old students. "What does the Charleston feel like? What does ballet feel like? What does this combination feel like? . . .then you can come from a real place instead of putting something on…ask what it feels like instead of what am I supposed to be doing."

Jessica interjected, "I started having some of my students, while we were doing échappés on pointe." She backed up slightly to clarify, "we were doing an échappé combination and it was looking like, well…" she cringed slightly, "échappés on pointe, and I was like, 'okay because we [Ballet Etudes] are doing *Sleeping Beauty*, choose one of the fairies and do the échappés like that fairy.' All of a sudden, they were enjoying it (the combination). They were smiling. They were making choices." Jessica's example illustrated a network of connections. The brief role as student and Amy's thoughts on feelings illuminated the effects of a previous pedagogical choice. Then Jessica connected her identity and values by assessing the choice based on evidence derived from her observations of the students' behavior (enjoyment and choices).

Amy responded to Jessica as she actively embodied the words. "You can see when they zone out," her facial muscles and limbs became lifeless. Then Amy's eyes widened, and her open hand pressed into her chest. Softening her chest, she inclined her

head gently forward and began to open eyes, head, hand and chest as though revealing her inner being. “when you start talking about their [students’] feelings...they see everything better, they see themselves better.” Physical and verbal processing enabled Amy to recognize the importance of helping students experience inner and outer connectivity (Hackney, 1998).

Again, Jessica connected the immediate discussion to a previous activity. She stated:

> You [Stacy] had asked when does teaching feel burdensome? It is when you are pulling your students along rather than experiencing this [dancing and learning] with them. I feel like it is those moments, where I'm like [she sighs], okay, something needs to change! This is too much work. It is supposed to be work but it's not supposed to be this much work. In those moments I feel like, okay, we are going to switch something up. I don't know if this is going to work...but we're going to try something different.

Here, Jessica identified her own inner response to pedagogical challenges, as an impetus toward a specific application.

Amy’s specific pedagogical challenge involved a student named Heather. Heather exhibits resistance towards Amy and the genre being taught in the class. “I don't know how to reach her,” Amy said. “We've been working on backwards rolls and she just doesn't like them. She says that her body can’t do a backwards roll. If I focus on her not liking backwards rolls it brings the whole class down and pretty soon, nobody likes to do backwards rolls.” Amy explained how she handled Heather’s refusal to attempt the skill.

“I say okay, you can do something else right there. When you're ready to work on it let me know and I will help you.” “I try to smile and not be mad at her,” Amy said, acknowledging her own internal frustration, “inside I am feeling like, ‘you are ruining my class. Just stop it!’”

Without a pause Jessica responded to Amy’s vulnerability, “I have that too. Where the student says I can't do this, and I'm offering suggestion after suggestion, but there is always an excuse or reason [on the student’s part] why it doesn't work,” relating to Amy’s frustration. “I have gotten to the point where I say; well this is all the information I have. I don't know what else to tell you. If you want to talk about it, we can talk about it later.”

I wondered why Heather, and by inference, other students might resist attempting a new skill. Jessica wove theoretical content from the workshop and personal experience to hypothesize an answer. “Maybe [the resistance] ties into the roles and identities Erickson was talking about,” she says, referring to the presentation given by an online participant during the workshop on Erik Erikson. “I definitely experienced that when I was in college,” She related her own experience in her first modern dance class. As a college freshman Jessica held tightly to her ballet persona. She experienced disequilibrium as the new movement form challenged her perceived identity. “I made it very clear that I was in a modern class because it was required. I do not go on the floor. I do not improvise!” She recalled the time it took to regain equilibrium as she “opened herself up.” Smiling at the memory she added, “it took a really long time before I could open myself up to those [improvisation and floor work] and incorporate that into my

movement.” Jessica's memory served a springboard to thoughts from her own theorist presentation. “It may also tie into Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and the need for safety and trust. They [students] can't reach the self-actualization that is involved with what we want for our students, if they're not feeling that sense of safety.”

Amy transferred the applications back to Heather. She stated:

> I think that kind of goes back to my problem with Heather. She needs to feel like she has some control over her environment. I'm asking her to do things that make her uncomfortable. She wants to have some control. If she feels that control and trusts me enough that it's [any attempt Heather makes] going to be okay, and it's not going to change who she is. It is not going to hurt her, then eventually SHE will want to try. I think letting people feel a little bit of autonomy, no matter what they're doing, is important.

The learning spiral transitioned seamlessly into perception. A need to know accompanied the shift from assimilation to perception. Jessica expressed the need as she described the feeling of pulling students through the learning process when she realizes that “something needs to change…” For Amy, the need to know came in the form of a particular student, Heather, when she said, “I don’t know how to reach her.” In both instances a question hung in the air, acknowledging an incomplete image. The conversation facilitated the research participants’ ability to consider different perspectives. Each participant added to existing knowledge as they listened to and responded to one another’s contributions. Jessica’s ability to connect concepts and experience interacted with Amy’s creative, action-oriented contextualization. A

perspective shift occurred. The shift in no way diminished existing values, instead Amy, Jessica and I experienced a transformation that left us better and more ourselves. Jessica emerged more self-aware, Amy became imaginatively engaged with focused energy and I was deeply moved by the beauty of sharing this experience.

CHAPTER 8

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: THE BODY

The body has an indisputable significance in the field of dance and therefore is a central topic in dance education. An effective dance educator possesses knowledge of the dancing body. In this project, the integration of developmental theories within the curricular design painted a holistic picture of the dance student. Thus, a perspective that isolates the student's body for technical refinement was avoided. In preparing the curricular materials, however, the temptation was to isolate the "mind" of the educator for refinement. Movement is fundamental to knowledge formation. As Dewey believes, the process of knowledge formation is not assigned to a single location, but thought occurs everywhere in the body (Dewey, 1938). Within the curriculum, I prepared activities to engage the "body" in the thinking process (Noë, 2004). While activities ignited personal and collaborative discoveries, the manifestation of knowledge discovered in movement did not limit itself to the structure the prepared activities created, because as Noë insists the body is always present.

Experience of Connection

Planned movement activities during the workshops served as an entry point to theoretical knowledge, an opportunity to build community, and a chance to investigate the body's knowledge of teaching and learning. One movement activity probed Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978). The activity's structure provided a movement metaphor intentionally designed to demonstrate the impact of support on a

student's achievement. From a balanced standing position, Amy and Jessica were instructed to lean forward as far as they could without falling. Jessica quietly and thoughtfully investigated the task. When asked, *"what happens in the body as your weight shifts?"* Jessica remained pensive as she flexed her elbows, which brought her forearms parallel with the floor. Palms and fingertips extended as though resting comfortably on a solid surface. Then the tips of her fingers slid toward her palms, muscular resistance evident as the joints in her fingers and hands compressed in a gripping gesture. With her gaze down as though still feeling the sensation, she added a single word, "gripping."

We repeated the activity, and this time, external support was added. Jessica represented Vygotsky's "more knowledgeable other" (1978, p. 87). As she provided support Amy shifted her weight forward. Amy found that with Jessica's support she leaned farther forward. In addition to an increased movement capacity, the need for compensation diminished. Few words were spoken as the activity concluded. An abstracted stillness acknowledged that the embodied contrast of support versus lack of support revealed the physical and emotional implications for young dancers.

The developmental movement-based pedagogy warm-up explored pedagogical concepts through the body. The anticipated outcomes described in Chapter 2 were broad and open ended. The activity unearthed and expanded on participants' existing layers of intuition and knowledge. Reflections of the individual pedagogical journeys and values described in Chapter 1 permeated each phase of the warm-up and ensuing discussion.

The warm-up began with *Walk and Talk* (Lerman, 2019) to establish a common orientation. Participants were instructed to walk or move freely around the room while speaking aloud on a given topic. A series of prompts about teaching provided the topics. Tentative, Amy looked directly at the documentation camera and sighed audibly. The first prompt offered was "what is learned in a dance technique class?" Walking slowly and heavily, Amy scanned the room looking for an external cue. She noticed Jessica incorporating upper body movement. Amy began to circle her right arm discreetly around her head. Amy's gesture multiplied into several pedestrian movements. Each movement gave birth to the next movement until the movements merged with her breath. Energetic, thoughtful, an arm carved the space, this time Amy's body followed, first her shoulder, then her spine and chest until her head and eyes completed the pathway. The spiraling continued, first forward and then backward, contemplating the question in movement, as though the question had penetrated her body. Amy found her orientation through movement.

Jessica responded to the same question by "following the rules." She remained cautiously on the perimeter of the space, uttering inaudibly verbal responses, while walking reluctantly until the question, "What is good teaching?" evoked an internal response. The question resonated with her values and insatiable desire for professional growth. As Jessica explored, the attempt to speak ceased. In silence, her arm circled her head gently, until the back of her hand found her neck and stroked it soothingly. She paused in a moment of complete-but alive stillness before the hand slipped tenderly down the side of her cheek to veer under her chin. The same arm guided Jessica's head.

Unexpectedly, a leg extended in an arcing sweep that penetrated the edge of Jessica's kinesphere, altering her relationship to space. Jessica drew inward, oriented herself within the experience, and created internal support that allowed her to delve into visible activity.

The questions flowed seamlessly into the developmental movement warm-up. Each stage offered a different pedagogical perspective. The embodied processing continued to mirror the values and journey of each educator described in Chapter 1. During Stage 1, "development and anatomical organization common to all humans" (Hackney, 1998, p.49), I wrote the following observations. "Jessica lies on the floor in a trance like stillness, in a deeply inquisitive exploration of movement sensations. She is content, unrushed, her pleasure in looking for something and discovering is evident." In contrast, I wrote the following observations of Amy. "Amy's whole body is attentive. She is ready to move faster, with more energy. When given the option, she begins with the largest range of motion possible. Sometimes the movement is interrupted by a scan of the environment. She then seems to settle into the movement."

Jessica and Amy both relished in the exploration of the individual person soma-psyche offered in Stage 2 (Hackney, 1998, p.49). I wrote:

> Jessica's movement is characterized by an alive stillness as she follows her breath, the opening and closing of her body is accompanied by a marked softening of her arms and hands. The closing slows as her hands approach her center as though fingering invisible silk threads to conclude each movement phrase… (workshop observation notes, August 5, 2019)

I noted that Amy's pleasure manifested itself differently. "Energy emanates from Amy's body, even in stillness. She opens and closes to her full expanse as her ribcage inflates. With the visible exhale, she curls slowly into her center, where she pauses- only briefly. Her phrasing is a distinct duple meter in a moderate to quick tempo" (workshop observation notes, August 5, 2019). As stage two continued through the six developmental patterns, Amy continued to seize movement possibilities and then settle into an organized phrasing. Meanwhile, Jessica's internal and intentional exploration of each pattern built a steady momentum.

Deeply satisfied after the warm-up during the first workshop, Jessica documented her initial response:

> It has been so long since I have moved this way-organically, trusting gravity and intuition. It was good to be reminded that I have this in me, though my body has changed, and it felt awkward or painful at times. Stillness left me feeling satisfied and at home, whereas I started out feeling anxious and unfamiliar. I want to incorporate the sense of trust and exploration in my young students…

As we discussed the experience, Amy too expressed satisfaction:

> When I returned to stillness, I felt more reflective. The movement feels like a rhythm inside of you. The movement helps you get into a brain space where thoughts are intuitive. All of a sudden, the thoughts and the body are combined. There is a peace that you feel when your mind and body come together.

Experience of Disconnection

When the day of the second workshop arrived, Jessica and Amy eagerly anticipated the warm-up. The participants' familiarity with developmental movement patterns and openness to the warm-up prompted two changes. The initial *Walk and Talk* (Lerman, 2019) activity was omitted. Additionally, metaphorical cues and imagery replaced procedural cues. The alterations were intended to accommodate individual physical expression and processing. Unexpectedly, the individuality evoked self-doubt. The structure began by sensing the common development and anatomical organization we enjoy as humans. From the shared, or common experience we transitioned into individual exploration of the soma-psyche followed by a final stage, which explored the individual's creative interaction with the world (Hackney, 1998, p.49). Prefaced by self-doubt, direct interaction with one another produced disequilibrium. Jessica and Amy found themselves attempting a shared exploration. The partnership, defined by a shared kinesphere and physical contact, impeded each individual's established strategies for regaining equilibrium. Rather than the deep satisfaction anticipated based on the prior warm-up experience, a sense of disconnect characterized the experience.

Jessica sat cross legged; her weight held slightly forward of her pelvis. She appeared uncertain of the surface she was about to tread on. With small, articulate, and cautious hand gestures, she described her experience. "Ideally," she began hesitantly, "this search for understanding-partnership…" Jessica paused, then blurted out, "I don't know if this is what you are looking for. In the movement exercise I was feeling disconnected. And I couldn't figure out why." She read from her journal, "a lack of

connection is always frustrating. When you know that two people want to connect and it [connection] is not happening then it is even more frustrating. It feels like a missed opportunity." Jessica rested her hands on the floor behind her as her weight settled back comfortably into her pelvis. Jessica's inner-connectivity provided the courage to express disconnection that gradually resulted in deeper connections.

Amy pinpointed the origin of disconnection in her own experience. "You said that we could explore the movement in a way that felt intuitive, and so I did." This matched the observations in my notes. I described Amy's movement by stating "she is the first to move. The movement is eager, she wants more of a full-bodied exploration of every pattern." Of Stage 2, I wrote, "Amy's internal rhythm is almost double Jessica's and still full bodied, gradually she slows until only her arm is arcing gently around her head." Amy continued, "Then I saw that Jessica was going in and out of the X [traditional exercise in Bartenieff Fundamentals]. Uh-oh, I thought, maybe I am not supposed to be moving this much...I started second guessing myself…" As Amy spoke, Jessica offered a wide smile and nodded in agreement. In the activity, Jessica and Amy moved contentedly until interrupted by a moment of uncertainty that resulted from comparison.

The self-doubt carried into the third stage of the warm-up. Amy explained, "When it came time to move together, I was worried. It seemed like I wanted to move more than Jessica did." Phase 3 began as the two, aware of the existing contrast in movement preferences, slowly rolled into a shared space. They faced toward one another in parallel planes. The outside of their left thighs almost touched as they overlap. A sense of warmth and openness filled the shared space accompanied by the sound of breath. Amy's breath

visibly slowed, adapting to Jessica's. Relational connection is one of Amy's highest values. As each pattern was introduced Amy acknowledged it with a hint of thought, or, as I wrote, "the slightest dart of Amy's eyes." Jessica takes a moment of pensive stillness at the onset of each pattern change. I wrote:

> Head tail-patterning impels a gradual cautious spinal undulation. Both bodies are carried backward and up, sensing one another takes priority over the action. Space between the two bodies expands and rises and then converges before dissipating (workshop observation notes, August 26, 2019). .

Without direct physical contact Amy and Jessica established a kinesthetic connection evident in the movement. The connection was interrupted with new information. I described the first moment of physical contact with the following:

> Their hands meet, [Amy's] eyes widen and glance around for more information, neck muscles contract and [Jessica's] suppleness of the movement is lost. A smile is exchanged and some pleasure in the shared struggle is achieved. Listening, navigation and negotiation temporarily replaced fluidity (workshop observation notes, August 26, 2019). .

About the first moment of contact Amy said:

> I wasn't sure if that would be okay with you [Jessica]. It was nice though, even though I felt unsure I was just going to go for it and I started to feel like okay, so at first I wasn't sure how Jessica was going to feel about this but I was like, okay I am just going. The moment when we first looked at each other and made contact- I could have stayed in that moment much longer.

The introduction of cross-lateral patterning increased movement possibilities. Fluidity returned to the movement. From my perspective it appeared that equilibrium was regained. Amy responded to Jessica's earlier admission of disconnect. She stated:

> I feel connected to someone when I feel reciprocated. Sometimes as a teacher you get those students who are as invested as you are. When two energies come together it is magical. But it is hard to find that synergy, it takes time. Just because we didn't find that right away, it's not a failure.

Amy further expressed her understanding from the experience with the following journal entry*:*

> Connection is feeling like you are free to express and the relationship you have with others will be accepted and reciprocated. In a technique class connection should feel like the teacher and students understand and reciprocate in the learning process. The dancers and teachers are learning from each other and both are accepted and grow from the experience.

Of the same experience, Jessica wrote:

> It was nice to return to this movement, though I still feel uncertain. [What is] Connection? There are two [people] involved. [Connection] is a balance [of] communication. [It is] frustrating when it doesn't happen particularly when desired by both [people]. Connection to me is being understood and understanding in return. In class it is trust and mutual respect. It is a shared search for understanding and attainment.

Several discoveries emerged from the data regarding the relationship or significance of movement in the participants' experiences. Movement patterns in the spirals of learning were similar to each participant's lived experiences. The warm-up did not have a prescribed outcome. Here the movement served as a metaphor, illuminating knowledge about connection as an ongoing process that takes time and work to cultivate. The embodied encounter of self-doubt and judgement resulted in decreased pleasure and increased anxiety. The first-hand experience cultivated empathy for the ongoing challenges of developing students of varying degrees of technical proficiency in the same class. Amy and Jessica agreed that the movement affirmed the importance of intentionally encouraging healthy thought patterns alongside technical development. I observed the body as a source of knowledge, essential to processing new information in a meaningful way, and as the site of perception transformation for these two dance educators.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: DISCOVERIES ABOUT SOMATIC PERCEPTION

Somatic perception in dance education is the dance educator's artistic expression or felt knowledge activated in an immediate pedagogical context. Common expressions of somatic perception gleaned from the data include increased confidence, empathy, creativity, and spontaneity. Evidence of somatic perception existed in both Amy's and Jessica's teaching practice prior to their participation in the limited case study. For example, Jessica prepared the lesson plans for level 5 first because that level aligned with what she most enjoys about dance. Not surprisingly, it is with level 5 that Jessica shares playful imagery that emerged spontaneously during shared discovery. The natural spontaneity characteristic of Amy's teaching, together with her love for her students resulted in frequently advocating on behalf her students both in class and in larger studio policies.

Cultivation of Somatic Perception

The time spent collaboratively exploring pedagogical practices and possibilities provided me an opportunity to pay attention to the interrelationship of details that converged at the intersection of somatic perception. Time spent in discovery revealed subtle adjustments conducive to cultivating somatic perception. Data collected from the limited case study suggests a relationship between the spirals of learning and somatic perception. Perception, or the ability to perceive detail with increased accuracy, follows the assimilation stage as described in Chapter 7, Spirals of Learning. The curriculum

confronted each research participant with new information that was in some way problematic to existing patterns, initiating a spiral of learning. Amy and Jessica navigated the disequilibrium by grappling with and contextualizing the information. During assimilation new information connected to previous knowledge in a meaningful way, resulting in deep knowledge (Willingham, 2009). When deep or connected knowledge was integrated it became available for retrieval at the appropriate moment. Deeply embedded knowledge became part of the lens through which participants perceived the immediate environment. The availability of knowledge did not ensure somatic perception, instead it provided a layers of knowledge or multiple perspectives.

Layers of knowledge are certainly beneficial, however, evidence from this research suggested that a depth of knowledge from multiple sources must be merged with openness to what is occurring. I will propose layers of knowledge for dance education. The lists are not intended to be exhaustive but rather to illustrate the multiplicity of perspectives. Four broad categories might include content, context, self, and others. Each of the four can be subdivided into theoretical and experiential. For example, the category of self includes a complex interplay of temperament, experience, values and beliefs. Similar to self, knowledge of others refers to temperament, values, beliefs, experience, and in the case of students, extends to development and family systems. Content is technical, historical, anatomical, and artistic knowledge of a specific dance form. Meanwhile, knowledge of the studio context encompasses studio culture, values, mission statements, and demographics. During the spirals of learning, data provided evidence that Jessica and Amy made knowledge connections between many of these details during

moments of perception. Evidence of perception occurred while Amy and Jessica were imaginatively engaged in a pedagogical puzzle. Moments of perception or perspective transformation were exquisite to witness. They held a promise of possibility. The transformation was evoked as knowledge from multiple sources combined. The infinite number of categories and subcategories, involved in teaching dance, means that somatic perception cannot be reduced to a level of attainment.

Perception occurred when the participants were still aware of thinking. Somatic perception required skillful enactment of accumulated and assimilated layers of knowledge. The difference is subtle. Highly skilled individuals in any field may exhibit somatic perception. Through the process of attentive and accurate practice skills become refined. Awareness is a necessary impetus to initiate a spiral of learning. During the study the spiral began when disequilibrium was noticed. The recovery of equilibrium required availability; participants had to attend to the immediate experience. Availability required humility and patience; the participants acknowledged that pieces of information to a pedagogical puzzle were not immediately evident and that building connections to solve the puzzle took time.

Disequilibrium is inevitable and educators establish patterns that help them navigate pedagogical puzzles in order to regain equilibrium. As revealed by the *Zone of Proximal Development* activity discussed in Chapter 8, equilibrium can be achieved through compensation. Compensation, which can wear many guises, creates an interruption or disconnection from the immediate experience. As a dance educator, two strategies for compensation I have employed were also described by both research

participants. These include over reliance on rote memory and on cultivated professional habits. Rote memory takes the form of repetition (Willingham, 2009) and can be summarized by the statement “I replicated how my teachers taught.” Another example of rote memory might be a “what worked for me approach.” Rote memory serves as an appropriate launching point to an educator’s career. However, over reliance on rote memory can establish unquestioned patterns that inhibit attentiveness. A second form of compensation is the reliance on intentionally cultivated professional habits. When used appropriately this can be very beneficial, however an overreliance on habits of phrasing, articulation and demeanor may also replace attentiveness and authenticity. A prolonged lack of attentiveness increases disconnection and potentially masks disequilibrium. Failure to recognize and engage with disequilibrium is a missed opportunity.

Each stage of the research revealed obstacles to the cultivation of the dance educator’s somatic perception. Dance educators, as both Amy and Jessica shared, are highly skilled individuals who often work in isolation. Jessica and Amy experienced the workshop as a supportive structure that allowed them to consider new ideas and reconsider previous perspectives. Although the information in the workbook was deemed valuable, the greatest benefit came from the shared workshop context. Data from the research suggested that a sense of community and support in which to assimilate information were essential elements to the curricular approach. Jessica explains:

> It's really nice to have this opportunity to talk. Although a lot of the information was not new, to revisit the information at a point in my life where I'm actually finding opportunities to put the information into practice has been very helpful. It

> is nice to kind of re-evaluate, 'am I doing this successfully?' And all of the venues I am teaching in, studios and in higher ed, it is very isolating. I go in to teach my class and then I'm done, and I don't have a lot of opportunities to have discussions with other educators... getting feedback from other people's ideas and insights has been really helpful.

During the study Amy and Jessica invested in the cultivation of professional knowledge by considering multiple perspectives and possibilities. The time served as a preparation period, during which they practiced and refined accurate perception (Eisner, 2002) and their ability to make themselves available (Noë, 2009) within the research context.

Final Interviews

The preparation provided by participation in the study became enacted in teaching practice. Both research participants integrated the information and knowledge cultivated through the study to their dance teaching practice in a manner specific to their inherent perspective. For both, however, their perception and openness increased imagination, creativity, empathy, and confidence, which are characteristics of somatic perception.

Amy's final interview was conducted in her home at 8:00 am on Monday, August 26, 2020. Amy's increased confidence was evident as she articulated concerns regarding the values and ethical discrepancies inherent in the mission of offering a pre-professional experience and working with children. "They are still developing and not necessarily equipped to make independent decisions [referring to cognitive and social emotional development]. Nor are they necessarily able to sustain the schedule required of them for

performances and rehearsals." Amy acknowledged, and articulated the implications of confusing technical proficiency with accurate perception of a young dancer's overall development. Although she began unsure about the application of learning theories to dance, Amy said during the final interview, "It was so good to think about the psychology aspect. I've always intended to address emotional development of my students. That's always been a priority, but I never had the tools it took to make decisions as to whether what I'm doing is enough or is effective."

Amy reflected on the year she spent teaching in a public high school, "I had different types of classes that I had never taught before but that was okay, I figured that part out. The one thing I felt unprepared for was learning to love and teach the students. There was so much emotional drama. No one prepared me for that. I had no knowledge of developmental theories. If it was taught it wasn't emphasized or maybe it didn't connect." Based on the theoretical knowledge Amy assimilated during the project, she described her new strategy to cultivate synergy with her students. "Now, I ask myself, okay what am I missing here?" Amy applied the strategy with Heather, the student she didn't know how to reach. She drew from theoretical knowledge of students' need to feel safe and sense some control, and her experiential knowledge derived from previous observations of Heather. "She's really apprehensive about doing improvisation, she's just really uncomfortable with it." Amy continued, "we got to that part of the class where we were going to be working on improvisation." Heather looked at Amy and asked, "are we going to do **this**?" Amy's spontaneous enactment of integrated knowledge demonstrated somatic perception. She responded, "you know what today we are going to put a little bit

of improvisation here at the end." Amy asked Heather, "Can you just show me something that you feel?" Amy then offered support, "I don't expect you to move around a lot, and I don't expect it to be like anybody else's. I just want you to show me with your body something that you feel. And it's going to be eight counts for today. Only 8 counts. And whatever you do, I will appreciate it- I promise you."

Previous knowledge and pre-reflective practice allowed Amy to anticipate the problem. Though she had no idea what she would do, Amy knew that a question was the right way to go. "I could have given her a thousand pieces of advice and told her what to do. This was a completely different way of teaching and it's simple. I didn't feel like I had to change everything, it's just one small shift." Amy described the difference as mind-blowing. Heather too made a subtle shift, she remained engaged during the improvisation. "Heather's palms opened forward as her arms extended forward and up, filling the entire eight counts," the gesture indicated to Amy a degree of receptiveness. Meanwhile, the entire class benefited from Amy's skillful interaction, "the class dynamics were completely positive; there were no obstacles to overcome."

Jessica's final interview two hours later at a local coffee shop revealed a deeper understanding of her own creative teaching practice. She shared her discoveries:

> I begin identifying needs within either the student, a group of students, or possibly myself. Sometimes the observation is very clear. Other times it's more gradual. I may notice a place where students hit a wall consistently. When I notice a trend that makes me rethink how I am approaching things."

Jessica also noted that her observation process is continual. She states:

> I'm always planning and I'm always anticipating needs but then there's always a constant sense of taking the pulse of the group that I'm working with and remaining flexible within myself to adjust and let go of my plan. I think that's the refining--the refining comes from sensing.

Jessica's language communicated a continual weaving of responsiveness, felt knowledge and detailed planning. When I shared the observation, Jessica realized that she approaches choreography in the same way. "I like to structure the pieces. I create rules and diagrams. Everything is written down but then when I get into the studio either by myself or with dancers then I can play with that structure and find flexibility within it. The structure gives me freedom." Jessica referred to a conversation from our first interview described in Chapter 5 to compare her discoveries to our previous conversation:

> I think these two sides, sensing and taking the pulse versus the structure and planning comes partly from the opposite influences I mentioned in my first interview. I had Mary who is very free and then I also had my instructors at New York University that expected me to justify my teaching choices and have everything mapped out.

Jessica drew from multiple sources of knowledge in a series of intentional but challenging pedagogical reflections that illustrate the pattern and creative process she described. She patiently observes the needs of her classes. "I have two new groups (of students). One is the youngest level I've ever taught. They are babies and this is their first hour-and-a-half class." I recalled that Jessica had never anticipated teaching children. "A lot of time was spent getting to know them; discerning which groups need a little bit

of levity and need more structure in the environment and then also assessing the technical levels." With a group of students, she had taught the previous year, Jessica's careful observations motivated a necessary pedagogical choice that resulted in student resistance. Jessica acknowledged that some resistance resulted from positive desires and normal development.

> They've moved forward to [a new] level, however, we are going to be working with material that is less advanced than accustomed to. Their previous material was too advanced for them. I want to keep their [the mental engagement and enthusiasm] but scale back on technical development. I just openly acknowledged that the work may feel tedious. And that we are going to work very specifically so that they are able to establish a really strong base.

Jessica explained to the young dancers how slowing down will ultimately benefit their technical development but admits, "I don't feel like the students are invested in the process of fine tuning."

Jessica remained confident in the decision and expressed empathy for the students' feelings, "I'm also trying to honor their social-emotional development and acknowledge that they are trying to gain independence. They're probably feeling like I am holding them back so I'm trying to honor their enthusiasm and desire for a challenge." Jessica recognized the change as a source of disequilibrium for her students, and remains attentive to the dynamic, stating "so I'm trying to help them make a mental shift so that we can all work together."

Conversations from the final interviews vividly describe the vastly different expression and experience of somatic perception for each participant. Chapter 5 described that the impact of "the substrate of our lives, and of our conscious experience, is the meaningful World in which we find ourselves" (Noë, 2009, p. 184). Echoes of each participants' past experiences and what they made of those experiences manifested themselves in the immediate experience throughout the research project. Whether interacting with the curriculum, experiencing spirals of learning, or manifesting somatic perception in dance education, individual patterns remained consistent. The patterns I observed during our limited time together reflected individual temperament, experiences, values, and culture.

I began this research with the intent to design pedagogy curriculum for private-sector dance educators to develop somatic perception. In the process, I cultivated layers of knowledge about perception itself by engaging with artists, scientists, philosophers, educational theorists, somatic theorists and dance educator-research participants. The knowledge guided the curricular design and implementations that provided evidence to support the answers to my original research questions. More importantly, I found myself positioned to witness the intimate process of perspective transformation as experienced by two dance educators.

From my observations as researcher-participant combined with Amy and Jessica's first-person accounts of perspective transformation emerged discoveries about the nature, experience and cultivation of somatic perception in dance educators. Somatic perception is elusive, or "really hard math" (McClure, 2019). The ephemeral nature renders it

unquantifiable. Eisner's language, "paying attention...fine-tuned adjustments...qualitative detail...felt knowledge" (pp. 75, 76) alludes to the subtle and complex nature of somatic perception, which the data from this case study revealed. Paradoxically, somatic perception manifests in all aspects of pedagogy, as defined by Vygotsky, in increased confidence, spontaneity, empathy and creativity. However, the expression of the manifestations is unique to each individual educator.

Cultivation of somatic perception occurs through intentional effort. The investment of time and energy in acquiring meaningful knowledge, reflecting on pedagogical practice, developing the ability to discern subtle relationships, and a humble acknowledgement of learning are essential parts of refinement. Lest the rigors of attainment of somatic perception sound daunting, let me offer reassurance. A dance educator who submits to the rigors that attainment of somatic perception requires discovers a distinctive expression in their teaching practice. An authenticity gradually diminishes self-doubt and distraction allowing dance educators to notice, marvel at, and participate in our dance communities. Perhaps we and our students will discover the possibilities dance education offers for as Alva Noë says "world is bigger than we are; what we are able to do is to be open to it- that is we are able to find our way around in it" (2009, p.184).

CHAPTER 10

TOPICS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

I began with a traditional methodology in which I hypothesized that somatic perception in dance pedagogy could be cultivated through curricular design. My original research questions sought evidence of the curricular effectiveness. The research questions were answered, however the most salient discoveries about somatic perception in dance education came as I looked at my sources of data and theorized. Recurring themes from the data and ongoing inquiry into perception resulted in a grounded theory about the processes influencing a dance educator's somatic perception. The grounded theory that resulted from this research suggests areas for further research and development.

First, data suggests that dance educators have cultivated rich experiences in their lives that allow them to navigate the complexity of their profession. The research participants in this study represent only two of thousands of dance educators in the United States alone, each of whom has a different temperament and lived experience. I believe much could be learned from an entry level research project that collects diverse stories of the larger population of dance educators. I anticipate that the narratives will be empowering to both the listener and teller. Additionally, the narratives may reveal themes to guide further studies relevant to the field about the somatic formation of dance educators. For instance, what influences or lived experiences shape physical embodiment and expressivity? Conversely, how do temperament and movement patterns shape lived experience?

Jessica's and Amy's responses to the sense of community created by the workshops and interviews indicates a need amongst dance educators for community and support. I propose studies that investigate what factors contribute to educators' sense of community and support and what factors hinder supportive communities amongst dance educators. The information could then guide efforts to establish sustainable and supportive communities among dance educators.

During the recruitment process for this study, I noticed that each studio I contacted had a pre-established rhythm which requires adherence a rigorous schedule. Many of the studio owners I interacted with expressed general interest in the study but felt consumed by existing obligations. I was requesting a considerable amount of time and energy on the part of potential research participants. Of the two research participants recruited, both knew me and were familiar with my professional background, which provided an element of trust that made them want to participate. An ethnographic study within a single dance community could support a sense of trust by addressing the needs of all of the stakeholders. By embedding the project within a given studio's existing timeline and framework we might discover how experience created by the curriculum impacts the dance community's culture, including student retention and wellbeing.

While the dance educators' experience of somatic perception became the central topic of this research it was assumed that the educator's perception influences students' experiences. Therefore, a comparative study may provide a deeper knowledge of the how the dance students' perception of the dance learning environment affects their social, emotional, and cognitive development. For example, it would be interesting to compare

two classes comprised of the same students taught by a different teacher. One teacher would employ a traditional approach and the other a teaching approach that addresses each domain of development. Data could be collected from students' teachers and parents' perspectives in order to assess factors affecting students' perception. From the comparative study could follow a longitudinal study that follows the individual educator and his or her students over an extended period. The class and student development could be closely observed for specified duration. After the initial period, follow-up interviews could be conducted to track student development and the effects of dance learning experiences on student's development and perception over time.

Further research is likely to uncover complex socio-economic issues. It is not my intent to problematize the existing complexities. Rather, identification of specific needs and issues will contribute to positive changes on multiple levels. Changes on a personal level, within dance studio communities, or educational level have the potential to increase dance educator's perception and sense of well-being, which, I believe, in turn affects the dance student entrusted to their care.

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