

**Body, Mind, and Frustration:
Navigating Dance in the Context of Academia**

Senior Honors Thesis
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Prologue: Through The Lens of A Dancer

I am a dancer. Every time someone asks me what I do, who I am, what I study, the first and foremost thing that I say is that I dance, I'm a dancer, I study dance. Most times people don't really understand, and I then have to explain more about my identity as an individual, who I am, where I come from, what qualities I relate to, all the cliché answers that people give when applying for jobs. But my truth is that I dance. I cannot live without thinking creatively on my feet, and I cannot sleep without writing down the choreographic ideas that fervently bounce around my brain. I am a dancer; that is what I do and that is who I am. However, at this present moment, I am not *just* a dancer; I am a *student* of dance. This can mean many different things; for me, it means that I study movement as a creative art form within a university environment. As a student of dance at University of Michigan (U of M), I learn ballet and modern dance technique, anatomy and kinesiology, dance history, improvisation, composition, and I am obligated to audition and perform in as many dance concerts as possible. Throughout four years of being required to dance every day, I have developed a valuable and intriguing relationship with my body. I have learned to trust that my body has an intelligence that my mind sometimes cannot recognize. My dance education at U of M consists of harnessing this intelligence as a resource for a career that is filled with uncertainty. My body will be able to provide an anchor for my experience, but only if I care for it, acknowledging its need for movement and creativity.

My life as a dance student, however, is not the only piece of my educational experience. Not only am I a dancer in the School of Music, Theater, and Dance (SoMTD), but I also study anthropology in the School of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA). I chose to come to University of Michigan, as many dance majors did, because it gave me the opportunity to study both dance and take advantage of Michigan's excellent academics. I came to Michigan expecting

that I could easily complete two majors in four years. I knew that it was a smart thing to something alongside dance because it would give me “something to fall back on.” Thus, I chose Michigan, where I could get both a dance *and* an academic education. However, being a dual degree double major is not the easiest things to achieve in four years. I have two sets of requirements that I have to fulfill, and they rarely overlap in ways that make it easy. By splitting up my education into what seems mutually exclusive as academic and creative education, I’ve ended up frequently running into roadblocks that I’ve had to maneuver my way around with a considerable amount of frustration.

When I began to think about *why* I was constantly getting frustrated with my education, I began to discover that certain things led to my frustrations. One was physical injury, which basically interrupts any kind of growth as a dancer. Another was that I *feel* like I was improving as a dancer at all. I was doing everything that was required of me, but I felt like I wasn’t improving or growing , or being satisfied with the work that I did. I began to blame my teachers fir not teaching *the right things* within a dance class, or doing the *right* kind of movement. I thought that they didn’t know what I, specifically, needed to hear in order to help me grow. One constant frustration was caused by when friends would find out that I was a dance major and then say, “You’re a *dance* major? Does that mean you *just* dance around all day? Do you even have finals? That must be so easy!” This has happened too frequently to count, and every time it does, my blood boils in anger because being a dance major is far from easy. The other frustration was that there simply was not enough time in the day to complete everything that needed to get done. I felt like my days became segmented between two parts: those hours when I would use just my brain, and the hours that I would use my body. The most satisfying days were those when I only danced simply because I didn’t have to feel so divided between models of behavior

and methods of learning. I could just dance and focus on how to intelligently think about my movements. However, these days were rare and I couldn't always reach a place of satisfaction when I felt like my mind was in a different place than my body. Thus, as my education progressed, I continually came up against these frustrations that seemed to inhibit and change how I felt about my choice to be a dancer and a student of something else. I could have easily stopped and chosen a singular pathway, studying either dance or anthropology. But this was not in my nature, so I walked both roads simultaneously, continuously battling the roadblocks of frustration that rose up to meet me.

I always assumed that I was personally frustrated because I felt obligated to study something besides dance. However, when I spoke with other dance majors, I began to realize that I was not alone in my battles against frustration. At every lunch break, I would run into clusters of dancers complaining about their injuries, their technique classes, their professors, and their academic classes. I realized that frustration was too common of an experience for dancers for it to simply be a *personal* experience. I became curious about why these dance students within this context of academia were constantly running into walls, forced into their frustrations. How did these dancers explain the cause of their frustrations? Were they ever able to overcome their frustrations? Does frustration happen so frequently that it becomes expected as a constant element of the dancer's career? I began to wonder why these individuals were frustrated, who or what they blamed, and what it might reveal about the subculture of dance within the larger context of academia. This thesis is my exploration of these concepts and these frustrations from the perspective of other dancers in order to understand its implications for the education within the arts.

Introduction: The Body as a Canvas

Dance Students Dancing

The long elegant ballet teacher walks up to the barre¹, demanding the students' attention as her body prepares to demonstrate the first exercise. "Five, six, seven, and a eight." She counts off the first musical measure towards the pianist, gracefully moving her arms into the first position of the exercise. She counts and moves, counts and moves, and occasionally mentions the name of the step and the number of times that step is repeated. As she finishes demonstrating the movement, she nods towards the pianist, and we begin to dance. Though she only said a few words, we all move in unison, integrating the motions of the legs, arms, and head in ways that seem to come naturally after years of watching dance and training our bodies.

Every dancer with ballet training is familiar with this scene no matter where they dance. After years of evolution, ballet technique has developed a regimented structure that sequences movements together and repeats them in predictable ways. In her book *Dancing Communities*, Judith Hamera writes, "Classes are organized ritualistically, beginning with barre exercises and ending with *reverence*, a bow or curtsy to the instructor and, if present, the musical accompanist as well" (2007: 64). Within a ballet class, there is a conventional sequence of "warming up" certain muscle groups so that as the class progresses, the body can sufficiently perform more advanced movements. The exercises begin with the dancers at the ballet barre, and a high attention is given to warming up the legs and ankles. As the class progresses, more and more

¹ A long wooden or metal pipe attached to the wall that dancers hold onto during the first hour of a ballet class. Sometimes, there are mobile barres that can be moved into the center of the room, allowing for more space for multiple dancers if it is needed. The barre is there to help with spatial and body alignment, allowing your body to reference the "square" room as you make the necessary positions.

muscles become warm so that by the end of the barre exercises, the dancers are prepared to be stretched and challenged with more complex movement sequences. The class then moves to the “center” of the room, where combinations of movements allow the dancer to jump and test his or her² balance in one-legged turns. After traveling through the space and performing these complex *combinations* to the mirror at the front of the room, indexing a frontal “audience,” the class ends with a slow stretch, *reverence*. Finally, we clap. We clap for the teacher, for the musician present in the room, and for the opportunity to express ourselves through movement. Thus, the ritual of a ballet class in a way reflects the ritual of a performance. The dancer warms up the body, the dancer performs for an audience, and the dancer receives and gives appreciation to all involved.

Though the modern dance technique class similarly warms up the muscles, a modern class is never as predictable. Modern dance began in the early 20th century as a rejection of the regimented structures of ballet. Pioneers of the dance form rejected ballet’s rigid body and perfectly placed positions of the arms and legs for a more fluid and grounded movement style. Modern technique classes are mostly conducted in the center of the room, allowing for more movement in and out of the floor.³ Modern classes⁴ will sometimes begin seated in the center of

² I will often use “her” when I speak of dancers because I am a female dancer and I can only speak from my own perspective. However, the truth is that there are many, many more female dancers than there are male dancers in the American Dance Scene. In our department of dance alone, we have three males within the total of around seventy dance students. However, I will occasionally challenge this view by representing the dancer as a male figure, because I feel that too frequently we assume dancing implies femininity, and this is never necessarily the case.

³ “Moving in and out of the floor” is the phrase that dancers use when they move between the levels of standing, sitting, lying down, rolling on the ground, falling to the ground, and returning to a standing position. All of these actions allow dancers to fall into gravity and then recover from it, thus moving in and out of the floor.

the floor, emphasizing the core of the body and the fluidity of the spine within movement. After ample exercises have been completed seated on the floor, the dancers “come to standing” to execute more conventional exercises that use the muscles in the legs, ankles, and feet. The class will then progress “across the floor,” or from one side of the room to another, while jumping and traveling through space with increasingly larger movements. If there is enough time, a final *combination* will be taught so that the dancers can feel a sense of accomplishment. Like a miniature dance, this combination is performed in small groups for classmates and teachers. Students of modern dance often yearn for this final combination so they can achieve the sense of freedom and expression that they have been preparing for throughout the technique. Once again, the class ends in applause, thanking the teacher and musician for their time.

Ballet and modern technique classes make up part of the core curriculum within the U of M Department of Dance. In order to fulfill the total requirement of thirty-five technique courses, each dance student is expected to take at least one if not two one-credit dance classes each day, one ballet and one modern. The National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) requires that dance students in a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) program attend at least one dance technique class each day (NASD Handbook 2012, 97). Most dance students, without knowing that it is a requirement of the NASD, recognize that they *must* take one dance technique class each day. They feel obligated to dance every day in order to “keep in shape,” and the “proper” way of doing this is to attend daily dance classes. Dance, at least as it is taught in our society, is not something that is easily practiced alone. Students need a communal environment and a teacher’s

⁴ There are many different modern dance techniques. Each teacher has their own interpretation and preference for what to include in a dance class, and thus modern technique is rarely similar between teachers. Because it is too complex to describe the eclectic nature of this field, I will describe a modern technique that I am most familiar with, and is almost always a universal requirement in university dance programs: that of Martha Graham, recognized as one of the first modern dance techniques.

eye in order to improve their technique. Of course, a dancer can practice dance moves alone, attempting to master them. He can train his muscles, repeating combinations of movements that increase his strength and endurance. However, western dance forms are largely reliant on sight, observation, and imitation. Thus, he must attend dance classes, where the teacher's eye can correct his technical form so that he "properly" embodies the aesthetic.

The other obligation to daily technique classes is that, essentially, attendance is one of the primary ways that the faculty grades their students. Dancers feel the obligation to attend a daily technique class. All of the faculty members that I interviewed expressed a similar perspective to Suzanne, a ballet teacher: "It is all about attendance and showing up. That is what shows your commitment to dance." The absence policy in the dance department ranges from a total of one to three absences before the student's grade will drop. Suzanne, who recognizes the importance of attendance for determining grades, is very strict with her attendance policy. She often makes the case that in the professional career of a dancer, you will be dancing and rehearsing almost every day, so attending each class is considered professional etiquette.

Aside from the daily technical requirement, dance majors take four consecutive semesters of dance composition, or learning the tools for making dances, or "choreography." Along with the physical aspect of dance, there are also required "dance academics," where dancers learn about the history of dance, anatomy and kinesiology, dance theory, and music. Dancer majors are required to learn and perform in at least four shows to receive "repertory credit." The final requirement for the BFA is a Senior Concert, where the senior dance majors choreograph both a solo and a group work, which culminates their experience as dance majors. Dancer majors at U of M aren't required to take the general education courses that are required for distribution within liberal arts colleges, but they are required to take lower and upper level English classes,

art history courses, and a number of electives within the general university in order to meet their credit quota.

This brief description of the requirements of a dance major provides a basic map of the dance students' experience in a university. However, because the dance department is located within the greater context of a highly recognized university such as Michigan, a lot of tension arises out of how the dancers' education fits into the general scheme of university education. Dancers often feel compelled or pressured to major in something else besides dance simply because it would be worth it to study a different subject as well as dance. Conventional education procedures also clash with dance education methods in a way that makes it difficult to maneuver easily between the two majors. Frustration seems to be the result of dancers' reconciling the difference between "academic" and "creative" education. Before I explore the topic of frustration, however, I first need to situate my research within existing literature on the anthropology of dance and education.

Where Do I Fit?

As I began my research, and sporadically throughout my process, I struggled to know exactly how my research converses with existing anthropological literature. Anthropology literature that mentioned dance always focused on other cultures, and movement was always put into a ritualistic or religious light. Dance history literature, though it places western dance forms within their cultural and historical contexts, always focused so closely on individual choreographers and their impact rather than the social implications of their dances. In both anthropological and dance history scholarship, there is a tendency for researchers to look at

movement symbolically, searching for meaning within the dance. In order to discover where my research fit in with existing literature, I had to explore all aspects of the anthropological and dance scholarship fields.

One of the pioneers of the anthropological study of dance is Anya Peterson Royce. She defines the art form of dance as “a rhythmic movement done for some purpose transcending utility” (Peterson Royce 1977: 5). This perspective seems to imply that dance has no function and goes beyond “utility” into a different perceptual realm of the “aesthetic”. Some anthropologists take a structural approach to researching dance, looking at how they can cognitively understand how patterns of movement can index greater social patterns (Williams 2003; Kaepler 1978). These anthropologists search for the ways in which members of the society create *meaning* when watching dance forms. These anthropologists understand and distill the meaning of a culture’s dance form by analyzing the movement with an almost linguistic approach. An example of this is Adrienne Kaepler, who argues that dance within Tongan society reveals a pattern that is replicated throughout different art forms as well as through the social organization of the culture (Kaepler 1978). She takes a structuralist approach and analyses dance as a model that acts as a window to reveal larger trends within the social organization of the culture. To emphasize how dance indexes greater elements of society, Deirdre Sklar, a dance anthropologist, writes,

Dance ethnography depends on the postulate that cultural knowledge is embodied in movement, especially the highly stylized and codified movement we call dance. This statement implies that the knowledge involved in dancing is not just somatic, but mental and emotional as well, encompassing cultural history, beliefs, values, and feelings. (1991: 6)

Further, she asks, “Why do people move the way they do, and how does the way they move relate to how they live, what they believe, and what they value”(Sklar 1991: 6)? Sklar emphasizes that dance is not just about the pleasure of movement, but rather it involves mental and emotional processes that point to values within the greater society.

In a later essay, Sklar (2000) makes a distinction between two different trajectories of dance ethnography. The first trajectory describes the above approach to dance anthropology and situates the study in the preexisting literature of that specific culture. The second trajectory is based more strongly in the body of movement, giving more attention to the somatic knowledge that arises out of learning dance forms. This second trajectory discusses “embodied knowledge, proprioception,” and different dimensions of knowledge that arise out of a strong connection to the body (Sklar 2000: 70). Rather than analyzing movement and how it can reflect sociopolitical trends, this area of dance ethnography is localized internally within the body. Thus, a researcher of embodied dance forms must utilize a more physical approach to their cultural knowledge. “Dance ethnography is unique among other kinds of ethnography because it is necessarily grounded in the body and the body’s experience rather than in texts, artifacts, or abstractions”(Sklar 1991: 6). This is the ethnographic method that I use within my research; being a dancer, I understand concepts more fully when I embody them.

There are two anthropologists in particular who operate more vividly within their personal experiences of learning cultural dance forms. One is Sally Ann Ness, author of *Body, Movement, and Culture: Kinesthetic and Visual Symbolism in a Philippine Community* (1992). Ness looks into how spatial relationships within the community become replicated within the dance. She orients her research around her own embodiment of the movement material, and this begins to reveal the meaning of the movement. She is working within her own body as an

anthropologist, participating in the dance as a dancer, and discovering the significance of the movements through her own embodiment. She too is searching for the *meaning* within dance, the *visual symbolism* that is present within the movement.

Another anthropologist is Cynthia Novack, author of *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (1990). This study is more relevant to my purposes because I am situating my research within a Western dance form. Novack explores the emergence contact improvisation as a dance form within 1970s America, placing it within the vibrant context of historical change (1988: 104). She finds that the ways in which participants used the body in an exploratory, tactile, and “free” way, reflected values on the “right way to live,” emphasizing that movement and living should be easy (Novack 1988; 106). Novack too was working within the social meaning of the dance form, situating it in its historical context.

These anthropologists used the process of experiencing dance as a means of discovering the embodied socio-cultural trends that are present within the bodies of the movers. They use *dance* as their window into society. My research, however, doesn't try to attempt *analysis* of movement itself. I am not as concerned with *how* people move and what that signifies in larger society. Rather I am concerned about the dancer's *experience*, which very often is frustrated. I am concerned with the perceived causes of this frustration: how do they get frustrated, what happens when they overcome frustration, how does *this* potentially point to larger trends in society, and how do their frustrations affect their education and their social interactions within the institution? Instead of researching the *dance*, I am more concerned with the *dancer*. So perhaps my research doesn't necessarily fit in directly with the *dance* anthropology. Perhaps, my perspective in research belongs more with humanistic anthropology or the anthropology of education.

Robert Plant Armstrong, in his book *Wellspring: On Myth and Source of Culture* (1975) gives a good overview of humanistic anthropology in relationship to art and the aesthetics of man. Armstrong critiques the functionalist and structuralist approaches to studying and interpreting art forms. He argues that a work of art “is not a function or a symbol, nor anything else, but a living presentation of man’s being... if one studies art one studies the externalization of man’s interiority—an actuality of human experience” (1975: xii). According to Armstrong, humanistic anthropology focuses on the “nature and value of human experience.” It does not limit itself to “the simple description of institutions, nor to reductions, nor to models.” (1975: 1) Humanistic anthropology is “the study of the condition and experience of being a human being (1975: 2).” The humanistic anthropologist is concerned with “the *quality* of situation, belief, and experience” of man (*Italics in original*. 1975: 5). To align this approach with my own research, I am looking at the *quality* of the dance major’s experience in the University of Michigan. How do dancers *experience* and explain their frustrations? Questions like these will help me to understand *why* their passion for dance presents them with constant struggle. Thus, I found that my research model could fit into that of a humanistic anthropologist: concerned with the dancers’ experiences of their art forms.

Another applicable approach is that of *The Anthropology of Education*, written by Christoph Wulf (2002). Wulf discusses a certain problem with current education. He says,

At present, much of the knowledge transmitted by the educational system does not correspond to people’s expectations. This poses the problem of the relation between educational knowledge and social, institutional and educational reality. Insofar as educational knowledge contributes to the formation and shaping of the next generation, it must imply human self-understanding, which itself is

scrutinized and questioned by the *problem of human perfectibility or non-perfectibility*. (2002: 3)

Further, he highlights the importance of “different forms of knowledge and new forms of instruction:”

Aesthetic education and intercultural education are of particular importance amongst these. The former is related to the emergence of new media and connected social consequences; the latter refers to the new economic and demographic contexts of contemporary Europe. Out of this new context consequences emerge that are relevant to education and training, to learning and practical experience. (Wulf 2002: 3)

Wulf uses methods in anthropology to assess these new and emerging forms of education and relating them to human expectation of what education should be like.

Wulf also looks specifically at the education of art forms and how they present a tension between imitation and creativity (2002: 53). “Human resistance and stubbornness constitute fundamental elements in education” (2002: 4). Students sometimes resist that they have to imitate precisely what the teacher is doing. When they come to a university for dance, they expect to create more than they are imitating. When these expectations misalign, frustration infiltrates their experience (2002: 5). Similar to Ness and Novack, Wulf’s research takes an internal approach and places it in the context of the external “world.” He states,

We shall examine the question of the relation between inner and outer worlds since this relates to the primary task of education, which is to help the individual transform the outside world that is imposed on him, and integrate it, make it coexist with the interior world of the individual and vice-versa. (2002: 5)

Wulf's descriptions fit well with the data that I collected. The frustration of the dance students can come out of a misalignment between their expectations of education and the actual reality of their education. I am taking an internal approach to the human experience of frustration in order to discover how the "outside world is imposed" on these dancing individuals. Throughout my literature research, I have found ideas about dance that I support and agree with, as well as approaches to dance that I disagree with. However, rather than looking at dance *forms*, as is common in the anthropology of dance, I am taking a more humanistic and educational approach to this anthropological study.

My Process

As a dance student at the University of Michigan, I have a lot of awareness of the inner workings of a dance major. However, I did not want this thesis to be an assessment of my own experience as a dancer. Nor do I desire this thesis to appear like a long and formal complaint about being a dancer. I simply intend to show how frustration as an *experience* can point to certain discrepancies between the "inner world" of the dancer and the "outer world" of academic education. I wanted my process to reveal the different perspectives that exist among dance majors. I gathered my data in a few ways. Initially, I distributed questionnaires to as many dance students as would fill them out. In these questionnaires, I asked questions like "What makes the ideal dancer? What makes a dance class a good one? What is the most important part of your body?" These questionnaires revealed general trends about the expectations and the aesthetics of a dance student. Beyond these questionnaires, I interviewed a total of nineteen subjects, all members of the dance school at the University of Michigan. Twelve of these were undergraduate

dance majors, two were graduate dance students, and the remaining five were dance faculty members. In my approach, I wanted to receive as many differing perspectives as possible, so I tried to have a balanced account of students in each year level. I was able to get a hold of three freshmen, one sophomore, four juniors, and four seniors. I hoped that their different perspectives would reveal a trajectory of experience, demonstrating any kind of pattern or evolution within their education that would help explain the emergence of their frustrations. It turned out, however, that each person's experience of frustration was so different and complicated, that there is no single way to describe the cause of frustration. The analysis of these experiences turned out much more difficult than I assumed.

My final method of research was my ethnography, or as I often call it, my personal experience. I will often use my personal experience as evidence to support my argument. A word of caution: I am a dance student at the University of Michigan. Thus, it has been difficult to approach my research objectively simply because the perspectives presented are so close to my own. I often found myself nodding in agreement with the words of my informants and then beginning to appropriate their perspectives into my own. In writing this thesis, I have found it difficult to present the material as it was presented to me; after listening to and analyzing the material, I perceived that all of the ideas emerged solely from *my* personal experience, rather than from my subjects. Thus, it has been difficult to manage my subjectivity in a way that gives my informants credit for their ideas.

Through the process of analyzing my data, I began to realize that there was a certain pattern emerging between discussion about being a dancer, and then discussion about being a dancer within the context of the university. There were frustrating elements involved in both of these categories, so I decided to separate them up into parts. The first part, "The Body and The

Surrounding Space,” explains what it is like to be a dancer and what this means for the methods of education. How dance is taught; what it means to learn an aesthetic form; what it means to obtain an embodied education. The second part, “Something To Fall Back On,” situates the dance major within the larger context of academia: what it means to be a dual degree double major; how much time has to be distributed between the two majors; and what interactions dancers have with the students and faculty within the larger university. The final part, “Frustration: The Dancer’s Companion” will synthesize the kinds of frustrations that dancers experience within U of M and what that can index within the different educational cultures of dance and academia. Frustration is common within all of these experiences; thus I will use the dancer’s frustrations in order to fully understand the subculture of the department of dance within the larger context of a University.

PART 1:

The Body and The Surrounding Space

Because dancers study movement and refine their muscular control, my research is based on the body. How do dancers perceive their body in relationship to the space around them and in the context of a university? Usually within the academic context, education and research is heavily focused around the mind's intelligence. However, dancers' education is based within the body, learning how to refine movement and perceive their bodies in a different way. This part will describe the dancer's experience from the perspective of undergraduate students and dance faculty members. Because my research is based in experience, I will describe ways in which dancers perceive their bodies within the context of dance as well as within the context of education.

The Technical Body: Where is Technique Located?

A major piece of the dancer's experience is a required daily technique class. Everyday, we warm up our muscles and adjust the details of our bodies to make sure that we are "properly" executing the movement. In order to understand our commitment to technique, I need to first define it. In her book *Anthropology of the Performing Arts* (2004), Royce provides a discussion of technique in terms of dance. She defines, "*Technique* (for dance and movement) is the set of movements, gestures, and steps that is the foundation of the genre; the accompanying vocabulary that names these steps; and the rules for combining steps. Technique is the grammar of dance and codified movement" (2004: 24). Though both modern and ballet classes are considered

“technique classes,” I have found, in many of my interviews, that dancers tend to look towards the ballet classroom as the primary location where dance technique is taught. One of the reasons is that each movement is named. There is a specific and regimented vocabulary of dance in the context of ballet that makes it seem more “technical.” Modern, on the other hand, moves beyond this named vocabulary and into what early pioneers would call more “expressive” movement. Royce would term this approach to dance as *style*, “the individual choices about movement and interpretation; the embroidery on the basic technique (2004: 24)” Wayne, one of my informants, presented his perspective of the difference between ballet and modern technique classes. He said that ballet and modern teachers differ because ballet teachers are more detail oriented and focused on the specifics of the body whereas modern teachers tend to speak more in terms of imagery and engaging the imagination. Thus, dance students begin to equate the ballet class as the most technical dance class. Modern, on the other hand, is where the imagination, style, and artistic expression are engaged. The way that a ballet class focuses on certain details of the body begins to affect how dancers value body parts in relation to one another.

Henry Kingsbury provides another definition of technique (1998). Though his research focuses on musicians, his discussion of technique also rings true for dancers:

Technique refers to a performer’s physical (bodily/motor) skill in controlling an instrument; it is conceived as though quantifiable (references are constantly made to people who “have a lot of technique”) and at least metaphorically as substance, a thing in itself (for example, “technical equipment”). When contrasted with *musical*, the word *technical* refers to the absence of affective feeling or expression. (1998, 98)

Technique is a purely physical thing to learn. A dancer is able to control her instrument, her body, through the technique. Dance technique classes provide a daily activity where dancers can train their muscles in repetition and increasingly gain more coordination and connections between all parts of their bodies. When these movements are repeated daily, they become easier to execute and they can be added together and integrated when asked to do more complex *combinations* of choreographed movement. Technique seems to present the highest quality of aesthetic perfection.

Judith Hamera takes a different approach to defining technique and how it relates to cultural aesthetics. “Dance technique puts aesthetics in motion. It is the primary tool by which ideals are incarnated or resisted...For dancers, ‘timeless’ aesthetics are distilled into the routine, daily discipline demanded by specific techniques” (Hamera 2007: 4). Along a similar line of discussion, Bourdieu writes that the praxis of an embodied form or the *habitus* “ensures the active presence of past experiences [which] tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms” (Bourdieu, 1990: 54). This suggests that by practicing technique, it is actively reproducing past trends and reinforcing a “correctness” of movement. As an embodied form, these aesthetics become more concrete to the dancers that learn them. Their daily practice of technique embodies a social history that brings aesthetics into the present.

Before I continue, I must define how I use the term “aesthetics.” Robert Plant Armstrong (1975) provides a working definition: “*Aesthetics* for the anthropologist is best defined as the *theory or study of form incarnating feeling*...A work may be created...to incarnate...an unaccountable and basic fact of one’s awareness, about which one feels significantly” (*Italics in original*. Armstrong 1975: 11). This definition of aesthetics implies that, within a culture, there

are certain patterns and forms that can give rise to specific meanings and feelings to an audience member. Very often, if an art form is aesthetically pleasing, an individual viewer may not necessarily recognize *why* they like it because aesthetics move beyond the realm of verbal articulation and into the realm of sensory feeling. Armstrong identifies art as “a manifestation of a highly self-conscious perfectionism” that can allow this aesthetic to take form (1975: 11). He disputes the idea that an art form is “a symbol” for something greater within society. Instead he suggests that art forms “directly bear power” because they embody this aesthetic that transcends symbolism into the realm of *feeling*, of “an affecting presence” (1975: 11).

Joann Kealiinohomoku also provides a discussion of aesthetics in her book *Theory and Methods for an Anthropological Study of Dance* (2008). In this text, she describes a certain process of creating a form of art that goes through stages of cultural acceptance and meaning. The first stage is where “the object or behavior is culturally acceptable” or is shaped by the person, the “world view” and the total environment of the culture (2008: 70). She identifies the second stage as when “the object or behavior is aesthetically acceptable” or meeting culturally imposed standards that transcend the behaviors of “the ordinary person.” Further within this stage, she writes,

Certainly aesthetic behavior and events are set apart by the ascription of para-normal usages of time and space. These special times and spaces are characterized by conscious effort, and may include large expenditures of preparatory time, energy, and wherewithal to the point of sacrifice. (2008: 71)

Extra training and preparation is required in this stage of aesthetics in order to achieve this aesthetic rules in a highly self-conscious perfectionism,” to use Armstrong’s words. This stage also implies that the performance of these aesthetics takes place in a space and time that is

separated from “normal” activity. Here Kealiinohomoku is indexing a certain kind of training that is required of dancers. The dancer must make sacrifices in order to embody this “perfect” aesthetic form. This training of the aesthetic form is what I call “technique.” She discusses the meaning of this object or behavior “may be felt by the perceivers but not be subject to verbalization because it transcends verbal analysis”, or it “transcends expectations” (2008: 72). This is the hardest stage to define and to analyze because viewers tend to have intuitive reactions to the performance that can’t be easily articulated. Kealiinohomoku is realizing that there can be an approach to analyzing dance in a way that can lead to an aesthetic understanding. However she also realizes that these different stages and levels of artistic development can lead to different reactions to a dance form.

Considering these two discussions of aesthetic, I realize that my understanding incorporates elements of both. At its simplest form, Royce (2004: 5) describes aesthetics as “an appreciation of what is pleasing to the senses. We often think of it in its more narrow application where it deals with the nature of beauty, art, and taste.” Aesthetics are specific patterns of seeing and sensing that are imbedded with cultural and historical meaning. Aesthetics embody the traditions of a culture in a highly stylized way. When they are taught, aesthetics are realized through technique. They prescribe a “correctness” of form, which characterize the art form as an “imaging, crafting, and play of individuals with and within their own cultures” (Royce 2004: 5).

As dancers become involved in these daily aesthetic exercises of technique, they gain a subconscious understanding about the “important” choices within their movement. For example, Western dance forms assign a lot of value to the functional alignment of the body. Even the term “alignment” can explain a major part of the aesthetic of Western dance forms: how the body makes lines. The points connecting the head, the shoulders, the hips, the knees, and the ankles

should all make a straight line when the dancer is standing vertically. When thinking about alignment, one of the freshman dance majors, Miranda, immediately repeated a phrase that each dance major at U of M knows intimately: “The hip bone is over the ball of the foot and the ribcage is isolated to the opposite direction of the standing leg.” One of our ballet teachers will shout this phrase repeatedly until we are able to recite it in our sleep. Dancers inherit these aesthetics of alignment simply because they are danced. They become embodied through execution and repetition in a way that becomes second nature. Through the technique class, dancers begin to know and understand what is “beautiful” dancing, what is “boring” dancing, what is “intriguing” dancing, and what is “intelligent” dancing. The way that these technique classes are taught can shape how dancers perceive their bodies in relationship to the aesthetics of western dance.

As dancers inherit these aesthetic preferences, they begin to create an idea of what “the ideal dancer looks like.” After distributing the questionnaire, I found that thirteen out of twenty-five dance students mentioned that the ideal dancer is long, lean, and strong. The daily practice of technique emphasizes length or the illusion of length by “creating space between every joint.” Dancers tend to associate length with the legs. This association is enhanced by the fact that the majority of the technique is devoted to working the legs and feet. Each exercise involves intricate leg movements increasing in intensity, speed, and articulation. Within these exercises, arm and upper torso movements are also included, but they must always embody an ease that contradicts the difficulty of the leg movements. The legs and how a dancer uses them becomes essential to all the movements in a ballet class. The dance students recognize this by how the dance class is organized around the use of the legs and the amount of detailed attention given to the articulation

of the lower body. Dance technique can bring attention to *how* moving a certain way is seen as more efficient and “technically sound” than other ways of moving.

Within the dance class, the center of the body also emerges as a valuable location of technique. Fourteen out of the twenty-five dancers who filled out my questionnaires identified the core as the most essential area of the body. One wrote, “The core is big because that is where it all connects! Where the energy is, where you can knit energy together and direct it.” Another mentioned, “The torso is the most important part of your body, especially the core. Everything or almost everything originates in the core and it stabilizes your body and keeps everything in place.” Hamera also explains the core’s importance in ballet technique:

The body in ballet is ‘centered’; movements originate from the torso, which is ‘pulled up,’ always poised between yielding to and resisting gravity, occupying a metaphoric ‘middle place’ of stability and balance. The center is also a reference point, a corporeal prime meridian running down the torso lengthwise... (2007: 67)

Dancers understand that engaging the core will allow them to attain a perceived lightness, often recognized as gracefulness. The core can “lift up” the body, or resist gravity, to allow the legs to quickly move and shift underneath. Many teachers in directing their students will explain how to connect to the core or the center of the body. Some will instruct the students to exhale or cough, both of which inherently engage the core. Many ballet teachers use phrases like “pull up”⁵ or “lift out of the hips” because they imply an energetic lightness through manipulating the center of the body. There is no real way to lift your own upper body away from your legs and hips.

⁵ “Pull up” is a common phrase used by dance teachers, essentially meaning to suck in the gut.

However, as dancers instill a sense of breath in their upper bodies and engage their legs and cores, they can convey the illusion of an energetically lifted and light torso.

Technique class is where dancers are able to warm up their muscles daily, increasingly gaining motor control over the body. Dancers associate “technique” with alignment and “proper” ways of movement, which index the evolution of these dance forms through time. They recognize ballet class as the primary venue where technique is taught. Through technique, aesthetics begin to infiltrate dance students’ perceptions about how they are embodying “perfection.” Aesthetics, within technique, prescribes a judgment system, which allows both teachers and students to recognize their improvements and growth through their education.

The Internal Details: Am I Improving?

Dancers attend technique classes daily. They assume that because of this constant attendance and practice of the dance form, they will always be improving, growing exponentially in their ability to perfectly execute the movement. However, this is not necessarily the case. As freshman, dancers come into the program expecting this constancy of growth. However, after a few semesters, they discover that they aren’t improving as much as they thought they would. They become frustrated, feeling as though they have *lost* their technique rather than increased it.

When I asked my friends if they feel like they have improved in technique classes, many mentioned ballet class first as the primary place where they’ve grown in their technique. One of the only male dance majors at University of Michigan, Wayne, expressed:

Yes, the ballet faculty are the ones that really help me improve. Because, honestly, if you looked at me in the modern class now and when I was starting

out, you would say, “Wow he’s gotten a lot better!” But it wasn’t because of the modern teachers, it was because of the ballet teachers...Ballet is very strict, and I think it’s more about mastering the craft and *then* bending it, then bending the rules. So then when I was able to actually be balanced in ballet, I could then push [my technique] by not being [balanced in modern].

To use Royce’s terminology, Wayne desires to master the craft of *technique*, and then add his own element of *style*. He feels like modern pushes him to bend the rules without having embodied the rules in the first place. Wayne’s discussion of technique is similar to a lot of dancers’ experiences. It seems as though the technique that he learns in ballet classes helps him successfully execute the “less-strict” dance form of modern. He made the distinction between modern and ballet, saying that the *specificity* and *calculation* in ballet technique allows him to intelligently consider how his body does these movements. Modern, on the other hand, emphasizes the *qualities* and *imagery* of the movement. Thus, for Wayne, technique requires a mindful body, a mathematical and calculated physicality that can allow him to properly execute the aesthetics of alignment.

Ballet teachers tend to focus on the fine details of the body, and they ask the dancers to manipulate these details slightly in order to facilitate a certain movement. This has the effect of transporting the mind internally through the body⁶. One freshman, Miranda, began to realize the importance of this internalization within her technical growth:

I’m focusing on doing movement correctly and pushing myself. I find that I focus best when I am by myself just totally secluded from any distractions, and I can really focus on each part of my body. When I stand in the back in the corner, I can

⁶ See Sally Ann Ness (1992: 3-7) for a discussion on the experience of transporting the mind internally through the body.

really focus and I have room to just do it. I can't focus as well when I'm in the middle of the class with a bunch of other people trying to do the same thing, I need to zone in and really focus and concentrate.

Miranda has discovered that she integrates more of the details within her technique when she doesn't have to respond to any outside stimulation. She searches for the most secluded spot in the room so that she can easily slip into this internal gaze. She is one of many dancers who takes this internal approach to technique, fluidly inserting her mind on the inside of her body so she can more easily apply the subtle changes.

For Wayne and for Miranda, this internal and detailed approach is helpful so they can improve by applying their teachers' specific corrections to their bodies. However, sometimes dancers can have an inhibiting reaction to the internalization of "technique." Eliza, a junior dance major, presents this argument.

Well I guess when I'm just working my technique, I generally feel really stiff and I feel like I can't move my neck or separate it from anything or look in a different direction than my body is. Whereas if I'm dancing *and* using my technique, my technique allows me to be more free with my limbs or my head while I'm doing it.

Dancers tend to view "technique" as a very calculated thing. It is something that becomes soulless and only adds together the miniscule details of the body. When teachers only focus on these different body parts, dancers begin to perceive technique as something that is only about "getting on your leg" and being "perfectly balanced." Yes, dancers want to improve their technique and they want to be able to execute movements properly. However, there is a sense that when dancers *only* work on technique, they aren't able to actually *dance* and express

themselves in the ways that they yearn for. In Eliza's experience, working on her technique doesn't warm up her muscles or allow her to easily maneuver between movements. Rather, technique makes her stiff, and it inhibits her from being able to enter into an external and expressive realm of dance. For Eliza, technique stands for the nitty-gritty work that must first be completed before attaining the joy of expressive dancing. Rarely does she take a dance class that allows her to both use her technique *and* dance.

Similarly, Rebecca discussed her frustration with "cold-blooded technique" and how it alters her experience of dancing. Further on this idea, she said, "I'm like a robot or a machine. I'm staying square, I'm keeping hip over knee over toe, thinking about all of these body things that I just forget *why* I'm there and forget *why* I like dance, because I'm thinking about being a robot." In this context, Rebecca was more referring to ballet technique. She had earlier expressed that she felt that modern technique should be a place where she can let loose and express herself. But after attending a few years of dance class at U of M, these classes "lost endurance." She became frustrated by the ways in which the teachers taught the classes. They seemed to be talking too much and making the dance class too much about a "lesson" in dance, when all she wanted to do was *dance*:

Maybe we were just like, focused on "making something" technique, that we forgot that we could just do it and you just don't even have to care... And it was just like, "Why are you trying to make this technique class, when it could just be full, loving dance?" With one technique class, it became more about: "I really want to incorporate this idea. And so I'm making you all have spirals in this one part." Or it's all about falls. It's about a lesson. But I don't want it to be about a lesson. I just want it to be about movement for the sake of release...I think they

are trying to teach us, that once you have a solid base of technique, then you can break from it. But how long do we have to do this solid base of technique? Until we get so sick of dance that we don't care anymore? Is that the point? They are teaching something that is so specific that I just keep seeing robots. And then breaking away from it is adding something else to it. Something human.

Technique, instead of facilitating Rebecca's dancing, became something that inhibited her from dancing. Focusing on the minute details of her body made her feel more like a machine rather than a dancing human being. It was a major source of frustration for her, one that caused her to consider no longer majoring in dance. This frustration sent her into a whirlwind of apathy; she stopped *caring* about technique and began to ignore everything that the faculty were saying to her. She *just* wanted to dance and not feel like she had to please everyone with her "hard work." Rebecca is a dancer who became so frustrated by the internal details of technique that she forced herself beyond her road block by becoming less passionate about the technique of dance. Rebecca felt that the faculty forced her into an internal and mindful state when all she wanted to do was to remove her mind, get away from the tyranny of the technique, and simply dance with her body. She said to me, "Do they *want* us to learn how to not *care* about dancing? Because if so, I wish they would have told us earlier!"

Rebecca, Eliza, and Wayne all presented different perspectives of how they felt like they were drawn into an internalized approach to technique. Either they *needed* to embody the technique first and then achieve their own expression, or they felt like they were *forced* to embody the technique when they simply wanted to express themselves. Michael Bakan, an anthropologist working with musicians in Bali, presented an alternative way of perceiving how information is learned in an artistic education (Bakan 1999). He mentions the tendency for

Westerners to assume that technique comes first and then only through practice can the performance evolve into an expressive form. However, when in Bali, he found that this was not the case and that “primary learning occurs as a product of direct kinesthetic imitation rather than through a step-by-step process of incoming musical information” (Bakan 1999: 285). As a Westerner, Bakan found himself thinking this approach was “random and chaotic, disruptive to the teacher, even counterproductive.” However this learning strategy is characteristic of Balinese music learning: “simultaneous reception and attempted reproduction of the music performance model are part of standard practice (199:285).” Bakan presents a trend of Westerners to feel as though technical knowledge *first* has to be acquired, and *then* the artist can begin to insert their own style or “the embroidery on basic technique” (Royce 2004: 24). However, Bakan’s realization in Bali suggests that there are other ways of learning, which from the beginning emphasize the whole experience rather than the sum of its parts.

This section discussed technique as a form that embodies aesthetics. The daily practice of dance technique brings reproduces historical action, allowing a dynamic relationship to form between the past traditions and the present practices of traditions. These traditions within the technique class shape how dancers experience their daily routine. They begin to assign value to certain parts of their bodies over others, such as the long lean legs and the strength of the core. As dancers take these daily modern and ballet classes, however, they tend to associate ballet more with “technique” whereas modern is the place to engage with “style” and expression. These dancers also have the perspective that technique is located solely within the body and that the professors are turning their gaze inward to focus on the fine details of their body. Their experience suggests that there is a certain trajectory of learning through Western art forms that values the internalization of technique *first* and then focuses on the artistic approach to style and

expression. However, dancers become frustrated when teachers stay within this technical realm for too long and don't push their students towards *style*.

The Integrated Technician

In the above sections, I have described the values placed on different body parts within technique classes. The ways in which these classes are conducted can alter how dancers experience their frustrations within their art form. Most of the dancers' frustrations emerge out of their perception that faculty members only focus on these details of the technical body. These depictions of "technique," however, have been mostly from the perspectives of the undergraduate dance students. Rarely is the goal of these classes to isolate body parts; rather, teachers intend to integrate these body parts within the rest of the body. Teachers will often describe how "freeing up" one part of the body will give you more power in another part of the body. When one area of the body is tense, this will inhibit the flow of energy through the rest of the body, thus making dance more difficult than it should be. Though these instructors will often correct the specific technical details of alignment, they strive to see how details become integrated throughout the whole body. I wanted to speak with my faculty members in order to further understand how *they* perceived their approach to dance. Did they feel, as some of the students felt, that they focused so specifically on the body and the technical details within it? Or did they experience their approach as something different? What did they expect from their students, and how did they see their students improving? I found that their expectations moved beyond the body, beyond the technique, and into the space surrounding it.

Suzanne recognizes herself as a teacher who focuses on the detailed elements of the body, asking dancers to engage certain muscle groups while relaxing others. She promotes “healthy dancing,” which prolongs a dancer’s career by “working within the rules of the body, the lines of the body, without extra muscular tension and gripping in the joints.” She hones in on core strength, specifically in the lower abdomen, to facilitate and support the movements of the body. She asks her dancers to use their breath and to release the tension in their joints. The breath can help achieve the traditional flightiness and light appearance that is so valued in the balletic aesthetic form. However, Suzanne also emphasizes “groundedness” into the floor, a concept that is more often associated with modern dance. Suzanne will often discuss the paradoxical idea of first “going down to go up.” She emphasizes the tension that exists between the two directions and how dancers have to simultaneously “push down” and “pull up” in order to successfully achieve a balanced and aligned posture. When dancers understand this paradox, they can begin to find a power and a force that can both facilitate their dancing as well as introduce an exciting dynamic to their movement.

Though Suzanne focuses on the integration of these calculated details, she also asks her dancers to take the extra step outwards to take notice of the elements outside of their bodies. She will often ask her students to “focus their eyes” while they are dancing. This helps them to achieve a presence in the room that is lacking when dancers are simply focusing on their “technique.” In her philosophy, focusing the eyes acts as an anchor so that dancers can more easily execute the technical movements. By allowing the eyes to focus on something more external than the body, the dancer is taken out of this “internal gaze” as discussed in the previous section. When the students focus their eyes, Suzanne sees their movement enter a place of freedom and authenticity. Her goal is to get her dancers’ eyes out of their mind’s constant strife

for perfection and enter into a place where they can begin to release tension and simply dance for the pure joy of it. When she sees her students achieving these goals, she sees “freedom of movement, less gripping, completing the lines, and ease of the movement. Sometimes [my goal is to] just give them permission to be bigger than the students see themselves as being. It’s giving them permission to really just let it rip.” For Suzanne, the purpose is not to *just* work with the details of the body but rather to allow the dancers to let loose and express themselves.

Katherine, one of my modern teachers, explained to me that she also pays close attention to the eyes. She asks her students to learn to “cultivate a real ability to see, to see what is being asked of you.” Instead of simply learning the larger movements, she assesses her students’ ability to notice and imitate the specific quality her movement, while incorporating as many details as possible. She explained her perspective by telling a story of when she was able to observe her class objectively while a guest artist taught. When she watched her students, she began to notice whether or not they were successful in correctly executing the movements, and she began to consider why:

People in that class and that level, everybody’s capable physically of doing a lot of [movement] well. But it’s funny noticing what people see and don’t see... And I think it’s hard for dancers because we aspire. Which is good. We aspire to have [perfect technique]. I mean who wouldn’t want that because it’s beautiful. It’s a beautiful form. [But as we] try to make that [beautiful form], are we really seeing what it is? Are we really seeing how things stack up? How weight is distributed and all those things?

Katherine is describing the problem of “technique” and how it can actually blind student’s eyes to certain movement details that deviate from “perfect technique.” By repeatedly learning the

technical form, dancers gain an ability to predict and pattern their bodies to conduct movement in a certain way. Dancers will pick up combinations by noticing first how the feet, legs, and arms are moving through the space and how they connect to their centers. Dancers begin to conceptualize these areas of the body as the most important facets of perfect technique. However, when dancers focus their attention of these larger body parts, they often fail to recognize small specific details that might be important within the combination. So within her classes she tries to cultivate more of an attention to these less recognized details. She has the sense that by engaging with these specific elements of dance, a dancer can begin to see beyond the patterns of the technique and think more conceptually about her body.

Both Suzanne and Katherine emphasize the importance of the eyes within dance technique. However, they explain something that is larger than the eyes: the integration of the visual realm into the full technique of the body. It is not simply that a dancer is *seeing* some specific detail in his body, but rather that he can intelligently tie these details into the rest of his body. The imitation of a teacher's body "is a process, in fact, that takes the body of the teacher and disembodies it in the sense of making it into a sketch, which is then shown to the dancers, who mark it or sketch it and then finally reembody it in their own bodies" (Royce 2004: 40). The dancer is constantly accumulating all of the imitated movements and applying the correction that they receive. The integration of these into the body leads to technical success and improvement. Equally, as the eyes begin to focus in the space around the dancer, the dancer is "taking in the space" allowing it to influence how the dancer moves. The eyes make connections between the body and the surrounding space, and these teachers agree that this is one way to integrate the environment and cultural context into a dancer's practice and education.

Recently, a guest teacher overtly recognized that there is a tendency in modern dance programs for the students to become “internal.” This can stop them from integrating new information. During one exercise, she challenged us to move beyond this tendency and face each other while we completed the movement. She instructed us to “not let the other dancer treat you like a wall.” The intention of this exercise was to induce an interaction between dancers and create an openness and sociality that often is lost within dance technique classes. The student response to this exercise was varied. One student mentioned that she found it very distracting to both interact with the dancer in front of her *and* pay attention to her technique. This proved the teacher’s point. This guest artist approached her class in a way that also uses the eyes to move beyond the body, into a social realm of dancing. Because of the tendency of students to revert to an “internal gaze,” a technique class tends to lose its social atmosphere. Though dance is a communal activity, dancers quickly forget that they are able to engage with other dancers while they take a technique class. This guest artist proved this trend by challenging us with the difficult task of “not treating the other student as a wall.” It was a very effective lesson.

Henry, another modern teacher, takes a different approach to teaching dance technique. He looks at the body in the context of space and how the body can represent the manipulation of geometrical shapes.

We are working with different planes and circles in those planes, and to work like you have a panel of glass [in front of you] as opposed to twisting and breaking that plane. Those things are still a challenge [for freshman students] because it hasn’t been a framework that’s been honed or taught over and over. [I try to teach you] to really locate yourself and to be aware of where you are and what you are drawing and the shapes that you are making.

The concept that Henry likes to work with is space. A lot of his movements reference vertical and horizontal space and how the body traverses between these two planes. He asks his dancers to conceptualize their bodies geometrically, connecting physical movement to different areas of study. Henry's goal is to inspire dancers to move in ways that energize the molecules around them. He discusses how the effort and force put into movement can change the quality of the air around you, altering how people perceive your body in space. He desires that the dancers ignite and energize the room with their movement qualities, commanding his attention so that they can produce a similar effect while performing.

Jeffery, another modern teacher, takes a similar approach of conceptualizing the human body within the context of space, but he takes it a step further by applying it to other metaphors and imagery:

How does one move from 2-dimensional to 3-dimensional, how does one carve out movement, how does one press the space forward, suck it back, extend oneself beyond their fingertips? So it's a use of the body and the space as a metaphor for something much larger, awakening imagery and metaphors, a poetics. That's the ultimate for me: a poetics of movement, like a poetics of music or poetry or visual arts.

Jeffery is a dancer who finds himself inspired by all different forms of arts. He makes connections interdisciplinary art forms, asking us to "paint" the air with our bodies, to "sculpt" the space around ourselves. These connections to different art forms help dancers to energize their movement and express something beyond the technique of the body. Jeffery would say that these qualities and images are an essential piece of technique and learning how to dance. Dance is not solely about the alignment of the body and the coordination of the muscles and the joints;

rather it is about *how* a dancer maneuvers between these elements of motion. The energy, the effort, and the force it takes to complete a movement help to define what kind of quality that the dancer is portraying. In ballet, this quality is a fluidity and lightness that seems to defy gravity and work against it. In modern, these qualities range from released and effortless to weighted and grounded into gravity. Dancers are taught to have a vivid understanding of these energetic qualities in order to be able to deploy them immediately when it is asked of them.

Jeffery, however, also recognizes that this energetic and qualitative aesthetic is not the final part of dance technique. He desires that dancers push beyond both the body and the energy of the body into a more expressive realm, the kind of dancing that is acceptable for performances. He expects his students to be able to quickly recognize and understand the “impact or the end product that is desired and then perform it... so that you get the movement and you make something of it immediately.” For Jeffery, it is about having a command over the intricate and communicative nature of movement and art in general, and it is the dancer’s job to project these ideas through the space.

We are not doing this isolated from the reality of being onstage and performing for an audience, a technique class should give you the chops, the confidence to feel secure and to execute movement quickly and efficiently, but it should also allow you to test drive your movement as if you are doing it in front of an audience. As if you have to communicate something with it, whether that’s a kind of an aesthetic or a picture or a moving sculpture, or whether it is a feeling or emotion a certain quality...When you’ve *transcended technique* and you are creating—if not the reality—the illusion of a pure innocent spontaneity as if it’s happening for the first time. (*Emphasis added*)

Transcending technique. What does it mean to transcend technique? Does it mean to simply dance without thinking directly about technique? Does it mean that the dancer will simply move their bodies without paying as much attention to how the movement fits into the perfect aesthetic? Kingsbury, discussing musical technique through the perspective of a Professor Goldmann, addresses a similar problem in the conservatory system of education. There is a “stereotypical idea that performers must first learn the notes and then add the expression or feeling.” Like Jeffery, “Goldmann’s position was that musical feeling was frequently essential to the technical mastery of the notes” (Kingsbury 2001: 99). Arts educators such as Jeffery and Goldmann try to combat this “technical/musical” or technical/expressive dualism that is prevalent within the perceptions of dancers and musicians alike. Rather than the end goal of dance technique being this expressive and performative moment, it should be an “essential element of the technique itself” (Kingsbury 2001: 98).

When I listened to Jeffery discuss this technique/expressive dualism, I was thrown into self-reflection. Like Rebecca and Eliza, I have been guilty of disregarding technique altogether so I can dance, express myself, and make my own choices about how I execute the movement. When I am stuck within the boundaries of technique and the confines of my body, I like to push completely out of the realm of specificity and disregard all technical thought for the sake of expressing myself. In this circumstance, I usually end up slightly altering the movement so that I can challenge myself to suspend in a balance for a beat longer while still making it to the next movement in the right amount of time. I like to take these kinds of movement risks, challenging myself to push time and physics, moving into a place where I feel like I can control gravity rather than react to it. However, this approach has gotten me into trouble with my modern teachers because they believe that I am not paying attention to the technical elements that they

are trying to teach me. Year after year, I've reach this place of disregarding technique in order to achieve my highest goal of being expressive and connecting to my musicality⁷. I express in these ways when I am performing, so why should a technique class be any different? Why should I only focus on the specific placement of each of my body parts when I could transcend this level of concentration and simply express myself? Like many of the dancers I interviewed, I feel that "technique" and "expression" are mutually exclusive categories. But Jeffery's statement about transcending technique makes me think twice about my choice to simply disregard technique altogether for the sake of expression. Is it possible that technique can be the avenue into the realm of expression rather than a completely separate category? My experience has been shaped by the fact that I approach "technique" with the perception that I *have* to focus on internal details and perfect execution of the movement. I never considered that my teachers were actually asking me to transcend my technique, transcend my body, and explore the expressive realm, where I can embody movement and energetically communicate ideas.

⁷ It is interesting that within the discussion of artistic expression of dance, I have used the term "musicality." There is the sense that the term "expression" can be applied to every art form, it is not specific to only dance. The expressive form for musicians is "musicality," the expressive form for actors is "theatricality," however, there is no specific term that explicitly implies the expressive dance form. The word "dance-icality" does not exist. This is a curious discussion, and I am not positive why this is. Perhaps, because dance is a completely embodied form, it can incorporate all aspects of artistic expression. You will often hear the terms "musicality" and "theatricality" thrown about the dance field, simply because dance can both be musical and theatrical. However, dancers more commonly use the term "expression", and thus I will continue to use it as the main concept to explore.

The Expressive Body: Authentically Transcending Technique

Imagine yourself in the dance studio, doing movements that you have rehearsed and repeated in the same order for months on end. The choreographer watches you, generally saying nothing save a few comments on the detailed execution of certain movements. Your experience is calculated, and yet, since you have rehearsed it for so long, you have reached a place where you can dislocate your mind from your body. Your body does the movements as second nature, as if your body is its own mind and can recreate these movements without a blink of an eye. This rehearsal process is one that dancers can recognize as something that can be tedious, calculated, and always referencing the technical form of dance.

Now, imagine yourself on the stage, in a completely new context, in a completely different space, where the vast possibility of the audience is before you, and the mysterious and dark backstage surrounds the rest of you. Above you, there are lights shining on your movements, lighting your motion with a guided beam, a specific kind of energy that bounces off of your skin and exudes a glowing heat. Being in this open space, on this open stage, surrounded by an openness that is so different than the enclosed cage of the dance studio, you can't help but inhale deeply and lift your chest upward. You energize every molecule of your body as if by doing this you can actually fill this vast and open space. Your eyes are wide, taking in your dark surroundings, allowing your energy to be fed by the space rather than engulfed by it. The only way that you can be seen is to vibrate at a higher frequency than normal, to be energized in a way that is captivating to watch. It requires a hyperawareness of your surroundings, as well as a willingness to project yourself to the last row of the highest balcony. Your body begins to do the movements that you have repeated for months and months, but somehow they feel different. They are larger and fuller, more energized, more real, and more connected to your identity than

they have ever felt. In the context of the theatrical venue, you are motivated, energized, and open enough to reach the desired expressive realm. You enter the elated state of dance that allows you to *be* in a way that feels *more* than your normal state of *being*. This is my experience of expression.⁸

Now, this is only *my* experience of expression, and it is only my experience of expression *on the stage*. Granted, many dancers only feel like they are able to express themselves when they are performing. However, they are also sometimes able to enter into the expressive realm within their daily technique class. As discussed earlier, dance technique classes are ritualistically organized to index a performance: warm up the muscles, learn and perform a small dance or combination for classmates and the teacher, and clap at the end. Thus, the technique class is inherently organized in order to allow dancers a daily venue to reach the elated state of expression.

In its simplest form, expression is regarded as a means of communication. Sondra Horton Fraleigh (1996) discusses the nature and definition of expression within the context of dance:

To *express* is to manifest the self toward another or others in some comprehensible medium. All of the arts are aesthetic and created forms of expression. That is, they are shaped through human action into objects that we can perceive as apart from, yet related to, our selves. As they are presented or performed for others, they intend an other, demonstrating a desire to

⁸ Simply by writing this description of expression, my breath has become shallower, my eyes are wider, and my heart seems to be pumping more blood. I have a physical reaction that makes me happier; it makes me feel like the impossible is possible. I feel like there is a lump in my throat that can only be moved if *I* begin to move, to dance and express myself in all the ways that I crave. I feel more open, and I experience an intense desire to do something physical in order to let go of all of the energy that built up within me. It's fascinating what reactions the body can have to the mind's activity.

communicate. Dance is not completed *as art* until it ... involves the self in a world of others – a communal and cultural context. (1996: 22)

Fraleigh implies that expression is directly related to the “self” that is expressing, that an audience receives said expression. For example, when you speak to someone, you are expressing yourself, communicating your opinions with an “other.” The self is seen as both the vehicle of the expression and the source of the expression. *Your* thoughts are being expressed and your words are what carry that expression to the listener: self-expression.

However, this is not necessarily how dancers regard self-expression. “Self-expression” often implies that the self at is the first and foremost thing that is being expressed. Self-expression is often seen as equivalent to the emotions that an individual is feeling at that present moment. If this were the case, however, it would imply that when dancers appear angry and disturbed when they are on the stage, they are *actually* angry and disturbed. This is not necessarily the case. They aren’t expressing their own anger. Rather they embody the technical movements so fully that makes it *seem* like the dancer is angry. The body is expressing, which may imply that the self is being expressed; however, it more frequently relates to how the *body* can express a kind of emotion. Bourdieu, in *The Logic of Practice*, describes this relationship to the expressive body. “The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, ... it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is” (Bourdieu 1990: 72). When they are expressing, dancers are expressing the *aesthetic intention* of the movement, rather than specifically their own *self* and feelings at that time. This is why the term “self-expression” can be problematic. “Self-expression” can be misunderstood as a means of always expressing the actual *feelings* of the dancers when, in actuality, they are

portraying emotions that have been asked of them by the choreographer and have been repeatedly rehearsed and reenacted.

Victor Turner, an important anthropologist in the study of theatre and dramatic events, has termed what I call “expression” as “flow” (Turner 1982: 56). He describes a number of elements or stages of flow that make a performance a creative experience. First of these elements is the “experience of merging action and awareness” (1982: 56). This idea reflects what many of the dance teachers desired for their students, that they integrate their bodies with their minds and the environment. Second is the “centering of attention on a limited stimulus field.” Further, the “past and future must be given up,” or, in other words, “only *now* matters” (*Italics in Original*. 1982: 56). All other thought is irrelevant and if the mind goes towards the past or the future, flow is disrupted within the performance. Amanda, a freshman dancer, expressed a similar relationship to the temporal element of “flow” as Turner discussed.

Expression exists within the self in the moment and the movement. It feels like I have more control over the movement and in a way I can control time. I am not worried about technique because I am in control of the movement. It just *feels* good. All the hard work has paid off because of that feeling, and you work so hard so you can get into that state. During a recent performance, when I wasn't feeling expressive, it felt like time was carrying me through and I didn't dance at all. When I am expressing, it is as if time isn't controlling my steps. I have *time* to complete everything that I'm doing. I can fill out my movement because I am expressing, and I have *time* to do so.

In Amanda's experience, she finds that expression is not always achievable. There are so many factors that contribute to an ability to express artistically. But when she is able to be completely

present in the moment, she feels able to *control* time. She can slow it down so that every detail of her body is under her command. Amanda, like other dancers, feels as though expression can only be reached after long hours of studying the technique or rehearsing the dance. She has to do all of the nitty-gritty technical work before she can feel like she can dance and express. To her, expression feels like the ultimate reward for all of her hard work.

Another element of flow that Turner discusses is the “loss of ego” (1982: 57). Fraleigh discusses what happens when dancers think of their *selves* during a performance. When dancers get caught up in their *self*, they enter into a performative realm where they consider how they look to other people and whether they are doing the movements correctly. It is “the self that needs vindication through constant surveillance of its effects on others” (Fraleigh 1996: 26). Further, she says, “Good dancers know that the dancing self dies when it looks back either to visualize or to admire itself. The present tense is lost. Spontaneity is lost, and with it the dance” (1996: 23). One critique that teachers often shout at us during our dance technique classes is, “Get your eyes out of the mirror. Don’t look at it! That’s my job.” When a dancer watches herself move in the mirror, she can enter into a comparative and competitive mindset that can inhibit her ability to fully “express” the movement. Constantly surrounded by mirrors, dancers are very prone to fall into the mindset that they have to *see* whether or not they are doing the movement correctly. They can get stuck in the frustrating cycle of self-judgment and self-consciousness by comparing themselves to the other dancers in the room. However, teachers understand that this is not an “authentic” approach to dancing. In a way, dancers are reprimanded for *thinking* about their selves, their bodies, because they are not truly *being* “themselves.”

This idea of “authenticity” came up quite frequently when I was interviewing my dance teachers. There is the sense that if a dancer is not being authentic in their movement, it is

immediately recognized as “fake” and uninteresting. This is an interesting concept to consider within the realm of expression because if a dancer is not expressing her *self*, then what is she expressing, and how can it be perceived as “authentic?” I approached my teachers to answer this question of authenticity, and I found that they each had their own interpretation of what it means to dance authentically.

Suzanne, a ballet teacher, expressed that authenticity is equated with an organic ease within the movement. “It has to be felt through the entire body. If it is a pose or a position, it doesn’t come from within, from that organic place.” For Suzanne, authentic movement comes directly from within the heart of the self. She says that inauthentic movement is recognizable when dancers are just moving from position to position, trying to be “correct” in their execution of the movement. Suzanne considers this calculated and picture oriented dancing as inauthentic and unfeeling. She expanded further on this idea of authenticity:

I would say [authenticity is] a person being true to themselves, a person being very true to their self-expression. We all carry our own unique talents and abilities. And the gifts that we have been given to share to the dance world are who we are as people, and those “stars” that we want to dance like, removes that authenticity into trying to be like that person who has already put their stamp on the world. So I think that comes with self-acceptance of one’s body. It may not be what we see as perfection but it’s accepting the perfection and the non-perfection and just moving forward.

Inauthentic dancing emerges out of the desire to dance like someone else, to be the next Baryshnikov, or to be the next Martha Graham. A dancer can wish to be technically proficient, able to execute all of the desired movements in an ideal way. However, if they strive to become

these “starts”, they aren’t expressing themselves authentically. When dance is authentic, the movements have to appear as if they are *spontaneous* expressions of the soul, even if the movements have been learned and repeated multiple times.

Katherine, a modern teacher, has a similar perspective in that she believes dance should be a continuous avenue for self-discovery and self-exploration. While discussing authenticity and expression, she noted the importance of improvisation in discovering how you can move without the confines of a technique that binds you to an aesthetic. Aesthetics are like culture in that they can never be truly be isolated and removed from an individual’s perspective. But when a dancer improvises, the movement allows an avenue into discovering how *your body* likes to move without adhering to prescribed movements. By discovering what it is like to create movement spontaneously, a dancer can apply this sense of exploration even when repeating the heavily technical movements.

You’re asking yourself not to know what [the movement] is but to learn it every time. It’s boring in a way, but you have to *learn* how to do a plié every time.

Certainly there’s that ingrained muscle memory, but there has to be that sense of sensing and seeing all the time, which is exhausting, which is why it fails a lot of times.

For Katherine, authenticity is rooted in the realm of spontaneity and total focus on the present. This perspective is similar to Turner’s second element of flow, the importance of *now*. The dancer’s sensation is ignited and energized in a way that allows him to be able to discover something new in the movement. Authenticity for Katherine also comes from the self, but it is not the self that considers the body from an external perspective. The authentic self exists *fully* within the body, rather than from this outside view. Dancers have to let go of this latter tendency

and focus all of their attention on their, energizing the body, and allowing for self-discovery throughout every movement.

My other modern teacher, Jeffery, had a wide-ranging and beautiful description of what authenticity is and how to identify it. The way that he explains it is also complex that it reveals the immense ambiguity of a concept like authenticity.

Authenticity can mean many things. It could mean—let's see from a creative or choreographic standpoint—someone who evolves a very personalized language of movement, a syntax, a rhythm that doesn't seem to be fabricated, superficial or pasted on or invented. It comes from a very deep place where there's no lying, there's no deception involved or duplicity. And I think one sees that immediately in an instinctive kind of way. Also I think it's something that as a witness or viewer I have learned over time, over watching dance for 40 years, is that I can immediately spot when someone's lying to me onstage, when it is just an act, when it is fabricated. And the other end of the spectrum is someone who's taught movement, who has assumed a role that has been done many times. How can one be authentic in taking on movement that they've been taught? How does one do that? Well I think that's the magic of dance. In one way there is something universal about movement, and if a creator hits upon something, that role or that part can be passed on and re-embodied. It's like a musician playing a Beethoven piano sonata. I mean how can one play that authentically. And I think it's becoming one with the material with the emotional investment with a commitment to it, and the willingness to fail, the willingness to give everything else up, including ego, maybe most of all ego, to get to the material itself and

what that material says. So one is letting go of personality and ego and any desire to get something out of this other than letting the material have it's full life. So I think that's kind of what it's about.

Jeffery's discussion about authenticity touches on so many of the ambiguous aspects of what it means to be authentic. How can someone be "lying to you onstage?" How can someone tell the difference between authentic dancing and inauthentic dancing? For Jeffery, authenticity can be recognized intuitively, which reveals its depth as a cultural concept. If someone is smiling on stage, it can be an authentic smile, one that comes out of the joy of movement, or it can be a fabricated smile, one that is plastered on for the purpose of smiling. Jeffery's discussion of authenticity reflects some of the categories that Turner discusses. The dancer becomes "one with the material" and invests himself whole-heartedly in the movement. Thus, the dancer, in Turner's terms, merges his action with his awareness (1982: 56). He must be willing to take risks, to fail, and to give up all sense of his ego. Thus, authenticity, expression, and Turner's "flow" begin to overlap and blossom within the movements. The dancer must be willing to fail and still commit fully to the aesthetic intention of the movement. Authenticity and expression come from a place of risk. There is always the chance that a dancer will not be able to physically execute the movement despite his wishes, but even so, if the dancer fails authentically, it is more appreciated than if he fails "self-consciously."

As Turner lays out the elements of expression, it may seem as though he lists instructions to performers about how to achieve expression. However, this is not necessarily the case. There are many elements within a performance that could inhibit expression and flow. One of these elements, naturally, is frustration. Malcolm Ross, author of *The Aesthetic Impulse* (1984), discusses expression and what happens when an artist loses an opportunity to express himself.

He argues that expression is “a *creative act*” rather than the simple “rendering external of something that would merely remain internal” (Ross 1984: 85). Expression is a dynamic act and can allow the artist to achieve “entirely new levels or structures of feeling. So expression becomes the means to a fresh insight and fresh understanding” (1984: 85). Thus, the expressive act is not *just* the result of fully embodying technique and letting go of the ego. Rather it is an experience that increases understanding and feeds the individual in ways that *merely* embodying the technique would not do. If individuals are deprived of this expressive element in their creative lives, it can result in “an expressive crisis” which can be “a personal and social disaster” (1984: 85). Many dancers understand this expressive crisis. As we saw earlier, Rebecca felt as though her education was dominated by the mechanical repetitions of technique. She never felt like she could express herself in the necessary ways. Her experience resulted in this expressive crisis, her personal frustration, which dampened her growth as a student.

Expression, self-expression, artistic expression, flow, always come from a place of authenticity, a well buried deep in the soul which dancers can access when they are fully committed to the spontaneity of the movement. Authentic expression can't occur if the self becomes external to the body, perceiving its appearance. Expression requires self-discovery, an exploration of the movement that has been repeated over and over again. It arises out of the joy of spontaneity, exploring and sensing and energizing every molecule of the body in a way that creates fullness within the movement. Expression refers to the self, the individual artist; however, it also goes beyond the self, entering into an exciting and stimulating energetic realm. To dancers, it feels as if they are being *so much* themselves that they become *more so* themselves. The final element of Turner's “flow” is that “it seems to need no goals or rewards outside of itself. To flow is to be as happy as a human can be” (1982: 58). Dancers yearn for the

opportunity to express themselves because it feels like an elated and happy state of being. Expression becomes a goal for dancers because it can allow them to move beyond the confines of their minds, their bodies, and their technique. They are finally able to feel hyper-aware of everything within them and around them. The senses are heightened, the body feels energized, and, thus, authentic expression feels like the highest form of experience and the most heightened form of existence.

Conclusion

When dancers begin their study at a university dance department, their ultimate goal is to have a constant venue where they can express themselves. However, through the daily strain of dance technique, they begin to feel as if they rarely reach this ultimate expressive state. The technique class focuses on the details of the body in a way that emphasizes an internal gaze, which confines the mind within the body. This can be a source of frustration because dancers desire to go beyond their minds and bodies and into the expressive realm, and they feel that focusing on just “technique” inhibits this from happening. Students blame their frustrations on faculty members, saying that they aren’t giving them the right information or the proper amount of attention. The students expect the faculty to act in a certain way, notice them and give them very individualized attention and feedback. The faculty, however, expect a more active dance student, one that will continually integrate all of the feedback as well as constantly project beyond their bodies and into the expressive realm.

The main source of frustration is the dualism that dancers feel between “technique” and “expression.” Within the way that the technique class is set up, they assume that they first have

to work really hard, get into the nitty-gritty details of the body, and *then* graduate into the expressive realm after the technique has been worked on. Teachers, however, emphasize that this dual perspective is inhibiting. Life is too short to spend most of it becoming frustrated by technique, when the *point* of the dancer's lifestyle is to become *more expressive* throughout the daily practice of technique. Frustration for dance majors occurs when they aren't able to evolve towards this ultimate goal of expression. The faculty members, however, dispute the idea that technique always comes before expression. Rather, they expect their students to learn how to become expressive even within the daily technique class. Often, dance students don't recognize that this is the intention of faculty members and remain stuck within the technique and within their bodies. However, even throughout their frustrations dancers persist because they are aware of the happiness that they receive when they attain this heightened level of expression.

PART 2

Something to “Fall Back On:” Dance in the Context of Academia

Thus far in this thesis, I have described various elements of what it is like being a student of dance. The previous part has revealed certain trends within dance education that can lead to a frustrating navigation between technique and expression within the cultural context of the Department of Dance. The following part focuses on how this dance culture fits into the larger context of the University of Michigan. I most frequently present the argument from the perspective of a dual degree dance major. It is common in the University of Michigan Department of Dance for a dance major to pursue a second major. Their frustrations can most easily reveal the discrepancies between the two separate educational contexts.

Why Michigan?

As I began to speak with the freshman dance majors about their experience here at Michigan, I caught myself asking them the most answered question by all Michigan students: Why Michigan? Generally, there was a consensus among the freshmen: they could have the option to study something else alongside dance. Miranda came to the University of Michigan in order to pursue both a dance and a physical therapy route; Betty wanted a college experience that involved more “academics” in general; Sonia wanted to dance but she also wanted “something to

fall back on.” Many dancers choose Michigan as a top University because they are able to get a high-class education in another subject *as well as* study dance.

The University of Michigan Department of Dance advertises itself as a department where it is easy and encouraged to get a dual degree in dance and another subject. My friend, Nicole, described her experience of auditioning for the dance department at Michigan and how the faculty “really played up the double majors and the potential for academic studies as well as the potential for dance studies.” The faculty’s enthusiastic encouragement of the dual degree made a big impression on Nicole and her parents. She articulated,

Truly, what I think is great about coming to the University of Michigan to dance is that you have the opportunity to dance in a semi-conservatory⁹ environment while also taking advantage of University of Michigan and its academic reputation and all of the amazing opportunities that comes with all of that, and that’s why I came here.

For Nicole, and for many dance majors at Michigan, this opportunity to study more than just dance was key in deciding to come to U of M. Of the twenty-five dance majors who completed my questionnaire, fourteen of them study something besides dance. Nine of these fourteen are double majors, and the remaining five have a minor in something else. When I consider this statistic, I also think about the end of my freshman year when *each* of the eighteen freshmen

⁹ A conservatory is an institution of higher education that specializes in producing performers within the arts, music, theater, musical theater, and dance. A conservatory doesn’t require its students to complete a number of liberal arts credits. Thus, a dance conservatory will focus all of the dancer’s education on the technical form, dance history, composition, anatomy, but it will not require the general education classes that are required of Liberal Arts colleges.

dance majors was pursuing a second major.¹⁰ The double major is such a pleasing attribute that the freshmen dance majors feel compelled to take on the responsibilities and requirements of a second degree.

One of the first questions that I asked my informants was why they decided to major in dance. Eliza said, “I think for me, since I’ve danced for so long, it just gives me the opportunity or the freedom to have dance in my life at any point in time and keep up my technique, because if I wasn’t a dance major I probably wouldn’t.” For Eliza, being in the dance department shows a commitment to being a dancer and it helps her to remain dedicated to the dance field. The daily technique class also “keeps me more disciplined, whereas if I were just in [a dance] group, I wouldn’t take it as seriously. And now after I graduate, [dance] will still be more serious [to me].” This is an interesting argument. There are multiple student dance groups on campus that provide ample opportunity to dance and perform. Many dance majors are *also* involved with these dance groups, but none of my interviewees spoke about their involvement, so I won’t expand upon that aspect of the dancers’ experience.

A few of my informants, however, did actively identify an interesting difference between being in a dance group and being a dance major. Eliza was one of them, saying that if she were *only* in a dance group, she probably wouldn’t have as much freedom to practice her technique. She equated being a dance major as being the more “serious” choice that demonstrates commitment to the artistic field. Another dancer, Marybeth, discussed the difference by describing a hypothetical situation. A group of dancers, who were on the same dance team in high school, would say, “Oh, I want to be on the dance team in college, but I want to major in psychology!” Dance for these people would be a hobby rather than the main focus of their time

¹⁰ Granted, since then, my class size has diminished to twelve people, but that is a topic for later consideration.

in college. Marybeth said, “I knew dance was really important to me, but it wasn’t like I know exactly what I want to do with my life.” She hints that these dancers on the “dance team” don’t value the art of dance as much as a dance major does. There is a sense that by committing her time, her education, and her creativity to the art form of dance, she is automatically engaging with something much more serious than a hobby. This is the case for many dancers. They have chosen to invest themselves in dance, and thus they make an effort to separate themselves from those who instead dance as a hobby.

Dancers choose to commit to the dance major because they feel that it is an essential part of their life. However, they aren’t necessarily able to identify *why* they felt that getting a degree in dance was important to them. Some dancers come to college not because they think about it, but rather because it seems like the right choice for them, the natural next step in their life. Marybeth is an example of this. She knew that she wanted to have dance in her life, but she wasn’t necessarily sure *how*.

Since I was really little, people would always say, “What do you want to do?” And I’m like “I know I’m going to dance.” But I just never knew in what capacity. It felt almost very not thought out, it wasn’t until I came here that I was like, “What do I actually *want* to do?” ... I never really seriously thought about that, about what it takes [to dance professionally], and this was just kind of the next step... Now, I’ve been thinking about that. I mean I haven’t found the answer yet, but it’s been much more intentional and purposeful in that sense. But I think initially, it felt almost like this is the next thing that’s supposed to happen. You graduate high school and go to college, and I’d been dancing, and I love dance.

Marybeth came to Michigan to dance in order to truly understand *how* she wanted to have dance in her life. She is using the four-year opportunity to discover her artistic tendencies and to explore herself. She knows that dance is and always will be important to her, so she chose to express her passion by committing her to college experience as a dance major. Many dancers feel that they need this transition period of college in order to truly understand *how* they want dance to play a part in their lives.

Shira, a senior dance major, expressed a similar perspective about why college is important for dancers. It is not that the *degree* is valued, but rather the *experience* is the most important part.

Well, it's not that I think it's necessarily important to have a degree in dance, but I think further education before going into a company—or teaching, or choreographing—is really important. I don't think most high school programs—even if it's a conservatory program or a school—have a curriculum that can prepare you for the dance world realistically. [When I was younger] I really wasn't sure if I was going to end up going to college, but when I got [older] I realized [college] was a really important component. And I also think the four years before going into a career of transitioning, that maturity, that growth, in general aside from dance and aside from what you learn, is really important for you as a person. I don't think when I was eighteen I was ready to take on a full time job. Now I think I'm ready, but it was an important learning gap and transition period.

Education is an important element of personal and artistic growth, and it allows students to increase their knowledge base and form valuable opinions. However, the actual *degree* in dance,

doesn't seem to have a value. For Shira the value of education instead is the *experience* of the four years between high school and "the real world." Many faculty members also reflect this perspective. Suzanne emphasized that throughout the four years of college, there is a lot of physical growth for a dancer, but there is also "emotional maturity, the mental maturity that comes from life experience: living away from home for the first time for freshman, to going through BFAs,¹¹ going through choreography, exploring one's own choreography exploring, one's own technique, going abroad or going to summer programs." Further she said, "It's an evolution of life experience, figuring out what makes them tick, gaining confidence in areas that they weren't sure." Dancers, and generally all students, value this experiential maturation rather than actually "learning" something.

One of the Graduate students in dance, Sharon, expressed something similar to Shira, however she emphasized that dance companies are beginning to require undergraduate college education before entering the dance world.

Dance companies, they're just not taking young dancers anymore. They want someone who's been trained. They want someone who's been through a disciplined system of taking technique and of going to performances. So there's been this realization, "If we take these dancers who graduated from undergrad in dance, they already have that built into them." And so it's been way beneficial for these dance companies who are trying to survive and they don't have to take a

¹¹ BFA stands for Bachelor of Fine Arts, but for dancers it is a colloquial term for the required choreography that seniors must complete before receiving their degrees. Choreographing a BFA seems like the final rite of passage for undergraduate students before they are sent away with their degree. Performing in a BFA is a common thing for undergraduates to get involved in since it is another opportunity to perform and engage with their expression.

risk on an eighteen year old who's amazing but they're not sure if they are responsible enough to make it work.

The theatrical dance world, especially the modern dance world, values more mature and experienced dancers. There is the expectation for modern dancers to go to college and receive four more years of training and experience. This allows dancers to develop a more mature approach to their art form rather than relying on their "young and flexible bodies." Dance companies value the transition period of college because the dancer will emerge with a more experienced mind. Thus dancers don't frequently say that the degree is valuable, but rather the experience is the most important.

Nicole also thought that she needed more experience in dance before she tried to make it in the "real world." While attending a specialized dance high school, all of her teachers and friends told her, "The only way to be a dancer was to just go to New York and start auditioning. Why waste time to go to college?" She responded to them, "I've only been doing modern dance for four years. There is no way that I can audition with that little amount of training." So she chose to go to college, "not necessarily because I thought the degree would get me anywhere but just because I felt like I needed more time with teachers." Further, she was "enamored with academics," so she knew that she wanted to have a well-rounded education and study something besides dance. She realized that she needed a backup plan in case "at some point dance wasn't going to work out." Nicole knew it was a smart choice to study another subject and have something to "fall back on" in case her body gave way to a career stopping injury. She knew that having a degree in something else would better allow her to get a job after her dance career ended.

Similar to Nicole, Eliza was attracted to the University of Michigan because it offered her the opportunity to study something besides dance. I asked her why she decided to do double major.

I don't want to just graduate here with a dance degree because if I'm paying the tuition, I want to take the opportunity to take other classes and graduate with something else that I could possibly get me a job in another field at some point after dance or while I'm dancing. Besides, my parents want me to. I'm smart, and both my parents graduated from here so they were keen on [my taking full advantage of Michigan.] I don't think I've ever thought about *just* graduating with a dance degree. I just knew it was smarter, especially in this job market now, to graduate with something else besides dance.

Like many dancers, Eliza is aware of the difficulty of the career of a dancer, and that it would be important to have something *else* that could support her through her life while she was trying to dance as well. She also makes the point that she wants to get the biggest bang for her parent's buck by taking advantage of all of the things that Michigan has to offer. She will have to pay the same whether she studies dance or an academic or both simultaneously, so she might as well do both to make the cost of education worthwhile. She also makes the statement that she is aware that she probably won't ever get a paying job with just a dance degree. She reflects popular belief that a dancer, as an artist in Western society, will automatically be a starving artist. Thus, she studies something else that could potentially get her a job. She is not alone in her thinking. I often feel as if I have to work twice as hard because I owe it to my parents to learn as much as possible for the money they spend to send me here. And I *have* to do it all in *just* four years – which is nearly impossible without twisting the system – or else it would end up being a waste of

their money and a waste of my time. I fear that a lot of dancers have this perception that studying *just* dance at Michigan is not *worth* the money spent. They also have the perception that their future as a dancer will not be monetarily successful, so they compensate this belief by studying *more* than dance.

Many dance students have also related a positive aspect of Michigan that they find appealing. The environment of the U of M Department of Dance feels unique to those who are applying to schools for dance. Sonia and Betty both expressed their amazement at the nurturing and welcoming community of Michigan's dance department. They felt that it is supportive and encouraging, which is rare in comparison to the recognized cutthroat competitive culture of dance known in conservatory programs across the country. Sonia mentioned:

I love the atmosphere here and I think everyone is really supportive which is great, it's something I need. Coming from a ballet school and even my high school it's always been very judgmental and very cutthroat. And it's not like that at all here which I love. And I think it's a better experience as a whole for me as a dancer and for me as a person and for me as a scholar. It just feeds me in so many different ways so that's why I came here. I just love the people here.

The Michigan dance department represents itself as a tight-knit community, welcoming and encouraging of every new face. Especially in the context of a big school, where an individual student can easily feel lost within the crowd, a small program like the dance program automatically gives a new student a community to connect to. Betty further mentioned that, "They are very nurturing and body-conscious¹² here and I really like that." It makes a difference

¹² "Body-conscious" in this context does not mean the same thing as "self-conscious" about your body. Rather, it means "aware of how the body works" or "knowledge about how to reduce the threat of injury." Being "body-conscious" is almost the complete opposite of being "self-

that the faculty members at Michigan take a knowledgeable approach to the body. They know when to stop pushing their students when they are close to an injury. The students feel very nurtured by the faculty rather than pushed to their physical limits, which dancers believe is more common in the conservatory dance environment. Rather than being an environment where competition, judgment, and self-consciousness infiltrate the system, Michigan *feels* like a nurturing community. It is this feeling that pulls dancers into the program.

All of these dancers present the common reasons why dancers choose to attend Michigan to dance. They want to improve as dancers, gaining the necessary experience that would increase their success in the “real world.” Some don’t necessarily have the conscious understanding of why they chose to come to college for dance. They simply felt like it was the natural next step for them. Some knew that they wanted to study something else besides dance, and they knew that Michigan was the place to do it. Some were influenced by their parents to come to a school where they could have the option to study “something to fall back on” as a backup if a career in dance didn’t work out. Some knew that all they needed was the traditional four years of transition to allow for emotional maturation. However, the most effective pull of Michigan is its welcoming and nurturing community, where a new student already feels like a part of the Michigan dance family.

Each of these opinions presents all of the reasons why I myself chose Michigan to dance. I wanted to grow artistically in a serious dance environment. While my high school friends were applying to the Ivy Leagues as *their* reach schools, I was applying to conservatories as *my* reach schools. I knew that wherever I went, I needed to have dance in my life, and I couldn’t *merely*

conscious” because it focuses on the positive ability to know your body intimately and use that knowledge as a resource to further your career. “Self-conscious” instead entails a negativity can put a damper on one’s growth as a dancer and could potentially end up harming the body.

dance as a hobby, nor could I *only* minor in dance. Like Marybeth, the choice to dance felt like an innate and necessary choice, and this put dance at the top of my college search, before academics. Like Nicole, I enjoyed other academic areas of study, but like Eliza, I was influenced by my parents to apply to a school where I could balance my dance with a major to “fall back on.” I needed to find the perfect place where my dance and academics could be balanced in a “well-rounded education,” making four years of tuition worthwhile. Michigan was my top choice. I knew I belonged here by the way that I felt instantly nurtured and welcomed into the dance community. This is why *I* came to Michigan to dance.

The Dancing Academic

As I was standing in the hallway of the dance building, trying to coordinate schedules, two prospective students and their mothers sauntered up behind me admiring the pictures on the walls. Seeing me, one mother asked, “Are you a student here?” “Yes I am,” I replied, quickly preparing my “Yes! Please-come-to-Michigan!” face. “Do you like it?” I don’t know why, but I was surprised by the bluntness of her question, and I couldn’t respond without a breath of hesitation. I do like it here, but as a fourth year student with a few weeks left before graduating, I could only say that I’m getting ready to move forward. The next questions out of her mouth were, “Are you a double major? What is it like? Is it easy to graduate in four years? Do you have any time for a social life?” She asked these questions urgently and with a force that made me cautious with my response. I wanted to say, “Come to Michigan! We learn so much here. Michigan is known for the opportunity to study dance *and* major in something else. It *can* be completed in four years and you will *still* have enough time for a social life!” I wanted to give her

all of the gilded responses to pull these prospective students into our department. However, knowing all that I know, and experiencing all that I have experienced, I had to be *very* cautious so as not to spread the idea that getting a dual degree is easy. Instead, I reluctantly responded, “It will be difficult, especially managing your time efficiently to be able to complete both degrees in four years. But it is possible. I am able to complete my two degrees in four years, but I have had to twist the system to make it possible. As for a social life, I sometimes have to force myself to hang out with people so that I don’t go crazy with all of the work I have to do. It is a *difficult* thing to do, but it *is* possible.”

I hesitated because I know first hand that there is a very concrete tension that exists between academics and dance. This tension begins with the expectation upon arriving at Michigan that double majoring in dance and another interest will be easy to do in four years. Nicole described her educational expectations and how they became a source of her frustration. As previously mentioned, Nicole was pulled into the program because of the opportunity to double major. However,

The moment that I was in the school and we were taking classes [the faculty said,] “Double majors are really *only* for very *exceptional* students, and it’s really not something that we encourage most of you to pursue. You really need to be focused entirely on your dance work.” [They were] really unaccommodating and really un-encouraging, not just that, “Oh, we’re not going to try to work around your needs for an academic class here and an academic class there,” but also, “We are going to actively try and get you to reconsider your decision to double major.”

Naturally, Nicole found this “incredibly frustrating because this is what I came here to do, and now you’re telling me that it’s not an option, and that’s not something that we’re willing to

support?” She was actively discouraged and forced to abide by the strict requirements of the dance department rather than supported to pursue both careers. However, she contradicted herself and said that her advisor was “much more supportive” of her decision, but from the rest of the faculty “was this other message that [the double major] is not something we support or encourage.”

Henry, one of the faculty members, reflects this point of view. I asked him about how he supports students that are struggling to grow as dancers. His own perspective is represented in his response:¹³

If I see someone *just* treading water, you know, I’m not going to call them on that, because as long as they’re putting enough time in [they will probably get over their frustrations.] I think the assessments are really important at the end of the term, because you get a different perspective. Every faculty member weighs in, and we’re saying, “Well listen, we’re not seeing the trajectory of growth. What’s going on? There must be something. Are you not taking classes every day?” And [the student will] say, “Yeah, I’ve had to work on my academics, and I got sick and blah blah blah.” And we’ll say, “Well maybe you have to find some time management. What do you *really* want to do if you want to perform? You’ve got to keep up the momentum. There are kids just like you who want to perform and they’re taking two classes a day at the *minimum*. And so you should try to do that, because this is like being the number one violinist. I mean you know they’re going to practice six to eight hours a day as far as that goes.”

¹³ He uses language like “we” in his response, implying that he thinks the whole faculty will respond in the same way, but this is not necessarily the case.

Henry, as a professor of dance, will naturally favor a student's commitment to dance over her commitment to her other major. He highlights academics as the cause of a student's frustrations. From his perspective, if she reduced her involvement in academics, she could devote more of her time to her improvement as a dancer. He then continued to prove this point by mentioning a student who had "great potential" and "was very good," but she wasn't excelling or using all of her potential. He noticed that she was "running into an impediment" and assumed that it was probably due to her second major. When she told him that she reduced her major into a minor, he was satisfied and since then has seen her grow as an artist. Henry sees these "pivotal moments or fulcrum moments" of frustration as a test of the student's commitment to dance. He can "ascertain when a person really wants it" when they choose dance over their academic major.

Not all of the faculty present such a black and white perspective of dance education. Nicole did mention that a few faculty members supported her. Her advisor helped her by saying, "We'll find a way to make it work. We can do this. It's all ok." She has also noticed that in the past few years, more and more faculty support the decision to double major. However, this didn't stop her from feeling extremely frustrated by how her expectations of her education did not match up with her experience at Michigan. She confronted her frustration by realizing "that I had to do my own thing and *drag* the dance department along with me." Further,

They say that there's only one way to do things and that's the way it *has* to be. Then somewhere along the way you go, "Actually, there are other ways to make this work without breaking rules, and I'm going to do that way, and I know it's not the way you think it should be done or the way you're telling me it should be done, but that's the way that I'm going to do it."

The departmental discouragement actually ended up reinforcing her behavior, and she made sure that she completed both majors, even in the face of faculty disapproval. Her frustration pushed her to stubbornly twist the system so that it would fulfill her expectations. However, the effect was that she would inevitably struggle with her frustration, maneuvering the tension between her expectation and her experience. Nicole's expectations reflect an issue that Christoph Wulf considers within *Anthropology of Education* (2002). Discussing the conventional forms of education, he says, "At present, much of the knowledge transmitted by the educational system does not correspond to people's expectations" (2002: 3). Nicole's experience reflects this and she is weary to perpetuate the idea that faculty members encourage the dual degree.

Students also arrive at Michigan with a certain expectation of how the college schedule would be: organize your own classes, sleep until 2pm, etc. However, the dance student's schedule hardly reflects that of a "normal" college student. Upon arriving at Michigan, Miranda was one of the few who were aware of the "really intense block schedule" of dance classes. The dancer's schedule is set up like this: all technique classes are blocked out for two hours per class. Four regular technique classes are offered each day: a ballet and a modern offered for lowerclassmen, and a ballet and a modern offered for upperclassmen. So if students take the advice of their advisors, they will be dancing each day for four hours of technique classes. Twice a week, lowerclassmen also attend a two-hour "composition" class where they learn the tools of choreography. If they have been cast in faculty choreography for the annual Power Center¹⁴ performance, they will have at least two more hours every other day to rehearse. Thus, if a

¹⁴ Power Center is the name of the large venue where this annual performance takes place. This annual show is choreographed by faculty and guest artists who have been invited to choreograph or restage existing works on the dance students.

lowerclassmen attends every class that she is advised to take, she will be dancing for almost six hours each day.

However, the dancer's day does not stop here. A requirement of the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Dance is that the senior dance majors choreograph a three to five minute solo and a seven to ten minute group dance (U of M Department of Dance Undergraduate Student Handbook, 2011: 30-31). Second year graduate students are also required to choreograph a dance that could range up to an evening-length work. The senior undergraduates and the graduate students choose their dancers from the lowerclassmen based on auditions held at the beginning of the year. Those individuals who are also cast in student works will fill their evenings and their weekends with increasingly more rehearsals. Most choreographers schedule rehearsals for two hours twice a week, so add four hours to the schedule for every piece a dancer is cast in. This semester, a sophomore has been involved in five group works; thus with all of her classes, scheduled rehearsals and other projects that she is involved in, she could very well be dancing for 48 hours each week. In this "semi-conservatory system," as Nicole called it, it is a wonder at all that we have any time to commit to any "academic" classes.

When dancers are able to fit in academic classes, they usually have to occur at the beginning of the day, prior to the first technique class. Dancers also may sacrifice one of their technique classes in order to allow more room for scheduling an academic class. Due to the multiple conflicts in the schedule and the amount of time that dancers devote to maintaining their bodies, it is very difficult to find any non-dance class that will fit into their already full schedule. When they do, often it requires that they run from one class to the next with barely enough time to eat a sandwich in between. Thus, the desired "well-rounded education" turns into a tense relationship between time conflicts and needing to accommodate their commitment to dance. I

have often found myself rejecting an intriguing academic class because it doesn't fit into the proper time slot after I've scheduled my dance classes.

To dancers at Michigan, "academic" classes mean a few different things. In its most general context, "academic" means "non-dance." When dancers say, "I'm sorry, I can't rehearse then; I have one of my academics at that time," they refer to non-dance classes like English or History. Any class that counts towards the Liberal Arts and Science¹⁵ (LSA) degree will be termed "academic." However, there are also "dance academics," where dancers learn about the history of dance, anatomy and kinesiology, dance theory, and music, all of which are required and will count towards the dance degree. These classes are termed academic simply because the body is not the vehicle for learning as it is in the dance technique class. It is more like a "normal" academic class, with the emphasis on shaping the mind through readings, lectures, papers, and finals. Dancers sense that the difference between "academic" classes and dance classes is that academics are situated in the mind whereas dance is situated in the body. Dancers frequently feel this duality between body and mind because the idea of a "dual" major perpetuates a divided approach to a student's education.¹⁶

Dual degree dance majors put a lot of effort into planning their schedules, trying to make space for required academic and dance classes. The dual degree dance major knows that if she wants to graduate in four years, her semesters will always be packed with the maximum number of credits possible. When registration approaches, students scramble to find *at least* two extra academic classes to fit into their already full schedule. Since my freshman year, a good friend and I have spent *hours* looking at the handbook, the course listings, sheets of paper with columns of numbers, counting the number of credits and whether one course can fulfill more than one

¹⁵ This is what University of Michigan calls its Liberal Arts College.

¹⁶ I will discuss this dualism in the third part of this thesis.

requirement. Dancers put a lot of effort into finding an academic class that can count towards both degree requirements. If there is a choice between an interesting three credit course and an introduction four credit course that fulfills two requirements, the dual major will choose the latter because it *counts* for more. “Figuring out your academics” ends up being a source of frustration because the interesting courses seem to always conflict with the required dance courses. Enrollment is a frantic and frustrating experience because students know that with this kind of time commitment to dance, something will have to be sacrificed.

Thus, the Dancing Academic is faced with the ever-increasing problem of time management and counting the hours in a day. These students come to Michigan with the intention of studying dance and academics in four years. However, they don’t realize how difficult it will be to manage time and figure out the necessary balance between dance and academic courses. They are often even discouraged from continuing their double degree in the hopes that devoting more time to dance will make them more successful and less frustrated. They have to maneuver the time conflicts between the two separate degree requirements. They begin to realize that the structure of the dance degree doesn’t easily accommodate an extra academic schedule. These students feel frustrated by the fact that their expectations of their Michigan education are not aligning properly with their experience. Yet, they still choose to do a dual major, in part because their parents strongly encourage them to study more than dance. They choose to both dance *and* be an academic.

The Academic Dancer

The above discussion about academics is localized around the perspectives of the undergraduate dual degree dance major. The other perspective that I haven't frequently considered is that of the graduate dance student. I was only able to interview two graduate dance students;¹⁷ however, they revealed sufficient frustrations with the structure of the dance department. They came into the graduate program in dance expecting to focus on perfecting their artistic craft. Instead, they found themselves forced into a greater academic involvement than they expected. They became academic dancers when all they wanted to do was dance. In order to consider the distinction between these categories, I found that I needed to better understand the formal definition of "academic."

The Oxford English Dictionary online database defined the term "academic" in a few ways. Generally, "academic" is "relating to education and scholarship." The "academic" institution "places a greater emphasis on reading and study than on technical or practical work." The "academic" individual "is interested in or excelling at scholarly pursuits and activities." The "academic" arts "are conventional, especially in an idealized or excessively formal way." (Oxford English Dictionary, *web*; accessed 3/25/2012) These sub-definitions of academic are interesting because they overlap with a few different areas of the dancer's experience. The general definition aligns with how dancers perceive their "academic" classes. These are classes where the student sits and thinks, listens to lectures and reads books, takes tests and writes papers. This is the common notion of "academic" in that it engages more with "the mind" than with "the body." On the other hand, because the technique class engages the physical body, it is thus not an academic class. However, this does not stop dance teachers from increasing the

¹⁷ I interviewed them together, so I will often represent their perspectives within the dialogue that they were having with each other, feeding off of each other's ideas.

“academic” elements of dance education by assigning readings and papers that respond to dance performances.¹⁸ The more important element of these classes, however, is that the dancer is able to physically move her body and engage with something that is less associated with the mind.

The definition of “academic” arts is especially interesting. Though dancers don’t call technique classes “academic,” they will often engage with “conventional and formalized” forms of movement. A ballet class that focuses on the highly calculated details of the body would be considered more “academic” than an improvisation class, where the dancer explores new and unfamiliar avenues of movement. “Academic,” in terms of a dance class, implies that the dancers move with care and caution, focusing all of their energies on the proper technical form. “Academic” movement is “mind-full” in that it is calculated in order to appear aesthetically conventional. However, dancers rarely call technique classes “academic” because they associate “academics” with its most general definition, involving the mind. This latter definition of academic is equivalent to the dancer’s “technique” which is considered conventional, mind-full, detailed, and embodying of an aesthetic form. One day, my ballet teacher said to us, “Let it rip! You are being so academic, when at this point in your education you should really just be expressing. Don’t be so academic.” In this context “academic” is portrayed negatively and in opposition to the purer form of expression. This, however, was one of the first times that I have heard the term “academic” in a dance class, since usually the language revolves more around the word “technique.”

¹⁸ None of the teachers I interviewed directly mentioned how they feel like they adjust their approach to dance education in order to make it more valid in the academic environment. However, I get the sense that they are affected by the perception that dance has no place in “academics.” They compensate this belief by assigning papers and readings to supplement the technique class. This affects students because they sometimes don’t understand the relevance of the assigned reading, there is no element of lecture or discussion within the technique class.

The Oxford English Dictionary presented a final definition of academic: “not of practical relevance, only of theoretical interest” (Oxford English Dictionary, *web*; accessed 3/25/2012). This is how the graduate students perceived “academics.” Within their interviews, Corrine and Sharon both stated that they were frustrated by the prominence of the “academic” perspective in their arts education. Sharon hinted that her frustration occurs simply because of the tension between academia and the arts. The arts don’t quite fit into the academic model because art forms are learned through *practice* rather than through *thought*. Education of the arts has “practical relevance” because it is based on building and critiquing creativity in a way that prepares students for the “real world” of the artist. When the “theoretical interest” of academic study takes precedence over the “practical relevance” of artistic study, the artist feels completely “discouraged away from it.” Sharon senses that educators value theoretical interest more than practical relevance within arts education.

Corrine expressed anger with the way that the faculty valued involvement in academics rather than in dance. Corrine told me that not only are they required to take a certain amount of credits within the department of dance, but also many of their required credits are to be taken as cognates, classes in other departments in the University. She said,

What else is really frustrating is to find out that the only reason that the [cognate] credit amount was so high to begin with was because a couple of faculty members in this program value classes outside of the department more than they value classes in it. They want you to be exposed to other things. Well, that is their own personal interest. They have personal interest in other things outside of the dance world. But not everybody does. Not everybody has to play that tune.

Corrine feels that she is under the influence of the faculty members' interests rather than being encouraged to develop her own interests. She finds that there is a structural problem within the graduate program in that they are required to become involved in other areas of interest rather than simply exploring their own artistic craft. Instead of giving her another opportunity to study more about her passion and polish her craft, graduate school is throwing her back into a system of academia that doesn't help her learn more about her *art*. She is beginning to feel that *dance* is not enough for graduate school. Rather, dance has to be situated in the context of academia for it to be valid in graduate school. This sentiment is quite the reversal of what I discussed earlier about the undergraduate students. Those who come to Michigan expecting to be able to study two things, desiring a well-rounded education, are faced with time conflicts and faculty who encourage them to only commit to *dance*. In Corrine's experience, however, the faculty encourage her to be more involved in the academics of dance. This reveals that faculty members have different expectations for graduate students than they have for the undergraduate students. It is as if being involved with *only* dance is more appropriate for younger students, yet the integrated academic approach to dance is a choice that mature artists make.

To further her point, Corrine mentioned that her graduate education is not preparing her to perform, which is why she came back to get a Master's degree. Instead,

I feel like this is only preparing me to be an academic, which I didn't want to do... I mean I wanted to be able to teach at a university and to inspire students the way I have been inspired in the past. But I really wanted to tone my craft. I didn't want to learn how to write a 5000-word research paper because I'm never going to write a 5000-word research paper unless I go into a PhD program. Which would be another totally different terminal degree. And I'm already on a terminal

degree right now. It's a Masters of Fine Art, which means that you should be able to walk out of here and be an artist. Instead we could be a dance critic or a dance historian, which is great. It's making me smarter. But it's not why I came into the program.

Sharon replied to this, "It's not explained at all when you audition, and when you ask questions like, am 'I going to be able to create work?' The answers [the faculty] give you are completely tailored, 'Well, you can create as much work as you want, and there's always this opportunity.'" Corrine piped up and said, "But there's *not* [always that opportunity] because there's not enough *time*." This lack of time becomes problematic for the graduate students and results in immense frustration. They don't *want* to be put in the situation of learning something beyond what is necessary to be learning within their dance education. But because they are *required* to do this, it forces them to use their time completing assignments that they don't find as useful for their growth as artists. The focus on academic education prepares them for a future career of academia rather than a career in the practice of their artistic craft as dancers.

Sharon expressed her frustration by telling a story of when she got physically injured because of the increased stress due to her multiple of academic classes. She attributed the cause of her injury to the stress of having to take so many credits, do so much more academic work than she expected, and she found it almost impossible to achieve the things that she wanted to achieve by coming back to graduate school. She couldn't take any physical dance classes because there was rarely time in her busy schedule to attend any technique class. She "got a horrible injury, partly brought on by stress. Every muscle in my back turned to cement and pulled my whole spine out of alignment because of the whole stress of dealing with graduate school. There wasn't any time to take technique." If she were to find the time to take a daily

technique class, she could have potentially been able to reduce both her stress and the likelihood of her body getting injured. However, there wasn't any time left over in her schedule, so she couldn't physically take a dance technique class. Naturally, she found this immensely frustrating.

Jeffery, as a mentor of these graduate students, discussed how difficult some Masters students find it to come back to school. He explained that getting a graduate degree in dance would allow dancers to get a teaching positions at universities. However, as a professor in a university, he knows the difficulties associated with a position like this. "I always say that a teaching position in a university is not for everyone. It's not for every performer-artist who is seeking steady employment, because one has to be willing to juggle a lot of balls, be willing to make certain sacrifices, to re-prioritize constantly." Often, graduate students come to the University of Michigan expecting to further their education in dance, and then

they're suddenly inundated with influences, critiques, suggestions. They have to make their decisions very quickly about what their big project is going to be. They're expected to speak about their work, write about it, write grants for it. It's like this accelerated growing up period, where they have to become professionals very quickly and function in this synthetic universe that we're creating for them to test their chops. So there can be a moment of disillusionment where one sees what they thought was the reality isn't, doesn't work, and one has to reevaluate, try to figure out what he or she wants, not what the advisors or the teachers are intimating what is the standard and should be what *they* want. So at a certain point, I look for a defiance, a spirit of essentially asserting one's being alone and that can work two ways: it can have a self-determination that drives you through on your own or it could be an opening such that one seeks assistance and asks

advice and gets feedback and begins to learn to listen. So it's a combination of humility and of being humble and also learning to say yes and say no and to make certain choices and decisions.

When Jeffery sees graduate students become frustrated with the world of academia, he expects his students to “grow up” and make some decisions. They are thrown into a certain situation and are asked to behave as “professionals.” Graduate students are frustrated by the assumption that they need to be more “professional” because many of them have already had professional careers. They are being taught how to participate “professionally” within this “synthetic” academic environment, and sometimes it causes graduate students to resolve not to go into careers of university teaching. However, Jeffery’s perspective is that the amount of required academic participation reflects the environment of teaching in an academic institution. As Jeffery says, the academic dancer always has to know how to “juggle a lot of balls and be willing to make sacrifices.”

The Academic Dancer returns to school in order to work on their artistic craft and grow as an artist. However, once in graduate school, they are thrown into more “academic” classes than creative classes. This forces critical and theoretical thought into their education. They realize that by requiring so many academic classes, they were being situated into the academic environment that would prepare them for a future in academic careers. This frustrates them because they feel as though the brain is dominating over an education that *should* be localized around the body. They feel as though they are sacrificing their *art* for a more “academic” approach to art.

The Faculty Experience

After Jeffery discussed the inevitable sacrifices as an academic dancer, I felt compelled to consider how the dance faculty experience working within the larger context of academia. Are there similar issues between the time spent practicing dance, and making “professional” decisions? I became interested in their actual *experience* of being faculty members rather than just their opinions, approaches, and interactions with the students. I found that when I only focused on the student experience, I eliminated a lot of the work the faculty does beyond nurturing and educating the students. My conversations with Jeffery and another teacher, Sherrie, revealed a lot of the frustrations that they run into as dance educators in an academic environment.

When I spoke with Jeffery, he began to explain his multiple roles within the department of dance. Not only is he a teacher of technique classes, but he also manages to mentor both graduates and undergraduates, while also working on his professional craft. He made the distinction between three separate roles that are expected of each faculty member: teaching, creative or scholarly practices, and service. Every faculty member is expected to participate in the student’s education, but they are also expected to continue with their own research and their own artistic practices. On top of this, faculty members are expected to spend some time voluntarily serving on artistic committees or advising the students, both of which are activities that fall under the service category. He also said that there is a lot of “personal entrepreneurship and initiative involved in making sure the educational mission moves forward and that I am successful in fulfilling the requirements imposed upon me.” Further,

What happens is there are so many expectations placed on us as faculty that I could easily spend eight hours a day, five days a week, sitting right here doing

work writing grant proposals, organizing projects, meeting people all over campus to do my work. But on top of that, I'm paid to teach. Gee! What a novel thing! So, I am having to portion out my time and re-prioritize such that I know I have to commit this much [time] to my syllabi and to be absolutely there when I'm in the classroom.

Jeffery's job as an arts educator is "multi-faceted" and he encourages performers and artists who seek steady employment to think very hard about their decision to pursue a university position. He knows from experience that it is a difficult thing to handle and that it requires discipline and sacrifices. He, like many students, feels that there aren't enough hours in the day to complete all of his required work.

Sherrie related to Jeffery's experience when she spoke about her almost painful account of her time commitments.¹⁹ Both Jeffery and Sherrie have previously been involved in administrative positions in the educational dance world. They each described to me some things about administration that weren't explicit or obvious to them when they were *just* dance educators. Administration takes dance to the next level by thinking about the future of the dance institution and how it aligns with the greater context of the university. Sherrie told me that as a faculty member she has spent a lot of her time advocating for the department of dance as a whole, strategically making relationships to people who could support the department. Sherrie has also spent a lot of time making sure that the dance institution is represented professionally as a "stellar" institution of education. To provide an example of this, Sherrie told me that when she was previously an administrator, she spent a lot of time working on the institution's mission so

¹⁹ Since I have never taken any classes with Sherrie, I felt as if I did not know very much about her role and experience as an educator. I used this interview as a chance to get to know her better and to understand her unfamiliar perspective.

that it accurately represented their educational practices. She expressed her thoughts at the time of the mission change: “If this is what we are saying publically we are, then everything we do academically, ethically, has to fit with that [mission]. If it doesn’t, we need to have a conversation [and change it].” For her, the highest source of professionalism is consistency in presentation. If the institution is not presenting itself in the way that it actually functions, it is a source of unprofessional behavior and can cause professional relationships to disintegrate.

Sherrie also spoke of how an administrator takes on role as a mediator between departments and faculty members. She used a lot of energy managing inter- and intra-departmental relationships. She told me that a major part of the administrator’s position was “how you try and reach a consensus [between the faculty] and if you don’t, how you try and deal with a real divide in opinion.” Compromising with the faculty and being able to maneuver potentially problematic situations is a skill set that is required of every administrative faculty member.

About midway through Sherrie’s hour and fifteen-minute interview, she asked me if everything that she was saying made sense to me. I responded that she had painted a full and informative picture of what an administrative job entails. She then surprised me by saying that she wasn’t even halfway through a page-long list of the administrative duties. I will not explain these here because I wanted to focus more on her own experience as a faculty member. I was curious whether she, like the students, sometimes felt a misalignment between dance education and the greater university. Though Sherrie related to me the immense amount of time she spends on her job, she seemed to know how to efficiently manage her time in a way that doesn’t increase her frustrations. Like Jeffery, she has learned how to “juggle a lot of balls” in a way that makes it easier to approach her job as a dance educator.

When Sherrie mentioned interdepartmental relationships I was confronted with my own assumptions. Due to my limited experience as an artist in the “real world,” I automatically assumed that dance, and generally the arts are on the lowest rung of American society, and thus they are the least funded.²⁰ I have made this assumption because even throughout my twenty-one years of living, I have experienced some beloved arts programs shut down due to governmental funding cuts.²¹ This naturally made me feel that the arts were the least valued by American society, and I made the inappropriate assumption that the dance department would have the lowest status in the university. However, when I asked Sherrie about her experience with other departments in the University, she surprised me by saying that the dance department is valued at the same level as other departments in the School of Music, Theater, and Dance. She explained that departments budgets are managed on the school level rather than at the university level. The funds are divided evenly in a way that is dependent on how many students are enrolled in the department. Thus, the dance department’s budget is managed independently of the larger institution of University of Michigan, “and that’s wonderful because we have our autonomy and we make the decisions. Essentially [the decisions] have to do with the artists, but we have to perform fiscally in exactly the same way as everyone else. So we would only have tension [with the larger institution] if the school’s budget didn’t balance.” Sherrie did, however, wish that there were some larger entity or organization within University of Michigan that would support the arts specifically within education, but sometimes “you can’t have your cake and eat it too.”

²⁰ This is not to say that they are less *appreciated*, but rather within institutional or governmental contexts, they are less funded than other organizations.

²¹ Granted, we are still amidst an economic recession, but I still perceive that the first thing that gets cut in these situations are arts organizations. I may have a biased and oversimplified view, however, so take my perspective with a grain of salt.

Sherrie also spoke about a few interdepartmental relationships that have caused her to feel frustrated. She related to me that, at a previous time, SoMTD was just the School of Music. This name change caused a lot of music faculty members to form tense relationships with her as a faculty member of dance. “There were still a lot of people in the School of Music that felt it was very much *still* a School of Music and that dance and drama were these things that had been tagged on.” She then tried to justify those people’s perspectives:

And to be fair, historically, [dance and drama] *had* been added; they had been graphed on over time because dance was part of physical education. So we weren’t seen as being necessarily *equal* in terms—well certainly not in terms of track record, because we didn’t have as long a track record as degrees in music...So that name change made a huge difference internally to the school.

She could understand these people’s perspectives, but that didn’t make those interactions any less frustrating to her. She was happy, though, when the name change happened because it put dance on the radar and changed people’s perspectives about how to value dance within the arts world of the University of Michigan.

When I asked Sherrie specifically about her frustrations, she told me that she often gets frustrated by the slow processes of change within the institutional structure of the department. The majority of faculty has to be in agreement when a change is to be made to the dance program. However, each faculty member has varying opinions that can sometimes conflict in a way that make moving forward almost impossible. Making decisions within the department “takes a lot of discussion. And sometimes you think we’ve made a decision, and after a long long long long long long discussion, we reach consensus and sometimes we’ve even voted on something, almost unanimously. Then it comes back for further consultation. It’s good in many

ways. It is good because it gives more people a chance to have a voice, but it actually stops progress.” It was clear by her repetition of “long” that she feels inhibited by the way that change is handled within the university. While always in consideration of other people’s opinions, making sure that everyone is heard, it is hard to imagine a smooth and speedy process of change.

I then asked Sherrie about how she interacted with the students and how these interactions compared to the relationships with her colleagues. She responded with a hint of guilt,

Right...and nobody’s perfect. That’s the thing, I could sit here and honestly think “These are things I know that we *should* do.” Do we always do them? Maybe not. But I have to believe for myself that, in the majority of instances, I am doing it right. For me it’s about being professional. And that might mean different things to different people, but it’s how you deal with individuals and therefore how you deal with conflict.

Her response implied that she doesn’t feel like she has a very strong relationship with the students. This might have been her response because of the way that *I* approached the interview and the question. I asked to speak with her because I felt as if I didn’t know her very well. I have never been in a class with her, and thus I have never understood *who* she actually is and how she experiences her role in the department of dance. Her response seemed to be directed towards me specifically, justifying to *me* why she might not seem very involved with the students. This does not belittle her response, however, because she recognizes that she is not as involved with the students. After speaking with her, however, I completely understand why she might not be able to have strong relationships with the student. She simply does not have the time. Like Jeffery,

she has a multi-faceted role in the department, and she has to sacrifice some relationships with the students in order to effectively do her job.

I asked Jeffery a similar question about his involvement with the student body. He is aware that the pull of the dance department is its “nurturing” environment. He likes that the students feel nurtured, but he also is cautious of giving them too much attention. He says,

I’ve seen faculty who have gone too far over to being too mothering or being too familiar [with the students]. And then it becomes counter-productive in certain ways. I’ve seen certain faculty pull back. I’ve been guilty of that. I’ve never done over excessive parenting. It’s just not in me. I’ve pulled back thinking, “These kids need to know what it’s really like.”... I have to be available for this student and this student and this student either officially or unofficially. But if I’m going to survive in this environment as a working artist professor, I need to make very clear boundaries so that people respect those boundaries so that I can continue to function as best as I possibly can in the way I know how to.

Being less involved with the students seems like a coping strategy to manage the stress placed on faculty members. As experienced professionals making a career in the context of academia, they have discovered how to prioritize their time and sometimes interacting with students is the last thing on their list to complete. In Sherrie’s case, she felt slightly guilty that she doesn’t have much of a relationship with the students. However, in Jeffery’s case, he knows that he has to make clear and decisive boundaries so that he can properly manage his life as a “working artist professor,” which is an already difficult position to have.

This section has covered a small piece of the faculty experience within the context of academia. Being a faculty member requires three separate aspects of experience: teaching,

service, and creative practice. Beyond these categories of work, the professors' experiences also involve more administrative elements. The experience of dance professors at the University of Michigan goes beyond the students into the realm of managing relationships between faculty members and between departments. It can lead to frustrations with how others perceive and value the department of dance. However, the relationships between departments are also better than I assumed because of the way that the budget is distributed and managed. Unfortunately, the faculty can sometimes reduce their involvement with the student body, which is a source of frustration for both students *and* faculty. However, the faculty that choose to be less involved with the students have made this decision because of the greater pressures placed on them by the academic institution.

The Tension Between Arts and Academics

I have situated the discussion of dance in the context of academic education by separating out a few different experiences, that of the undergraduate, who begins to see herself as a dancing academic, that of the graduate who comes to see herself as an academic dancer, and that of a faculty member. For me, the distinction between these categories lies within how each individual approaches their expectations. The dancing academic feels the need to study more than one area of interest in order to broaden the chances of having a career in the future. The academic dancer, however, expects to focus more on the practice of dance and instead is placed in the critical position of making dance as academic as possible. The faculty member is situated in conversation between these other categories and helps to advise the students about how to

manage the relationship between academics and dance. In order to better understand this separation of experiences, I wanted to look into how the arts *fit* into higher education.

To do this, I found Malcolm Ross's *The Aesthetic Impulse* (1984) very useful in understanding the separation that art can have from "normal" education. Ross describes the arts as a "sacred" practice, which is heavily contrasted with the "secular" tendencies of higher education (1984: 10). Ross emphasizes that there is a boundary between the arts and "everyday human transaction." He quotes Edmund Leach, an anthropologist specializing in ritual and myth: "A boundary separates two zones of social space-time which are *normal, time-bounded, clear-cut, central, secular*, but the spatial and temporal markers which actually serve as boundaries are themselves *abnormal, timeless, ambiguous, at the edge, sacred*." (Leach 1976: 35 in Ross 1984: 10). In Ross's argument, this boundary clearly defines the separation between "normal" activity and the more "at the edge" artistic activity. He makes the point that the arts are always considered as liminal, "being different, being odd-ball, being outsider... being cast out" (Ross 1984: 11). Dancers often feel this way because they separate themselves from "normal" people and normal activities. Miranda in her interview said, "Why am I doing this to myself. I could be *normal* and take an eleven am [class], come home, take a two-hour nap, and just have a normal life." Betty similarly said, "There are the days when I just want to be a *normal* student and go to class in my pajamas and go back to my dorm sleep and if I want to I can sleep through my lectures because nobody will care." These two students make a very clear distinction between "normal" students and their lives as dance students. "Normal students", from the dancers' perspective, have much more time to sleep in the middle of the day and skip their classes, whereas dance majors feel obligated to attend each dance class and accept every opportunity to perform and express themselves. Often when dancers get frustrated with their daily routine, they

will compare themselves with the “normal” student, isolating themselves from the rest of the student body because of their required heightened time commitment.

Though I have often heard students complain of loss of time, dancers feel that they *really* don’t have any time for anything. Their free time is taken up by rehearsals for student choreography, which as previously mentioned doesn’t *count* towards anything in their major. Thus, dancers’ complaints about their lack of time are amplified because they have volunteered their few hours of free time for the opportunity to perform and express themselves in a practical setting. This problem of time becomes the automatic defense when other students express what I call the “dancers don’t work hard” perspective. There are many points in the dance major’s life when they encounter their friends who major in more conventional and “valued” areas of study. These friends often assume that “dance majors must not work as hard as other students do. They are *just* dancing around all day.” Sonia, at the end of our interview, said that some of her friends²² frequently express this “dancers don’t work hard” perspective. They would say, “Art is not as challenging as the other majors,” or, “Oh, it’s *just* art. You don’t really have exams,” or, “You don’t know this because you only dance.” Naturally, for Sonia, this is a constant source of frustration. When she asked my advice, I responded to her request by first grunting in frustration and then saying, “You’re going to run into that *all the time*, and it’s *always* annoying *every* time that it happens. They just don’t know how hard we work. They don’t know how much of our time is taken up by only one credit. It’s a lot of physical activity and it’s a lot of mental power. It’s a lot of strain on your body, on your brain, and on everything.” This interaction is a major source of frustration for dancers, and my automatic reply is to defend myself with all of the hours

²² Sonia specified these friends as engineers, which I find interesting because I have often found dancers complaining that their “engineer” friends never understand how much work they do. However, I do not know what it means. For some reason, engineers must be marked as the most valued and supported area of study, a natural antagonist to dance as an educational form.

I spend dancing to justify the amount of work I do. However, because our friends assume that we are “just dancing around all day,” we begin to doubt that our chosen area of study is as valued as conventional avenues of education.

Ross identifies these more valued or conventional areas of education as “the scientist and the technologist who are associated with a particular set of skills and purposes related to the mastery or utilization of the object world. By contrast the arts are defined by their apparent commitment to *the expression of subjective states in imaginative creations*” (1984: 27). He draws such a clear boundary between arts and “normal” education that it seems almost impossible that the arts could be valued at all within the traditional educational institutions. The ways educators and students value certain subjects over others is reflected in an anecdote that Sharon, told me. In her attempts to get into a four hundred level course that could count as her cognate, the professor who taught the course said that she “didn’t let dance students into four hundred level courses.” Sharon felt like she had to work even harder to simply *prove* that she could do the work that was necessary in the course.

She asked me upfront, “Do you think you can do this? I need you to send me a proposal.” I needed to prove to her that I could handle [the intensity of] the course. Which then only made me feel like every time that I went to class I was representing the dance department. I was just carrying that weight on my shoulders the whole time. So on top of having to get all my graduate work done, I felt like I was representing the dance department in the art history department, and they were going to make a lot of judgment calls on how I held myself during those classes and that was a lot of stress. And when I came to talk to faculty about it, they were like, “Yup!” And I was like, uh ok.

This experience caused Sharon to feel like she had to defend the dance department by working harder than she needed to. As an educator of the *academics* of art, this professor seemed to be able to refuse Sharon's entry into the class because as a dance student she *practiced* her art. Frustrated by this interaction, Sharon approached the faculty for advice, but they shrugged it off as a common interaction between dancer and academic. Thus, Ross' theoretical boundaries between conventional education and artistic education have very real repercussions within the interdepartmental interactions between student and faculty.

After defining this boundary between the arts and academics, Ross begins to discuss how he thinks all education should be situated within a creative and imaginative approach to learning. He suggests pursuing "cultural meaning," or as he puts it, "Putting the body back."

Education would emphasize the quality of on-going mental, physical and emotional engagement in the here and now and largely dispense with the prognosticated outcomes, products and all long-term situational pay-offs... Why should we not have a genuinely creative education – and if it is to be creative, then one focused on process, one that would not allow product to dominate and dictate outcomes in advance? There are skills, resources and knowledge that children absolutely must be given if *their* responses to life, both at school and in the wider context are to be creative: and if they aren't to be creative then what possible alternative worth giving a second thought to suggests itself? (Ross 1984: 88)

"Putting the body back" into the education of students requires taking it out of its dominant location of the mind. Ross suggests that conventional education focuses on the outcome of prescribed careers, rather than a process-based education that can allow students to learn

problem-solving skills. Ross suggests that an education in the arts can give students the skills necessary to make their own choices and opinions about how problems are solved in their future. Skills and knowledge can be learned through participation with the arts in a way that is more generally applied than if one only pursues an education that prescribes a certain occupation after finishing school, i.e. the scientist. Ross recognizes that more conventional areas of study isolate the mind, but in his opinion, education should be an on-going interaction between the mental, physical, and emotional aspects of the individual. Education could benefit from an art form such as dance, which focuses on this integration and embodiment of education.

Ross's perspective relates closely to what Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger term "situated learning." Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger explain this more embodied form of education in their book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991). They intend to describe the difference between a form of education that emphasizes "learning by doing" (1991: 31) and the more recognized form of education that focuses on "'receiving' a body of factual knowledge about the world" (1991: 33). In the context of my research, the "learning by doing" can be equated with dancing, and the "receiving knowledge" can be linked with "academics." Lave and Wenger want to eliminate the "conventional pessimism about informal, experience-based learning," and they emphasize the "comprehensive understanding involving the whole person" (1991: 33). They argue that an academic approach to education is the more "general" approach to knowledge. This is different from Ross's argument in that he felt as though the arts could provide a student with more general skills. For Lave and Wenger, the "academic" approach, or in their terms a more "general" approach to knowledge, can only be used in specialized situations.

Generality is often associated with abstract representations, with decontextualization. But abstract representations are meaningless unless they can

be made specific to the situation at hand. Moreover, the formation or acquisition of an abstract principle is itself a specific event in specific circumstances. Knowing a general rule by itself in no way assures that any generality it may carry is enabled in the specific circumstances in which it is relevant. In this sense, any “power of abstraction” is thoroughly situated, in the lives of persons and in the culture that makes it possible. (1991: 33-4)

By associating “general knowledge” with the idea that it can only exist in specific contexts, Lave and Wenger intend to show that a theoretical approach to knowledge is situated within the context that it is received. As previously discussed, academic education is strongly associated with theory and not practice; thus, according to Lave and Wenger, this theoretical thought remains situated in academia. Thus, academic study perpetuates academia.

Corrine expressed frustration with the way that academia becomes perpetuated through the study of dance. “There is such a disconnect between the professional dance world and the academic dance world. Those two collide. They don’t intersect, and they should intersect. This is the problem.” For Corrine, “academics” have no relevance when studying the *practice* of dance, and thus they shouldn’t be as important in the pursuit of a professional career in dance. However, there is the sense that if Corrine is studying dance within the context of academia, it has to become situated academically. As Lave and Wenger discussed,

The organization of schooling as an educational form is predicated on claims that knowledge can be decontextualized, and yet schools themselves as social institutions and as places of learning constitute very specific contexts. Thus, analysis of school learning as situated requires a multilayered view of how

knowing and learning are part of social practice – a major project in its own right.

(1991: 41)

Thus, simply by placing the study of dance in an academic setting, it will end up perpetuating the critical thought and care that is necessary within an academic area of dance. The arts and academia, as Ross mentioned, are rarely compatible in a way that is satisfying within arts education. However as Lave and Wenger describe, arts education becomes situated within academia no matter how compatible the two categories are. The result of the tension between arts and academia is that the students become frustrated so that they aren't given enough time to practice their art, to express themselves, or to have the "normal" life of a student.

The arts in the context of an academic institution tend to be a source of tension for those studying the arts. Students often desire to practice the art form rather than academically analyze the art form. However, because these arts programs are situated within an academic institution, there seems to be a greater pull towards the *academic* study of the arts rather than the *practice* of the arts. Dance students within this context begin to see the divide between the academic world and the dance world and try to reconcile the difference between the two by either resisting it, as the graduate students do, or by trying to bridge the gap between academics and dance by defending the amount of time they spend working and rehearsing their bodies. The student has to maneuver between these two almost opposing educational forms, and this can be a source of their frustration.

Conclusion

This part has situated the educational experience of dance within the larger context of academia. Many dancers choose to come to Michigan so they can take advantage of the high-quality education by taking on a second major. The department presents itself as a place where a dual degree is easy to complete in four years and they even encourage this pathway. However, when students come into the program, they soon realize that this is not the case and that it will be much more difficult than they expected. Sometimes they might even be encouraged to drop the double major and focus all of their energies on dance. Thus, they become frustrated by the way that their expectations that their experiences misalign.

Then there is the experience of the graduate students who attend Michigan for the opportunity to develop and explore their craft. Once at Michigan, however, they realize that they are required to become much more involved in the academic study of dance, which becomes critical and theoretical with no practical relevance. Frustrated by the amount of time they spend maneuvering academics rather than working on their body and their craft, they realize that they are being prepared for a career in academia. As we saw from the faculty members, dance academia is never *just* about teaching dance or practicing your craft, but it is also about service and interdepartmental relationships, and being able to professionally maneuver the gap between academics and art.

As dancers maneuver dance within the context of academia, they begin to understand the value systems that are at play within the University as a whole. Students who study more conventional subjects will scoff at the dance student, assuming that they are just dancing around all day. Professors who research the academic side of art won't value those who *just* dance. Dancers feel as though they have to defend themselves to these individuals who have the

“dancers don’t work hard” perspective. They become frustrated that they need to defend themselves in the first place because they already *know* how hard they work and how much time is spent rehearsing, dancing, or working on their second major. They want to say that they are studying as hard as the next person, working hard to fit the round peg of dance into the square hole of academia, but they can’t find the words except by expressing the immense time commitment of dance. Ross, Lave and Wenger, however, have found a different way of approaching this defense. Rather than the common “dancers don’t work hard” perspective, they suggest that dancers work *differently*. They learn differently because their education is *embodied* in practice. It focuses around the practical relevance of the body rather than the theoretical relevance of the mind. This duality of mind and body is the most prominent gap that dancers have to traverse when studying dance in the context of academia. This duality will be discussed in the last part.

PART 3

Frustration: The Dancer's Companion

“It takes a really strong person to be a dancer.”

– Suzanne

“Eighty percent of being in the dance field is learning how to deal with your frustrations.”

– Guest Teacher

“Getting frustrated and then dealing with it, and then really screwing up, it’s hard. I remember, especially when I was in school, it would feel debilitating. I remember that feeling of just shutting down, and you just feel it. You get tight. Your breath goes away. Your vision closes in. You get myopic. We’ve all had that feeling. It’s just that everything is squeezed in, and you’re just trying to dance. I think it’s physiological. It’s neuromuscular. I think that your heart rate changes. I feel like you just don’t function as well.”

– Katherine

The previous parts have demonstrated the different cultures and approaches to education within a university system as experienced by dance students and faculty members. The first part looks at the dance culture specifically, and the second part looks at how this dance culture fits into the larger context of the University of Michigan. Within their experience of education within The University of Michigan, dancers seem to be in a state of perpetual frustrations that can last for a day or can last for months. They can impact the dancer’s performance during a technique class, or they can cause a complete roadblock that makes it seem as though the dancer is unable

to improve within her education. No matter the scale, frustration is the dancer's companion. Learning how to "deal with your frustrations" becomes the biggest lesson for dancers in a university environment. To cope with these frustrations, students identify certain causes, blaming their bodies or the faculty. However, these dancers aren't as ready to identify their frustrations as a result of the misalignment between the different educational cultures of dance and academia.

The Identifiable Frustrations

There are certain elements of the dancers' experience that can allow them to identify certain causes of their frustration. As discussed in previous parts, one of the major causes of frustration is inability to manage time between the academic and the dance educations. Dancers are very conscious about their time and spend a lot of effort in picking the *right* classes to fit into the *right* two-hour time slot. Dancers express their frustration with time by comparing themselves to the "normal" college student who *always* has the time to sleep until the middle of the day and then sleep again. Dancers have the sense that a normal college experience revolves around the luxury of time to sleep and socialize with other students. This kind of comparison, though an exaggerated stereotype, helps them to *justify* to themselves and to other students the immensely difficult work that they have to do as dancers.

Another identifiable frustration is that of physical injury. When a dancer gets injured, it is not only inhibiting to her art, but also to her career and her passion. The identity of a dancer resides fully in the functioning of her body, and if her body begins to fail, her whole idea of herself becomes compromised. Thus, within technique classes, dancers are given the resources they need to prevent future injuries, or at least to cope with them as they occur. Another resource

for injury prevention is anatomy and kinesiology. Knowing how gravity pulls on the skeleton and aligns the body as it is “supposed” to be aligned, dancers begin to understand what their anatomical limits are, and how to push beyond them without damaging their instrument.

However, despite the teacher’s nurturing and preventative actions, dance students are still very likely to become injured due to overexertion and exhaustion. When an injury occurs, it is almost like a slap in the face, telling the dancer to slow down. Doctors will tell dancers to stop dancing so that they can heal; however, dancers rarely do this. They will dance on an injury even if it is painful to them and detrimental to their recovery process. This is “the show must go on” mentality: even if you are sick, exhausted, and injured, you are still expected to perform. A sophomore dance major, Marie, made comments about this kind of mentality during her interview:

I think it’s a feeling of guilt or a sense of responsibility. When you know that you’re hurt, it’s probably not wise to dance. But we tend to push ourselves or feel obligated to push ourselves or to prove something. I’m sick but I’m going to dance anyway; my ankle hurts but I’m going to push through the pain. I think that element comes out because you don’t want to seem lazy. You want to prove something, prove you’re willing to work hard or be extreme, [as if people would say,] “She twisted her ankle and now she’s going to ballet? Wow!” Even though that’s not really smart, it’s this sick impressive thing [that dancers do].

For some reason, as performers, we have the instinct, and even an obligation, to believe that pain is tolerable and that the most important thing to do is to dance. Marie is not alone in her belief that she *has* to dance on an injury in order to prove something. Most dance festivals and dance conservatories have a very strict policy about injuries. One of the freshmen I interviewed, Betty,

spoke about a recent experience at a dance program: “Right before I came here I went to a summer intensive where if you were injured, and you didn’t want to do your technique classes because you were injured, you couldn’t take part in rehearsal.” She related that a friend at another school immediately needed to see a chiropractor because within the dancer world “you push yourself and push yourself until you physically can’t.”

Marie expressed her extreme frustration once she found herself injured. She discussed how an injury could physically stop you from improving as a dancer.

It is one of the worst feelings: not being able to do things you have been able to do before... We’re just used to moving. I can’t chill out for a day; I need to take a walk for an hour; I need to be moving and get sweaty. If somebody is just an English major, they walk to class and sit in class. For them, if they hurt themselves it would be a drag. They’d walk slower, hobble to class. [But an injury for them] is not really taking you out of your element. It’s like if you mess up your eyes and you can’t read your literature. An injury takes you out of everything you define yourself as. You have to sit out of all your technique classes for a few weeks, but then who are you? You’re not doing what you’re here to do. I think that’s part of the guilt feeling, even though [sitting out of class is] wise for your body, to rest and heal, but I’m not being myself. In a way I think that’s really hard to be able to be that patient and take care of yourself.

Marie makes the common distinction between how and injury would affect a “normal” student and how it practically destroys a dancer. Marie speaks about something very crucial: self-identifying as a *dancer*. There is a sense that being a dancer is a major part of her identity. If this element is removed from her life, even temporarily, she is not going to feel secure in her identity.

It is as if these dancers are grounded in the fact that they are dancers because it is what makes them extraordinary. They are not *just* English majors. Instead they get the privilege to study something that they identify with. However, studying something like dance has its consequences, like getting injured and facing the frustration of that experience.

Being physically limited by your body is one of the most frustrating things about being a dancer. When you are young, you feel almost invincible and immortal, able to do push your body into new limits. However, once in the educational context where you dance for more hours than you have experienced before, injury becomes almost inevitable. I recently heard a freshman complain about a major injury that she received this year. She said, “I’m going to find all of the prospective students and *tell* them that if they come here, or go to dance in another college, they *will get injured!*” It almost seems inevitable as an enthusiastic freshman to be thrown into too many things that the body becomes overwhelmed and resorts to injury.

Kimberly, a senior, presents a different perspective of injury. She realizes that pain, like frustration, is a constant for dancers, and the necessary precautions have to be taken in over to overcome these physical limitations. “I’ve just accepted the fact that I’m always going to have trouble with [certain movements] but it doesn’t mean that I’ve given up. It just means I know my limits; I know my body.” She realizes that knowing your body can help prevent injury. Kimberly has observed many freshmen become injured due to overwork, and through her “senior wisdom,” her own experience through injury, she understands that the freshmen don’t yet know their bodies well enough to prevent themselves from injury.

I mean I’d rather they not have to learn the hard way but it’s like when your parent tells you [something] and you don’t get it until someone else tells you. You don’t get it until you actually get injured. At least all the upperclassmen know,

“Hey, if I’m close to injury, stop.” They know that much. Even if they don’t know, or they’re proprioception is not on point or something, they at least know that “oh I’m pushing it” and should probably sit down. Freshmen don’t know that at all.

Kimberly realizes that when freshmen come in to the department of dance, they are enthusiastic to push themselves and grow. However, this enthusiasm can push them farther than they physically should. These individuals often end up getting injured, and as a result, they are forced to learn about their bodies “the hard way.” She focuses on the fact that upperclassmen are different in that they take a more cautious approach to their bodies. They are more able to identify when something in their body is “off-kilter” and that they should stop themselves before they injure themselves more.

Though it is completely frustrating, getting injured is probably one of the most important lessons that a dancer can learn, and to be injured in a department who support you and make sure you have the resources to recover is an important thing for a dance student. Dance teachers are in tune with their students’ bodies and can encourage them to take the necessary precautions in order to prevent injuries. They try to give their dancers the resources to deal with these injuries in a way that can elongate their careers. Kimberly recognized that the faculty members at Michigan are very nurturing and intelligent about the way that they approach their practice as dancers. They want to prevent as many injuries as possible and thus will encourage the students to “do what you need to do” in order to feel better and heal. She compared the dance faculty at Michigan with what she assumes it is like in a conservatory environment. Teachers in a conservatory will push dancers without caring about an injured and unhealthy body. “Any hard core ballet place is going to do that, because most of the teachers don’t know anything about

their bodies. They haven't gone to college they haven't had any other sort of information pumped into them, it's always just been dance." Dance students at Michigan feel as if they develop a serious *intelligence* with which they approach dancing. The faculty nurtures this intelligence; they help students to approach their recovery process with patience rather than with frustrations.

This section identified a few different ways in which dancers explain their frustrations. One is time distribution and the attempt to balance the hours in a day between dance and academic work. The other is injury, which physically limits the dancer from achieving any sense of fulfillment through movement. Nor will she feel as though she is excelling within the technical form. She *has* to stop dancing, and begin to learn how to fix her body in order to make it feel better before she can go back into the dance class and move through the proper steps in order to reach the desired level of expression. These are the most frequently identified causes of frustration for dancers. However, most of the time, frustration is not that straightforward. A lot of the time, it is ambiguous and unidentifiable.

The Tyranny of Technique

Frequently, when dancers became frustrated I found that they would automatically blame the faculty for their frustrations. It usually stemmed from whether or not the student felt noticed enough by their professors. I began to ask my interviewees if they thought that the faculty noticed them enough in class or if they felt ignored by them. Many of the freshmen that I interviewed expressed more frustration with faculty members who didn't seem to notice them or

correct their dancing. However, in many of these circumstances, the student's frustrations stemmed from a deeper conflict with the tyranny of the technical form.

One of the freshmen that I interviewed, Betty, described that her experience as a dance major can be so exciting and productive one day and then completely down in the dumps and frustrating the next day. Sometimes she gets frustrated with herself, but "a lot of the time I get frustrated with my teachers." Further, she said,

It might not even be their fault, but it's just I'm in a bad mood that day. They either don't give me corrections, or I don't understand their corrections, or they just give me a general comment [that doesn't seem specific enough]. One modern teacher gave me comments but I wasn't sure how to apply them. [They would say ambiguous] things like "shift your weight" and then [move on to the next dancer]. But I'm like, "What does that even mean?" I would just be confused. I know I'm not doing it right, but I don't know why. So that would be frustrating.

In Betty's experience, she found that some of her teachers didn't give her enough time or feedback. On the rare occasions that they did notice her and give her a correction, she wouldn't understand it. Betty expresses frustration in that they don't spend *enough* time in explaining how to execute the movements better. As a new addition to the department of dance, Betty expects to improve immensely, and thus desires a very detailed and explicit approach to dance classes, with emphasized individual attention and feedback. However, when she doesn't receive the expected individualized attention from the faculty, her confusion with the technical form becomes overwhelming.

Marie presents a different case, where she blames the faculty leniency for the lack of her improvement. Though she recognizes that this nurturing community draws people in to attend

Michigan, she dislikes how nurturing faculty members are. When she isn't battling an injury, she doesn't feel pushed or challenged to move forward in her technique and grow as a dancer.

Sometimes it's frustrating to have them ease off you. Sometimes I wish that they were a little more on our backs. It's frustrating when in one ballet class, the teacher will sometimes say "Sit down if you want. You can always just do a barre." And I'm like "No!"...It's kind of shocking actually [how people take advantage of this.] By the end of class, there's a good eight or nine people sitting and saying, "My calves are tight, or my ankle is hurting." I mean I guess it's up to you to make the judgment about what your body needs, but the teacher isn't going to say anything.

For Marie, sometimes she feels as though dancers take the "nurturing" university environment for granted and they take advantage of the teachers' care of the students' bodies. Marie thinks it's an issue of self-motivation. She believes that these students want to sit out because they aren't motivated enough to finish the class and push through to the end. "When we graduate, no one is going to wake us up in the morning and make us go to class. But you better... I think we all have to grow up a little bit...you have got to be a mature person now." Marie seems to think that the dancers who sit out because of an injury are less mature than those who motivate themselves to push through the pain. Moreover, she feels as though these dancers will take this nurturing educational environment for granted and sit out of class "just because they feel like it." However, as we have seen from faculty members and from other students who have suffered injuries, it takes a lot of willpower to learn how to *stop* dancing when you are injured. But Marie feels as though students abuse this idea and aren't being properly prepared for the "real world of dance."

Marybeth, a junior, is also a student that is dissatisfied with the level of nurturing that happens at U of M. She presents her argument by complaining about how the dance department as a whole approaches ballet technique. She feels that because it is primarily a modern dance program, the teachers “dumb down” the ballet. However, she then backtracks and says that it is a two sided coin because “those teachers tend to be more understanding,” so she elects to skip the ballet classes more than the modern classes. However, “then I get disappointed because I don’t have the best ballet training, or I’ve lost some of my technique.” She automatically blames the teachers and she says, “It’s because my ballet teachers aren’t pushing me hard enough!” Marybeth’s main frustration is that she wants to be pushed harder in ballet classes rather than “eased off of.” She doesn’t see the benefit of leniency and nurturing within the education of a dancer.

However, Marybeth backtracks on what she just said because she did enjoy. Taking the classes that push her forward to do things that she hasn’t done since high school. However, when she is *forced* to do these things, she feels as if the professors treat the students “like little kids” in that they require students to come to class anyway even if you are feeling terrible. Marybeth says,

If I’m coming up to you and saying this is a horrible day and my mind needs a break and they’re like, “You know what? I’ve found in these cases, you just need to take a class.” And I’m like, “Please trust me on this.” So that totally changes from student to student. Some students will come up every class and then say, “I’m having a bad day *again*.” So I think the system in place is probably the best we’re going to get. Or maybe it’s just hard for me to see what can be changed or helped.

In this case, the teachers are expecting her to trust their experience by saying that you just need to take class and move through it, because technically, when you are paid to dance, you will still have to show up for class, even if you are having a bad day. However, the student wants the teacher to understand that she is so physically divided and exhausted that there is no possible way to concentrate on a dance class. In a way, the teacher is taking the perspective that by activating the body, the mind will follow and create more energy and allow the student to relax. However, the student is of the perspective that the mind won't be able to process and control the body in a way that is healthy. The student is of the perspective that with an exhausted mind, injury of the body will surely follow. However, the teacher has the perspective that with an exhausted mind, one can rely on the body to use its own intelligence and energize the mind. There is the sense that students and teachers take a different approach to the body because they have experienced different relationships between the mind and the body. The above examples begin to reveal the ambiguity of how frustration can be interpreted by members of the dance community. As Marybeth and Betty demonstrated frustration can come from both an internal source as well as an external source. Eliza and Kimberly have similarly felt these interactions with their selves and the faculty members, but they have begun to discover *why* they don't normally feel as though they are improving, thus lessening their frustration.

Eliza expressed that it is rare when a faculty member says something to her that she finds really insightful. She has had a few years to adjust to the different styles of the faculty members in a way that seems as if they probably won't say anything new to her. She replied to my question by highlighting the importance of guest artists who occasionally come and teach dance technique, called "master-classes." She found that guest artists would give her a correction that she found extremely insightful, but when the faculty gave her corrections it felt as if she had

heard them all before. The faculty rarely presented something new to her, whereas guest artists, by nature, are a new and fresh perspective. She feels that she must respect and impress the guest artists, and this entails being more *open* to trying new things, to learning combinations faster, to being receptive to all corrections that they give. I asked Eliza what the difference between faculty and guest artists is, and she replied:

I feel like I need to be more noticed when guest artists come in because they are only going to be here for a short time, and I want their attention. But with the faculty, I usually stand in the back [of the room]. For those kinds of classes I don't feel like I need to present myself to them as if I'm performing or going to be in a dance with them. I take those classes because I want to work on myself on my technique, rather than, "I'm going to dance for you and I want you to see me." I dance more for how I'm feeling and how it feels to me, and I want to do it that way.

Essentially, she recognizes that when she dances for the regular faculty, she dances with the mindset that she needs to be working internally on her technique as well as making choices of her own, dancing for herself rather than to impress the faculty. When she takes a technique class taught by a guest artist, she is less likely to dance internally focusing on her body, simply because she wants to get the attention of the guest teacher. Getting the attention of the teacher requires that the dancer is open and "present" and responsive to all external stimuli around her. By being open and projecting her energy outward, she is more likely to gain the attention of the teacher and hear what he has to say about how she is dancing. She would dance in an outward and expressive way rather than an internal and technical way. This change to an outward focus

allowed her to project her energy to the teacher, and in turn she was more able to actively respond to the corrections that the guest artist gave her.

Eliza presents a complex relationship between her body, her technique, and the way that she listens to corrections, and it revolves around the teacher that she has. If it is a regular faculty member teaching the class, she is more prone to turn inward within her body and focus on her technique. She is less likely to hear if the faculty has anything new to say to her because she comes into the class with the perception that they *won't* say anything new to her. In this case, familiarity breeds contempt. On the other hand, when she is in a master-class with a guest artist, it is a new teacher, a new perspective, and a new approach to dancing. She comes into the class wanting to project her dancing outward, ready to *dance* for the teacher rather than merely work on *technique* for herself. The newness of the guest teacher allows her to move beyond the details of her body into a more open and expressive realm where she is willing to hear as many corrections and criticisms as the teacher is willing to give to her. The way that she experiences a dance class revolves around how she perceives the teacher. She attends a dance class with a preconceived notion of how she is willing to perform for the teacher. It affects whether she dances for herself alone in an internalized and technical way, or if she wishes to project her dancing outward in an expressive way.

Kimberly found a different way of saying something similar. She told me about certain transformation that she experienced after becoming frustrated by the fact her teachers rarely noticed her. When they did notice her, they would yell at her “MORE! GIVE ME MORE!” I asked Kimberly what it meant to give “more.” She replied, “It means to fake being an extrovert.” When Kimberly said this statement, it blew me away. Being very extroverted myself, I never considered how outwardly one has to perform when dancing. Kimberly, as an introvert,

discovered that one reason why she felt that her teachers ignored her was because they couldn't *see* her. There is the sense that dancing *within* the confines of the body is not *enough* to capture the attention of an audience member.

I'm really detail oriented, but people don't see the details—other people won't see the details until you grab their attention, so I have to find a way to do that. And in discovering that fact, I'm just forcing myself to become extroverted... Previously I wasn't animated enough. My emotion wasn't coming out in whatever I was doing. I feel my emotion inside, but nobody else knows what it is because I'm not portraying it physically.

Kimberly has made a very important discovery in that if a dancer does not project their emotions, or become animated within their dancing, they won't be *seen*. If the dancer's focus becomes an internal one, then it becomes rare that a teacher will notice the dancers movements. Kimberly, in order to feel like she was improving, had to be active in approaching her modern teachers for feedback in her dancing. She could not be passive and internal with her interactions with her teachers. Instead, she had to be extroverted and active in her education and pursue her teachers for applicable corrections.

There is something to be said by the way each of these students realize their frustrations. In each of these situations, there is a very direct relationship to how they are interacting with their teachers in the dance technique class. There is a way in which dancers feel that by focusing on "technique" they have to become internal, detailed focused, and very specific dancers. Early in the dancer's education at U of M, they expect this high concentration on the details of the technique. They are drawn into their bodies internally, allowing their eyes to glaze over and really hone in on the subtle manipulations of the body. However, very often, the dancers feel that

they aren't being recognized or noticed by their faculty members. It has taken a few years for both Eliza and Kimberly to realize that there is an unknown benefit to outwardly projecting their dancing within a technique class. According to their experiences, the teachers will more actively respond to the dancers who are projecting their energies outward. They will be more likely to notice the way in which these students dance so they can more easily give them useful feedback. In turn, because she is already openly projecting herself out to the teacher, the student will feel more open to receiving the feedback, and thus feel like she is improving more.

Navigating Dualism: Body vs. Mind

In many of these case studies of frustration, dancers are blaming the faculty members for either not paying enough attention to them or forcing a certain kind of internalization of the technique onto the dancers in a way that doesn't push them into the expressive realm of dance. Miranda, also feels that her professors don't see her in the classes. She becomes frustrated, but she has a different reaction. Instead of passively becoming frustrated at the teachers, she actively tries to get their attention within their classes. She asks questions in class so that the faculty knows that you are making an effort.

It's about being hirable. It's important to make yourself noticeable by asking questions, even if they're dumb questions. I was always the one in my studio at home to ask dumb questions and learn to listen and learn. My teacher was like, 'Stop asking dumb questions. You know the answer to them. You are a smart girl

you can figure it out.’ I then understood that if you look and if you listen, then you’ll get it, and it’ll somehow connect. It will click.

There is the sense that Miranda thinks that asking questions will get her noticed and it will help her to learn more. Her anecdote demonstrates that questions won’t necessarily aid learning in the dance classroom. Asking questions and speaking in class is often looked down upon in a dance class. Dance teachers don’t expect the students to ask a lot of clarifying questions. Instead the students are expected to absorb the material by looking at the details and quickly imitate the movement. The body is the study guide, and teachers expect the students to be able to embody the specific details and “cultivate a real ability to see” as Katherine previously mentioned.

The approach to educating dancers is very different from the academic approach to education, which emphasizes the discussion of topics in order to better understand the concepts. The different ways that speech plays a part in dance and academic education creates an incompatible discrepancy between the two cultures of education. The dance students who are taking both dance and academic classes have to negotiate the gap between these approaches. It often results in frustration. Sharon, the graduate student, presented a problem that she had while traversing this gap between educational approaches. She identified herself as a student who would ask the questions to clarify assignments and understand the details of certain requirements. Within the department, she was reprimanded for asking these questions, and was told that the answers were clearly stated in the handbook. She quickly learned to shut her mouth when dealing with issues in her dance education because she felt like she was constantly being humiliated for asking these questions. This silencing, however, had an important effect on her academic education. When her art history professor assessed Sharon at the end of the semester, “she thought Sharon had a lot of valuable things to say that she didn’t say in class” and that she

wished Sharon spoke up more. Sharon expressed immense frustration at this assessment because she realized that her dance education is silencing her in a way that is not compatible with an academic education.

My own experience supports this incompatibility of dance education with academic education. Being a dancer, I am used to observing movement and “picking it up” quickly without having to ask many clarifying questions. This has had an effect on my academic education. I feel like I have to figure everything out on my own terms or else I will end up asking a question that I could have easily answered myself if I just thought about it long enough. Thus, I rarely go to office hours or participate vigorously in discussions because I am silently absorbing the material as I would in a dance class. This got me into trouble, however, when I was forced to verbally articulate my ideas for my thesis research. As I was preparing to discuss my ideas, which seemed pretty clear in my brain, I began to feel very anxious about how I would actually *talk about* my ideas. As I began to speak, my words came out jumbled, definitely not in complete sentences, and I resorted to using as many gestures as possible because I couldn’t *find* the right words. This was the first chance I had to speak in this class, and it was the least eloquent speech I have ever made. The result was that I immediately thought that my ideas were less important than anyone else’s because I couldn’t *talk* about them. My professor, after knowing me for a semester, admitted that his first impression of me was, “Oh, she’s a *dancer*. We are going to have to work on her a lot. She can’t figure out her ideas.” After saying this, he admitted that his first impression was wrong, and that he now understands that as a student that *moves*, *speech* is more difficult for me to eloquently produce.

These few anecdotes demonstrate that there is certain process of education within dance that is not very compatible with conventional academic education. Jean Lave and Etienne

Wenger begin to consider the difference between “conventional” education and what they term “situated learning” (1991). Situated learning focuses on how education does not have to be directly “received” in the form of knowledge as is thought of in conventional education (1991: 31), but rather it can be practiced and learned through observation and imitation. “[We argue] in favor of a shift away from a theory of situated activity in which learning is reified as one kind of activity, and toward a theory of social practice in which learning is viewed as an aspect of all activity” (1991: 37-8). They desire to take education out of the cerebrum and beyond, into the society around individuals and the social practice of the community. Essentially, they are arguing that learned culture, commonly associated with how children learn to behave by watching and imitating their parents, could actually be applied within other kinds of education, such as apprenticeship. By participating in the practical culture of “learning by doing,” students of dance are discovering the acceptable social interactions and the proper way of conducting themselves as professionals in the dance field. It is a practical approach to education because the dancers physically experience and embody the aesthetics of the art form. Thus, when dancers are situated within a dance class where speech and discussion is rare, they are being situated in a medium of communication that focuses on the expressive qualities of movement rather than the eloquence of speech necessary in “conventional” education. In a dance technique class, there is no real space for “receiving education in the form knowledge” in the traditional sense, but rather they are embodying knowledge, and they are actively participating in the field of dance.

Lave and Wenger argue that there is a problem with traditional education in the sense that the process of learning is focused on “internalizing” the information. Lave and Wenger suggest there are other ways of learning besides the common approach of memorizing, storing, and internalizing information within the brain.

Conventional explanations view learning as a process by which a learner internalizes knowledge, whether “discovered,” “transmitted” from others, or “experienced in interaction” with others. This focus on internalization does not just leave the nature of the learner, of the world, and of their relations unexplored; it can only reflect far-reaching assumptions concerning these issues. It establishes a sharp dichotomy between inside and outside, suggests that knowledge is largely cerebral, and takes the individual as the nonproblematic unit of analysis. (1991: 47)

To situate this discussion within the experience of the dance student, dancers often find themselves frustrated by the tendency to internalize the technical information. As we saw in “The Body and The Surrounding Space,” there is a tendency of dancers to have an “internal gaze” when involved in a technique class. This internalization can cause frustration for dancers because it feels as if their mind is operating inside their body and they are stuck within the confines of their skin. Dance students assume that frustrating internalization is brought on by the teachers’ instructions to pay attention to how all of the small details of the body add up and lead to an embodiment of the perfect technique. Lave and Wenger, however, suggest that this internalization is caused by the dominance of “conventional” forms of education over these more “situated” forms of learning. Like many dance professors, Lave and Wenger suggest that a broader and integrated experience of learning is a better way of approaching the education of dancers.

This discussion about conventional education versus situated learning begins to suggest a certain “dichotomy between inside and outside” the body and that knowledge can only be located in the head. By disputing this conventional approach, Lave and Wenger try to prove the validity of situated learning. They discuss that there needs to be a “break with the dualisms that have kept

persons reduced to their minds, mental processes to instrumental rationalism, and learning to the acquisition of knowledge (the discourse of dualism effectively segregates even these reductions from the everyday world of engaged participation)” (1991: 50). By even suggesting that dualism exists, it perpetuates the segmentation between the body and the mind. Their intention is to integrate the mind within the body and within the social context, thus allowing education to be situated in society, and knowledge to be practiced within the individual’s body rather than dominated by the mind. This discussion is highly applicable to the experience of dance majors within the context of academia. The dancers that experience the pull to internalize the knowledge of the technical form essentially are splitting the brain from the body. However, dance professors try to encourage an integrated approach to learning movement and technique. The dancers that are caught between this conventional form of education and the situated learning of dance education are the most likely to feel frustrated with their education.

Lave and Wenger introduce this dualism between mind and body as if it is an easy thing to integrate once education becomes more situated within the social context of practice. However, the problem of body and mind has been a prominent idea in dance scholarship for years. Fraleigh addresses the problem of dualism by mentioning that most dance literature involves a language that reinforces “that the body is simply material substance and mechanical physiological process, moved by something other than itself; and that mind, as pure thought, escapes the material body” (1987: 9). The mind, in this circumstance, is the agent that instructs the body, and that by intelligent calculation, the mind can control the body. This kind of language separates the mind from the body as separate entities. Fraleigh, as she discusses Plato, mentions that the mind is recognized as superior to the body (1987: 9). Fraleigh discusses Susanne Langer, when she defines “mind in terms of the highest articulation of psychological

processes” (Langer 1967 *in* Fraleigh 1987: 11). Fraleigh, however, tries to combat these common Western notions of the separation between mind and body and the everlasting superiority of the mind. She states,

Another consequence of dualism is that it encourages the all too common view that the training of a dancer is the training of the body, simply understood as physical. The body then is conceived mechanistically, as *a thing* to be whipped, honed, and molded into shape. (Fraleigh 1987: 11)

This can be seen within the students when they find themselves frustrated by the tendency of technique classes to only focus on the body. The technique class exists within the physical realm of toning, strengthening, and stretching the parts of the body to work together fluidly as a machine would. The body then becomes a source of frustration because the mind often cannot tell the body to work like a machine that executes movements perfectly each time. The body will often fail and lose balance even though the mind yells, “Get your hip bone over the ball of your foot!” Dualism between the mind and the body is a concept that is very prominent in Western thought, and the way that the dancer’s education is structured perpetuates this idea. However, the ways in which professors structure dance classes try to emphasize the integrated nature of body and mind rather than a dualistic approach.

Sally Ann Ness discusses the tendency for dancers to have this dualistic idea about body and mind. She tells a story of her personal experience of transformation when she discovered a fluidity within the perception of her mind, allowing it to become integrated into her body in ways that dancers often try to achieve within their daily technique classes. Like many professors, she says that no choreographed movement can be skillfully and artfully acquired “without keeping an open mind” (Ness 1992: 4). When she began learning the movement, she became very aware

of how she perceived her *self*. She, like Fraleigh, has traditionally understood her *self* as being associated with the features on her face and as having a certain control over the separate entity that is her body. However, during the experience of learning new choreographed movement, she began to redefine how she perceived her *self*.

Its first referent was no longer a vocal breath phrase, a voiced “me.” Its first referent was no longer a face, a pair of eyes and ears, and a brain. “Me” or “I” now meant itself to be a limb, swinging and scooping freely through the air, “listening,” as it went along, to the heavy rhythmic rocking of the pelvis to which it was connected. “Me” now meant “its self” to be of another mind. To the “me” of everyday life, it was a radically “other” mind, an exotic mind composed by a limb’s neuromuscular intelligence, a mind exploring its environment through something other than its eyes and ears. In sum, what had been “my” arm became “me,” and what had been “me” lost consciousness, and this transformation presented a microcosmic moment of liminality and “culture shock.” (Ness 1992: 5)

Ness is relating an experience where she felt the power of the body over the mind. The dominant form of her *self*, her mind and her face, began to relocate throughout different parts of her body while she danced this movement. She began to feel that her arm had a certain kind of intelligence that was not recognizable when her *self* was dominantly located in the cerebrum. Ness found this experience transforming, placing her in a liminal space rather than “in control” of her body. This transference of mind is something that is common for dancers. Teachers will often say, “put your mind in your pelvis” in order to stimulate this transformation, allowing dancers to gain a different perception of the movement. It is as if, for dancers, the mind is a fluid entity that can

easily move away from the head and into any part of the body. This kind of perspective suggests the immense intelligence that exists within these body parts in a way that can be forgotten when the mind is dominantly attached to the brain.

Similar to Ness, Cynthia Novack in her article “Looking at Movement as Culture” (1988) recognizes the problem of separating the body and the mind. She states, “Many cultural observers and researchers ignore the body and its actions, seeing them as irrelevant trappings for the mind” (1988: 102). This approach to researching culture is problematic for studying dance because the body itself has an intelligence that contributes to how the mind perceives. Novack continues by saying that even “if researchers do pay attention to movement and the body, it may be only in order to see the mind which lies behind it. If gestures, for instance, can be translated into verbal messages, then they have been ‘explained’” (1988: 102). This research is common for anthropological studies of dance, which locate the research within the cognitive search for “meaning” within movements, asking what the movement “stands for” or how the body can reflect social structures. These are important areas of research, but they tend to highlight the mind as dominant and “subsume the reality of the body.” Novack, however, cautions researchers who tend to highlight only the body in isolation from the mind “as if the body, movement, and mind were independent entities, scarcely connected to social and cultural ideas and institutions (103).” The problem with both of these approaches to research is that there is a division between mind and body that “dichotomizes aspects of experience which are not only closely related but which also reflect and refract upon one another.”

Kimberly reflects the opinions of these two anthropologists with the way she discusses how the mind can have an inhibiting dominance over the body. She is aware of this dualistic

trend in Western thought, however there have been times in her dance education where her body overcomes the dominance of the mind.

There are so many ways that you can control the way that you move. You can literally go beyond what you think are your physical limits just because your brain says so. And it's crazy to me because I'm always the person that's like, "No. I cannot lift my leg that high because I've tried but my muscles aren't that strong at this moment." But there are ways to get past that because it's not that your muscles aren't ever strong enough. I mean it gets easier when you work out, but your muscles should always have the ability to produce a certain amount of force that can go beyond what you think you're capable of. It is a whole mental struggle as opposed to a physical one. Everybody thinks it's physical and it's more mental.

That's made me rethink all of my dancing. I should just do it. Who cares!

She is recognizing that often dancers feel limited by their bodies. She uses her own body as an example and expresses her frustration with how her body is structured and how it's almost impossible to do some of the things that dance requires while still working within the limits of her body. However, she is beginning to realize that this struggle is not purely physical because technically muscles have enough force to be able to overcome this physical limitation. Instead, the limit on one's movement is actually the mind saying, "I can't do this movement. It is physically impossible." As she began to make this discovery, bringing the limitation out of the physical realm and into the mental realm, she was able to overcome a lot of her frustrations because she could mentally challenge herself to think differently about her dancing.

Novack's discussion of the prominence of the mind within Western thought and Kimberly's struggle with the limits of her mind both bring light to some of the frustrations that

these dancers experience. There are often times when a dancer related to me, “I’m trying so hard to do this movement correctly. I’m *trying* to put my hip over the ball of my foot, but my body just won’t do it.” As Western dancers in an educational system that emphasizes the importance of the brain over the body, these students assume that they, as subjects of their minds, are able to control their bodies and be able to execute a movement properly each time. They take Ness’s initial perspective, thinking that their *selves* are able to instruct the body what to do, and the body will be able to execute the movement. However, the body does not always cooperate with the mind, and a dancer may fall down even when the mind has made the necessary detailed calculations. When dancers find themselves in this common situation, this is when frustration overwhelms them. Between attempts of a movement, they will grunt, make faces, and tense up their muscles in a way that makes it harder to accurately complete the movement. Teachers can see this happening and try to calm them down by saying, “Don’t think so hard. Let go and let your body take over.” This prompt sometimes creates results, but often brings the student to tears because their frustrations won’t allow them to stop thinking about their failures. Their frustration arises out of the inability of the mind to control the body, and then it acts as a barrier between the mind and the body, reducing any chances of relocating the mind in the learned intelligence of the body. This frustration is caused by the Western assumption that the mind can control the body.

Nicole’s experience of frustration reflects the inhibiting feature of *thinking* within dance. I first asked her what helps her to embody movement and commit to dancing. She responded, “Oh, I think it depends on what movement it is that you’re trying to get done. I think for me I function really well with a lot of imagery so normally it’s finding the right way to imagine what’s going on inside the movement and inside my body.” She is speaking here about what helps her learn, and the imagery associated with a certain movement is something that she can

relate to while she is dancing. By associating an image to her movement, she is able to better integrate her brain with her body, allowing herself to find an intelligent approach to movement.

However, she contradicts herself by saying,

I have found recently that I like to over-think things and that gets in my way just as much not having the right image. So if I'm sitting there concentrating, "Oh I'm thinking about this in my ribs, and I'm thinking about this in my hips, and I'm thinking about this." Whereas sometimes you have to let go and trust that your body has it and let your mind go blank and just do it. So I'd say that imagery is normally what I turn to, and if that doesn't work then throwing myself into it and trusting that my muscles will make it happen even if my brain can't.

She has recognized the dominance of the brain over the body and how this can be a source of frustration. When the brain overworks and thinks heavily about what the body is doing, this turns into a place where frustration can happen and the movement can't be performed fully. The issue of the mind in dance is something that dance scholars have tried to address by saying that the body is equally as important. However, I think that dancers still feel the tension between the body and the brain in a way that creates frustration for them because they aren't exactly positive how they can coexist in a positive way without one overpowering another.

As discussed in Part 1, professors try their hardest to emphasize an integrated experience, locating the mind throughout the body and then moving beyond this integration into the realm of expression. However, because dancers are situated within the academic environment, they assume that they have to *think* harder to make this integration happen. This is not necessarily the case. To emphasize this point, let me present a situation that highlights the *success* of the body when integrated with the mind. I often feel obligated to attend dance class even if I have not slept

well or if I am feeling sick. In these circumstances, I will tell the teacher that I'm not feeling well, but I will still go through all of the regular motions of the dance class. On these days, I feel as if my mind cannot focus on all of the details of technique and I have none of the energy necessary to be expressive. I will instead focus all the energy I do have on my breath and my muscles, trying to move them in the least strenuous ways possible. My mind is so preoccupied with feeling sick that I cannot *think* about the internal details of my technique. However, without fail, every single time that I attend class in this sickened state, the teacher will comment on how beautifully I am moving and how well I am embodying the technique. It always confused me that every time I *wanted* to do well in a dance class, I would *work* my mind so that I could properly execute the technique. However, this mind-dominated approach would often result in frustration. And yet every time I was *just* dancing because I didn't feel well, I would have the best dance class of my life. When my mind was preoccupied with feeling unwell, my body had the chance to intelligently take over the experience of dancing and perform in a way that was more effective than if I was *thinking* about producing the movement. It is a very complex experience; however, it seems to reflect Novack's ideas about how the dichotomization between the mind and the body can be problematic, both for dance researchers *and* for dancers who are trying to integrate the mind within the body.

This section has presented a lot of very complex ideas about the problematic separation between mind and body. We began with Miranda and Sharon's experiences of using speech within the context of a dance class. Both of these individuals felt that the way in which dance classes are conducted tend to silence dancer's voices. In Sharon's experience, this silencing affected how she was perceived in her academic courses. There is a certain way in which dance classes are conducted that is not compatible with conventional academic education. The role of

speech within these two settings is one way in which dance within academia is not very compatible. Another discrepancy is the conventional emphasis on internalization of knowledge. This internalization gives prevalence to the mind, and emphasizes the existence of an inner and outer world. Dance education, on the other hand, emphasize that the body, the mind, and the space surrounding them should be integrated throughout all elements of education. Western thought assigns great importance to the dualism and separation between body and mind. Dance forms, however, try to dispute this approach by emphasizing the intelligence of the body. There is a sense that dancers become frustrated when they feel like they *have* to overwork their brain in order to be successful as a dancer. My opinion is that because these students are *Western* dancers, and they are dancing within the context of an academic university, they automatically operate with the idea that their brain has all of the control. However, their *experiences* with dancing contradict their mind-dominating ideas because the most successful moments are when dancers stop *thinking* about all of the technicalities, and *just dance* and express themselves. Their frustrations emerge when they are trying to bridge the artificial gap between the mind and the body. When dancers overcome their frustrations, it is caused by a conscious decision to ignore this gap and give more credit to their bodily intelligence.

Conclusion

As dancers, there is already a constant threat for frustration, simply because we are trying to embody an art form that highlights the body as the central axis of meaning. Both as a student in a university *and* within the real world of dance, there is an expectation to always attend a daily dance class. This daily dance class can be a place where the body becomes exhausted and

overworked in a way that could threaten injury. When dancers become injured, they feel as though a piece of their identity is being compromised. They aren't able to move in the ways that they want to, and they are stuck within the physical limitations of their bodies. This is one of the major sources of frustration for dancers. Within the U of M dance department, the faculty tries to present the dancers with as many resources as possible so that they can more easily deal with their frustrations. However, this nurturing environment can be both beneficial and frustrating to the students because they sometimes don't feel challenged enough within their education.

Often, dancers within a university context will blame their professors for not providing them with what they need in order to feel like they are excelling in their technique. They sometimes feel as though the faculty don't notice them enough or give them the right kind of attention. This can be caused by the way in which the mind dominates the technical education, internalizing the technical information in a way that dichotomizes the outside of the body from the inside. When dancers feel frustrated by the fact that the faculty members don't notice them, often it is because they are approaching their education from this internalized state. A few dancers have discovered that they need to express more within their daily technique classes in order to gain the attention of the faculty members. Many of the dance students, however, remain stuck within the tyranny of technique and the dominance of the mind over the body.

The most complex cause of these constant frustrations is the different values placed on the mind and the body within both dance and academic education. Though much dance literature tries to highlight the importance of the body within the education, the way in which academic education is situated makes dancers perceive the mind as a more dominant entity than the body. They become frustrated when their minds aren't able to control their bodies, as prescribed by Western ideas about mind and body. Their bodies have a certain kind of intelligence that can

only be revealed when the mind lets go of the dominance over the dance education. When dancers feel preoccupied with their technique, this is usually a sign that they are “thinking too much” or putting too much effort into mentally calculating the accurate placement of the body. This is a constant source of frustration for dancers. However, when dancers feel successful within their dance classes and within their performances, it occurs when the body and the mind and the space surrounding them become integrated into a whole experience that allows all elements of the body to interact and support each other.

Afterthoughts: Beyond Frustration

Completing this research has ended up being a very personal experience for me. As a dancer who participates within this particular dance culture, I have often found that I don't fit in perfectly with the way in which education is conducted. I feel slightly out of place both in my technique classes as well as within my academic classes. There have been times when I sorely desire an in depth discussion of what technique *means* for a dancer; what dance *is*; what we are actually *doing* as students of dance. This kind of discussion has never really occurred within my dance classes. However, I also find myself frustrated that I occasionally have to *read* and *write papers* for technique classes that I am *only* receiving one credit for. It doesn't seem worth the effort to do this academic work when I've already put in the time to dance the embodied form of technique. Thus, this research has revealed a few conflicts that I have within myself and within my experience of frustration.

Another example of this is the "dancers don't work hard" perspective that I mentioned in Part 2. When I spoke to one of the freshmen about it, I began to realize that I was not only responding to other people's understanding of what dance is. I was also getting angry at *myself* for thinking that dance is not *enough* to only study within a university. Through this research process, I realized that I am just as much of a bearer of Western culture as anyone. When I asked people if they were double majoring in something else, I phrased the question like this: "Are you majoring in something else or just dance?" *Just Dance*. My own language reflects the idea that I am trying to combat: that dance *is not* enough to study without also imposing academic values over a completely separate educational culture. I have the ideal sense that dancers are educated in ways that are *integrated, embodied*, and can overcome *dualism* between the body and mind. But

the fact of the matter is that dancers will still fall down even if they *try* to integrate their bodies and express themselves. I will *still* have the tendency to believe that I *need* more than dance in my life so that I can compensate for the popular idea that dance is not enough, not worth a whole four years of tuition. It is as if throughout my whole education I have separated my brain from my body, considering how one can control the other. As I've grown, I have developed a different kind of respect for my body that allows me to use it as a knowledgeable resource that is often more alert than my mind. However, as hard as I try to actively integrate my mind and my body, I am continually faced with cultural reminders that this is not as easy as I want it to be. Thus, frustration often comes from this active struggle against how education systems have formed cultures that reinforce a dualism between the body and the mind.

However, my research not only has revealed a deeper cultural trend within educational approaches, but it has also allowed me to move beyond my own frustrations within my education. I have gained an objective perspective of the frustration so that I am able to separate the emotion from my individual self. I am able to identify some of the sources of frustration so that I don't have to begrudgingly blame my teachers, or become extremely self-conscious because I can't balance on one leg. This research has pointed me to other sources of frustration that takes it out of the personal level, thus reducing the constant pain of frustration. I hope that this can happen for other dancers who read this.

To end on a positive note, frustration does not always end badly. Frustration can be a barrier, yes. However, it challenges you to climb the roadblock before you, allowing you to recognize your strength once on the other side. Many of the dancers that I spoke with mentioned that they have often overcome their frustrations and have emerged stronger and more satisfied as a result. Granted, all of the dancers I spoke with were *still* dance majors. I did not interview any

dancers who dropped the major, because I wanted to localize my research around the culture of the current department of dance. Those who are still dance majors, however, experienced their frustrations and continue to be dancers, even with the knowledge that they will become frustrated again and again. Katherine, for example, suggested that the frustration present within education allows the student to build a set of resources that will help her in her future career. She implies that this element of frustration never goes away for a dancer. There will always be some source and cause of a frustration, whether it is caused by physical pain, or whether it stems from a mental battle between the brain and the body. Thus, how a student copes with frustration in the environment of education will affect how she copes with her frustrations in the “real world of dance.” Though she is reluctant to say that frustration is a *good* thing, Katherine suggests that the prominence of frustration can provide the dancer with a practical resource when she goes into the field.

In order to represent the resilience after a major source of frustration, I will present Nicole as a case study. Nicole had to spend a period away from dance due to an injury, and as she discussed the frustrating process of being away from dance, she began to reveal the value in consciously considering why she wanted to dance. “I would not recommend going through what I went through, but on the other hand, taking time away from dance and assessing *why* it is you do what you do” is a really valuable decision to make. When dance is going to cause damage to your body, is it worth it to continue when there will potentially be chronic pain? She asked herself, “Do I really want to be doing this? Or am I doing it because it’s what I’ve always done? We dancers start so young and from such a young age, that’s how we define ourselves. I’m a dancer, that’s what I do.” She feels as though dance has a self-defining nature that causes young dancers to identify with it at a very early age without a conscious consideration about what it

means to be a dancer. Nicole suggests that sometimes dancers don't consciously know *why* they need to dance, and if they want to easily overcome their frustrations, they *should* know why they dance.

Once you really make that decision consciously that this is what I want to do, the experience of taking a technique class becomes so different. All of a sudden it becomes this almost spiritual experience every time you take a class, where it is this expression of who you are and what you want to be doing with your life...So taking class now [after time away from dance] has become much more of a joy whereas before it used to be something you *had* to do because you were getting graded, and they were taking attendance, and you had to be there. Which is not to say that there are days when I don't want to get up and I don't want to have to do it, but there are far more days when it feels like I *have* to be there because otherwise I won't be enjoying myself.

By consciously making the decision to dance, a student can begin to have a completely different experience of moving and taking classes. Somehow, this conscious choice makes it more possible for her to absorb the material, learn what is being taught, and engage in expressive movement. It seems as though the increased intention of *needing* to dance can increase the student's ability to enjoy dance, learn the material, and express herself in the desired way. A major frustration, like Nicole's big injury, can be the cause for dancers to assess their decisions to dance and either move away from it or move back towards it with increased intention to fulfill themselves artistically.

Nicole then turned the conversation towards why she felt like she was drawn to dance, why she needs to dance. She said, "to take it down to the bare bones, I love being onstage, and I

think that most dancers would tell you the same thing if they're being really honest about it. They like the attention of being on stage and they've become addicted to it in some way or another." Performing is a risk. Putting one's body out for public consideration, observing the moving form in a way that can reveal technical imperfections and failures. But this risk ends up being an adrenaline rush for performers. Dancers want to "get the adrenaline rush of exposing yourself that way, and hopefully making a connection with the audience and feeding off of that...I feel like that's one of the best highs in the world." Nicole loves to perform and give it everything, and "the audience is right there with you, and it just clicks." When she can get to the place of an ultimate connection, a "click" that happens between the performer and the audience, everything that was frustrating to the dancer becomes trivial because that moment is so satisfying. She listed a few joys of dancing that are more common: "The joy of physically moving; the joy of discovering new ways of moving the joy of struggling with a movement style or a particular movement that you're not getting, and you keep coming back to class, and it's not working, and then all of a sudden you find that little key that makes it click," all of these things for Nicole are valuable when involved in the world of dance. But she thinks that the ultimate joy is reaching this heightened place of expression and performance, this "clicking" together in an ultimate connection of the moment.

Nicole's experience can provide a model through which many dancers experience frustration. While "in it" dancers feel extremely inhibited and "squeezed in." However, in many circumstances these dancers take this frustration as a challenge, a barrier to climb rather than something to give up on. In some cases, frustration can force dancers to consciously consider their reasons for dancing, discovering their own interests and artistic needs along the way. Being in a field that is full of frustrations requires strength and willpower. But dance students are able

to *learn* how to deal with their own frustrations and discover new ways to overcome them. In this way, frustration can foster resilience and build a dancer's emotional strength, contributing to her maturity as an individual and as an artist. By no means is getting frustrated a positive experience. However, there is something about frustration that makes someone *pay attention* to what is going on, allowing an individual to *learn* something about themselves and their passions. This, at least, is what *I* have discovered through *my* frustrations.

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