

Abstract

As a seasoned dance educator I have spent the last decade developing a curriculum that supports student identity development through creative practice. Through my research and practice in the classroom, I have discovered the power of dance education to promote collaboration, creative problem solving, the ability to learn across disciplines, and several other areas of cognitive development. In this MFA thesis project, I continue this work by applying the creative process to investigate the potential for dance film to be used as an educational tool to support critical analysis of social constructs that inhibit identity development, specifically gender identity development. The resulting research investigates the use of dance film as a tool for building empathy, shifting audience perspectives, and creating a resource for critical examination of the effects of gender stereotypes on identity development. By choreographically challenging ideas of conformity and gender performativity as it relates to the gender binary, and framing the investigation under educational theorist Paulo Freire's structures for social reform, I seek to promote dialogue and social progression to reduce stereotypical threats against gender non-conforming individuals and to educate the larger community about the multiple layers of gender identity.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

IDENTITY STORIES: CULTURAL IMPRINTS ON THE BODY

by

Alexis Kamitses

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

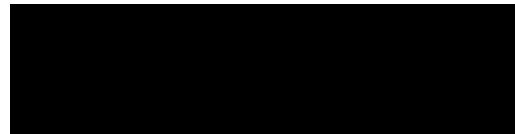
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

August 2020

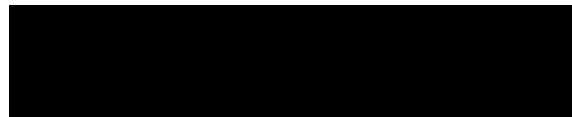
College/School: College of the Arts

Thesis Committee

Department: Theatre and Dance



Christian von Howard
Thesis Sponsor



Diann Sichel
Committee Member



Kim Whittam
Committee Member

IDENTITY STORIES: CULTURAL IMPRINTS ON THE BODY

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

by

Alexis Kamitses

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2020

Copyright ©2020 by Alexis Kamitses. All rights reserved.

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the help and support of many, and I am deeply appreciative of all the support I have received in the creation of this project:

The Montclair State University MFA Dance faculty: Dr. Elizabeth McPherson, Dr. Neil Balwin, Apollinaire Scherr, Maxine Steinman, Trebien Pollard, and Dr. Allen Maniker; with a special thanks to Professor Kathleen Kelley for guidance and expertise in laying the foundation for my work in dance film, Professor Claire Porter for her insight into Laban Movement Analysis, and Dr. Penelope Hanstein for reigniting my love of the messy creative process. Thanks also to readers Diann Sichel and Kim Whittam, and a special thanks to my thesis sponsor Professor Christian von Howard for hours of editing and guidance helping me to focus and refine my work.

A very special thank you to my family: my father Jerry Kamitses whose generous financial support made this entire MFA possible, my mother Lori Keene for both financially and lovingly supporting the filming of this project, David French whose talents in editing were a lifesaver throughout my two years in this program, and my son Liam for putting up with all the creative chaos.

I am indebted to Braden Pontoli for his generous musical contributions and professionalism in creating the film's soundtrack and the extremely talented Matthew Bingnot who was able to bring my choreography and concepts to life through his talents behind the camera and in the editing room.

A huge thanks to all of the dancers who contributed their time and exploration in the creative process with me along the way, Autumn Bangoura for her costuming contributions, Julie Shanks for lending me her daughter's Barbie collection, and all of my amazingly supportive friends and colleagues. A special thanks to my students past and present who inspired this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	8
Rationale	9
Research	12
Background	12
Dance and Social Justice	13
Stereotypes and Hidden Curriculum	17
Gendering and Marketing	20
Gender Performativity and LMA	24
Methodology	28
Exploration of Movement Choreographies	29
Barbie and Ken in Action	30
Film Structure	31
Generative Themes	31
Dialogue	33
Decodification	35
Praxis	37
Results and Implications for the Future	38
Bibliography	43
Appendix: Supplemental Figures and Performance Documentation	49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Theorizing Dancemaking as Storytelling. Created by Alexis Kamitses, 2020.	49
Figure 2: Hyperreality. Photo provided by Wayne Tarr, 2020.	49
Figures 3 and 4: Gendered Reaches in the Kitchen. Photo provided by Wayne Tarr, 2020.	50
Figures 5-11: Gendered Movement in the Garage. Photo provided by Wayne Tarr, 2020.	51-52
Figure 12: Program for Film Showing.	53

Introduction

Dance performance, film, social justice, and education are inextricably linked throughout American history and the history of dance education from the early 1900s until today. My thesis project aims to extend this long-standing relationship of dance, film, social justice, and education and embed it into current media contexts to challenge harmful stereotypes that continue to hinder social advancement for all people.

During the last fifteen years, teaching at public schools in Vermont, I have witnessed many students struggling with healthy identity development amidst family, school, and community pressures. Emotional barriers and trauma have isolated or pushed them away from the process of learning in the classroom. Their struggles inspired me to develop curriculum and teaching practices that integrated both academic and social learning, promoting classroom cultures where students can imagine themselves from the inside out instead of the outside in, creating space for both critical self-reflection and the promotion of social awareness.

I would like to expand this curriculum by using a new mediated platform. Famous Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire (1921-1997) named education as a force linked to either conformity or freedom. Through his analysis of education, he developed a set of key concepts which I used as the structural foundation in the creation of a dance film that investigates the effects of gender stereotypes on identity development in American culture. By choreographically investigating performativity as it relates to the construction and performance of gender identity, I seek to understand how dance film can be used as a form of narrative intervention, an educational platform for fostering empathy and supporting social progression. More specifically, I want to use this dance film as a pedagogical catalyst to upend social constructs, or what Freire refers to as social myths, to create new narratives that can help

dissolve stereotypes. By utilizing multimedia applications for this choreographic investigation, there is potential for reaching larger audiences and challenging the long-standing impact that multimedia marketing has had on human behavior and social construction.

Rationale

Under a strong presence of social media, adolescents and young adults face great pressure to “fit in” to hegemonic models of gender. Young women and girls struggle with body image and healthy sexuality, as their worth is often attached to their appearance rather than intellect. Young men and boys struggle with healthy modes of emotional expression as anger and aggression are often seen as the only acceptable forms of expression for them to have. For young men to show signs of empathy is often looked at as weak, and if you are a strong-minded young woman you are often ostracized. Women are stereotyped at being bad at math and encouraged to go into caretaking fields which pay far less than careers in math and science, and men are encouraged to think that acting like a woman is an insult and that to dominate others is a sign of success. I have seen these things occur first-hand in my own teaching and personal experiences. There is hope, however, to reverse these trends of homogenization and stereotyping. By finding space and time to give voice to personal identity outside of these extremes, we begin to see gender on an individual/interpersonal level, allowing each body to find its own authentic voice.

To begin this thesis project, I asked myself: how can the creative process be used to help create dialogue and promote self-reflection in order to reduce the impacts of these limiting social norms and support diversity? And, how can the creative process be used to make space for myself and viewers to reflect on the marketing of gender identity development and the implications of the stereotypes it perpetuates? I sought to answer both of these questions.

My work as an educator has allowed me to see the importance of integrating academic and social learning throughout K-12 classrooms and the powerful impact that dance education has on the development in these areas both in and beyond the dance classroom. In 2013, inspired by successes I was having with at-risk high school students in Franklin County, Vermont, I conducted a phenomenological study to document the effects of dance education on social, emotional, and academic learning with the intent of providing research in support of public dance education. I found that collaboration, creative problem solving, the ability to learn across disciplines, and several other areas of cognitive development were strong outcomes of students who participated in dance education.

Inspired by these findings, in 2014 I became a founding member of the Vermont Educators Professional Learning Community, which was started as a forum for dance educators across the state to share classroom experiences and curriculum, and to develop and refine educational standards. Through this undertaking, I became cognizant of the limited opportunities to study the art of dance in K-12 classrooms not only in the state of Vermont but across the nation. Inspired in part by these experiences and my continued investigation into the impact of dance education on student development over the course of my MFA, I aim to continue my inquiry into the positive impacts of dance education by examining the potential use of dance to support critical thinking skills, build awareness, create space for identity development, and support the cognitive and affective development of students in relationship to kinesthetic learning.

As an educator who works in rural Vermont where a large population of residents never leave the town they grew up in, I have come to understand the miseducation that often comes from working within cultural, social and economic limitations. 21st century technology has

opened up a whole new world of possibilities for learning. Students can watch live video footage of scientists in the Amazon and help with data collection or video conference with Broadway performers in New York City. However, the internet is also saturated with misinformation and sensationalism. The virtual market of YouTube stars, reality TV shows, and online advertisements has oversaturated the online world with bad behavior, damaging stereotypes and unachievable expectations. They reaffirm harmful stereotypes that are perpetuated through hidden curriculums in the classroom and have long created barriers to academic and social learning.

By making a dance film, for my thesis project, inspired by my own critical analysis of media impacts on gender development, I aimed to create a resource that can be utilized by educators in classrooms to examine the marketing of damaging social norms and stereotypes and their impacts on identity development. Ideally, my dance video will be a useful teaching tool to be utilized across curricular areas to reduce the impacts of gender stereotypes which create barriers for economic success and emotional well being for women and gender non-conforming individuals in particular. It might be used as a teaching prompt in a health class to talk about healthy modes of sexuality, or in a biology class to discuss the difference between gender and sex assignment, or in a history class to discuss the women's suffrage movement. Although these goals are too large for the scope of this project and require piloting the film in different educational settings, I include them to contextualize the intent of this creative endeavor and establish areas for a larger inquiry agenda.

Research

Background

When I was twenty I read the book *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (by Jung Chang), which is a true story about three generations of women growing up in communist China. I still remember exactly where I was sitting and the epiphany I had in that moment. Up until then, I had only been taught history through textbooks, so to experience history interwoven into a beautiful story was very memorable and my first exposure to understanding the power of storytelling in education.

Two years ago at the start of this MFA program, I took interest in exploring the use of story or narrative storylines in dance performance as a way of teaching and learning. Inspired by the skills I was learning in dance technology and wanting to incorporate multimedia modalities into my work, I choreographed a solo interlacing the use of text, movement, and video projections to investigate how perception can be affected by narrative representation. This led to a two-year exploration integrating dance and multimedia contexts to investigate social narratives and challenge audience perceptions. In the spring of 2019, I applied my new knowledge of multimedia software in Final Cut Pro and Isadora to create a multimedia performance piece in collaboration with my advanced dance students, exploring the effects of social media on self-perception. In this work, we incorporated the use of performers' cell phones on stage to project live feed onto two projection screens. I also created a dance film titled *Inner Monologue* in collaboration with theater artist Susan Palmer and videographer Harry Goldhagen. It investigated notions of personal perceptions of a performer using a live monologue, pre-recorded dialogue, and interactions with gestural movement and video projections in order to portray the inner experiences of the performer.

I delved into the theoretical research of dance making as narrative development in my *Creative Practices II* course with Professor Penelope Hanstein, and explored and developed a model titled *Theorizing Dance Making as Storytelling and Creating Narratives*, in which I investigated dance making as a pedagogical enterprise from the perspective of audience, participant, and dance maker. (See Figure 1 in the Appendix.) This investigation led me to a series of questions I used as a jumping-off point for this thesis project: What choreographic processes open up space for the learning self through transitional space and emergence? How does a dancer create opportunities in performance for new meaning construction for both self and audience/witness? In what ways can a choreographer use space/environment to inform dance making in relationship to meaning construction?

Dance and Social Justice

A foundational aspect of my research for this thesis project was an investigation of choreographers who have created work on themes of social justice. I start with a piece that forever changed my view on the art making process. *Making and Performing: Code 33*, a public art project performed in 1999 in Oakland, CA is a poignant example of artistic processes that open up space for the learning self and create opportunity in performance for new meaning construction for both self and audience/witness. By incorporating youth art workshops and video productions, facilitated discussions between police and youth, and community discussions as a part of the creative process, the performance “promoted changes in the way individual police officers and the Oakland Police Department relate to young people” (Roth 47). Hundreds of police officers and youth’s lives were changed for the better.

Art and social justice have a long history before this. The development of modern dance in America has strong ties to social justice and has addressed issues such as the labor movement,

civil rights, and anti-war activism. Modern dance practices can also be linked to American political progressivism and the Communist Party through the work of choreographers like Jane Dudley and Edith Segal (Library of Congress). Activists and leaders of these movements believed in the equality and empowerment of the less privileged in America, and many modern dance pioneers considered themselves to be activists who also fought for social justice and freedom of expression. Dance performance was even considered to be a “weapon” to fight for the rights of everyday workers who struggled against injustices and unemployment during the Great Depression (Geduld 202). This weapon was considered to be, not the physical act of dancing, but rather the stage or platform through which artists could convey their message. The Workers Dance League (WDL) performed in this way. Founded in New York in 1932 by a group of modern dancers, it “functioned as an umbrella organization, sponsoring concerts and lecture-demonstrations, as well as leading debates about the artist’s responsibility to society” (Prickett 1). The WDL held rallies incorporating dance, music, and spoken word performances, and its members built dances founded on principles of revolution, protest, reform, and freedom of expression.

The 1960s in the United States ushered in new dance practices that continued to expand and shape the legacy of social justice. This was the era of postmodern dance, a form developed alongside artistic and social upheavals in reaction to the compositional and presentational representations of modern dance up to that point (Guadagnino 2). Postmodern dance, aligned with other social, political, and artistic practices of the 60s and 70s and taking inspiration from the wider postmodern movement, was characterized by experimentation in both process and performance. “Performances were taken out of the proscenium theatre, process was highlighted, technique and form were deconstructed, and abstraction as well as improvisation became

mainstays of creation and performance” (McPherson 1). In this regard the postmodern movement itself could be seen as a protest against conforming to performance expectations of the time.

Viewed through the lens of social activism, street dance traces its lineage back to the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which was considered the “sister” of the Black Power Movement and was made up of artists motivated by conditions of oppression and racism (Harper 235). The Black Arts Movement sought to bring to light these challenges and to create a space for Black artists to be recognized amidst the ongoing colonialist heritage of oppression. The Black Arts Movement, although short-lived, was credited with affecting future generations of artists including influencing politically minded hip hop artists (Fulwood). Marvin Gladney credits the Black Arts movement with the beginnings of the “hip hop movement,” which began in the 1970s and led to the development of hip hop culture (1), which encompassed street dance rooted in Black and Latino communities in the 1970s (Chang 1). Hip hop was created in the streets by the people and through the people.

Current dance artists influenced by these American dance histories express themselves in ways that are rich and varied. They work across dance genres and styles and investigate the intersections between dance, education, social justice and the power of storytelling. Artists in the field of street dance continue to value the dissemination of knowledge as a key component of the hip hop aesthetic to be carried to many venues, from theatres to community centers and the streets which gave rise to the form. Rennie Harris, a contemporary hip hop artist and choreographer doing important work to educate audiences about historical and contemporary political, social, and racial issues in Black communities of the United States, conveys that, “Hip hop has affected all of mainstream culture, aka white culture. It has affected the language of an entire nation when you have white kids speaking the slang” (Grimes and O’Neal 2). In addition

to creating many choreographic works exploring issues of social class, gender, and the black experience, Harris also started an after-school mentoring program in 2000 to promote creativity and literacy in urban youth through learning about hip hop culture and street styles.

Contemporary artist Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's work is rooted in social justice issues and crosses into concert dance, education, and community outreach programs. She performs, choreographs, and teaches through her dance company Urban Bush Women (founded in 1984), which seeks to foster a two-way street provoking 'reluctant' viewers to consider dimensions of their social reality, including "race, gender, spirituality, social relations, political power, aesthetics, and community life" (Kowal 195). The company has also developed a community engagement program called BOLD (Builders, Organizers, and Leaders through Dance) that features facilitators who travel nationally and internationally to conduct workshops that bring the histories of local communities forward through performance (Bland 1).

Harris and Zollar are two examples of the many current artists whose work is strongly rooted in the histories of social justice and who actively seek to challenge stereotypes and viewers' perceptions through their work performatively and educationally. The work of these artists is important in understanding the underlying reasons why the work is happening in the first place. As artists with lived experiences of the negative effects of stereotypes in this country, it is a part of their story, but it is a part of all of our stories, because we all perpetuate stereotypes if we are not critically engaging in understanding and dismantling them.

In the history of education, there are many leaders who have promoted this dismantling through social analysis, student-centered and non-formal education: John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Carmelita Hinton, the founder of my alma mater, the Putney School. While some theorists (Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner) that I countered in my own Masters in

Teaching are still widely taught in educational programs, others have been considered more radical, outliers of mainstream education, including Paulo Freire. Most famous for his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire developed the concept of critical pedagogy and argued that teaching and learning could not be separated from social justice and democracy and that the goal of education should be an emancipation of oppression (Freire). He highlighted the importance of students' developing critical consciousness, seeing the connection between their own problems and their social context. Freire's "banking model" of education is important in the discussion of "hidden curriculums" and student-centered curriculum development. In this model, students become passive receptors of information which reinforces a lack of critical thinking and knowledge ownership. His pedagogical analysis presents a tool for addressing stereotypes and creates a forum for action that can help integrate social justice, education, and dance.

Stereotypes and Hidden Curriculum

A stereotype is commonly understood as a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. It causes people to attach characteristics, behaviours, and attributes to certain groups, which are often assigned by observable characteristics such as gender, race, or age. Stereotypes encompass both overt and hidden bias, can lead to inequity, and can be constructed from many sources such as direct personal experience, encounters with other people, academic and familial influences, and media. Implicit biases and hidden curriculums are constructed and reinforced through false perceptions which call attention to facts that support stereotypes. These actions divert attention from those which contradict it, and educational systems perpetuate these types of biases through hidden curriculums which are often compounded by technology and social media. The term "hidden curriculum," coined and defined in the early 1950s, is commonly understood as lessons which

are learned but not openly intended such as the transmission of norms, values, and beliefs conveyed in the classroom, and has been widely studied as a method by which schools generate and perpetuate social inequality. Susan Stinson's article "The Hidden Curriculum in Dance" demonstrates ways in which dance training teaches girls to be silent and do as they are told, while boys are encouraged to be leaders, the results of which can be linked to higher numbers of men in positions of leadership in many dance communities despite their minority in the art form itself (53). Ann Daly notes, "If we think about what values and meanings the feminine gender display encodes (softness, yielding) and those the masculine gender display encodes (strength and assertiveness) we find that these very polarities are those of the current hierarchy of labor in dance" ("At issue: Gender in Dance" 23). Shankar Vedantam in his book *The Hidden Brain* gives us a good analogy in helping to understand gender bias perpetuated by hidden curriculums, relating this to an undercurrents effect on a swimmer:

Most of us — men *and* women — will never consciously experience the undercurrent of sexism that runs through our world. Those who travel with the current will always feel they are good swimmers; those who swim against the current may never realize they are better swimmers than they imagine. We may have our suspicions, but we cannot know for sure, because most men will never experience life as a woman and most women will never know what it is like to be a man. (110)

But how do stereotypes, bias, and hidden curriculums form and what can we do to alleviate their effects? Social norms theory states that much of people's behavior is influenced by their perception of how other members of their social group behave (McLeod 1). Social norms are reinforced by internalization, identity contingencies, desire to belong to a group, and repetitive reminders. If harmful social ideologies from our past are accepted and recycled

without examination, then we run the risk of perpetuating hierarchies of power that continue the histories of oppression and exploitation of certain groups of people. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her TED Talk “We Should All Be Feminists” states: “culture does not make people, people make culture,” suggesting that we are all in charge of helping to construct the social realities we find around us. She points out that “boys and girls are undeniably different biologically but socialization exaggerates the differences and then it becomes a self-fulfilling process” (Adichie). Social psychologist Claude M. Steele in his book *Whistling Vivaldi* provides evidence-based studies highlighting how these self-fulfilling processes work by examining the impact of social identities, or contingencies. These lead to what he refers to as stereotype threats, which perpetuate racial and gender stereotypes and “strongly affect things as important as our performances in the classroom and on standardized tests, our memory capacity, our athletic performance, the pressure we feel to prove ourselves, even the comfort level we have with people of different groups - all things we typically think of as being determined by individual talents, motivations, and preferences” (4). e

Educators can either exacerbate these identity contingencies and stereotypes by contributing to hidden curriculums or alleviate the negative effects of stereotypes by using what social scientist Greg Walton coins “narrative intervention,” an educational method which utilizes the power of positive narratives to reduce the negative effects on student achievement (Steele 165). This concept can be identified as a method for new meaning construction which can be applied to this project. By highlighting narratives that place students in control of their own identity development, educators can work towards supporting the expansion of their worldview to alleviate learned biases, promote critical thinking, and encourage identity development that is not contingent on socially prescribed conditions.

To determine what types of stereotypes I wanted to address in this project, I examined the student population in which I taught and chose a topic I seemed to encounter most frequently in my classroom: gender identity development. As a jumping off point I interviewed dancers in the Burlington community who identified as gender non-binary or gender non-conforming with the intent of using these stories to help shape my choreography. I also began a larger literature search to explore gender expression and the impact of gender stereotypes on the construction of gender.

Gendering and Marketing

From what one wears to how they walk and talk, we apply socially constructed stereotypes, make assumptions, and try to put individuals into gender binary boxes where they face stereotypes about their intellect, ability, and behavior. In order to investigate this narrative and discuss gender stereotypes, it is important to properly define the difference between “sex”: assigned by our anatomy at birth; gender or gender expression: the way a person chooses to show their gender to others; and gendering: the process by which people “ascribe characteristics of masculinity or femininity, femaleness or maleness to a phenomenon (i.e., a role, position, concept, person, object, organization, or artifact), usually resulting in power and privilege, voice and neglect, or advantage and disadvantage” (Dye 413). Gender stereotypes, perpetuated by the act of gendering, enforce rigid views of a gender binary and limit social roles and attitudes assigned to these extremes. The term gender itself was popularized by feminists in the 1970s as a counterpoint to the idea that male/female differences were immutable and to support the deconstruction of gender norms that placed women as either homemaker or submissive, privileging that which is male or masculine over that which is feminine (Cislaghi and Heise 411).

By assigning arbitrary things like clothes, colors, and personality traits to gender, social constructions of gender perpetuate limitations and create “othering” effects that elicit discrimination and contribute to the undercurrent of gender bias. This phenomenon is often seen in current marketing campaigns where pink-colored products are suggested representations or choices for girls and blue for boys. A survey from the 1920s, however, indicated that about half of major American department stores promoted blue for girls and pink for boys (Ingraham 118), which demonstrates the changing construction of gender norms. The 1960s to the 1980s was an era which saw the marketing of more gender-neutral clothes and books, but since that time, gender-specific marketing has increased dramatically, and children are marketed specific toys, clothes, and games which can lead to developmental differences, predisposition for academic achievement, and as Vedantam would describe, strong undercurrents that children have to swim against if they want to venture outside of these gendering constraints, often at the risk of being bullied or ostracized. In a commonly cited case study in 2005 by Blakemore and Centers, research found that most toys were assigned to either boys or girls, and that toys for girls encouraged nurturing and domestic skills or were associated with attractiveness in appearance, while boys’ toys were mostly associated with violence and aggression or the development of cognitive, spacial, and scientific skills (631).

A quintessential example of gender marketing to children can be seen in the development of the most popular fashion doll ever produced: Barbie. Generating 1.6 billion dollars in 2019, the anatomically improbable Barbie is the highest grossing doll in American sales. Created in 1959 by Ruth Handler, who was president of Mattel toys until 1974, Barbie has taken many different forms over the years including dolls that love to shop and a model that spoke and stated “Math is tough!” While the math doll was controversial and removed from shelves, and current

trends at Mattel are marketing Barbie with new body types and diversity, Barbie's evolving appearance seems to be inspired more by consumer markets than advancement of women. According to *The Toys That Made Us* episode titled *Barbie*, she only got to become an astronaut once Ken was created in 1961 and she needed to be able to hang out with him ("*Barbie*").

Barbie's physical appearance was modeled on the German Bild Lilli doll, a risqué gag gift for men based upon a cartoon character featured in the West German newspaper *Bild Zeitung* (Lord 2020). Barbie represents just one of the many marketing strategies that promote the over-sexualized representation of women in American culture. Research on the effects of sexualization of girls in the media gathered by The American Psychological Association (APA) task force shows ample evidence to conclude that sexualization and its over portrayal in the media have negative effects on girls in a "variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, and healthy sexual development" (Zurbriggen, et al 1). The APA puts out a call to everyone working with young women, including educators, to "teach media literacy and include sexualization topics" (Zurbriggen, et al 1).

The effects of gendering are prolific throughout all aspects of American society, not just in the marketing of toys, and extend to my own personal experiences and those of friends, colleagues, and dancers I interviewed in conjunction with this project. For example, female students in male-dominated tech high school programs such as building trades or automotive are often made to feel uncomfortable and are subject to sexual harassment by their male peers; and men who make less than their wives are made to feel "emasculated," a term that is a problem in and of itself. One male dancer I interviewed witnessed the reality that his female coworker is repeatedly questioned on her authority while he is not, even though they hold the exact same job and position of power within the organization. What is even more pervasive is that these attitudes

and actions are often done unconsciously and without harmful intention. Shankar Vedantam defined the term “hidden brain” to describe a range of influences that manipulate us without our awareness (7). He states, “When a woman assumes a leadership role, our unconscious stereotypes about leadership come into conflict with our unconscious stereotypes about women... Our hidden brain makes women leaders appear ruthless and dislikeable for no better reason than that they happen to be women leaders” (Vedantam 93).

Grappling with the pervasiveness of these gendered limitations, one must consider how dance educators can support the cognitive and affective development of students to alleviate these influences. But, even if we take these gendered norms out of our schools and studios, constant handheld access (via smartphones) to film and media contributes to the construction of meaning. When YouTube was launched in 2005, the production and marketing of videos became opened to larger audiences. Dance, historically linked to marketing and commercialization, became a strong cultural driver that posited cultural meanings through advertising. While the empirical data behind dance’s impact on consumer culture is new and inconclusive, the long history of dance and commercialization suggests that there is a clear demonstration of audience impact and the consumption of products. In Colleen Dunagan’s *Consuming Dance: Choreography and Advertising*, she posits that the marketing value of dance “lies in the ability of the dancing body to produce *affect* through kinesthetic empathy and correspondingly to create the appearance of relational meaning and agency” (13). This can be related back to Ann Daly’s scholarship recognizing that dance “although it has a visual component, is fundamentally a kinesthetic art whose apperception is grounded not just in the eye but in the entire body” (*Critical Gestures: Writings on Dance and Culture* 307).

Dance film has the potential to develop kinesthetic empathy in viewers to promote gender diversity, but the integration of dance and film has not always been utilized to promote social justice. From Anna Pavlova's endorsement of Pond's Vanishing Cream (1914), to "What becomes a legend most?" (1976) advertising Blackglama mink coats, to Rolex ads from the '80s and '90s, to current ads selling products from Levi's to Under Armour and Free People, advertising has used dance to capitalize on images of wealth, style, and success (Kelly). Consumer culture, centered on commercialization, promoting social status and values, and activities centered on the consumption of goods and false relationships, can lead to desensitization to reality, misplaced self identity, and a "resultant uncritical engagement with life" (McGregor 747). Applying critical consciousness to examine these marketing and culture makers is an important construct in 21st century education; by developing educational systems that promote critical thinking and media literacy, students have a better chance at creating healthy relationships with themselves and others.

Gender Performativity and Laban Movement Analysis

The gendering of movement itself can also be seen as a type of gender marketing, as witnessed in the performance of gender roles found in dance classrooms and on stages. We see the prescription of movement in line with gender roles in ballet and many forms of partner dancing where there is a notion of a lead and follow, historically assigned to men and women respectively. Expectations for physical traits and movement styles run rampant in the field, and subtle and not so subtle undercurrents create gender divides in movements and training.

Wendy Oliver and Doug Risner note that:

One 1995 study of eight hundred elementary school children found significant differences between boys and girls in dance classes. Boys covered large amounts of

space, used more physical energy, moved quickly, took physical risks, and approached their own presentations with confidence. Girls worked in limited space, moved at slow to moderate tempos, did not take physical risks, spent considerable time standing still, and apprehensively showed their presentations. (8)

It also extends far beyond that. Gender performativity is a term first coined by author and philosopher Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990), in which she investigates the notion of gender as performance, focusing on stylized repetition of acts through time or “reiterative and citational patterns... that interpellate the subject as a gendered subject” (Butler quoted in Foster 4). Butler’s work advanced J. L. Austin’s analysis of the performativity of language and its relationship to social and political dimensions and gives us language and ideas that can be expanded to include discussions about gender performativity as it relates to the study of the kinesthetic (Foster 3).

In Ann Daly’s work “Movement Analysis: Piecing Together the Puzzle,” she surveys the social and political significance that movement has had on our culture and social order, and the importance of movement analysis in the field of gender performativity. In light of the fact that movement itself has been dichotomized as feminine against the more masculine associations with language, and the centralized power of language on interpretation, this analysis allows us to extend our understanding of gender to hierarchies of power linking back to the discussion on hidden bias. Reading “body language” alone, Daly argues, limits the broader notion that “all behavior – postural shifts or the relinquishing of direct gaze, for example – potentially functions to establish, maintain, and terminate patterns of relationships between interactants” (“Movement Analysis: Piecing Together the Puzzle” 44). By shifting the focus of meaning-making from its linguistic isolation in the metacognitive and back into the body and feelings, and removing these

as gendered experiences, perhaps we can promote a more holistic perspective of body and mind and build empathy. Daly highlights how the observer's role in dance performance is both visual and kinesthetic, noting that viewers' perceptions are an important component of constructing meaning in movement. She writes, "spectators of dance experience kinesthetic empathy when, even while sitting still, they feel they are participating in the movements they observe, and experience related feelings and ideas" ("Movement Analysis: Piecing Together the Puzzle" 44).

Movement analysis such as Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) has opened the door to legitimizing dance as meaning-making by its inclusion in the field of social sciences and empirical data collection, and its analytical applications to understanding ways that movement communicates intention on both physical and psychological levels (Levy and Duke⁴⁰). The field of movement analysis itself dates back to Charles Darwin (1872) and has long been prevalent also in the field of psychology and anthropology. LMA is largely credited to the work of Austro-Hungarian dance/movement theoretician Rudolf Laban (1879-1958). It was further developed by Irmgard Bartenieff into an analysis utilizing four major categories: Body, Effort, Shape, and Space (BESS), which are then broken down into further categories for analysis. In *Body Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*, Janet Kaylo links the work of LMA and movement analysis to the social construction of gender identity and Jungian ideas of gender. She notes that "when particular movement qualities and combinations are utilised expressively in one gender with significant frequency over the other, it becomes especially important to flesh out further how these qualities might be socially construed and even more importantly, might contribute to limitations of expression for each gender" (Kaylo 8). By repetitively associating movement qualities with gender we start to create limitations and boxes which individuals now have to move within to fit into the social norm. This leads to construction of an idea that there is such a

thing as gendered movement, suggesting that “movement choice reflects to a significant degree gender-related conditioning – particularly in those cultures which inhibit an outward display of physical strength and control in women, and discourage displays of vulnerability in men” (Kaylo 8).

The analysis of movement, the process of deriving meaning-making, constructing a new way of knowing outside the boundaries of language, also can be seen as a bridge between the early histories of social reform and feminism associated with modern dance (social justice histories outlined at the start of this research), and the study of education and dance in education. Turning back to Butler, she gives us a tool for the critical development of gender identity in support of broadening social norms to reduce harm. She suggests that “the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style” (Butler 519). She challenges us to question notions of gender roles, to see them as “signs” that are made up to represent something fictional and to reject the idea that behaviors and attitudes can solely be predetermined by one’s biological sex traits (Butler 520). Yes, women birth babies and men do not, and men have the potential for greater upper body strength compared to women; but neither of these things predetermines what an individual likes to wear/should wear, whether they are good at reasoning or math, know how to cook, enjoy fixing cars, or would like to learn to “lead” or “follow” in partner dancing.

The analysis of gender in the field of movement analysis inherently becomes interdisciplinary, and to “approach gender as choreography” creates a “potential bridge between academic and activist spheres of engagement with gender operations” (Foster 28). The study and practice of choreography can in fact “disrupt the traditional division of labor between verbal and

nonverbal acts by fusing the experiential and ‘feminine’ cultivation of bodily presence to the intellectual and ‘masculine’ analysis of representation” (Foster 28). By choreographing new meanings for gender roles, recognizing the effect of social systems on our gender identities, we have the ability to make space for healthy identity development, recognizing gender not as biologically fixed, but rooted instead in the social, political, economic and aesthetic values of our society.

Methodology

How can we use dance performance, specifically dance film, as a resource to inspire social change through critical pedagogy uncovering the performativity of gender and its relationship to the construct of the gender binary? Freire’s analysis of education embedded in social justice reform served as the foundational structure for my film. By applying the theories of gender performativity and constructs of gender bias to my choreographic endeavor, I worked to create a dance film with the potential to be used in educational settings to promote social awareness and media literacy. Dance film has the potential to tap into affect theory, or how film affects an audience's senses and therefore perceptions, allowing them to reinterpret and reimagine their own reality. In “Identity Stories: Cultural Imprints on the Body,” I hope to invite viewers to indulge in the “fantasy of becoming multiplicity - the dream of limitless multiple embodiments, allowing one to dance from place to place and self to self” (Foster 29). While naysayers might try to argue that removing the pink and blue stereotypes will turn our world all to beige, I would argue that by challenging the gender binary and expanding the possibilities of identity development we instead create a world full of color, expanding across a beautiful spectrum of shades and hues.

Freire's concept of *conscientization* inspired me to think of the creation of this video as a tool for action, a focus on cause and effect instead of fatalistic remorse to expand limited notions of gender. Freire suggests that "When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it in fragments which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality" (Freire 104). By creating a dance film which challenges audiences to derive their own meaning, and providing opportunities for it to be used in educational settings, I hope to facilitate a broader discussion. By beginning to piece together the socially constructed fragments of gender identity, we gain awareness of a broader and more accurate reality, and become critically conscious of social pressures, commercialized culture, and hidden curriculums that hinder identity development.

Exploration of Movement Choreographies

My movement analysis constituted investigating Rudolf Laban's notion of effort factors, mainly weight, time and space; aligning indulging efforts with the feminine; and fighting efforts with the masculine as analyzed in Janet Kaylo's article "Anima and animus embodied: Jungian gender and Laban Movement Analysis" :

To summarise these movement polarities: The culturally-inscribed feminine of women's movement would include various combinations of characteristics that have more incidence of Light, Indirect, Decelerating Effort with Bound Flow; paired with Growing in the Kinesphere and opening modes of Shape; while relating through accommodating modes of Shaping or internally adjusting Shape-flow. For the masculine of men, similar cultural expectations might idealise inclusions of Strong, Direct, or Accelerating Effort with Bound Flow; pairing Growing in the Kinesphere with closing in Shape; while relating oftentimes through a Directional mode of Shape. (7)

I combined this movement analysis with anecdotal stories from research on socially-constructed gendered movement patterns and gestural movement explorations rooted in the site-specific locations I chose for the film. I experimented with different styles of music that I felt inspired the movement qualities in my own body and emotional concepts that I wanted to portray in the different parts of my film, and then worked with composer Braden Pontoli to create music with a similar feel.

Barbie and Ken in Action

The main characters I chose for the film, Barbie and Ken, are used to construct and then deconstruct stereotypical gender roles. They are introduced at the start of the film as dolls that come to life and enact notions of gendered movement in their socially prescribed environments. Over the course of the film, we see these dolls changing personas, going out into the world, and then imagining themselves in each other's spaces and roles. By the end of the film, when the credits roll, we see staged pictures of Barbie and Ken in gender-bending and eclectic outfits. By choosing to play both Barbie and Ken myself, I explore these prescribed roles and places in one body, suggesting not a split personality, but one person, in one body, with multiple parts of their identity outside of the gendered box of the binary. Viewers see these concepts played out through different gendered movement qualities, costuming, and environments. (See Figures 3-11 in Appendix). By choosing Barbie and Ken, along with found footage showing advertisements of these dolls and other toys that are marketed separately to boys and girls, I seek to highlight this influence on gender construction in the media.

Film Structure

Generative Themes

“The first thing you're going to want to know about me is: Am I a boy, or am I a girl?” (Garvin 1)

The section of the film called “Generative Themes” starts with a focus on the minutiae: viewers see fabric on a doll, pink for feminine and blue for masculine, as representation of a narrow world view that is created by stereotypical notions of the gender binary. Upon seeing the pink fabric, we generate a whole list of associations with femininity. Viewers see a plastic doll, then a person enacting that doll's role, blending together what is real and what is fiction and portraying a sense of hyperreality and fragmentation to challenge the viewer's perspectives. (See Figure 2 in the Appendix). Gender performativity as enacted through the bodies of Ken and Barbie is used to establish fixed and rigid notions of the gender binary. The use of space, costume, movement and sound all emphasize gender performativity in the binary and contribute to meaning construction. Barbie is dressed in a pink dress with baked cookies in the kitchen, and Ken in a blue work suit in the garage with a set of tools. This sets the scene and develops the gender binary as a generative theme.

Movement in this section is based on feminine indulging efforts and masculine fighting efforts. Barbie is seen representing the feminine as delicate and shy, exploring indirect, light, and sustained movement, eyes averted and body leaning forward, traveling in small parameters where she is sometimes lost from view, exploring serving and smoothing gestures and circular indirect pathways. Barbie's camera angles are mostly cast downwards, a less powerful stature for the female, and film transitions are soft and fluid. In contrast, Ken's actions and camera angles are direct and cast upwards a more power stature and film transitions are sharp. Ken's

movements representing the masculine are strong, direct, and quick, traversing across a larger space, body leaning back, exploring punching, running, head nodding, and traveling in linear direct pathways. I show Ken leaning which is associated with relaxed attitudes representing a high status and traveling over larger distances is used to represent gender stereotypes which give men more access to work and leisure outside the home. Supporting these movement and camera angles, I chose light and free jazz-inspired music for Barbie and a more driving, forceful and bound sound for Ken.

The use of Judith Butler's ideas of performativity, repetition in the binary was explored in this section. Butler insisted that gender resides in repeated words and actions that both shape and are shaped by bodies in relationship to their environment (culture) and are rarely performed freely (Fraker 1). This concept is demonstrated through repetitive looping sequences that trap both Ken and Barbie in their environments: Barbie as a 1950s inspired suburban housewife performing femininity in the kitchen, and Ken performing masculinity in the garage. This showed a sort of Groundhog Day effect, getting stuck back in their prescribed locations and despite trying to leave, getting frozen in time to demonstrate fixed and rigid notions of the binary. Performativity was also used to inspire the second movement of part one, when Barbie and Ken "change costumes" as they prepare to go out into the world and perform their expected roles. Barbie changes into Bild Lilli, performing her persona of sexualized vixen, while Ken is seen counting out money, performing his role as financial supporter. Barbie and Ken travel to their prescribed locations outside of the home, Bild Lilli to the grocery store and Ken to the office, where they further explore the gender constructs of growing in the kinesphere with modes of shape and the idea of gendered walks. I also explore working in parallel movement to represent linear constructions of masculinity and working in turnout to represent the feminine,

associating this further with the notion of opening in shape and being vulnerable for women versus closing in shape and being protective for masculinity. Shots of Barbie walking represent a narrow unstable stance while Ken's strides are wider and more stable. By juxtaposing a sexualized image of Barbie against a grocery store setting, I also comment on the oversexualized role of women, aiming to elicit critical discussion on the portrayal of women in the media and the effects on female identity development.

Dialogue

"Since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one persons 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants" (Freire 88-89).

The second section of the film, titled "Dialogue," represents the importance of dialogue in constructing new knowledge; by entering into open minded discussions with others we have the potential to change existing beliefs and construct new ways of thinking and seeing. It is the first time we see the masculine and feminine together, in interaction with each other, represented by the dancer (me) wearing a Victor/Victoria outfit, half masculine/half feminine. It begins with me standing in front of a projection montage of found footage representing gender stereotypes and gender marketing images. In the projection, we see Bild Lilli, Barbie and Ken, and images of femininity and masculinity steeped in binary extremes which I found in footage of commercials from the 1950s/60s through today and videos discussing gender stereotypes. The dancer is seen as both being acted on and acting upon societal constructs of gender, creating movements in dialogue with the changing environment.

The chaotic soundtrack in this section was composed to match the fast flipping commercial images in the projection and to inspire increasingly polarizing movement and the crux or conflict of the film. Spoken phrases are heard over the music, perpetuating gender stereotypes through an additional layer of dialogue. These stereotypical gendered phrases are used to demonstrate hidden bias in language and represent Daly's analysis of the heavy reliance on the verbal for communication as discussed in gender performativity, highlighting the relationship between body and mind in identity construction.

The choreographic structures of this section are based on representations of dialogue between self and the society that influences gender perception, between how you see yourself and how you represent yourself, and a representation of one person having a conversation with themselves. The movement seen on the dancer in front of the screen projection was developed by playing around with the idea of a call and response between the two parts/sides of the body, as if one side of my body (the feminine) was in dialogue with the other side of my body (the masculine). Both genders are in one body, representing the complexity of an individual who cannot be confined to the stereotypes prescribed for one or the other. The idea of gender performativity is also revisited but this time demonstrating the dichotomy within oneself, the masculine and feminine in one body and in dialogue with each other. This dialogue between the gendered opposites represents an embodied conversation with oneself which is building towards an integrated whole, in body and mind, as is realized in the next scene.

The relationship of the dancer to the projection represents another layer of dialogue, a person's internal dialogue (the dancer in front) with the social constructs (the projection) around them that pressures them to conform, challenging the relationship one has between one's authentic self versus the self we project to society due to these social pressures; a person in

dialogue with their environment, a duet with knowledge construction. The dancer, immersed in the backdrop of images that perpetuate gender limitations, is directly influenced by the voices narrating gender stereotypes. Gestural representation in conjunction with physical orientation (which side of the body is seen) visually represents these stereotyped phrases being heard over the music. In keeping with ideas of gender performativity, I use different qualities on each side of my body; one half moving separately from the other half in form and style. I played spatially by showing rigid, direct, flexed, and parallel movement on the masculine side of my body and indirect and fluid aspects on the feminine side working in turnout and with pointed feet. Moving within the limits of the projection, I investigated linear pathways to represent the idea of a gendered box. As the music grew more frantic, all of the structures started to dissolve which then led viewers into the next section.

Decodification

“Decodification is a process whereby the people in a group begin to identify with aspects of a situation until they feel themselves to be in the situation and so able to reflect critically upon its various aspects, thus gathering understanding” (“Paulo Freire” 1).

“Before you judge a person, walk a mile in their shoes” is a common idiom that can be traced back to Mary Torrans Lathrap (1838-1895) poem “Judge Softly” and used to explain what Freire terms as decodification. For the decodification section, I reflected on the effect of gender stereotypes from research, anecdotal, and personal experiences and created choreography to represent what happens to meaning construction when we are allowed to change spaces.

I started with the idea of Ken and Barbie’s transformation as they reimagine themselves in the other's space. The choreography seen in the projection behind the dancer showed reversing the environments that Barbie and Ken were prescribed to, supporting the notion of “trying on”

someone else's self. I revisited Judith Butler's performativity here in choreography, feminine characters in stereotypically masculine spaces trying on gendered masculine movement forms, and vice versa for the feminine. Barbie performs Ken's phrase in the garage, and Ken performs Barbie's phrase in the kitchen. Instead of doing the exact same movement, wearing the same costume, and becoming the other person, I instead explored adapting each phrase to keep the original gendered movement qualities but within the opposite form (choreography) and environment. This concept was also reflected in costuming. Barbie dances Ken's phrase in the garage now dancing in an outfit which reflects her own adaptation, a blue skirt and work shirt, as she softens the movements and makes the choreography more fluid and light. Ken performs Barbie's phrase in the kitchen in a pink button down workshirt and the white apron, but also uses his own movement qualities, sharper and more direct, giving space to the idea that femininity can access power and still be feminine and masculinity can be nurturing and still be masculine, representing the notion that one does not have to literally become another person in order to walk in his or her shoes, or to gain an understanding of them.

As this scene progresses, viewers see Ken in the grocery store and Barbie in the office, enlivened by their investigation outside their gendered boxes/roles, exploring the quality of free flow in their new space without gendered movement restrictions, demonstrating the absence of limiting behaviors. To develop the choreography for these scenes as viewed in the film projection in the "Dialogue" section, I improvised in each space to the upbeat music in the "Praxis" section, inspired by the objects and setting and a sense of joy, freedom, travel and play.

The choreography of the dancer in front of the projection was the last choreographic layer to this section and demonstrates working in more integrated binary movement qualities and form. I still respect the differences in the two sides of my body in the Victor/Victoria outfit, exploring

different forms and quality on each side of my body, playing with the gendered walks again, but this time moving from bound flow in the “Dialogue” section into more free flow and working with more fluid and integrated movement.

Praxis

“As critical perception is embodied in action, a climate of hope and confidence develops which leads men to attempt to overcome the limit-situations. This objective can be achieved only through action upon the concrete, historical reality in which limit-situations historically are found”(Freire 99-100).

The final section represents the praxis, or Freire’s pedagogical notions that one can “move beyond dialogue to act together upon your environment in order to critically reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection (“Paulo Freire”). This last section is filmed at a commercial market place in downtown Burlington, Vermont, which highlights the consumer culture. Choreography in this section, developed collaboratively with the dancers, represents interacting with the environment in new ways: reimagining the space, the use, and the role of items found on the street. Dancers are seen creating effects or change resembling a domino effect, passing from one person to the next, inspiring a different outlook and symbolizing the continual re-examination of societal influences that is necessary to advance society. In the ending sequence, a drone shot takes us out, expanding the vantage point even further, representing a continual evolution of social change, supported by the imagery of a dancer’s powerful stance on top of a rock, a rainbow flag waving in the background.

To find dancers for this scene, I had an open call, casting people interested in dancing in the film who were passionate about the work that needs to be done to reduce gender stereotypes. I also wanted to include dancers from my community who were excited about dance but did not

have a lot of opportunity to explore in this artform: an alumni student of mine who has not gotten to dance much since graduating, a dancer whom I met out at a club who was always interested in talking about dance with me, and a multimedia artist who was interested in sharing her story about being non-heteronormative. I sat with each dancer to discuss their experiences with gender stereotypes and their journey in their own gender identity development, and then did a site-specific walk with each individual to find a place on the Church Street marketplace that inspired them. Since most of the individuals were not formally trained dancers, I worked by giving suggestions and then guiding them in seeing their location in non-typical ways. The duet in this section is inspired by the marketplace, but also by upending traditional partner roles.

Results and Implications for the Future

This project was started by the desire to create choreography with dancers that helped to support their identity development and ended up significantly impacting me in ways that I had not anticipated. As an educator, I am always learning from my students and a large part of my creative process for the past ten years has been driven by the individual voices that come into my classroom. Working with a wide range of abilities, needs, and desires has always challenged me creatively, and the work I create with my students is largely process-oriented. Throughout my research on this project, I sought out stories from others about their gender identity development, and in so doing, created opportunities for dialogue and reflection on my own gender identity construction.

As a cisgendered woman, I have always been a witness from the outside to gendered experiences beyond mine. I grew up with two non-heteronormative marriages in my extended family, work with many dancers who identify as nonbinary, support high school students grappling with gender identity construction, and railed against my own experiences of feminine

expectations throughout my adolescent development, but still I am on the outside looking in to experiences beyond my own. Through this research, I was given the chance to be a participant in the experiences of others by becoming an active listener, seeking out personal stories and creating space for empathy construction through my own creative process. While a compassionate person may feel compelled to help someone who is suffering or less fortunate, an empathic person will feel the emotions another person is experiencing and share in the burden of suffering emotionally. This was an important takeaway that I will apply to my work with students in the future, and connects my creative research on this project back to the phenomenological research that inspired my work as a dance educator to begin with. By creating empathy through the creative process we can teach, build awareness, and create space for identity development to support the cognitive and affective development of the dance maker. By incorporating active listening and inquiry into the creative process, the choreographer becomes a changemaker not only by potentially broadening the perspectives of viewers in their work, but by changing themselves in the process, opening up space for the learning self through both transitional space and emergence.

This film created opportunities in performance for new meaning construction for myself, but what about audience members/witnesses? Did visual imagery and music upend ways of seeing, challenge viewers to see things differently, spark emotional response in viewers such as laughter, enjoyment, or uncomfortableness, or inspire educators to use the film as a resource? As a part of my creative process I held a virtual screening on Facebook Live, including a talkback question and answer session, and offered an informal survey through Google Forms to collect feedback. One takeaway from audience feedback from educators was that while dance performance can allow you to make a wide range of your own interpretations, the essential points

of the film's narrative were very clear, leading to optimism about its potential uses in the classroom to spark critical dialogue. When asked if educators would consider using this film in their school, one respondent wrote, "Absolutely! I already have been thinking about that. I would use it in lessons about gender roles, gender inequality, LGBTQ rights, art as a tool for social justice, art as a tool for communication of big ideas. I would be using it with middle school students in classroom lessons as well as in smaller social justice-oriented peer leadership settings." Viewers also indicated that the still images of the dolls at the beginning immediately grabbed viewers, and the celebratory nature of the last scene was uplifting and left viewers feeling happy. One other aspect that stood out to me was the audience reflecting on how the perspective shift allowed them to be more aware of the gender marketing that they encountered, and one viewer applied these insights to his encounter with gender stereotypes in animations.

This project also successfully served as a vehicle to gain new skills and experiences in dance film; and my role as producer, sound designer, film director, costume director, performer, choreographer, and editor was both challenging and rewarding, requiring me to be both inside and outside the work at the same time. I learned I had to trust and let go of some of the process as it was challenging to play all the roles within time, material, and budget constraints. During the Praxis section, for instance, I needed to perform, work with the dancers and the videographer, and try to manage working in a public street during a pandemic. My strategy for juggling all these balls was to let the process unfold and then work in the editing room to try and make the vision come to life.

The constraints of a pandemic also added additional limitations which steered me towards new pathways for my work. While my original intent for the film was largely focused in exploring gender stereotypes through partner work between different dancers, the need to play

both parts myself due to stay at home limitations opened up an opportunity to explore the ideas of dueting in different ways, using multimedia contexts. I had to think creatively about how to use space/environment and filming to support my concepts. Being forced to stay home due to the pandemic, I spent a lot of time in my house and was inspired by my kitchen and garage as locations for the development of my feminine and masculine stereotypes. I set up cameras in my house from different vantage points, chose recorded music to inspire my movement and played around with gender performativity, using my video footage as feedback. Inspired by the interconnectivity of the two spaces in my house I came up with a looping concept to portray the limitations of gender construction and how they play out in relationship to space, which supported my intent to challenge audience perception. This opportunity also added another layer of empathy construction in my creative process as I attempted to embody both roles in costume and movement and improvisation in the Victor/Victoria outfit with different shaping and qualities on each half of my body.

By using film as my medium, the opportunities for challenging viewer perception became much broader and inspired me to focus on the videography as choreography itself, influenced by choreographers working in dance film such as the work of Akram Khan whom I investigated early on in my graduate work. I worked collaboratively with videographer Matthew Binigot, sending him examples of work and styles I was using to inform my research, and storyboarding my ideas for the film and character development in order to explore his skill set as editor. I investigated the concept of dancing with myself through the use of film edits, inspired by the work of Bridgman and Packer and their creative work with projection and technology, but given the complexity in the editing that would be needed to make this happen, Binigot and I settled on the concept of dancing with myself through the use of film projection using an outside studio

location. With the help of Autumn Bangoura, I designed a Victor/Victoria costume to explore this idea of dancing with myself even further.

In the future, I plan to investigate the potential impacts of the use of dance film in classroom settings to encourage critical thinking skills, build empathy, and counteract negative stereotyping. At the beginning of this thesis project, I asked myself if a dance video could become a useful teaching tool to use across curricular areas to reduce the impacts of gender stereotypes which create barriers for women and gender non-conforming individuals. In order to answer this question I needed to first make a dance film that addressed these issues, which I have done here, but would next need to pilot the film as a resource for classroom use and gather data on potential impacts on student learning. In order to do that, I will need to further investigate what kinds of data collection could be used to provide evidence on the impacts of dance film on student learning and use my educational resources to implement these investigations by piloting this film through equity committees, educators, and other settings which support adolescent development. If successful, additional films could be made to promote social justice in other areas, investigating other topics such as race relations, environmental racism, mental health stigmas, and intersectionality. Future films could also incorporate students into the creative process as dancers, videographers, editors, costume designers and musicians. By including a larger community in the creative process we have the potential to create a larger impact both in the creative process and performance.

Bibliography

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "We should all be feminists," YouTube, uploaded by TEDxEuston, 12 April 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc. Accessed 30 July 2020.

"Barbie." *The Toys That Made Us*, season #1, episode #2, Netflix, December 2017.

Blakemore, Judith and ReneeCenters. "Characteristics of Boys' and Girls' Toys." *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, vol. 53, no. 9-10, 2005, pp. 619–633. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-7729-0>. Accessed 18 June 2020.

Bland, Susan. "Urban Bush Women Challenge Assumptions about Women, People of Color, Body Types, Society, and History." *Virginia Tech Daily | Virginia Tech*, 17 Apr. 2018, vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2018/04/mac-urbanbushwomen.html. Accessed 15 December 2019.

Boyer, Holly, and Aimee Graham. "Hip Hop in the United States." *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 3, Spring 2016, pp. 215–218, doi:10.5860/rusq.55n3.215. Accessed 4 December 2019.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1988, p. 519, doi:10.2307/3207893. Accessed 20 May 2020.

Chang, Jeff. "How Hip-Hop Got Its Name." *Cuepoint*, 10 April 2016, <https://medium.com/cuepoint/how-hip-hop-got-its-name-a3529fa4fbf1>. Accessed 10 December 2019.

Cislaghi, Beniamino and Lori Heise. "Gender norms and social norms: differences, similarities and why they matter in prevention science." *Sociology of Health & Illness* vol. 42, no. 2, 2020, pp. 407-422, doi:10.1111/1467-9566.13008. Accessed 20 May 2020.

“Concepts Used By Paulo Freire.” Freire Institute, freire.org/paulo-freire/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire/. Accessed 10 April 2020.

Daly, Ann, et al. “At Issue: Gender in Dance.” *The Drama Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1987, pp. 22–26, www.jstor.org/stable/1145810. Accessed 13 May 2020.

Daly, Ann. *Critical Gestures: Writings on Dance and Culture*. Wesleyan University Press, 2002.

Daly, Ann. “Movement Analysis: Piecing Together the Puzzle.” *The Drama Review*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1988, pp. 40–52, www.jstor.org/stable/1145888. Accessed 8 June 2020.

“Dance and Media Timeline.” *Dance Films Association*, 22 Aug. 2017, www.dancefilms.org/dance-and-media-timeline/. Accessed 4 December 2019.

Dunagan, Colleen T. *Consuming Dance: Choreography and Advertising*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Dye, Kelly. “Gendering.” *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, edited by Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe). SAGE Publications, 2010, p. 413.

Foster, Susan Leigh. “Choreographies of Gender.” *Signs*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1998, pp. 1–33, www.jstor.org/stable/3175670. Accessed 13 June 2020.

Fraker, Will. “Gender Is Dead, Long Live Gender: Just What Is 'Performativity'?” *Aeon*, Aeon, 24 July 2018, aeon.co/ideas/gender-is-dead-long-live-gender-just-what-is-performativity. Accessed 27 July 2020.

“Paulo Freire.” *Freire Institute*, freire.org/paulo-freire/quotes-by-paulo-freire/itemlist/category/110-paulo-freire. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum, 2005.

<https://envs.ucsc.edu/internships/internship-readings/freire-pedagogy-of-the-oppressed.pdf>

Garvin, Jeff. *Symptoms of Being Human*. Balzer Bray, an Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2017. Accessed 1 July 2020.

Geduld, Victoria Phillips. "Performing Communism in the American Dance: Culture, Politics and the New Dance Group." *American Communist History*, vol. 7, no. 1, June 2008, pp. 39–65. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1080/14743890802121886. Accessed 4 December 2019.

Gladney, Marvin J. "The Black Arts Movement and Hip-Hop." *African American Review*, vol. 29, no. 2, Summer 1995, p. 291. EBSCOhost, doi:10.2307/3042308. Accessed 5 December 2019.

Graff, Ellen. "Dancers, Workers and Bees in the Choreography of Doris Humphrey." *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1996, pp. 29–34., www.jstor.org/stable/1478585. Accessed 5 December 2019.

Grimes, d. Sabela, and Amy O'Neal. "Street to Stage." *Dance Magazine*, vol. 91, no. 7, July 2017, pp. 42–43, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=123712274&site=ehost-live&scope=site. Accessed 5 December 2019.

Guadagnino, Kate. "The Pioneers of Postmodern Dance, 60 Years Later." *The New York Times*, 20 March 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/t-magazine/postmodern-dance.html>. Accessed 4 December 2019.

Harper, Phillip Brian. "Nationalism and Social Division in Black Arts Poetry of the 1960s." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1993, pp. 234–255, doi:10.1086/448673. Accessed 5 December 2019.

Ingraham, Janet. "Paoletti, Jo B.: Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America." *Library Journal*, vol. 137, no. 3, Feb. 2012, p. 118. Accessed 15 June 2020.

Jordan-Young Rebecca M. *Brainstorm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences*. Harvard University Press, 2010. Accessed 15 June 2020.

Kaylo, Janet (2009) "Anima and animus embodied: Jungian gender and Laban Movement Analysis." *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*, vol. 4, no. 3, 173-185, doi: [10.1080/17432970902917984](https://doi.org/10.1080/17432970902917984). Accessed 15 May 2020.

Kelly, Deirdre. "These Ad Campaigns Show That Dance Sells." *Dance Magazine*, Dance Magazine, 16 Sept. 2019, www.dancemagazine.com/dance-advertisement-campaign-2306950917.html. Accessed 18 June 2020.

Kowal, Rebekah J. "Measuring a Choreographic Legacy Humanitarian Terms: New Books on Pearl Primus and the Urban Bush Women." *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 30, no. 2, Nov. 2012, pp. 191– 196, doi:10.3366/drs.2012.0047. Accessed 4 December 2019.

Levy, Jacqyln A., and Marshall P. Duke. "The Use of Laban Movement Analysis in the Study of Personality, Emotional State and Movement Style: An Exploratory Investigation of the Veridicality of 'Body Language.'" *Individual Differences Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, Apr. 2003, pp. 39–63. Accessed 15 May 2020.

Lord, M.G. "Barbie." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Barbie. Accessed 6 Feb 2020.

McGregor, Sue. "Education for Sustainable Consumption: A Social Reconstructivism Model." *Canadian Journal of Education*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2019, pp. 745–766, journals.sfu.ca/cje/index.php/cje-rce/article/download/3853/2765/. Accessed 1 August 2020.

McLeod, Saul. "Social Roles." *Simply Psychology*, 2008, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-roles.html>. Accessed 20 May 2020.

McPherson, Elizabeth. "Postmodern Dance: A Revolution." Lecture for the New York City Department of Education, 28 Jan. 2019. Accessed 15 December 2019.

Novack, Cynthia J. "Looking at Movement as Culture: Contact Improvisation to Disco." *The Drama Review* vol. 32, no. 4, 1988, pp. 102–119, www.jstor.org/stable/1145892. Accessed 4 June 2020.

O'Connell, Liam. "Barbie Sales Mattel Worldwide 2019." *Statista*, 3 Mar. 2020, www.statista.com/statistics/370361/gross-sales-of-mattel-s-barbie-brand/. Accessed 2 July 2020.

Oliver, Wendy, and Douglas S. Risner. *Dance and Gender: an Evidence-Based Approach*. University Press of Florida, 2018.

Prickett, Stacey. "Workers Dance League, The." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, 5 Sept 2017, doi: 10.4324/9781135000356-rem85-1. Accessed 4 December 2019.

"Politics and the Dancing Body: Exploring National Roots." *Library of Congress*, Feb. 2012, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/politics-and-dance/exploring-national-roots.html>. Accessed 10 December 2019.

Roth, Moira, et al. "Making & Performing 'Code 33': A Public Art Project with Suzanne Lacy, Julio Morales, and Unique Holland." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2001, pp. 47–62, www.jstor.org/stable/3246333. Accessed 19 July 2020.

Steele, Claude. *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues To How Stereotypes Affect Us*. New York : W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.

Stinson, Susan W. "The Hidden Curriculum of Gender in Dance Education." *Sexuality, Gender and Identity*, pp. 50–56, doi:10.4324/9781315715728-7. Accessed 15 June 2020.

"Urban Bush Women." *Urban Bush Women*, 2019, www.urbanbushwomen.org/. Accessed 12 Nov. 2019.

"What Is Kinesthetic Empathy?" *Watching Dance: Kinesthetic Empathy*, http://www.watchingdance.org/research/kinesthetic_empathy/index.php.

Vendantam, Shankar. *The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives*. Scribe Publications, 2010.

Walter, Carla and Loay Altamimi. "Dance-in-Advertising, Affect, and Contagious Movement," *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology Vol. 1 No. 3*; November 2011. doi:10.1093/oso/9780190491369.003.0002. Accessed on 18 June 2020.

Zurbriggen, Eileen, et al. "Sexualization of Girls is Linked to Common Mental Health Problems in Girls and Women," APA Task Force, 2007. www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2007/02/sexualization. Accessed 10 July 2020.

Appendix

Figure 1: Theorizing Dancemaking as Storytelling. Created by Alexis Kamitses. 2020.

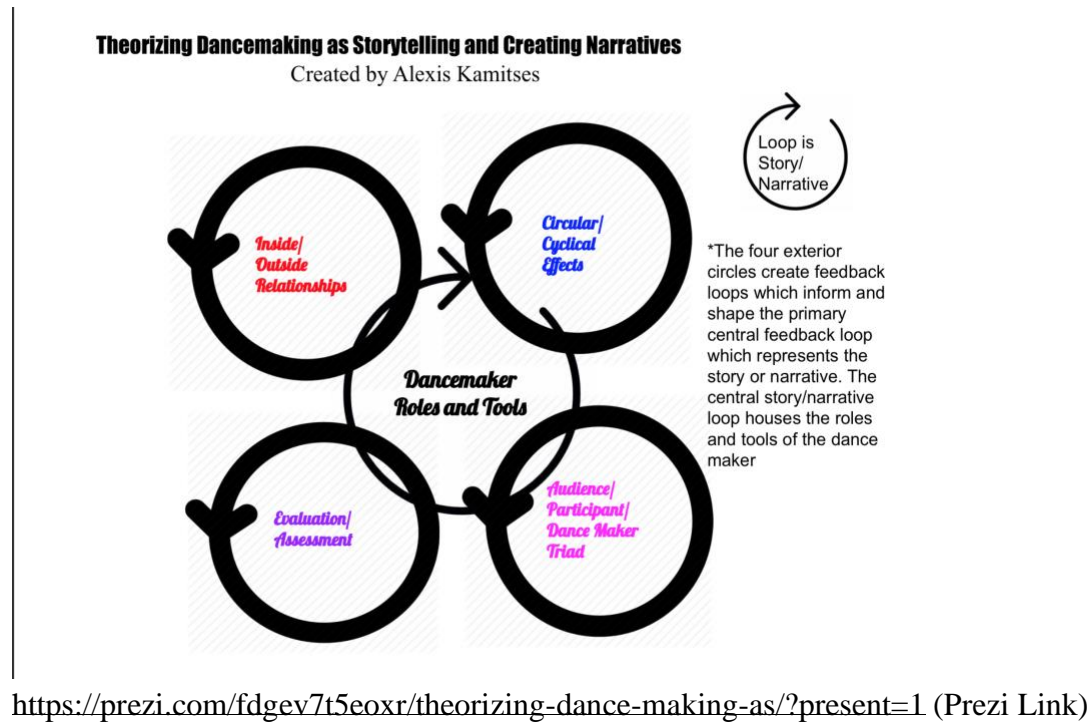


Figure 2: Hyperreality. Photo provided by Wayne Tarr, 2020.



Figures 3 and 4: Gendered Reaches in the Kitchen. Photo provided by Wayne Tarr, 2020.



Figures 5-11: Gendered Movement in the Garage. Photo provided by Wayne Tarr, 2020.





Figure 12: Program for Film Showing.

Identity Stories: Cultural Imprints on the Body

An MFA Thesis Dance Film

Presented by Alexis Kamitses

Friday July 24th, 2020

A Facebook Live Streaming Event

Production Credits:

Thanks and Acknowledgements

To my father and mother Jerry Kamitses and Lori Keene for making this film and my MFA possible through their generous financial contributions and support.

To Elizabeth McPherson and all of the Montclair State University graduate faculty for supporting my work throughout this MFA program, graciously offering their time and insight and inspiring me in many ways, and David French for being my editor throughout this masters program.

To my thesis advisor Christian von Howard for his generous feedback and support helping me along my own identity journey as choreographer and writer.

To the phenomenal Braden Pontoli for his generous musical contributions and professionalism in creating the film's soundtrack.

To the extremely talented Matthew Binguo who was able to bring my choreography and concepts to life through his talents behind the camera and in the editing room.

To Autumn Bangoura and Jamaica White for making Victor/Victoria come to life, Julie Shanks for generously loaning me her daughters Barbie dolls, Ellen Montgomery for our long walks and talks about my research, and the rest of the BMC for always championing me.

To the owners and staff at Healthy Living and Leslie Holman for generously loaning me their spaces to film in.

To the dancers who so generously contributed their thoughts and time with me both on film and throughout my research process, and to all of my students past and present who have shared their stories with me and inspired the making of this film

Identity Stories: Cultural Imprints on the Body

Section I: Generative Themes

Movement I: Barbie and Ken in the home: A study of gender performativity in relationship to the kinesthetic and a symbolism of repetition of the gender binary.

Movement II: On becoming representations: Bild Lilli, gender expectations and portrayal outside the home.

Section II: Dialogue

A multi-media choreographic exploration of dialogue between individual identity development and social constructs of gender.

Section III: Decodification:

The process of building empathy in relation to the experiences of the "other"

Section IV: Praxis

To move beyond dialogue, effecting change in a commercial marketplace: a site-specific exploration supporting new ways of seeing.

**Choreographies created collaboratively with dancers*