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What It Means to be a Little Girl in Tutu: Gender Role Development for Children in Ballet

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What It Means to be a Little Girl in Tutu:

Gender Role Development for Children in Ballet

Brooke N. Schneider

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Chapter 1

What it Means to be a Little Girl in a Tutu:

Gender Role Development for Children in Ballet

For children, gender role development basically starts from the moment of birth. However, as they grow up their views of what it means to be a girl or a boy can differ based on influences from parents, teachers, and media. This study examines the way gender role development is portrayed from teacher to student in the culture and environment of a ballet class. Although this phenomenon occurs with many males as well, I will be focusing mainly on this relationship with female ballet dancers.

Rationale

Gender role development has been studied from many different standpoints. Theories have developed from views of psychology, communication and culture. For example, Wood's (2003) *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture* explains in detail how each of these theories supports notions of gender development. The social learning theory that stems from the communication view of gender development supports the ideas at which the new research posed is aiming. Along with this, Rishoi (2003) wrote *From Girl to Woman: American Woman's Coming-of-Age Narratives*. Her book discusses in depth the transformation of the typical female gender stereotype to the start of American feminism. While Wood (2003) focuses on both males and females, Rishoi (2003) concentrates only on the gender of females in America.

Ballet has been studied in a variety of ways as well. Performers, observers, anthropologists, teachers and choreographers have contributed to this literature. Novack (1993) includes many of her own personal accounts of what it was like growing up as a

dancer. She discusses her thoughts, feelings and emotions going through the learning process herself and observing her sister's classes as well. Anthropologists, such as Gottschild (1996) wrote about interpretations and beliefs about the art form.

There is even literature that has taken theories from each topic and combined them to discuss gender and dance. Both Novack (1993) and Grover-Haskin (1998) included the issues of gender along with their writings about dance.

The study I am proposing is different from that of previous research because I will be looking at the ways in which the stereotypical female gender role is communicated from the dance teacher to the dancer in ballet class. I want to explore every aspect of this portrayal of the feminine dancer from costuming to choreography to the performance. Based on the research, it is necessary to find out what steps teachers can take to change the female gender development in dance. Ballet is an art form that relies on tradition. However, not allowing a dancer some freedom in what she is doing because of a stereotype is only taking away from their passion. Therefore, the following three questions are posed:

RQ1: How is femininity produced and reproduced in a dance class?

RQ2: What constitutes stereotypical gender behaviors in class?

RQ3: What is the teacher's role in changing stereotypical gender roles for dancers?

In the remainder of these chapters, I incorporate a review of literature that pertains to the particularly important aspects of my study in chapter two. I researched gender role development, ballet and dance education. Chapter three explains the methods I used in my project. In chapter four, five and six I incorporated Van Maanen's definition of realist, confessional and impressionist tales as well as added my own version of the three within the context of my organization. My conclusion is discussed in chapter seven which

includes what I learned, major findings, what other organizations can learn from the study, the strengths and limitations and ideas for further research.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Gender Role Development

According to Polhemus (1993) “gender is itself, of course, culturally defined” (p. 11). What it means to be a female ranges from one society and culture to the next. An individual’s gender identity is based on how he or she sees themselves along with the qualities of the actions they possess and whether they would be considered masculine or feminine (Wood, 2003). Most people do not understand that gender is something that changes over time and is in our own power to change.

Wood (2003) divides the theories of gender role development into three groups: the ones that concentrate on biological aspects of gender, ones that stress the growth through interpersonal origins, and those that center on the way in which culture plays a part on the growth. The first of these three was the biological approach to explaining gender. For example, it tries to explain how the X and Y chromosomes and hormonal activities affect gender qualities from physical features to thinking. The second theory aims to focus toward the interpersonal influences on gender. Two sub-theories have emerged from this notion. One of these views believes that culture influences gender. This supports the belief that gender changes based on what the society believes at that particular time. The third view is social learning theory, which will be further explained because it can be applied to the study I am proposing. It is not to say that any one theory in particular is correct but rather that they compliment one another and allow research to expand on their basis.

According to social learning theory “individuals learn to be masculine and feminine through observation, experiment, and responses from others” (p. 47). Children will imitate whatever catches their attention. However, certain behaviors children engage in may or

may not be socially accepted. Because of this authority figures will either positively reinforce or punish their actions. Therefore, this theory implies that individuals teach children what are appropriate socially constructed gender norms. Social learning theory directly relates to the study I am proposing in several ways. The suggestion I am making is that in the environment of a ballet class young girls are being taught how to fit the mold of the stereotypical ballerina. So, anything that does not imitate this idea is “wrong” and therefore not accepted.

Ballet

Ballet is a culture within itself. This culture consists of costuming, body image, movement vocabulary, training, technique, and narrative. The same as any other culture the ballet world has many stereotypes about gender.

Lawson (1991) discusses the history of ballet in her writings. It first began in around the 1500-1600s. King Louis XIV used ballet dancers to glorify the state of France by showing wealth and class. After this time period, the two most crucial points of the history of ballet were the Romantic Period and the Classical Period. The Romantic Period was where we got one of our most famous ballets, *Giselle*, which is the only romantic ballet still performed to this day. The most popular ballets nowadays originated from the Classical Period. Performances such as *Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *Sleeping Beauty* are from this era.

The Classical ballet period has created controversy based on how the woman is portrayed. In the book, *Theorizing Gender*, the author examines the natural gender differences that are portrayed in classical ballet at every level. According to this narrative “the female form has long been inscribed as a representation of a difference: as a spectacle, she is the bearer and object of the male desire” (p.288). Stinson (as cited in Grover-Haskin, 1998) recognizes the ballerina as submissive while her partner leads and controls

Her every move. This role is never reversed, for if it were, it would no longer be Classical ballet.

The choreographer's choices in ballet have created stereotypical gender roles within the art. This issue largely has to do with the fact that the majority of Choreographers are male. World famous dancer and choreographer, George Balanchine, shared his intent for choreography with these words:

Man is a better cook, a better painter, a better musician, composer. Everything is man-sports-everything. Man is stronger, faster. Why? Because we have muscles, and we're made that way. And woman accepts this. It is her business to accept. She knows what's beautiful. Men are great poets, because they have to write beautiful poetry to women-odes to a beautiful women. Woman accepts the beautiful poetry. You see, man is the servant-a good servant. In ballet, however, woman is first. Everywhere else man is first. But in ballet, it's the woman. All my life I have dedicated my art to her. (p. 279)

Having a choreographer who holds these views on men and women makes it nearly impossible to find equality in the movement. Balanchine has been credited to making women appear worshipped by her partner. But, the majority of observers have a counterview on this issue. Critiques who have seen Balanchine's choreography feel that the male portrays dominance, control and manipulation over the female.

Foster (1998) asks many questions in her research when it comes to gender and choreography. She agrees with the notion that gender is part of the performance and the roles that we act out are what make it interesting. But, the fine line is as she asks, "which certain gestures might be identified as gendered?" (p. 4)

While some observers classify Balanchine as a choreographer that demeans women, anthropologists such as Gottschild (1996) recognizes a female African presence in his dances. She finds this familiarity in the conflict in his choreography, or the dynamics he uses. It is also in the polyrhythmic and polycentric movement. Finally, in the youthfulness of the dance and the way the dancer performs it.

Dance Education

Those of America's society only compliment the stereotypes that are portrayed in the ballet culture about female gender roles. In many ways, our society has conquered some of these stereotypes that women are looked at as inferior to men. However, Stinson (1998) discovered as she taught, she was passing on ideas of passivity and obedience to the students.

Mara (1959) defines the importance of discipline in dance education through the clothing that is worn. She stresses that it is unacceptable to not wear a leotard and pink tights for class. The reason for this is that it enhances the appearance of the class as a whole. But, why does the class need to appear all the same and well groomed? As Novack (1998) recognizes, there is a power in the classroom that lies completely in the hands of the teacher. The teacher decides how they will run their class, how the dancer will dress and even how the dancer will dance. They are able to change the dancer's abilities. At times this kind of an environment can hinder the dancer's artistic passion and not allow them to become the dancer or even person they want to be.

Chapter 3

Methods

Participant Observation

The key to participant observation is the importance of it being the researcher's lived experience (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The researcher takes part of the culture he or she is studying and watches and learns about the organization and participants. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002) the researcher's "sensual, visceral and emotional experiences are not only detached from the allegedly more valuable contents of rational cognition" (p. 138). What they mean by this is that it is simply not enough to just watch and observe. The researcher needs to become one with the organization's daily routines by using five senses of the body. Touching, feeling, smelling, tasting, and listening are all crucial aspects of participant observation that make the experience more real to the reader. It is essential for the researcher to act as both the participant-as-observer as well as the observer-as-participant (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The participant-as-observer role has an "openly acknowledged investigative purpose" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 147). The observer-as-participant is going to interact and be part of the participant's activities.

Fieldwork

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe fieldwork as the "producing detailed knowledge about scenes of social life" (p. 158). As the researcher, we have to put ourselves in the participant's shoes and try to feel what it is like for them. According to Schwartzman (1993) "stepping into a setting for the first time is probably the most significant phase of the entire ethnographic process" (p. 48). The second a researcher steps into the field, he or she must be alert and aware of the surroundings in every way. They cannot allow noise to get in the way as a distraction.

Site

The organization I am studying is the Westchester Dance Center on Manchester Blvd. It is an institution that teaches children dance forms such as ballet, jazz, tap hip-hop, and lyrical. The youngest children taking from there are two years old and the oldest are about eighteen.

When I walk into the building there are two white doors in front of me with little square windows at the top. To my left is a small room with a large glass window that looks into the studio. On the right is a small single bathroom. My observing took place inside the actual studio. The space is large, open and rectangular shaped with high ceilings of about fifteen feet that have two fans. Covering the floor are strips of a black material called marley, which is often what dancers dance on. Mirrors cover an entire wall of the front. In the back is a ballet bar drilled into the wall. In one corner there is a stereo system and a black piano. Speakers for the stereo are in all three of the remaining corners of the room. On each side of the room there are two black portable bars. Hanging on the wall the bar is attached, to is three pictures. One picture is of a dancer stretching against a mirror in a studio. The other is of a worn out pair of pointe shoes. And the last one is of a beautiful prima ballerina in a tutu.

The noises I hear vary from before class even begins to the end. Before class I can hear all the parents talking to their kids. Things are said such as “listen”, “be good”, and “pay attention”. Then I usually hear the voice of the teacher when she tells everyone to come in and sit in the center. For about the first ten minutes of class, the teacher gives instructions and very little is said by the dancers unless it is sharing what color butterfly they are. When the warm-up is complete, music is the primary sound I

hear. The teacher is usually always saying things, but the music is the loudest noise.

The studio feels cold in the beginning. This is why the kids are allowed to keep on warm-ups for the first fifteen minutes of class. After this time, the body heat usually warms it up quite a bit. Sometimes the fans are turned on to cool the room. The smell is distinct and you can usually smell on your clothes after you leave. It smells like the marley material that is used on the floor.

My role as an observer is to discover in as many ways as possible how gender roles are portrayed to children in a ballet class. The challenges of my role in the site I am in is that it is a place where I work. I have taught all the children I am observing at some point. My discovery can only happen by collection data accurately and efficiently. I try to make this possible by sitting directly in the room where class is being held so that I do not miss any important information. I also record as many details I see in my notebook.

Participants

The participants in my study are the students at Westchester Dance center, the parents, and the teacher. The specific group of students I am studying range from the ages of three to seven and they all take ballet. I will be looking at three of these classes in particular.

The first participants in my study take what is called a "Combo I" class. This is most of the children's first time in a dance class ever. They are the youngest, starting at age three and going no older than four. Nine girls and two boys are enrolled in this class. The girls all have their hair pulled into buns. Some are messy and some are neat, but almost all of them have some kind of colorful bow or ribbon in it. They are all relatively the same height.

Every one of the girls has some kind of ballet skirt on whether it is attached to the leotard or put on separately. Tights are a must with the proper shoes as well, pink ballet. The boys both have on black sweat pants, not too baggy, and white turtlenecks with black ballet shoes. Their role is the student and at a young age it is a difficult concept for them to understand, but they are learning. It is difficult for them to remember that they have to raise their hand to talk and that they have to follow instructions at all times. Since I began to observe them in the middle of the year, they were already a lot more comfortable with the way class is ran. The communication pattern they use is almost always through the teacher. However, there are several students that talk to others a lot and get in trouble. Lauren is one of the students that often misbehave. Her communication pattern differs from the rest of the students because she often has to go talk to her mom in a time-out. This has happened two times in one class and one time in the other. When the communication does not go through the teacher, it is through the parents, or asked if it can be through the parents. For example, last class Lolli asked the teacher if she could go ask her mom something. I did not have much interaction with this class. I have taught them before, but at this age they are not interested unless you are the one talking with them at that moment.

The second class is a "Combo III" class. This is a class of eight girls from the ages of five to seven. They all have their hair in buns with a decorative hairpiece in it. Most of the class is wearing skirts, but two of them match by wearing colorful pants. The entire class seems to be relatively shy. They differ from the last class because they try harder to do well. There is a noticeable difference in the age level. This class is more focused and does not have any problems with anyone talking or acting up. Their communication relies solely on the teacher.

They do not talk unless it is a question they raise their hand for. The instructor treats them grown-up in many ways, so they feel as though they have to meet her expectations. At this age they are more conscious that I am in the room so some of them try harder. I can tell this especially from one girl, Samantha. Every time there is a leap that travels to the area of where I am sitting, she smiles and watches me to see what my reaction is to her dancing. I am always very aware of who looks my way and what their expressions are, so I have a permanent smile on my face to encourage them and make them feel comfortable.

The final class I am observing is the “Combo II” class. Seven girls are enrolled in this class that are between the ages of four to five years old. All of the girls in this class wear ballet skirts. The majority of the girls act more like the Combo III class, but there are two of them that still act as young as the Combo I. They try to keep their attention spans high throughout the entire class, but with about fifteen minutes left, it is more difficult for them to focus. These ladies communicate primarily through the instructor. There are times when a question about going to see their parents or ask them a question comes up. One girl in the class, Iyona, has already begun to stick out as a dancer. At such a young age she is the one with noticeably more flexibility, pointed feet and straight legs. She is often used as the example in class. This class is skewed with their interactions with me. Some of them do not even notice I am in the room, while others do what Samantha did and smile at me after each move they do.

The woman who teaches the class is Lisa Diaz who is also the owner of Westchester Dance Center. Lisa is in her thirties and has been teaching for over ten years. She has a family with two little girls who both are in classes at the studio. Lisa’s role is motherly to the girls. She is stern with them, but you can tell she loves them too.

She communicates with the students in different ways, she is better acquainted with them so she feels comfortable telling them “no” or “do it again”. Lisa communicates with the parents in very different manners. It is obvious to me what kind of question or topic they are asking her about because she lets it all read through on her face. Some of their complaints she tries to accommodate, but most of the time she is the one in control so their complaints don’t mean as much. Lisa is my boss, so my interaction with her is usually on a professional level. She, however, is a very easy-going person so it sometimes seems like she is more on my level.

I did not expect the parents to be part of my participants until I began to observe. Some of them are very involved in the class process. Most of them sit outside the entire class and watch. When it is time for the girls to change their shoes, some of them come in and help them. Lauren’s mom is visible quite often. When Lauren acts up, her mom will sometime come inside the studio and watch from inside to try and prevent her from misbehaving. The parents report to Lisa any concerns or questions they have before or after each class.

Interview

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002) an interview is a conversation between two individuals that serves a purpose. When we ask and listen to what others know, think, feel, experience and believe we are partaking in actions of the interview process. These authors also explain that the qualitative interview is a technique that is profoundly flexible and can be held in many different settings such as the beach, a bar, or a private and secluded room. What is discussed in these interviews go beyond the imagination.

The purposes of interviewing are to understand both the subject’s experience viewpoint as well as native conceptualizations of communication, draw out the language used by subject, gather information about the study that cannot be done in other ways, ask

about the past, ask about other sources, test hypothesis, and gain effective data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Kvale (1996) stresses that the quality of the interview is important because it determines how much it will assist you later on. The author mentions some guidelines to follow in order to maintain a high quality interview. Some examples of these are for the interviewee to provide useful and applicable answers, interviewer's interpretation of subject's answers during and after interview, short questions and long answers etc. He also says it is important for the interviewee to be credible about what they are discussing. Every subject is different and some are easier to interview than others depending on the subject. Kvale (1996) feels that it is important to interview someone who is focused, intelligent and articulate. The interviewer's qualities are also discussed by Kvale (1996). The person themselves is a tool to the research. The individual should be knowledgeable on the issue and have good people skills. She or he should help the interviewee to feel comfortable and want to tell her or his stories.

Chapter 4: The Realist Tale

Writings from the realist perspective “typically narrate the realist tale in a dispassionate, third-person voice” (Van Maanen, 1988, p.45). The realist tale strives to create a true representation of the culture through text and description. It is the author’s prerogative to describe the daily workings of the culture on a detailed basis (Van Maanen, 1988, p.45).

According to Van Maanen (1988) “there are at least four conventions that mark a tale as a realist and set off the work as a distinct product” (p.45). He titles these conventions as: “experiential authority, typical forms, the narrative’s point of view, and interpretive omnipotence” (p.46). Van Maanen’s (1988) definition of experiential authority is “almost the complete absence of the author” (p.46). The typical forms he talks about are a minute-by-minute synopsis of what is encountered on a daily basis. Narrative’s point of view of the convention displays and explains the members of the cultures daily practices. And finally, interpretive omnipotence means that the author gives the story upfront without censorship.

Van Maanen (1988) says, “it is important not to judge the realist tales too harshly” (p. 54). It is taking several parts of the culture and incorporating them into one textual account. The largest difference in the realist tale and where it is not like other writings is where it asks the audience to not analyze the description as much (Van Maanen, 1988, p.57).

My Realist Tale

Emily woke up Saturday morning with a complete feeling of anticipation and excitement. She darts into her mom’s room and the first words out of her mouth are “Mommy, is it time to get ready for my first day of dance class?” Given the fact that it is

only 7am and her class doesn't begin until 10am, her mom, Suzanne, responds by telling her that she still has plenty of time and she should go back to bed to get some rest. But, Emily's excitement is too overwhelming and there is no way that she is going to get back in bed. She is too eager to put on her pink tights, princess pink leotard with sparkles and new ballet slippers.

Emily darts back into her room and rummages through her closet to find her new apparel. As she pulls out many of the clothes that are stacked on shelves she finds the goods. All three of the pieces of her wardrobe are brand new and still in the packaging. She is determined to get dressed and be ready to go. But, above all Emily is most excited about looking like a pretty little princess ballerina. She starts by pulling her pink tights up and quickly as possible because that is not the part of the outfit she is most excited about putting on. Unable to get the tights to stretch all the way up to the top, she quickly moves on to the next piece of the outfit and tries to put on her leotard. The leotard is pink with a tool skirt around the waist. It is sleeveless and has a pink bow in the center around the neckline. Sliver glitter sparkles are spread throughout the tool on the skirt. Emily pulls the leotard onto her body as quickly as possible. The way she appears after having dressed herself is hardly comparable to a true ballerina. Her decorated heart underwear sticks out from the bottom of her leotard and the crotch of the tights hangs down mid-thigh. It appears as though she wouldn't be able to get her ballet slipper to fit on her foot because the tights hang off her toes about three inches. Her hair is still messy, tangled and in her face.

Emily looks in the mirror and her face lights up with a smile. She says in a whisper, "I look like a beautiful princess ballerina". Emily then runs into Suzanne's room even faster than the first time to show her how pretty she looks. She is screaming, "Mommy, Mommy, look at me" over and over again. Suzanne, still in bed, rolls over to

see what Emily is excited about. Suzanne cannot help but let out a little giggle and smile at not only the way that Emily looks, but also her enthusiasm in getting her dance apparel out and dressing herself.

For Suzanne she could not believe this day had come. Ever since she had thought about having a family, a little girl who danced was always part of the equation. And for Emily, she never even knew dance really existed. She just went with mommy one day to pick out a new pretty outfit for a class she was signed up for. She was told how fun it was going to be, but most importantly she got to wear a pretty princess ballerina outfit with a bow in her hair. This sounded most appealing to Emily.

Suzanne then gets out of bed to help fix Emily's outfit. She starts by trying to take off her ballet slippers and pull up the tights. Emily immediately rebelled against the help. She thought she dressed herself beautifully and she was definitely not going to take off her new ballet slipper. Emily began to throw a fit. Suzanne threatened Emily by telling her that she would not be able to go to dance class until she stopped acting that way and listened to her. Emily stopped throwing her fit and let her mom help her.

Suzanne first began took off her ballet slippers to pull up the tights. She then realized that in order to pull them up all the way she would have to take off her leotard. Emily's frustration continues to grow. As Suzanne resumes grooming Emily she tries to get her to stop pouting and fidgeting by asking her, "you want to look pretty for your first day of dance class, don't you?" Emily still pouts, but stops fidgeting. However, it doesn't last for long. She thought she looked beautiful the way she dressed herself. She didn't care that everything wasn't perfectly put in place. After Suzanne finished fixing every part of Emily's outfit, she then brushed her hair and put it in a bun. The only thing that put the smile back on Emily's face was when she saw her mom put the new pink ribbon in her hair.

Emily was so excited to look so beautiful in her whole new outfit. She had been waiting for this day since they went shopping to buy the clothes.

There was still some time until Emily's class began. The anticipation was killing her. She could hardly wait to show off how pretty she looked to everyone at the dance studio. Emily had to settle for watching cartoons until it was time to leave. As she was watching her cartoons, she asked her mom to make her breakfast. She asked for her typical Saturday morning meal, pancakes with butter and syrup. Suzanne told Emily that she could not have pancakes this week unless she took off her leotard because she did not want her to get her clothes dirty. Emily again got angry and threw a fit. As much as she loved her outfit, she was not fond of all the rules that were being implemented while wearing it. Suzanne again threatened her that she would not go to dance class or be able to wear her new leotard if she kept it up. After hearing this, Emily decided to stop whining and eat a granola bar instead of her pancakes.

At about 9:30am, Suzanne went into the family room to tell Emily it was time to go. Emily quickly jumped up and cheered. She had been more than ready for this for the past 2 hours. As she runs over to the closet to get her shoes, she begins to ask Suzanne questions. "What's my teacher's name?" Emily inquires. Suzanne yells in from the other room, "I think it's Lisa". Emily says it as a whisper over and over again attempting to pronounce it the right way and remember it, "Lisa, Lisa, Lisa". Suzanne smiles as she over hears her. Emily kisses her dad goodbye and asks him if he was going to come see her dance. Her dad, Michael, tells Emily, "you look beautiful princess but I can't make it this week, I have to take your brother to soccer, but definitely next week". Emily goes out to the garage and jumps in the car with her mom. The car ride to the dance studio takes about ten minutes and the entire way Emily is bursting with excitement and the questions don't stop the entire way. She asks, "What is dance class like?" "are there going to be other kids in my class",

parents to look through as well. This entire area looks old and worn. The carpet has stains on it and the walls are dirty with dents and marks. There is a musty aroma in the area as if there was a water leak at some point, which had not been cleaned up properly.

When Emily steps foot into the building, her face immediately reflects shyness and fear. Her feelings of excitement and anticipation were quickly lost. She clung onto her mom tightly and refused to pick her head up to say hello to anyone or make eye contact with anyone. Suzanne was reassuring her that it was going to be just as much fun as they had talked about, but Emily's feelings were too overwhelming and she could hardly remember why she was excited. Some of the other students saw Emily's reaction and the feelings were contagious to a couple of them. Victoria and Marina, two of the other students, began to cling to their mom's too. Sidney, Valerie and Katie were not scared at all and sat inside the studio's dance space with the teacher. When teacher Lisa notices she has a few shy ones in the waiting area, she quickly makes her way over there to make them feel comfortable. Lisa walks over and greets all of them at once, "Hi girls, how are you"? She then kneels down by Emily, "Hi, my name is Lisa, what's yours"? Emily answers in a shy, timid voice, "Emily". Lisa grabs her by the hand and asks her to come into the studio with her because she would love it if she would come have fun and dance with her. Emily hugs and kisses her mom goodbye and reluctantly grabs Lisa's hand to follow her into the studio.

The inside of the studio is big, huge to Emily's eyes. A mirror completely aligns one entire wall. A bar aligns the other wall. There is a piano and stereo in the corner of the room. The floor is aligned with a black material called marley. This material has a scent of play-do or clay that fills the room. There are three pictures on the wall. The first picture is of a very thin ballerina in her leotard and tights looking in the mirror from her second position plie at the bar. The picture in the center of the three was of four ballerinas in full

tutus. They appeared to be backstage getting ready for a performance as the corte ballet. And, the last picture was of an old worn out pair of pointe shoes. Emily's favorite of the three was of the women in their tutus. She thought that they looked beautiful and that her own outfit was similar to this. She dreamed of having a costume just like that one day.

Lisa brought Emily into the studio to sit in the center with the other girls. She had her wait there while she went out into the waiting room to get the other scared students. One of the other girls named Sidney did not allow her enthusiasm or curiosity stray away when she got into this new environment. She immediately asked Emily when she sat down, "have you ever taken dance before"? Emily shook her head very timidly. Emily quickly discovered that Sidney was not new to this. Sidney had told Emily that she took dance before. This made Emily even more afraid. She did not know what to expect while other girls had done this before. In a couple of minutes the other girls are brought in one by one by Lisa. However, one of the girls, Shelby, refused to go in. She was crying hysterically and saying she wanted to stay by her mommy. This did not faze some of the other girls, but it did make Emily a little nervous. She couldn't help but wonder why someone else would be crying over dance class. Sure, she was scared, but to cry? Did this girl know something that she didn't? Lisa had no choice but to let the girl stay out by her mom and hope that she warmed up to the class by observing.

When Lisa joined the circle in the middle of the classroom, Emily could not help but to stare at her out of curiosity. She thought she was very pretty and very nice. She was excited and could get used to the idea of this being the person to be teach her every week. Lisa was so warm and sweet. Emily couldn't help but compare her to a cartoon character. Lisa's gestures were larger than life and funny to watch. Emily's shell was quickly broken because of Lisa's welcoming demeanor.

The first thing that Lisa did when she sat down was took role. Since she already knew who Emily was, when she read off her name, she looked at her and smiled. This made Emily's face light up and she came to like Lisa even more. After role was taken, Lisa led them in the floor stretching exercises that took place before the bar. Emily had to hold her legs out straight in front of her and move her feet around as Lisa said, "point and flex, point and flex". These words meant nothing to Emily, she was just trying to follow along and repeat what Lisa was saying. While this was going on, Emily was distracted by Shelby's hysteria in the waiting room. Shelby's mom continued to try and get her to go in and take class, so she kept opening the door to the studio. Lisa kept trying to keep the girls' attention and telling them to pay attention to her. Lisa then told the girls to sit with their legs in a pizza slice, which was second position. To get them to stretch, she had them put their elbows in the pizza pepperoni. Emily could not help but giggle at this. Just like any other kid, she loved to pretend and she found this game to be very fun. Emily kept giggling and hitting the floor and saying, "look, my hands are covered in pepperoni". In order for Lisa to get everyone's attention again, she had to tell Emily to settle down. Emily was embarrassed and immediately became shy and quiet again. The last thing they would do warming up on the floor was the "butterfly". Lisa had them spread the peanut butter under the bottom of one foot, then jelly on the other and make a sandwich. Now they were in "butterfly position". Lisa then went around the circle and asked each girl to say what color butterfly they were and where they were flying. When it was Emily's turn, she was so overwhelmed and hidden a little but back into her shell that she didn't know what to say. It took her a minute and she quietly responded, "pink with silver sparkles and I'm flying to Disneyland". This was the end of the floor stretches.

Lisa had them all stand up and go to the bar. While the girls were all doing this, she stepped out into the waiting room to see if Shelby was ready to come in. The crying had

stopped, but the whining did not. Emily and all the other girls kept hearing her say, “I don’t want to go, I don’t want to go” over and over again. Shelby’s mom was frustrated and continued trying to get her to go in there. Emily was confused and scared by Shelby’s reaction, but she decided to stay put and keep giving the class a try. It was fun so far.

At the bar, Lisa tried to teach the girls first and second position. This part of the class was not as fun and interesting as the first part. Emily was getting bored and could not keep paying attention. The other students were struggling as well and this made it even more difficult for Emily. She could sense the other girls’ lack of interest in the class. Lisa struggled to keep the girls attention. Since her nature was more stern and strict, she thought why wait to show that side? In a serious, raised voice she told the girls that they needed to focus and pay attention to her. Lisa asked for them to “show her that they were listening with their eyes”. Emily wasn’t sure exactly what that meant, but she began to pay attention to Lisa again because of the raised voice she used. Lisa often used descriptions such as “pretty” and “beautiful ballerina” and this made Emily want to do well. However, this again did not last for long. Although she wanted to be a pretty ballerina, she started to get fidgety. She missed her mom and wanted to go see her. So, Emily raised her hand and told Lisa that she “missed her mommy” and she wanted to go see her. Lisa responded by asking her to be a big girl and just wait a few more minutes until class was over to see her mom. Although Emily decided to stay in class because she felt pressure from Lisa, she was unable to focus. Emily kept looking towards the doors for her mom and she continued to get in trouble by Lisa.

Emily began to get very frustrated with the way that dance class was going. She thought it was supposed to be all fun and it seemed like there were so many rules. She felt as if she was getting in trouble for everything and she was doing everything wrong. As much as she wanted to be that “beautiful ballerina” she was dressed the part to be, she just

wanted to be back in her pajamas, eating pancakes, watching cartoons in her house with her mommy. After the bar exercises were complete, it was time to line up on the side of the room and go across the floor. This sparked Emily's interest when she was able to move to a different area of the room and Lisa brought out "Mr. Snakey". Mr. Snakey was a hot pink stuffed animal that was placed in the middle of the floor for the girls to jump over. Lisa told them it was a game to not jump on Mr. Snakey. Emily started having fun again and giggled every time she ran across the floor.

After the girls did this several times, Lisa tried to get them to settle down again so they could come to the center of the room and review what they had learned that day. Since it was Emily's very first class ever, she could not remember the name of any positions. Every time someone answered a question correctly they got a piece of candy. Emily was the only one without a piece of candy and this hurt her feelings. She was embarrassed and really wanted a piece of candy. Then Lisa brought over a piece of candy for Emily and told her it was for staying in the class the entire time and not going out to see her mom. This made Emily's face light up with a smile. Lisa then told the girls she would see them all next week and that they were all beautiful.

Emily ran out to see her mom and gave her a big hug. When Suzanne asked Emily if she had fun, she nodded her head. But, her enthusiasm was a lot less than it was before she took the class. Emily really did not know what to think, she was confused. Dance class was not what she expected, but she still liked some of it. She liked the outfit she got to wear, the games and the candy she got at the end. Emily was not ready for all the rules and the amount of work she had to do. However, when Suzanne asked her if she was ready to go back next week, Emily said yes. Overall she enjoyed the class.

Chapter 5: Confessional Tale

According to Van Maanen (1988), “the distinguishing characteristics of confessional tales are highly personalized styles and their self-absorbed mandates” (p.73). It is structured by the ethnographer’s attempt to transfer the daily disciplines of the culture they are studying into a description that the audience can relate to. The goal of the confessional is to make the work of the ethnographer in fieldwork more respected. It is to show that there is a discipline behind it and the process is highly evaluated (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 74).

Similarly, as with realist tales, Van Maanen (1988) states “there are conventions at work in confessional tales (p. 74). He places these conventions into three categories: personalized authority, the fieldworker’s point of view, and naturalness. What he means by personalized authority is that there is an active voice that states what they observed within that particular organization. There should be a relationship with the reader that is established, there are characters to describe and events to depict. The fieldworker’s point of view should be “tacking back and forth between and insider’s passionate perspective and an outsider’s dispassionate one” (p. 77). And the naturalness of the tale is the importance of keeping the flaws and problems with the research and observation involved so that it maintains its pure, unaffected nature.

My Confessional Tale

The organization I am studying is the Westchester Dance Studio. I gained access to this organization because I am employed by this establishment as a dance instructor. I chose to study this particular organization because it has always intrigued me since I have grown up my entire life in a dance studio atmosphere. Now that I am older and involved in

the teacher aspect, rather than the student, it has become so interesting to realize the effect we as teachers have on the student in our language and teaching style. In addition to this, I have encountered, first-hand, parents who both adore you and thank you for teaching their child, and the opposite end of the spectrum of those who think you are scarring their child for life and can't stand you. Most importantly, and the focus of what I am looking at, is that the way a teacher communicates with students, particularly of a young age, really matters and has a direct relationship to how they feel about themselves and the class. Also, exactly what kind of gendered stereotypes were we creating in the language we used to teach one of the most gendered activities that existed? I took myself out of the position of a dance teacher and objectively observed some of the classes that were taught at Westchester Dance Studio. My focus was on children between the ages of three to seven.

I walk into the studio, at about 9:40am on Saturday morning ready to observe and analyze the daily classroom activities objectively. The first thing that occurs before I even walk into the studio is a little girl who I have taught before runs up to me to give me a hug. I bend down and greet her and tell her that I missed her and that she looked so pretty. I did not even notice this observation until I was sitting in my room later that evening, but it was so true. When we see little girls in their ballet leotard and tights, the pretty pink colors, skirt and ribbon in her hair, makes us want to tell her she is pretty. Also, stereotypically, what goes along with being a ballerina? Grace, poise and beauty. Over and over again this is what we are trying to teach our female students.

I walk straight into the parent waiting room, ready to observe. I get there about twenty minutes before class begins so that I can see all that takes place prior to class. There is only the one student who greeted me outside there so far. She is there early because her sister is finishing up a class that was before hers. For the Smith family, Saturdays consist of dancing all morning. There are three girls, all of different ages and

skill levels; therefore they all take different classes. Sara, the youngest of the three, whose class is next, loves to watch her big sister, Jessica dance. She watched observantly through the one-way window. Mallory, the middle child could care less and would rather color in her coloring book that her mom brought to keep her busy.

Slowly the students begin to trickle in. Some of them are excited to be there and some of them are still half asleep, others pout and don't feel like dancing. I know this because they ask their mom if they have to dance today. The waiting room is filled with moms, except for one dad. The interesting part about this one dad was that, he had brought his son. So, the moms were all there with their daughters and the one dad was there with his son.

The teacher and studio owner, Lisa, walks in at 9:58 to teach her class. She is frazzled and hardly greets the parents she walks through to get into the studio. She walks over to the stereo to place her purse down and then walks back to the waiting room to ask her class to come in. The previous class has just been dismissed so the waiting room is chaos. Lisa addresses them in a tone as if it is the late start was their fault and says, "ok, come on, lets go, it's 10am, class has started". She doesn't actually think that a 5 year old should know this, but she is trying to portray to the parents that it is the fact that the kids are young and take longer to get shoes on and set in the studio that it is their fault and not hers that class is started late. Every parent gives their child a hug and kisses and tells them they will be in the waiting room.

The class begins in a circle in the center of the floor. Some students run to sit by their one little friend that they sit by every week. Others just walk in and keep mostly to themselves. It seems that the ones that are excited about actually taking the dance class are the ones who have made friends in the classroom. The others do not seem enthused to be there and are often not engaged in the directions of the class. The first thing that is done is

Lisa taking role. It is evident that she is still struggling to know all the students names. There are nine people in this class, which I know can be difficult to tolerate when they are at such a young age.

After role it taken, Lisa leads the students in a warm-up. First, they put their feet out in front as they point and flex. Everyone says the steps to the warm-up together out loud. It is important that they say what they are doing, they will learn faster this way and are more likely to retain the information. Next, the students were asked to make a pizza slice with their legs. It is obvious that this is one of their favorite parts of warm-up as all of their faces lit up and they began to giggle. Lisa immediately brings the giggling and excitement to a minimum when she says, "all right now, that's enough". Part of the stretch is that they get to put their hands and head in the pepperoni that is on the pizza.

Lisa's approach from the start was that she meant business. It was evident that she had this group of kids for a while because they took to her stern attitude very well. When there is a room full of five years olds, you get many different attitudes and moods. This did not change how Lisa approached any of them. She was not accommodating to their individual personalities; they were all going to be taught the same. Lisa seemed irritable and frustrated quite easily for teaching a group of five year olds. She definitely said things to them that would be over my head if I were five. Things such as "that's not how we act to be proper", "ballerinas and ballerinos are proper". If one of the students tried to get attention she would tell them to stop trying to make others look at then and she wasn't impressed. After criticizing their behavior about four to five times, she would commend them with a compliment, but what she would say was interesting. Lisa would compliment on "how pretty and handsome they looked". The students did not seem phased by the compliments, but on occasion one of their faces would light up and they would check themselves out in the mirror to see if they looked nice.

Certain analogies were used to get the students to dance and move the way Lisa wanted them to. Since there was a boy in the class, the language changed and there were always two different analogies used to describe each concept. It is evident that she is communicating one aspect of language to the females and the other to the one male. For example, Lisa describes the batmes across the floor as beautiful ballerina legs for the girls and karate kicks for the boy. When the students do runs across the floor, she tells the girls to make no noise and stay light on their feet, while she tells the boy to look strong and tall.

I carefully watched for the difference in the males and females approach to the movement after Lisa told them what to think about. It was obvious that the female students dance more lightly and passively while the single male in the room was allowed to be bold and reflect strength. The dancing appeared more fun to him. While the girls had to be a little more reserved, he could dance larger and not worry as much about being perfectly placed.

As I observed, I thought about the different things that would be said and done if the class was all girls. I thought back to my previous observations with classrooms of all girls. Overall, I realized that more emphasis is put on beauty. Lisa still incorporates this a significant amount into the class with females and males, but not as often. Also, whenever a word such as beautiful, pretty, soft, or ballerina is used, she always counters it with a male version that will relate to the boy. She will use words like strong, powerful, and ballerino. In addition to this, more attention was directed towards the boy in the class and Lisa was more lenient towards him when he was goofing around. I think the reason behind this is that she does not want the boy to not come back to class.

As class goes on, the parents sit observantly in the dressing room. Some of them giggle and laugh when their child does something cute. A couple of them talk to one another about their children and how busy their lives are. While I am trying to listen to

some of their conversations, I hear the one dad that is there with his son mention that his son would not be in the class much longer. When the mom he was speaking to asked why, he had said that he was going to start sports and the only reason he was taking him to dance was so that he would learn discipline.

However, of all the parent's conversations in the dressing room, what I find to be most interesting was the one mom that watches anxiously from the door. She segregates herself from the rest of the parents and is watching every move her daughter is making. I can make out the connection of which child is hers in the classroom. Her daughter continuously looks back to the door after she attempts each exercise. I can see that this mom has already begun her "psycho backstage mom" days. I feel bad for her daughter. At the tender age of five, she can't enjoy dancing and just have fun; she already is pressured to be something that is out of her reach right now. I hope that this little girl continues dance as she gets older because I know that with this kind of pressure, the parents often push the child away from the activity. The most disturbing part of it all was that there were two times within the class that she walked in the room to yell at her daughter for laughing or talking to one of her classmates. I was so sad for this poor little girl to have to go through this already.

As I was sitting there, I was paying close attention to both the language Lisa was using to teach her class as well as the parent's conversations. Lisa used gender stereotypical language to get her students to move a certain way. As a result of this, the way the students were dancing reflected the general stereotypes about gender in our culture. The females try to dance lightly, gracefully, with poise and beauty. It is an expectation for the girls in the class to maintain beauty and discipline. In contrast to this, it was communicated for the male in the class to dance with strength and power. Also, the boy was able to get away with more goofing around in class. Parents are very critical of

how their children are being taught in anything. But, they seemed to agree with this approach even though there was a significant difference in how the boy was being taught in comparison to the girls.

A parent's motive for putting their kid in dance differs from person to person. I overhear some of them conversing with other parents and saying that they just want their daughter to gain some discipline and coordination. Others say that they will not be allowed to quit until high school. And the boy's dad was said that he just wanted his son to gain some discipline for sports and that he wouldn't be dancing for long. A lot of times moms put their little girls in dance so that they are girly and elegant. Even if they are in sports as well, dance is important so that they have grace.

From all of this, I came to the conclusion that parents did not object to the differences in language and teaching approach that was being used for the females as opposed to the male because this was part of the reason they wanted their child in dance. There are certain stereotypes that any person would associate with dancers. Ballerinas are poised, beautiful, thin, graceful, elegant, etc. Moms do not put their daughters in dance so that they are powerful and strong, but rather they would put them in sports for them to gain this. The ironic thing was that the male in the class was in dance to gain power and strength. The motives for the male being placed in sports or dance did not change like they did for the females.

Lisa concludes the ballet portion of the class with a reverance in the center of the room. This is the dancer's final bow to their audience, thanking them for watching. Lisa does her reverance towards the mirror, mostly with port de bra where the kids have to yell out each position. The expectation that they know what position their arms are in keeps them focused because for the most part they all like to be the one to answer first. The students get most excited when they turn towards the one way glass that they know their

parent watch through to wave to them. Also, the females curtsy as the boy in the class is asked to bow. When he absent-mindedly follows the rest of the class in a curtsy Lisa reminds him that he is a boy and he should be bowing.

Half way through the class, the children go and change into tap shoes and complete the remainder of class practicing this form of dance. Lisa concludes the ballet portion of class and tells the students to go change their shoes. All the kids run excitedly into the waiting room to find their parents to help them change their shoes. One child's mom could not stay and watch the class because she had to take her son to soccer, so she made sure that another mom was going to help her. It was obvious that the little girl was disappointed that her mom was not there to help her. When the students return to take the rest of their class, they say goodbye to their parents the same way they did when they first left. Almost every parent makes sure that they mention to their child that they need to behave. Also, the "psycho backstage mom" from earlier, is telling her daughter all the things they need to work on before next week.

They start off the tap portion of the class with some toe taps in the center of the floor. Lisa seems to get more and more irritated as the students get more rowdy as a result of the loud tap noises and upbeat music. The threat that Lisa uses to calm them down is by saying that they are going to have to get their ballet shoes on again. With this in mind the students immediately start to settle down and listen more intently.

Lisa then has the students do some across the floor exercises. The students start with marches. Lisa plays a catchy upbeat Disney song on the stereo. It is a song that the students have heard before and they sing along. The familiarity of both the music and the movement makes the students more at ease. They had just finished a difficult ballet class where they were presented many challenges and I could see the frustration when they could not do something. Tap was the time to let it all go. The music, change of pace, more laid

back teaching style and less discipline made the students more happy to be in class. They were also able to sit down when others went across the floor, in ballet this was not allowed.

The tap section of the class is significantly different from the first part in nearly every aspect. When the kids change their shoes the entire meaning of the class changes. One of the biggest differences is that there is no gendered language or style of teaching Lisa uses that distinguishes the boy from the girls. In ballet there are different expectations from the boy in the room than from the girls. The movement even changes sometimes, for example, males bow and females curtsy. In tap, the girls and boy are the same. They receive the same corrections when they go across the floor.

The fun, laid back nature of the tap class has the children a little more excited and riled up, and therefore has them in trouble more often. When the students go across the floor and end up on the side with the one-way mirror, they make faces in it. Lisa again threatens them that they will have to get their ballet shoes on again. The kids are obviously getting more and more frustrated and antsy and her threats mean less to them. Some of them start complaining that they want to go home, they are tired and they want to see their parents. Lisa does not handle this well. I could see the frustration building on her face. She would respond to them by saying, "the big kids don't complain about dancing". She has now set new expectations of how they should act. In tap, since there is far less structure and discipline than in ballet, Lisa tried to set the expectations of the students based on them role modeling. She knows that the kids watch the older girls dance with envy, so she used it to her advantage. However, this does not work for everyone. For example, the boy in the class could care less how the older students dance, so he continues to act hyper. Lisa keeps asking him not to draw attention to himself.

Class is now over and Lisa wants to create one more structural activity before she dismisses the students. So, she created a game where she does the tap movement, such as a

filap and then has the students repeat it in their bodies. The first one to raise their hand with the correct answer gets a piece of candy. After she does this for about a minute, she gives candy to the rest of the kids and lets them go. The students run to their parents as if they have not seen them for days and are so excited to tell them how good they did and ask them if they can eat their candy. The parents praise their kid's hard work and all of them allow them to eat the candy. Lisa walks over to the door to say goodbye and lock up the studio. It is evident that they all like Lisa despite her harsh teaching style because they all hug her and tell her they will see her next week.

Chapter 6: Impressionist Tale

Van Maanen chooses to compare the writings of the impressionist tale to the skills and captivations of a painter. In other words, just as a painter is able to transfer what he or she sees at that time, moment, space, etc. into a portrait that the audience will then see exactly what the painter sees even if that moment will never exist again. Similarly to this, Van Maanen uses the analogy that the impressionist should use all resources in describing their observations and thoughts, just as a painter uses all of his or her materials in creating a picture, such as color, form, light, stroke, hatching, overlay, framing (Van Maanen, 1988, p.101). As impressionists it is crucial for our audience to visualize every aspect of the field, participants, rituals, duties, cultural artifacts, etc.

An impressionist's goal should also be to shock the audience (Van Maanen, 1988, p.101). According to Van Maanen (1988), "their materials are words, metaphors, phrasings, imagery, and most critically, the expansive recall of fieldwork experience" (p. 102). The story told is not about what always happens within the organization on a daily basis, but rather what does not occur as often. These are the stories that really speak for the most unforgettable fieldwork experience (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 102). Van Maanen (1988) states "impressionist writings tries to keep both the subject and object in constant view" (p.102).

The impressionist tale should be a spectacular recollection of what the fieldworker saw, heard, felt, and touched in a similar order as to how they occurred on a daily basis. The author of the tale faces the challenge of continuing a flow of the narrative, yet stepping out on several aspects to make an analytical point or two. The primary challenge facing this continuation is that the audience must be clear as to what the fieldworker is saying and what the story is (Van Maanen, 1988, p.103).

The audience should not feel the impulse to analyze the tale, but rather engage themselves in a way that they actually feel they were there (Van Maanen, 1988, p.103). It is the author's main priority to keep the reader on the edge of their seats and wanting to hear more (Van Maanen, 1988, p.106). Van Maanen (1988) states "impressionist tales allow fieldworkers who are characters in them to exaggerate to make a point to omit tedious documentation, to entertain, to be uncharacteristically kind (or unkind), to use crude figures of speech typically forbidden, to intensify the relived experience, and otherwise say things that under different circumstances could not be said" (p.108).

My Impressionist Tale

This is a story that occurred when I was on my fifth day of fieldwork. It is about a 7 year old girl and her mom's anger in the dance class and how her daughter was taught. Lisa Diaz, who is my frequent participant instructor as well as studio owner of Westchester Dance, was teaching on this day. It was a Saturday morning between about 10 and 11 am and this particular day was extremely chaotic because it was a new quarter sign-up day. Westchester Dance Studio, being the unprofessional place of business it is, did not have an organized system for this registration. The kids were confused, parents were even more confused and the woman working the table had no idea what was going on. This created tension and disappointment for both veterans and new comers of the studio

I walk into Westchester Dance Studio at about 11 am to see that there are kids and parents everywhere. I could tell that they were not just there to take class, there were far too many for that. I could also see the confusion in their eyes and frustration coming out of their ears, almost in the form of steam. There was absolutely no organization to the new quarter sign-up. I overhear one of the parents complaining to another, "this is ridiculous," says one parent "if I would have known it was going to be this way, I would have had Susie go somewhere else to take dance". The more people complain, the more anger I can see in

others eyes. Lisa is inside the studio finishing up teaching her class. You can see that she is particularly more scatter brained on this day because she knows it is hectic in the sign-up area and that she did not organize things well, as usual.

There is a woman sitting behind a small square-folding table who is trying to hand out papers and collect money from the other parents. However, the fact that she has no idea what is going on or knows any answers to their questions just makes the parents even more angry. I hear some of them ask her rudely why she doesn't know. The woman responds by saying that her daughter was inside the classroom taking dance class and Lisa asked her last minute if she could just sit behind the table and hand things out. This showed the true lack of professionalism to some of the parents and that is why three of them left.

Adding to the frustration that was already being felt, each parent had at least one kid, if not two, that they were there with. The area to the waiting room is small as it is, and the extra folding table along with triple the amount of bodies that are usually in there caused even more disorder. The woman working behind the table then made an announcement to everyone, "parents, if you could please just sit tight for a few more minutes, Lisa will be done teaching her class and she can answer any questions you have and get this process moving along". Ah, finally some sort of voice of reason that the parents were comforted with. They were beginning to feel their four-year-old child could run the studio better than the current way. This almost instantly got many of the parents to calm down, stick around and await Lisa to get out of class and help out.

With this large misunderstanding going on, there is still a class being taught, and as usual, a parent for each student in that class watching how their child is doing. This class was a group of seven year olds. It was obvious that Lisa was even more at her wits end with these kids because she was taking her lack of organization and planning for the

registration out on them. I hear the tone in her voice is increasingly getting more condescending and loud with the students. Lisa was not engaged in the class she was teaching. She was constantly looking into the waiting area to see if things were calming down. At one point she even interrupted her class to walk over there and peak her head out the door to say that she would be out there in a few minutes to answer any questions that any of the parents had. Her students could sense her lack of interest in the class, which made them in turn even more lost and confused as to what was going on. Lisa was not teaching very clearly and the class also did not have the structure it usually did. This threw the students off even more. They were completely lost with what was going on.

One little girl named, Alexis was struggling the most. She was newer to the class and this was only her 3rd week, while most of the other students had been there anywhere from two months to three years. Lisa had the students doing balances across the floor. When it was Alexis' turn to go, she did not know how to do them on her own. Lisa had to go across with her and do the combination in front of her. Because Lisa was already frustrated with what was going on in the waiting room, she took some of this out on Alexis. Lisa said to her, "Alexis, there is no reason you should not know what we are doing across the floor, you are a big girl and you need to start dancing like it". Immediately Alexis' eyes welled up with tears. She not only felt like she had been scolded, but also she was humiliated that this happened in front of her peers. She felt stupid and incapable of dancing. As she stayed in the class crying in front of everyone, Lisa asked her what was wrong. Alexis responded with her fingers in her mouth, "I can't do this, I want to go see my mommy". Lisa asked her to stay in class and keep trying, but Alexis would not stop crying. So, Lisa escorted her out to the waiting room to find her mom.

Although Alexis' mom was in the waiting area, she was completely caught off guard by her coming out crying. She was talking to one of the other moms when this

happened and was concerned when Alexis was upset. She kept asking Alexis what was wrong, but Alexis was not responding and continued to cry. Her mom just kept holding her and rocking and saying it was ok. Eventually after a few minutes, Alexis calmed down. Her mom asks her if she wants to go back in and finish the class, but Alexis does not want to at all. Alexis finally tells her mom what is wrong, "I can't do it mommy". Her mom is shocked, "what do you mean you can't do it," she asks, "I was watching you and you were doing a beautiful job". Alexis just sits there and does not respond. She just wants to lie in her mom's arms.

Lisa finishes up teaching class and dismisses the students. It is obvious she takes her time going over to the stereo to stop the music and get her things together to avoid going out into the chaotic registration area for as long as she can. While she is in the corner of the studio, parents are eagerly looking in, waiting for her to create some kind of organization to the process and answer some questions. Before anyone gets a chance to get to her first, Alexis' mom walks over there and says, "I don't know what happened, she just must be tired today, we will be back next week". Lisa responds almost emotionless, "ok, sounds good, see ya next week". She gets her belongings and goes into the waiting room.

Lisa is immediately bombarded with questions, mostly having to do with prices and wanting to know what level their kid is going to be in. Lisa has no apologies for her lack of preparation and no appreciation for those parents waiting and the mom that was trying to help run the table. She is not enthusiastic and answers their questions in a condescending tone. Her attitude has a lot to do with the fact that she is defensive for having messed up. She knows by now that sometimes apologizing too much can lead to even more angry parents. So, she pretends like the day was not as big of a problem and was not her fault and nobody notices the difference.

Although Lisa should be more professional in dealing with this situation, it seems to appease the parents for the most part. The majority of them are kissing up to her even though she is the one who should be doing that to them. The major thing that Lisa does not understand about owning a business is that without the customers, the business does not exist. However, in the dance studio owner business, the common rule of “the customer is always right” does not exist. It doesn’t exist because the parents allow this. They do not want their kid to suffer in class as a result of them complaining about something. They know that if they want their kid to learn to dance, Lisa has 100% control in that classroom. If a parent does not like her teaching style, they can take their child somewhere else. Lisa is very fortunate to have a studio that teaches young kids dance in an area where not very many exist or else the parents would not put up with her unprofessional manner.

However, this is not how all the parents feel. As a teacher, I have had parents call me and ask if I teach anywhere else because they cannot deal with the way the studio is ran. Lisa lost money and customers on this day of registration when several of the parents walked out. If she was a good businesswoman, she would take these things into serious consideration and change the organization of the studio, but she could care less that this is going on. Other parents may deal with the studio’s unprofessional manner, but they have no respect for Lisa and do not like to talk to her. This is rare for a studio owner because most of the time, the parents worship you for giving their child a place to dance.

Lisa continues to answer some of the questions the parents have. The woman who was trying to run the table when Lisa was teaching class was trying to get her little girl ready to go home since her daughter was done dancing. Lisa sees she is about to leave and panics. She realizes that she has 15 minutes until her next class begins and she wants to run to Starbuck’s. She runs over to the woman, kneels down on the floor next to her as the lady is putting on her daughter’s shoes and begs her to stay and work the table for a few

minutes while she runs out. Lisa tries to use excuses in a joking manner by saying “your kid’s class sucked all the energy out of me, I can’t teach the next one without my coffee”. The mom laughs and tells her to get out of there. As Lisa is running out the door, the mom is trying to ask her some questions that she knows she will need to answer because she was asked before. Lisa shouts back into the studio as she is jumping in her car, “Just tell them I will be right back”.

Some of the other parents are shocked that she would do this. The mom who is covering for her just laughs and shrugs her shoulders. The registration area begins to calm down a little bit and the students from the class before are leaving. Within a couple of minutes, the students from the next class come strolling in. These children are four to five year olds. As the parents walk in, they ask what is going on in there and the mom who is working the table tells them it is new quarter registration. Of course, most of the parent’s responses were, “we didn’t hear anything about this”. The mom working the table, obviously not a businesswoman herself just laughs and asks them to fill out the forms. Again, when the questions begin to get asked, the mom has to tell them that Lisa will be back soon.

In the meantime, I recognize Alexis from the class before, and her mom comes back to the studio. Her mom does not look happy at all. She asks the mom behind the folding table if she knows where Lisa is. She nervously tells her she will be right back. Everyone in the room can sense there is something wrong. As everyone sits around, filling out papers and asking questions that they hope someone else will be able to answer, Lisa pulls up in the parking lot. Alexis’ mom walks out there to confront her, holding Alexis’ hand.

Lisa gets out of her Nissan Pathfinder with her large cup of Starbuck’s coffee and greets them, “hello, are you back already”. Alexis’ mom begins to raise her voice, “my daughter said you yelled at her and made her feel stupid, she doesn’t want to dance again”.

Lisa was completely caught off guard. She knew that when she taught class this morning, she was out of sorts, but yelling at a girl to make her not want to dance again? Was that possible? Lisa immediately got on the defense, "I do not know what you are talking about, and I treat all of my students the same". Alexis' mom responded by saying "well then why did you single her out and tell her she needed to be a big girl in front of the class". Lisa vaguely remembered doing this, but she did not think anything of it. She tried to explain that it was how she pushed the kids to make them get better and set them at higher expectations. Really, it did not matter what Lisa was going to say. She had an angry mom who thought that her daughter got yelled at and made a skeptical of in dance class. She thought that Lisa made her daughter cry and wants to quit dance. As the mom angrily stormed away she yelled, "I want my money back and you will hear from my lawyer".

Since I am both a member and frequent observer of this organization, I was not particularly surprised that this occurred, however, I was shocked by the way both the parent and studio owner handled it. It reminded me of a confrontation between two high school girls about sleeping with someone's boyfriend. You would never guess this was a place of business. There was nothing professional about the way Alexis' mom confronted Lisa, nor the way Lisa responded.

Lisa was completely shocked. Was she really going to get sewed for scolding a little girl in dance class? As she walked into the studio, she was obviously shaken up and nervous and the parents had seen what had happened. Most of them tried to comfort her by making light of the situation and saying, "what, another crazy parent". But, Lisa was more upset by the word lawyer. All she could think about was it really going to court, being in the newspapers and ruining her business. Being, the drama queen that she is, Lisa told the parents that she was going to get sewed for scolding a girl in class. The parents could not believe it. They have all heard stories and seen their child get reprimanded in class before,

it was all part of the dance discipline. Lisa especially wanted to see my response from this confrontation because she knows that I teach and I have gone through parent's anger in how I deal with their kid. However, I usually have to put up with it more because I am only 21, Lisa is a grown woman, in her forties with a family.

Lisa tried to conduct business as usual. She began to answer the questions of the parents for registration. After this encounter in the parking lot, her entire demeanor to the parents changed. She was more upbeat, accommodating, friendly, thankful, apologetic and personable. She knew that with something like that happening in front of the parents, her reputation was largely at stake. After she was done answering questions for the parents, she walked into the studio to begin class on time (which rarely happened).

Lisa was even different to the children in the class. She was nicer, warmer, encouraging and seemed happy to be teaching them. It was evident that she was trying to be more aware of the children's feelings, after all they were just kids. But, you could also tell that she was trying to put on an act for the parents. If my kid were in the room, this would have worked to her disadvantage. These parents see every week how Lisa is with the kids. She does not have a warm teaching technique. She is strict and can be harsh. If she really thought that this was the most effective way to teach kids, she should have stayed true to it despite what one mom thought based on what her little girl said to her. It was obvious that Alexis' mom did not hear or see Lisa yell because she was so nice about her daughter's tears before they left the studio. I think Lisa looked phony when she did this and in turn made the parents think that she may have been doing something wrong in her teaching style previous to this.

Lisa's attitude change lasted for the entire class. As a result of the change, the students did not dance as well and were goofing around more often. I am sure that Lisa noticed this as well and would return back to her stern teaching style before next week.

She did not want the parents who had seen the confrontation leaving the studio as well, so she tried to kiss up a little by treating their kids that way. She also knew that by this mom's complaint, it would probably make the other parents more weary and critical about her teaching style. She did not want any more criticism for that day.

As class finishes, Lisa dismisses the children and tells them, "you girls are all so beautiful and the best dancers ever". With this comment, I can see that she is trying to be encouraging to the students and does not want them to feel like they can't dance. She was already told once that day that she discouraged a little girl from dancing and she did not want this to happen again.

Lisa came into the waiting room to say goodbye to all of the parents and make sure that they were all still friendly to her and that there were no hard feelings about the confrontation. Everything seemed to be fine and soon enough they all left so it was just Lisa and I. She could not stop talking to me about the instance. She was shocked that her words could have been taken to such an extreme opposite level than she intended them to. But, overall she was most concerned with being sewed. She said that nowadays people sew for anything and who knows she could lose that battle in court.

Then, the phone to the studio rang and the answering machine picked up. Alexis's mom left a message saying that as long as she got a full refund for the money she paid for Alexis's classes, no legal action would be taken. This completely relieved Lisa and she immediately began to write the check to reimburse the mom. Lisa was happy, but she was completely disregarding the fact that this hurt her business. Whoever that mom tells to not take from Westchester Dance is going to matter.

Before Lisa says goodbye to me, she goes off on a tangent about how much she hates the business she is in. She tells me that she does not enjoy teaching and the worst part about it is the parents (which I know is true). Lisa says that she would so anything to

give it up and sell the studio to someone but there is no one. She then makes a joke to me about buying it. I laugh and tell her that I am a college student so unless it was free, I couldn't. After this conversation and observing for the day, so much made sense about why Westchester was run the way it was and why Lisa taught the way she did.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

All of the points discussed for both gender development and the culture of ballet are equally important to the research questions posed. The social learning theory from Wood (2003) says that gender development is influenced by the environment and culture they are surrounded by. What a child hears, sees and is taught will develop their ideas of gender. This means in particular that authority figures such as teachers play a significant role in this. The study I have proposed aims to prove that dance teachers communicate certain behaviors that are only acceptable for females in dance. Based on answers that support this assertion I have found that there are not many ways to break through these barriers of socially constructed gender norms and stereotypes for females in the dance world.

It seems that gendered stereotypes in the dance world are supported and encouraged by the teacher, students and parents. In my review of literature, I found that quite often that the male choreographer has traditionally made the female in ballet more passive and vulnerable. She is submissive to the movement and represents poise and grace while the male is dominant and powerful. Quite contrary to the belief that the male was passing this stereotype along, the female choreographers stick to tradition in their choreography and make this true even now.

These findings advance the way that we think about culture because as described earlier by Polhemus (1993) “gender is itself, culturally defined” (p.11). Therefore within the culture we place ourselves in, we define what actions and representations are feminine and masculine. We find this to be particularly true in that of dance culture. Dance culture openly supports these stereotypes based off of the tradition of the discipline.

In addition to this, we discovered that in Organizational Communication it is up to the leaders in the organization to determine the common goal that is going to be reached by its members. In the dance organization, the teachers determine what the students are going to associate with the organization. In my interview, the young girl who had been taking at Westchester Dance for fourteen years knew that the teacher's goals were to get them to be ladylike, poised and graceful. When you are part of an organization, you learn through the teachings of what the leaders want and expect.

Dance education organizations can learn from this study that it is up to them to determine what stereotypes of dance culture they are going to implement to their students. Certain stereotypes are unavoidable because they are part of what makes up the dancer, but others are more extreme and completely unhealthy for the dancer to have to compare themselves to. Many dance studios take on a different teaching strategy in order to encourage what their studio believes is their mission statement. For Westchester Dance, it was a community for kids to be a part of that created a positive self-image for them. Although they still implemented many of the stereotypes of dance culture in their teachings to maintain tradition and meaning of dance, they strayed away from the harsh expectations of the discipline.

There are still studios that exist where the dancers have to weigh in and watch what they eat or they are kicked out. It is sad to think that some teachers push the student to anorexia or bulimia, but this does exist. A discipline such as dance that has been around for hundreds of years is always going to have stereotypes that are associated with it. For the most part, some of them make up what the art form is. However, a large extent of these expectations creates a lot of pressure for the female to be thin and male to be afraid to join in fear of being called a homosexual.

One of the strengths within my study was the access that I had to the organization I was observing. I was able to spend any amount of time there I needed on a weekly basis and got to see the children's interactions with the teachers. I also was able to get the perspective of teaching from several different teachers with different training and backgrounds. Another strength was that I was part of my organization prior to my observation. This made the participants trust and feel more comfortable around me.

There are limitations to the study that I have conducted. One major limitation is that I only studied one small studio in a small region of Los Angeles. I am sure that the studios in other parts of the country and even state or city have a much different teaching philosophy with much different students. Cultural differences are seen everywhere we go, and the culture of Westchester Dance Studio is unique. Another major limitation is the amount of time I studied this organization. I was not there for a period of a few years in order to watch the students grow and progress from one level to the next. This process of seeing them change from a young age would have possibly confirmed more about the teaching process and how it affects the student. Also, studying all the students in one class was difficult because of class size. Most likely by studying a few of the students in a wider range of classes would have been easier for the researcher and would have answered more questions.

There are so many different aspects of the organization of a dance studio or dance culture you can observe and do further research on. I would say that someone could take this study further by narrowing it down more. For example, studying only the male responses to the different gendered language and posing the research question of do males in dance produce more feminine qualities from the activity? I feel that the study would be stronger and raise more answerable questions if it were narrowed down to females and males looked at separately rather than together.

I also feel that for further research, a new site should be looked at. Only looking at one dance studio limits the broad range of teachers and students. From an insider's perspective of this kind of organization, things are run so much differently in each studio you go to. The overall goal of the studio can differ which dramatically changes the study outcome.

In conclusion, the study I conducted just barely scratched the surface of the how gendered stereotypes are being implemented in ballet. My findings do conclude that we can attribute some of the stereotypical beliefs to the tradition of dance, the choreographic choices of the choreographer, costumes and language used in class. However, there is much more that goes on for the dancer outside of when they are in the studio. By breaking through some of my limitations and narrowly focusing the studies separately from boys to girls will answer more questions. Overall, I discovered a lot about a culture and discipline I thought I already knew a lot about.

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Appendix

Fieldnotes

When I first walked into the building of where the studio is, it was hard for me to pick up on all of the small details because it is a familiar area to me. The first things I noticed were the doors that lead from the entrance way to the actual studio space. It is almost like it is an entrance to another world. In the entrance, it is where the parents wait and kiss the kids goodbye and then when they walk into the studio it is an environment where they have to interact with many children in a class. A lot more is expected from them when they enter the studio, they have to act disciplined, mature, and not talk out of turn.

The parents wait in a room that is to the left of the entranceway. There are ten chairs in this small room. Pictures hang on the wall of the entire faculty of teachers. There is a window in the room that is one sided, meaning the parents can see into the studio, but from the inside the children cannot see out. Across the hall from the waiting room there is a bathroom. This is also used as a changing room for the kids who have activities such as soccer games after class is over.

Inside the studio it is very open and bright. The space is large, open and rectangular shaped with high ceilings of about fifteen feet. Black strips of material called Marley cover the floor. Mirrors cover the entire wall of the front of the room. There is a ballet bar across the back of the room. Two portable ballet bars are pushed up against

the far wall. Also against this wall is the piano that is used for the ballet classes when a musician comes in to play live music. The stereo also sits against this wall in the corner. In each of the four corners of the room there are speakers hanging from the ceiling. In the far corner there is also a large stuffed snake stuffed animal known as "Mr. Snakey". There is a second entranceway on the other side of the studio. Nobody is allowed to enter in this way and the door always remains locked. The reason for this is because the main entranceway used to not exist. Parents used to be able to walk right into the studio in the same room where the children were dancing. This way too much of a distraction so Lisa, the owner, had an entire waiting room built. Hanging on the wall are three pictures. One is of a dancer stretching against the mirror. The other is of a worn out pair of pointe shoes. The last one is a beautiful prima ballerina in a tutu.

The studio feels cold in the beginning. In fact the children are allowed to keep warm-ups on for the first fifteen minutes of class. By then, their body heat usually warms up the room. There are fans that hang from the ceiling and most of the time the children ask for them to be turned on. The studio smells like the marley material that is used for the floor. It is a distinct smell and when you leave, you can still smell it on your skin and clothes.

The class begins by Lisa walking in very frantically because she is almost late. As soon as she walks in the door she starts saying "hi everyone, come in and sit down". She rushes over to the stereo and picks through her cds to place in the stereo to place in the stereo. She sits in a circle in the center of the room and starts to call everyone over. The

parents kiss their kids goodbye and shut the door to the waiting room. Since I was observing from inside the room Lisa introduced me to the girls as “her friend, Brooke”. All of the kids looked at me with big eyes and smiles on their faces. They know that I am a teacher there because I have taught them before. They often like to impress people that are watching, especially since they know that I am a dancer.

In warm-up, Lisa uses an animated tone to try to keep the kids interested. She uses many analogies and little games to get them to do what she is doing. For instance they sit in second position on the floor and Lisa calls it a “pizza slice”. In order to get them to stretch, she tells them to put their hands in the cheese and then their heads in the cheese.

The first class I watched was a Combo 1 level. So, the children in this class are taking their first dance class and the class is divided half ballet and half tap. There are nine girls and two boys in this class. The kids are as young as 2 and are no older than 5. All of the girls are wearing ballet skirts. Most of their leotards are colorful and bright with colors such as pink and purple. They all have on pink tights and pink ballet shoes. Most of their hair is in buns or at least attempted buns. It is at least pulled back off their face because Lisa requires it. All of them have a bow or ribbon in their hair. The two males that are in the class wear black pants and white turtlenecks. Their ballet shoes are black. The clothes are not at all tight fitting, but very loose.

The music used is very “kid friendly”. Some of the songs are nursery rhymes or Disney songs. Most of the music can have little skits that go along with them. What I mean by this is that most of them have hand gestures that the kids remember and do each week to keep them interested.

When they go across the floor, they are chosen in a certain order. They do not stand in line. Lisa calls them one at a time and that is when it is their turn. At one point, the little boy, Quincy, was jumping around acting silly, Lisa said to him “do not direct the attention to you when it is supposed to be on someone else”. They learn to stand still and not fidget. It is not only about dance, but about discipline as well. They are not called to go across the floor until they are waiting quietly and patiently.

At this level the children are just learning how to take a dance class. Although the entire class is a routine that they participate in every week, they still need to be reminded of the order and how to complete each step asked of them. They are just beginning to learn discipline and how to follow direction. Often some of them will speak out of turn and they get scolded when they do. Since I began to observe them in the middle of the year, they were already more comfortable with the way the class ran. However, some of them still have some problems with listening. Lauren is a little girl who was in this class and was getting in trouble on a consistent basis for talking and not listening. When someone gets in trouble this often, Lisa sends him or her out to see his or her parents (most of the parents wait there since the class is only an hour and the children are young). Lauren had to go see her mom three times during this class. In the beginning when Lisa

saw her talking to someone else or jumping around, she was immediately more impatient with her than the rest of the children. I assumed that she has had problems with her before because the mom did not seem too surprised either. Where most kids would be upset or embarrassed about something like this, Lauren did not seem phased. In fact she might have even enjoyed the attention. Lisa does not tolerate any kind of misbehavior. She is stern and hard on them. At the end of class Lisa told Lauren she did not think she should get a piece of candy. Lauren had to go ask her mom if she thought she should get one. Although I felt this was harsh for a 5 year old, Lisa has the power to do this because she is the teacher and it is in a class where discipline is essential. The parents do not complain because of any harsh punishment.

The instructor throughout the duration of the class gives many of the same directions and commands. Overall the children are encouraged to act mature at the age of 3. For example Lisa will say, "I am not impressed". She will also ask them to act like "big people". Talking and giggling are two of the biggest issues. Lisa is always saying things like "quiet is nice", "no talking", "it is not your turn", and "stop drawing attention to yourself". It seems as though most of what she is saying does not hold much meaning for them, but they can tell by a look she gives them or the tone in her voice that what they are doing is "not okay".

There is a difference in the way that language is used for the boys in comparison to the girls. One of the first things that were said was "stand up straight like good ballerinas and ballerinos". When the kids go across the floor one by one, the phrases

used for the boys are different than the ones for the girls. Lisa will say things such as “walk with strength”, “chest out” and “try to look really big”. With the females everything is almost the exact opposite. She tells them to “walk like a princess on your tippy toes”, “run like you’re on the clouds” and “do it like a pretty ballerina”. These phrases are never used with one or the other gender. At the end of class, the girls curtsy and the boys take a bow.

When she makes corrections and tries to explain that they are doing it wrong, she always compares it to something else. For example, when she tells the kids to hold in their stomachs, she refers to it as a “beach ball”. She will say, “hold in your beach ball”. Or, when they go across the floor loudly and not light on their feet, she compares it to an elephant and explains that they do not want to sound this way. One girl in particular (Madeline) got this correction more than anyone. For being about 4 or 5 years old she had a little more baby fat than the rest of the kids.

Although Lisa is the teacher and she is the one in charge, their parents are always in the picture throughout the entire class. There was a little girl named Lolli in this class and she wanted to go and ask her mom something in the middle of class. She must have caught Lisa at just the right time because she allowed her to leave the room and go ahead. Often when the child has a problem with their outfit or shoe or needs help going to the bathroom, Lisa sends them to their parents. When they switch from ballet to tap in the middle of class, they all go find their parents to help them change their shoes. Even at the end when they are given candy, Lisa will tell them to ask their mommy before they eat it.

The parents in this class were a little bit different because of the boys in the class. The dads brought their sons into the class. Both Quincy and Ryan had to go to their dad for anything they needed. At one point Quincy got a time-out and Lisa sent him right out to his father. I could assume that it was every week his dad took him because Lisa knew right away. I did not see a difference in the way that the boys were treated in comparison to the girls by their parents. The dads helped out Ryan and Quincy in changing their shoes and everything just as much as the moms helped the girls.

It is strange because at times they are expected to have the discipline of a teenager, but then it goes back to “mommy” and “daddy”. The communication to them is constantly battling either talking to them like they are adults and then talking to them like they are the age they are.

The second class that I observed was a Combo 3 class. The children in this class had all already graduated from Combo 1 and were between the ages of 5-7. There were a total of nine children in this class, all girls. They all have their hair in buns with some kind of decorative hair clip in it. Most all of them are wearing skirts except for two of the girls who arrived together and appeared to be friends. They were wearing spandex pants underneath their leotard. The colors in everyone’s outfits were bright and the typical girl colors. I can see a noticeable difference in Lisa’s teaching style as well as the listening skills from the girls. The entire class seems to be relatively shy which is a huge difference in itself from the first class. For this reason and also because they are older, these girls do

not have any problems with talking or acting up. The parents are also not involved at all with these children. They sit in the waiting room to watch and that is all. The communication is based solely on teacher to student and vice versa. They wait patiently with their hands raised and do not talk out of turn. Lisa treats them grown-up in many ways so that they feel they have to meet her expectations. At this age they are more conscious that I am in the room and impressing me is an intended. There is one little girl in particular. Her name was Samantha and every time she did a leap or ballet runs across the floor, she would look right at me, smile and wave. I am always conscious of the girls and that they are looking to me to see my expression so I am always sure to have a big smile on my face.

Although there were all girls in this class, I could still definitely tell a difference in the language that was used. It would have most likely been different if there were boys in the class. Adjectives like pretty, beautiful, and dainty were used. These girls have a lot expected from them and are always encouraged to strive for perfection. When a jump looked bad, Lisa would compare it to an animal like a frog. When it looked good she would say that it was beautiful and she felt as though they were jumping in marshmallows. Everything has to be light on the floor. She makes examples of other girls as well. At one point she had everyone watch one of the girls and said that they wanted to “have straight legs like Indigo”. When the class as a whole did something well, the teacher praises them. She will say “thank-you, that was perfect”. If something looks just ok, she will say, “that was good, do it better”. They are still taught discipline at this age, but more of how not to be ready. They know they will be in trouble if they talk and goof

off. It seems that it may be a little more embarrassing at this age for them to be in trouble and that is why they avoid it more. Lisa teaches them how they need to be ready when she counts and that they need to make eye contact with her when she is speaking. At times they even get in trouble for standing with their hand on their hip and yawning. This is when they begin to be molded into disciplined dancers.

The major difference I noticed in this class in comparison to the Combo 1 was that all of the girls in this class were extremely thin. Long, skinny legs and long torsos with no fat on them. So, I never once hear Lisa give the correction to hold in their tummies.

The final class that I observed was the Combo 2 class. Nine girls are enrolled in this class and the ages are four and five year olds. They are all wearing ballet skirts and leotards of bright colors and of course pink tights with pink ballet shoes. The majority of the girls behave like the Combo 3 class, but there are two of them that are a little more hyper like the Combo 1s. They try to keep their attention spans for the entire class but it gets difficult for them within the last 15 minutes. At this level, Lisa seems to be attempting to make them more like leaders. She says things like "leaders don't do that" and "try to do your best". For some reason it seems as though the language used with them is more encouraging. This is surprising because it is the last class of the day that she teaches after teaching for 3 hours and I would think she would be more aggravated. These girls communicate primarily only with Lisa, but there are a few of them who ask still if

they can go ask their mom's a question. A little girl named Iyona in this class seems to be the youngest yet she catches on the fastest and seems to have the best sense of positions and jumps. She is often used as the example in class.

This class is skewed as far as their interactions with me. Some of them do not even care that I am there. Others are constantly watching me and paying careful attention to my reactions. One little girl, Jessica, gave me the most attention. She even kept trying to come up to me and talk. She would ask me questions about what kind of dance I did. Lisa was not happy about this, but at the same time she thought it was kind of funny.

Lisa definitely made the correction to hold in their tummies on several instances. It was never made to one girl in particular but to the class as a whole. They are kids so they do not have much of anything on them besides baby fat. Most of them do not know how to engage the proper muscles to pull up and use their abs. When this is said I see kids correcting it by simply sucking in their rib cage, which is not what they want to do.

Overall the way that Lisa teaches her classes is teacher-like and mother-like at the same time. It is obvious that she feels very comfortable with telling them what to do or yelling at them. The parents have respect for Lisa and seem to appreciate her as the teacher. Because she owns the studio she has a bit more leverage on how she can act and what she can say. For instance, with Lauren and the candy situation. Although the parents are the ones paying the money, Lisa only has to please them to an extent. She is the one in charge and if their child is misbehaving, she has every right to put them in a time-out because it takes away from the other children.

1 Brooke Schneider
2
3 Transcribed Interview #1
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5 Methods-Edley
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7 25 March 2004
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9 **1) Brooke: Can you explain typical dance classes you teach to the children**
10 **you have between the ages of 3-7?**

11 **Lisa:** Well typically I teach a 55-minute class. I do ballet and tap with them be-
12 cause they are too young to stay focused for an entire ballet class. I stretch with
13 them, I do counting, they learn how to count to eight, and they learn how to follow
14 direction. Listening to the teacher is important because dance is discipline. So I
15 teach them basically how to stretch and count and very simple, but fun. They
16 learn how to do ballet walks, kicks, jumping is the first half hour and then the next
17 half hour they go put their tap shoes on and it is more rhythmic. They learn how
18 to tap toe, toe, toe and heel, heel, heel and if I think they can do a little more I will
19 add a little bit like heel toes and shuffles. That is what I do with my 3-5 year olds.
20 With my 5-7 year olds it is almost the same thing except the next level up. I do
21 the same activities and exercises with either a more difficult variation and add a
22 few steps. A little more is accepted from this age group. Not a lot, but they have
23 been in dance a little longer, most of them, so they know how class should be run.

24 **2) Brooke: Is there a difference in the teaching techniques you use when**
25 **there are males in the class?**

26 **Lisa:** Yes there is [enthusiasm]! And more so because there are stereo-types
27 [hesitation], the fathers that bring in their sons want them to learn not necessarily
28 how to be a ballerina, but to learn balancing and stretching and they learn that
29 here. In the adult ballet class we have a football player. Um, so ok if I say hold
30 your hands out and show me your ballet fingers I will say to the girls pretend like
31 you are holding a teacup. I won't say "teacup" to the little boys I will just say
32 hold a "cup" in your hands. I also won't say extend your arms like a "butterfly"; I
33 will say make your arms like "airplane" arms. I do this mostly for the parents, not
34 the little boy.

35 **Brooke:** In addition to this, in what other ways does your language differ
36 in talking to the girls in comparison to the boys? Not only in using analogies,
37 but also in general?

38 **Lisa:** Do you mean more technically?

39 **Brooke:** Yes, more technically.

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41 in the class. I say "strong", I use the word "strong", point your feet "hard", lift
42 your chest, stand up tall. For kicks I will say that I want a big karate kick with
43 straight legs. I will change it. Yeah I do [laughs].

44 **4) Brooke:** What is the attire that the children are required to wear?

45 **Lisa:** Um, leotards and tights. Boys can wear white t-shirt and black sweats. The
46 babies pick out whatever they want to wear because that is the fun it it.

47 **5) Brooke:** Why does the attire differ for girls and boys?

48 **Lisa:** Well again, it is mostly for the parents. I have taken many classes at adult
49 levels where men wear leotard and spandex, but it is their choice and they are
50 comfortable with it. A child that is that young, if we are talking about three years
51 old is going to wear what they have to for the most part. We could have the boys
52 wear leotards and they would think nothing of it, but it is the parents that do not
53 want their son in a ballet class with tights and a leotard on. It again goes back to
54 the stereotypes. A male in dance should appear manly.

55 **6) Brooke: In the dance world, what do you feel some of the stereotypical**
56 **gender differences between males and females?**

57 **Lisa:** In the adult dance world?

58 **Brooke: Yes, primarily ballet?**

59 **Lisa:** Stereotypically? Well, unfortunately, I think the adult male dancer has the
60 stereotype of being feminine and homosexual, quite frankly. You don't usually
61 think of a ballet dancer as a strong male who has a family and kids. Balanchine
62 and some of them broke that vault. But, typically most of those people that don't
63 even know about dance think that the male dancer as a, a, fruit-cake [stumbled
64 over words]. Yeah know?

65 **Brooke: Yes, I understand.**

66 **Lisa:** The female is usually looked at like a Prima Donna. Typically assumed and
67 appeared to have an eating disorder. They are looked at as weak and frail. But,
68 hopefully we are going to change that. Times have changed and woman should
69 not appear this way.

70 **7) Brooke: How do you see these stereotypes being depicted in different as-**
71 **pects such as teaching styles, body image, choreography, attitudes or films?**

72 **Lisa:** Honestly, I don't see any of that going on in choreography. When I see
73 choreography on a man they are usually dancing a stronger role. Gay or not, they
74 are dancing like men out there; they are not dancing like ladies. That is what I see

75 **8) Brooke: Do you encourage these stereotypes in your teaching**
76 **style because they are expected and accepted, such as your earlier comment**
77 **about doing it for the parents because they have certain expectations when**
78 **sending their kids to dance?**

79 **Lisa:** No, I don't encourage that [adamant]. Well...[second guessing] I encour-
80 age them to be who they are and as they get older I encourage them to do what
81 the choreographer asks them to do. If there is a girl who needs to do a very
82 strong manly type walk then that is what I want her to do because the choreo-
83 grapher asks her to do that. The dancer needs to be pliable. If there is a male
84 dancer who needs to appear a little lighter than he needs to do that or vice versa,
85 if he needs to do a more strong male role on stage than he needs to be able to
86 change to whatever the choreographer wants.

87 **Brooke: So versatility?**

88 **Lisa:** Yeah, versatility. And I don't only train them to be really pretty little balle-
89 rinas because everyone is a different shape and different size. So I try to avoid
90 that whole stereotype.

91 **9) Brooke: That actually leads to my next question. At this young of an age,**
92 **are you still cautious on what you say about body image?**

93 **Lisa:** I never make anything about body image. I never discuss that at this young
94 of any age or really at all at the studio.

95 **10) Brooke: How about corrections like “hold in your stomach” which are**
96 **heard so often from a teacher to a dancer even at a young age? How do you**
97 **explain to them what that means without them feeling like you are trying to**
98 **say that they are overweight, especially to the ones that are not stick thin?**

99 **Lisa:** I always explain to them that they are to hold in their stomach because that
100 is their center and with your tummy hanging out, you’re not going to be able to
101 balance with this big ball hanging out. It is really not a body image thing but
102 more of a, a, it is really [searching for words] a technical term that I would use
103 that they accept. Instead of yeah know, one girl may have a fat tummy anyways
104 it’s not about your fat tummy, it is about pulling up what you have so that you
105 can balance. So, I never get into body image.

106 **Brooke: So, you just explain it?**

107 **Lisa:** In fact, I don’t get into body image at all with the kids; I let their parents do
108 that [laughs]. That’s their job [more laughs].

109 **11) Brooke: Do you feel that in choreography when you are dealing with**
110 **both males and females on stage, the woman should appear to be the more**
111 **passive or vulnerable one?**

112 **Lisa:** No, no [adamant], it depends on the choreography, really it does. I mean I
113 have had, um, I did *The Lion King* two or three years ago and I had males and
114 females and they all had the same part, they were all strong, all of them. I wanted
115 everyone strong and really athletic. I mean, people were flying off chairs and,
116 yeah know.

117 **Brooke: Yeah, I understand**

118 **Lisa:** I didn't want anyone feminine at all up there. I wanted it just hard dancing.

119 **Brooke: So by them being athletic, strong and participating in strong**
120 **dancing, this made them not feminine?**

121 **Lisa:** Well, not necessarily [hesitates]. When we are talking about the typical
122 Stereotypes though, yes.

123 **12) Brooke: Would you do the same thing if you wanted a beautiful and**
124 **feminine ballet piece and there were males in it as well? Would you have**
125 **them appear feminine?**

126 **Lisa:** If it supports all the choreography and the story I am trying to tell. Also,
127 what I am trying to let the audience know. That's what it all depends on. So, it
128 just depends on that.

129 **13) Brooke: My final question is, what role do you feel responsible for taking**
130 **on to correct some of the gender stereotypes that exist in the dance world?**

131 **Lisa:** Well, I guess it relates more to the whole homosexual part we talked about
132 a little. It is just letting that little boy or boys know that it doesn't have to be for
133 him, he is his own person, yeah know. You don't have to, you don't have to

134 [pause] take a class with an entire group of male homosexual dancers and think
135 that it is inevitable, like oh my gosh I will turn out that way. It just doesn't work
136 that way. I just try to shape them into their own person and train them and I let
137 them worry about the social aspect of it, later, when they are out of my reach. I
138 don't really get into that too much here at my studio. I don't make an issue out
139 of it.

140 **Brooke: What do you mean by social aspect?**

141 **Lisa:** Well...[pauses] it is always a bug controversy about boys in dance as far as
142 school goes and families. I have had boys quit before based completely on the
143 fact that they were teased in school. That is the social part that I try to stay out of.

144 **Brooke: What about the stereotypes for girls?**

145 **Lisa:** For girls, I would say that I always try to make them appear strong. Just as
146 we talked about, it is more typical for a female to be passive, especially in ballet.
147 I just hope that I can encourage them to be more versatile. I don't want them to
148 go on to a professional dance career and only be able to be the typical pretty
149 ballerina. I want them to also have an edge to their dancing, even if it is ballet. I
150 also just hope that my choreography will enable them to have the tools to do this
151 and be this person. I try to stay away from the whole body image aspect as much
152 as possible, but I hope that the stereotype that is usually true about dancers with
153 eating disorders can get better. For a ballerina, this probably will never change,
154 but for other aspects of dance. It is sad, but I really don't see the extremely thin
155 ballerina icon ever becoming a girl who has a little meat on her bones.

Brooke Schneider
Methods-Edely
Field Notes
3 March 2004

When I first walked into the building of where the studio is, it was hard for me to pick up on all the small details because it is a familiar area to me. The first things I noticed were the doors that lead from the entrance way to the actual studio space. It is almost like it is an entrance to another world. In the entrance, it is where the parents wait and kiss the kids goodbye and then when they walk into the studio it is an environment where they have to interact with many children in a class. A lot more is expected from them when they enter the studio, they have to act disciplined, mature, and not talk out of turn.

The parents wait in a room that is to the left of the entranceway. There are ten chairs in this small room. Pictures hang on the wall of the entire faculty of teachers. There is a window in the room that is one sided, meaning the parents can see into the studio, but from the inside the children cannot see out. Across the hall from the waiting room there is a bathroom. This is also used as a changing room for the kids who have activities such as soccer games after class is over.

Inside the studio it is very open and bright. The space is large, open and rectangular shaped with high ceilings of about fifteen feet. Black strips of material called marley cover the floor. Mirrors cover the entire wall of the front of the room. There is a ballet bar across the back of the room. Two portable ballet bars are pushed up against the far wall. Also

against this wall is the piano that is used for the ballet classes when a musician comes in to play live music. The stereo also sits against this wall in the corner. In each of the four corners of the room there are speakers hanging from the ceiling. In the far corner there is also a large stuffed snake stuffed animal known as “Mr. Snakey”. There is a second entranceway on the other side of the studio. Nobody is allowed to enter in this way and the door always remains locked. The reason for this is because the main entranceway used to not exist. Parents used to be able to walk right into the studio in the same room where the children were dancing. This was too much of a distraction so Lisa, the owner, had an entire waiting room built. Hanging on the way are three pictures. One is of a dancer stretching against the mirror. The other is of a worn out pair of pointe shoes. The last one is a beautiful prima ballerina in a tutu.

The studio feels cold in the beginning. In fact the children are allowed to keep warm-ups on for the first fifteen minutes of class. By then, their body heat usually warms up the room. There are fans that hang from the ceiling and most of the time the children ask for them to be turned on. The studio smells like the marley material that is used for the floor. It is a distinct smell and when you leave, you can still smell it on your skin and clothes.

The class begins by Lisa walking in very frantically because she is almost late. As soon as she walks in the door she starts saying “hi everyone, come in and sit down”. She rushes over to the stereo and picks through her cds to place in the stereo. She sits in a circle in the center of the room and starts to call everyone over. The parents kiss their kids

goodbye and shut the door to the waiting room. Since I was observing from inside the room Lisa introduced me to the girls as “her friend, Brooke”. All of the kids looked at me with big eyes and smiles on their faces. They know that I am a teacher there because I have taught them before. They often like to impress people that are watching, especially since they know that I am a dancer.

In warm-up, Lisa uses an animated tone to try to keep the kids interested. She uses many analogies and little games to get them to do what she is doing. For instance they sit in second position on the floor and Lisa calls it a “pizza slice”. In order to get them to stretch, she tells them to put their hands in the cheese and then their heads in the cheese.

The first class I watched was a Combo 1 level. So, the children in this class are taking their first dance class and the class is divided half ballet and half tap. There are nine girls and two boys in this class. The kids are as young as 3 and are no older than 5. All of the girls are wearing ballet skirts. Most of their leotards are colorful and bright with colors such as pink and purple. They all have on pink tights and pink ballet shoes. Most of their hair is in buns or at least attempted buns. It is at least pulled back off their face because Lisa requires it. All of them have a bow or ribbon in their hair. The two males that are in the class wear black pants and white turtlenecks. Their ballet shoes are black. Their clothes are not at all tight fitting, but very loose.

The music used is very “kid friendly”. Some of the songs are nursery rhymes or Disney songs. Most of the music can have little skits that go along with them. What I mean by this is that most of them have hand gestures that the kids remember and do each week

to keep them interested.

When they do across the floor, they are chosen in a certain order. They do not stand in line. Lisa calls them one at a time and that is when it is their turn. At one point, the little boy, Quincy, was jumping around acting silly, Lisa said to him “do not direct the attention to you when it is supposed to be on someone else”. They learn to stand still and not fidget. It is not only about dance, but about discipline as well. They are not called to go across the floor until they are waiting quietly and patiently.

At this level the children are just learning how to take a dance class. Although the entire class is a routine that they participate in every week, they still need to be reminded of the order and how to complete each step asked of them. They are just beginning to learn discipline and how to follow direction. Often some of them will speak out of turn and they get scolded when they do. Since I began to observe them in the middle of the year, they were already more comfortable with the way the class ran. However, some of them still have some problems with listening. Lauren is a little girl who was in this class and was getting in trouble on a consistent basis for talking and not listening. When someone gets in trouble this often, Lisa sends him or her out to see his or her parents (most of the parents wait there since the class is only an hour and the children are young). Lauren had to go see her mom three times during this class. In the beginning when Lisa saw her talking to someone else or jumping around, she was immediately more impatient with her than the rest of the children. I assumed that she has had problems with her before because the mom did not seem too surprised either. Where most kids would be upset or embarrassed about something like this, Lauren did not seem phased. In fact she might have even enjoyed the

attention. Lisa does not tolerate any kind of misbehavior. She is stern and hard on them. At the end of class Lisa told Lauren she did not think she should get a piece of candy. Lauren had to go ask her mom if she thought she should get one. Although I felt this was harsh for a 5 year old, Lisa has the power to do this because she is the teacher and it is in a class where discipline is essential. The parents do not complain because of any harsh punishment.

The instructor throughout the duration of the class gives many of the same directions and commands. Overall the children are encouraged to act mature at the age of 3. For example Lisa will say, "I am not impressed". She will also ask them to act like "big people". Talking and giggling are two of the biggest issues. Lisa is always saying things like "quiet is nice", "no talking", "it is not your turn", and "stop drawing attention to yourself". It seems as though most of what she is saying does not hold much meaning for them, but they can tell by a look she gives them or the tone in her voice that what they are doing is "not okay".

There is a difference in the way that language is used for the boys in comparison to the girls. One of the first things that were said was "stand up straight like good ballerinas and ballerinos". When the kids go across the floor one by one, the phrases used for the boys are different than the ones for the girls. Lisa will say things such as "walk with strength", "chest out" and "try to look really big". With the females everything is almost the exact opposite. She tells them to "walk like a princess on your tippy toes", "run like you're on the clouds" and "do it like a pretty ballerina". These phrases are never used with one or the other gender. At the end of class, the girls curtsy and the boys take a bow.

When she makes corrections and tries to explain that they are doing it wrong, she always compares it to something else. For example, when she tells the kids to hold in their stomachs, she refers to it as a “beach ball”. She will say, “hold in your beach ball”. Or, when they go across the floor loudly and not light on their feet, she compares it to an elephant and explains that they do not want to sound this way. One girl in particular (Madeline) got this correction more than anyone. For being about 4 or 5 years old she has a little more baby fat than the rest of the kids.

Although Lisa is the teacher and she is the one in charge, their parents are always in the picture throughout the entire class. There was a little girl named Lolli in this class and she wanted to go and ask her mom something in the middle of class. She must have caught Lisa at just the right time because she allowed her to leave the room and go ahead. Often when the child has a problem with their outfit or shoe or needs help going to the bathroom, Lisa sends them to their parents. When they switch from ballet to tap in the middle of class, they all go find their parents to help them change their shoes. Even at the end when they are given candy, Lisa will tell them to ask their mommy before they eat it.

The parents in this class were a little bit different because of the boys in the class. The dads brought their sons into the class. Both Quincy and Ryan had to go to their dad for anything they needed. At one point Quincy got a time-out and Lisa sent him right out to his father. I could assume that it was every week his dad took him because Lisa knew right away. I did not see a difference in the way that the boys were treated in comparison to the girls by their parents. The dads helped out Ryan and Quincy in changing their shoes and everything just as much as the moms helped the girls.

It is strange because at times they are expected to have the discipline of a teenager, but then it goes back to “mommy” and “daddy”. The communication to them is constantly battling either talking to them like they are adults and then talking to them like they are the age they are.

The second class that I observed was a Combo 3 class. The children in this class had all already graduated from Combo 1 and were between the ages of 5-7. There were a total of nine children in this class, all girls. They all have their hair in buns with some kind of decorative hair clip in it. Most all of them are wearing skirts except for two of the girls who arrived together and appeared to be friends. They were wearing spandex pants underneath their leotard. The colors in everyone’s outfits were bright and the typical girl colors. I can see a noticeable difference in Lisa’s teaching style as well as the listening skills from the girls. The entire class seems to be relatively shy which is a huge difference in itself from the first class. For this reason and also because they are older, these girls do not have any problems with talking or acting up. The parents are also not involved at all with these children. They sit in the waiting room to watch and that is all. The communication is based solely on teacher to student and vice versa. They wait patiently with their hands raised and do not talk out of turn. Lisa treats them grown-up in many ways so that they feel they have to meet her expectations. At this age they are more conscious that I am in the room and impressing me is an intended. There is one little girl in particular. Her name was Samantha and every time she did a leap or ballet runs across the floor, she would look right at me, smile and wave. I am always conscious of the girls and that they are looking to me to see my expression so I am always sure to have a big smile on my face.

Although there were all girls in this class, I could still definitely tell a difference

in the language that was used. It would have most likely been different if there were boys in the class. Adjectives like pretty, beautiful, and dainty were used. These girls have a lot expected from them and are always encouraged to strive for perfection. When a jump looked bad, Lisa would compare it to an animal like a frog. When it looked good she would say that it was beautiful and she felt as though they were jumping in marshmallows.

Everything has to be light on the floor. She makes examples of other girls as well. At one point she had everyone watch one of the girls and said that they wanted to “have straight legs like Indigo”. When the class as a whole did something well, she teach praises them. She will say “thank-you, that was perfect”. If something looks just ok, she will say, “that was good, do it better”. They are still being taught discipline at this age, but more of how not to be ready. They know they will be in trouble if they talk and goof off. It seems that it may be a little more embarrassing at this age for them to be in trouble and that is why they avoid it more. Lisa teaches them how they need to be ready when she counts and that they need to make eye contact with her when she is speaking. At times they even get in trouble for standing with their hand on their hip yawning. This is when they begin to be molded into disciplined dancers.

The major difference I noticed in this class in comparison to the Combo 1 was that all of the girls in this class were extremely thin. Long, skinny legs and long torsos with no fat on them. So, I never once hear Lisa give the correction to hold in their tummies.

The final class that I observed was the Combo 2 class. Nine girls are enrolled in this

class and the ages are four and five year olds. They are all wearing ballet skirts and leotards of bright colors and of course pink tights with pink ballet shoes. The majority of the girls behave like the Combo 3 class, but there are two of them that are a little more hyper like the Combo 1s. They try to keep their attention spans for the entire class but it gets difficult for them within the last 15 minutes. At this level, Lisa seems to be attempting to make them more like leaders. She says things like “leaders don’t do that” and “try to do your best”. For some reason it seems as though the language used with them is more encouraging. This is surprising because it is the last class of the day that she teaches after teaching for 3 hours and I would think she would be more aggravated. These girls communicate primarily only with Lisa, but there are a few of them who ask still if they can go ask their mom’s a question. A little girl names Iyona in this class seems to be the youngest yet she catches on the fastest and seems to have the best sense of positions and jumps. She is often used as the example in class.

This class is skewed as far as their interactions with me. Some of them do not even care that I am there. Others are constantly watching me and paying careful attention to my reactions. One little girl, Jessica, gave me the most attention. She even kept trying to come up to me and talk. She would ask me questions about what kind of dance I did. Lisa was not happy about this, but at the same time she though it was kind of funny.

Lisa definitely made the correction to hold in their tummies on several instances. It was never made to one girl in particular but to the class as a whole. They are kids so they do not have much of anything on them besides baby fat. Most of them do not know how to

1 Brooke Schneider

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3 Transcribed Interview

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5 Methods-Edley

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7 25 March 2004

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9 **1) Brooke: Can you explain typical dance classes you teach to the children**

10 **you have between the ages of 3-7?**

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13 them, I do counting, they learn how to count to eight, and they learn how to follow

14 direction. Listening to the teacher is important because dance is discipline. So I

15 teach them basically how to stretch and count and very simple, but fun. They

16 learn how to do ballet walks, kicks, jumping is the first half hour and then the next

17 half hour they go put their tap shoes on and it is more rhythmic. They learn how

18 to tap toe, toe, toe and heel, heel, heel and if I think they can do a little more I will

19 add a little bit like heel toes and shuffles. That is what I do with my 3-5 year olds.

20 With my 5-7 year olds it is almost the same thing except the next level up. I do

21 the same activities and exercises with either a more difficult variation and add a

22 few steps. A little more is accepted from this age group. Not a lot, but they have

23 been in dance a little longer, most of them, so they know how class should be run.

24 **2) Brooke: Is there a difference in the teaching techniques you use when there**

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26 Lisa: Yes there is [enthusiasm]! And more so because there are stereotypes
27 [hesitation], the fathers that bring in their sons want them to learn not necessarily
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35 **3) Brooke: In addition to this, in what other ways does your language differ in**
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38 Lisa: Do you mean more technically?

39 Brooke: Yes, more technically.

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42 your chest, stand up tall. For kicks I will say that I want a big karate kick with
43 straight legs. I will change it. Yeah I do [laughs].

44 **4) Brooke: What is the attire that the children are required to wear?**

45 Lisa: Um, leotards and tights. Boys can wear white t-shirt and black sweats. The
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62 and some of them broke that vault. But, typically most of those people that don't
63 even know about dance think that the male dancer as a , a, fruit-cake [stumbled
64 over words]. Yeah know?

65 **Brooke: Yes, I understand.**

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67 appeared to have an eating disorder. They are looked at as weak and frail. But,
68 hopefully we are going to change that. Times have changed and women should
69 not appear this way.

70 **7) Brooke: How do you see these stereotypes being depicted in different aspects**
71 **such as teaching styles, body image, choreography, attitudes or films?**

72 **Lisa:** Honestly, I don't see any of that going on in choreography. When I see
73 choreography on a man they are usually dancing a stronger role. Gay or not, they
74 are dancing like men out there; they are not dancing like ladies. That is what I see.

75 **8) Brooke: Do you encourage these stereotypes in your teaching style because**
76 **they are expected and accepted, such as your earlier comment about doing it**
77 **for the parents because they have certain expectations when sending their**
78 **kids to dance?**

79 **Lisa:** No, I don't encourage that [adamant]. Well...[second guessing] I encourage
80 them to be who they are and as they get older I encourage them to do what the
81 choreographer asks them to do. If there is a girl who needs to do a very strong
82 manly type walk then that is what I want her to do because the choreographer asks
83 her to do that. The dancer needs to be pliable. If there is a male dancer who needs
84 to appear a little lighter than he needs to do that or vice versa, if he needs to do a
85 more strong male role on stage then he needs to be able to change to whatever the
86 choreographer wants.

87 **Brooke: So versatility?**

88 **Lisa:** Yeah, versatility. And I don't only train them to be really pretty little
89 ballerinas because everyone is a different shape and different size. So I try to
90 avoid that whole stereotype.

91 **9) Brooke: That actually leads to my next question. At this young of an age, are**
92 **you still cautious on what you say about body image?**

93 **Lisa:** I never make anything about body image. I never discuss that at this young
94 of any age or really at all at the studio.

95 **10) Brooke: How about corrections like “hold in your stomach” which are**
96 **heard so often from a teacher to a dancer even at a young age? How do you**
97 **explain to them what that means without them feeling like you are trying to**
98 **say that they are overweight, especially to the ones that are not stick thin?**

99 **Lisa:** I always explain to them that they are to hold in their stomach because that
100 is their center and with your tummy hanging out, you’re not going to be able to
101 balance with this big ball hanging out. It is really not a body image thing but more
102 of a, a, it is really [searching for words] a technical term that I would use that they
103 accept. Instead of yeah know, one girl may have a fat tummy anyways it’s not
104 about your fat tummy, it is about pulling up what you have so that you can balance.
105 So, I never get into body image.

106 **Brooke: So, you just explain it?**

107 **Lisa:** In fact, I don’t get into body image at all with the kids; I let their parents do
108 that [laughs]. That’s their job [more laughs].

109 **11) Brooke: Do you feel that in choreography when you are dealing with both**
110 **males and females on stage, the woman should appear to be the more passive**
111 **or vulnerable one?**

112 **Lisa:** No, no [adamant], it depends on the choreography, really it does. I mean I
113 have had, um, I did *The Lion King* two or three years ago and I had males and
114 females and they all had the same part, they were all strong, all of them. I wanted
115 everyone strong and really athletic. I mean, people were flying off chairs and,
116 yeah know.

117 **Brooke: Yeah, I understand**

118 **Lisa:** I didn't want anyone feminine at all up there. I wanted it just hard dancing.

119 **Brooke: So by them being athletic, strong and participating in strong dancing,**
120 **this made them not feminine?**

121 **Lisa:** Well, not necessarily [hesitates]. When we are talking about the typical
122 stereotypes though, yes.

123 **12) Brooke: Would you do the same thing if you wanted a beautiful and**
124 **feminine ballet piece and there were males in it as well? Would you have them**
125 **appear feminine?**

126 **Lisa:** If it supports all the choreography and the story I am trying to tell. Also,
127 what I am trying to let the audience know. That's what it all depends on. So, it
128 just depends on that.

129 **13) Brooke: My final question is, what role do you feel responsible for taking**
130 **on to correct some of the gender stereotypes that exist in the dance world?**

131 **Lisa:** Well, I guess it relates more to the whole homosexual part we talked about
132 a little. It is just letting that little boy or boys know that it doesn't have to be for
133 him, he is his own person, yeah know. You don't have to, you don't have to

134 [pause] take a class with an entire group of male homosexual dancers and think
135 that it is inevitable, like oh my gosh I will turn out that way. It just doesn't work
136 that way. I just try to shape them into their own person and train them and I let
137 them worry about the social aspect of it, later, when they are out of my reach. I
138 don't really get into that too much here at my studio. I don't make an issue out of
139 it.

140 **Brooke: What do you mean by social aspect?**

141 **Lisa:** Well...[pauses] it is always a big controversy about boys in dance as far as
142 school goes and families. I have had boys quit before based completely on the fact
143 that they were teased in school. That is the social part that I try to stay out of.

144 **Brooke: What about the stereotypes for girls?**

145 **Lisa:** For girls, I would say that I always try to make them appear strong. Just as
146 we talked about, it is more typical for a female to be passive, especially in ballet. I
147 just hope that I can encourage them to be more versatile. I don't want them to go
148 on to a professional dance career and only be able to be the typical pretty ballerina.
149 I want them to also have an edge to their dancing, even if it is ballet. I also just
150 hope that my choreography will enable them to have the tools to do this and be
151 this person. I try to stay away from the whole body image aspect as much as
152 possible, but I hope that the stereotype that is usually true about dancers with
153 eating disorders can get better. For a ballerina, this probably will never change, but
154 for other aspects of dance. It is sad, but I really don't see the extremely thin
155 ballerina icon ever becoming a girl who has a little meat on her bones.

Brooke Schneider
Methods-Edely
Field Notes
3 March 2004

When I first walked into the building of where the studio is, it was hard for me to pick up on all of the small details because it is a familiar area to me. The first things I noticed were the doors that lead from the entrance way to the actual studio space. It is almost like it is an entrance to another world. In the entrance, it is where the parents wait and kiss the kids goodbye and then when they walk into the studio it is an environment where they have to interact with many children in a class. A lot more is expected from them when they enter the studio, they have to act disciplined, mature, and not talk out of turn.

The parents wait in a room that is to the left of the entranceway. There are ten chairs in this small room. Pictures hang on the wall of the entire faculty of teachers. There is a window in the room that is one sided, meaning the parents can see into the studio, but from the inside the children cannot see out. Across the hall from the waiting room there is a bathroom. This is also used as a changing room for the kids who have activities such as soccer games after class is over.

Inside the studio it is very open and bright. The space is large, open and rectangular shaped with high ceilings of about fifteen feet. Black strips of material called marley cover the floor. Mirrors cover the entire wall of the front of the room. There is a ballet bar across the back of the room. Two portable ballet bars are pushed up against the far wall. Also

against this wall is the piano that is used for the ballet classes when a musician comes in to play live music. There stereo also sits against this wall in the corner. In each of the four corners of the room there are speakers hanging from the ceiling. In the far corner there is also a large stuffed snake stuffed animal known as “Mr. Snakey”. There is a second entranceway on the other side of the studio. Nobody is allowed to enter in this way and the door always remains locked. The reason for this is because the main entranceway used to not exist. Parents used to be able to walk right into the studio in the same room where the children were dancing. This was too much of a distraction so Lisa, the owner, had an entire waiting room built. Hanging on the wall are three pictures. One is of a dancer stretching against the mirror. The other is of a worn out pair of pointe shoes. The last one is a beautiful prima ballerina in a tutu.

The studio feels cold in the beginning. In fact the children are allowed to keep warm-ups on for the first fifteen minutes of class. By then, their body heat usually warms up the room. There are fans that hang from the ceiling and most of the time the children ask for them to be turned on. The studio smells like the marley material that is used for the floor. It is a distinct smell and when you leave, you can still smell it on your skin and clothes.

The class begins by Lisa walking in very frantically because she is almost late. As soon as she walks in the door she starts saying “hi everyone, come in and sit down”. She rushes over to the stereo and picks through her cds to place in the stereo. She sits in a circle in the center of the room and starts to call everyone over. The parents kiss their kids

goodbye and shut the door to the waiting room. Since I was observing from inside the room Lisa introduced me to the girls as “her friend, Brooke”. All of the kids looked at me with big eyes and smiles on their faces. They know that I am a teacher there because I have taught them before. They often like to impress people that are watching, especially since they know that I am a dancer.

In warm-up, Lisa uses an animated tone to try to keep the kids interested. She uses many analogies and little games to get them to do what she is doing. For instance they sit in second position on the floor and Lisa calls it a “pizza slice”. In order to get them to stretch, she tells them to put their hands in the cheese and then their heads in the cheese.

The first class I watched was a Combo 1 level. So, the children in this class are taking their first dance class and the class is divided half ballet and half tap. There are nine girls and two boys in this class. The kids are as young as 3 and are no older than 5. All of the girls are wearing ballet skirts. Most of their leotards are colorful and bright with colors such as pink and purple. They all have on pink tights and pink ballet shoes. Most of their hair is in buns or at least attempted buns. It is at least pulled back off their face because Lisa requires it. All of them have a bow or ribbon in their hair. The two males that are in class wear black pants and white turtlenecks. Their ballet shoes are black. Their clothes are not at all tight fitting, but very loose.

The music used is very “kid friendly”. Some of the songs are nursery rhymes or Disney songs. Most of the music can have skits that go along with them. What I mean by this is that most of them have hand gestures that the kids remember and do each week to keep them interested.

When they go across the floor, they are chosen in a certain order. They do not stand in line. Lisa calls them one at a time and that is when it is their turn. At one point, the little boy, Quincy, was jumping around acting silly, Lisa said to him “do not direct the attention to you when it is supposed to be on someone else”. They learn to stand still and not fidget. It is not only about dance, but about discipline as well. They are not called to go across the floor until they are waiting quietly and patiently.

At this level the children are just learning how to take a dance class. Although the entire class is a routine that they participate in every week, they still need to be reminded of the order and how to complete each step asked of them. They are just beginning to learn discipline and how to follow direction. Often some of them will speak out of turn and they get scolded when they do. Since I began to observe them in the middle of the year, they were already more comfortable with the way the class ran. However, some of them still have some problems with listening. Lauren is a little girl who was in this class and was getting in trouble on a consistent basis for talking and not listening. When someone gets in trouble this often, Lisa sends him or her out to see his or her parents (most of the parents wait there since the class is only an hour and the children are young). Lauren had to go see her mom three times during this class. In the beginning when Lisa saw her talking to someone else or jumping around, she was immediately more impatient with her than the rest of the children. I assumed that she has had problems with her before because the mom did not seem too surprised either. Where most kids would be upset or embarrassed about

something like this, Lauren did not seem phased. In fact she might have even enjoyed the attention. Lisa does not tolerate any kind of misbehavior. She is stern and hard on them. At the end of class Lisa told Lauren she did not think she should get a piece of candy. Lauren had to go ask her mom if she thought she should get one. Although I felt this was harsh for a 5 year old, Lisa has the power to do this because she is the teacher and it is in a class where discipline is essential. The parents do not complain because of any harsh punishment.

The instructor throughout the duration of the class gives many of the same directions and commands. Overall the children are encouraged to act mature at the age of 3. For example Lisa will say, "I am not impressed". She will also ask them to act like "big people". Talking and giggling are two of the biggest issues. Lisa is always saying things like "quiet is nice", "no talking", "it is not your turn", and "stop drawing attention to yourself". It seems as though most of what she is saying does not hold much meaning for them, but they can tell by a look she gives them or the tone in her voice that what they are doing is "not okay".

There is a difference in the way that language is used for the boys in comparison to the girls. One of the first things that were said was "stand up straight like good ballerinas and ballerinos". When the kids go across the floor one by one, the phrases used for the boys are different than the ones for the girls. Lisa will say things such as "walk with strength", "chest out" and "try to look really big". With the females everything is almost the exact opposite. She tells them to "walk like a princess on your tippy toes", "run like you're on the clouds" and "do it like a pretty ballerina". These phrases are never used with one or the other gender. At the end of class, the girls curtsy and the boys take a bow.

When she makes corrections and tries to explain that they are doing it wrong, she always compares it to something else. For example, when she tells the kids to hold in their stomachs, she refers to it as a “beach ball”. She will say, “hold in your beach ball”. Or, when they go across the floor loudly and not light on their feet, she compares it to an elephant and explains that they do not want to sound this way. One girl in particular (Madeline) got this correction more than anyone. For being about 4 or 5 years old she had a little more baby fat than the rest of the kids.

Although Lisa is the teacher and she is the one in charge, their parents are always in the picture throughout the entire class. There was a little girl named Lolli in this class and she wanted to go and ask her mom something in the middle of class. She must have caught Lisa at just the right time because she allowed her to leave the room and go ahead. Often when the child has a problem with their outfit or shoe or needs help going to the bathroom, Lisa sends them to their parents. When they switch from ballet to tap in the middle of class, they all go find their parents to help them change their shoes. Even at the end when they are given candy, Lisa will tell them to ask their mommy before they eat it.

The parents in this class were a little bit different because of the boys in the class. The dads brought their sons into the class. Both Quincy and Ryan had to go to their dad for anything they needed. At one point Quincy got a time-out and Lisa sent him right out to his father. I could assume that it was every week his dad took him because Lisa knew right away. I did not see a difference in the way that the boys were treated in comparison to the girls by their parents. The dads helped out Ryan and Quincy in changing their shoes and everything just as much as the moms helped the girls.

It is strange because at times they are expected to have the discipline of a teenager, but then it goes back to “mommy” and “daddy”. The communication to them is constantly battling either talking to them like they are adults and then talking to them like they are the age they are.

The second class that I observed was a Combo 3 class. The children in this class had all already graduated from Combo 1 and were between the ages of 5-7. There were a total of nine children in this class, all girls. They all have their hair in buns with some kind of decorative hair clip in it. Most all of them are wearing skirts except for two of the girls who arrived together and appeared to be friends. They were wearing spandex pants underneath their leotard. The colors in everyone’s outfits were bright and the typical girl colors. I can see a noticeable difference in Lisa’s teaching style as well as the listening skills from the girls. The entire class seems to be relatively shy which is a huge difference in itself from the first class. For this reason and also because they are older, these girls do not have any problems with talking or acting up. The parents are also not involved at all with these children. They sit in the waiting room to watch and that is all. The communication is based solely on teacher to student and vice versa. They wait patiently with their hands raised and do not talk out of turn. Lisa treats them grown-up in many ways so that they feel they have to meet her expectations. At this age they are more conscious that I am in the room and impressing me is an intended. There is one little girl in particular. Her name was Samantha and every time she did a leap or ballet runs across the floor, she would look right at me, smile and wave. I am always conscious of the girls and that they are looking to me to see my expression so I am always sure to have a big smile on my face.

Although there were all girls in this class, I could still definitely tell a difference in the language that was used. It would have most likely been different if there were boys in the class. Adjectives like pretty, beautiful, and dainty were used. These girls have a lot expected from them and are always encouraged to strive for perfection. When a jump looked bad, Lisa would compare it to an animal like a frog. When it looked good she would say that it was beautiful and she felt as though they were jumping in marshmallows. Everything has to be light on the floor. She makes examples of other girls as well. At one point she had everyone watch one of the girls and said that they wanted to “have straight legs like Indigo”. When the class as a whole did something well, the teacher praises them. She will say “thank-you, that was perfect”. If something looks just ok, she will say, “that was good, do it better”. They are still being taught discipline at this age, but more of how not to be ready. They know they will be in trouble if they talk and goof off. It seems that it may be a little more embarrassing at this age for them to be in trouble and that is why they avoid it more. Lisa teaches them how they need to be ready when she counts and that they need to make eye contact with her when she is speaking. At times they even get in trouble for standing with their hand on their hip and yawning. This is when they begin to be molded into disciplined dancers.

The major difference I noticed in this class in comparison to the Combo 1 was that all of the girls in this class were extremely thin. Long, skinny legs and long torsos with no fat on them. So, I never once hear Lisa give the correction to hold in their tummies.

The final class that I observed was the Combo 2 class. Nine girls are enrolled in this class and the ages are four and five year olds. They are all wearing ballet skirts and leotards of bright colors and of course pink tights with pink ballet shoes. The majority of the girls

behave like the Combo 3 class, but there are two of them that are a little more hyper like the Combo 1s. They try to keep their attention span for the entire class but it gets difficult for them within the last 15 minutes. At this level, Lisa seems to be attempting to make them more like leaders. She says things like “leaders don’t do that” and “try to do your best”. For some reason it seems as though the language used with them is more encouraging. This is surprising because it is the last class of the day that she teaches after teaching for 3 hours and I would think she would be more aggravated. These girls communicate primarily only with Lisa, but there are a few of them who ask still if they can go ask their mom’s a question. A little girl names Iyona in this class seems to be the youngest yet she catches on the fastest and seems to have the best sense of positions and jumps. She is often used as the example in class.

This class is skewed as far as their interactions with me. Some of them do not even care that I am there. Others are constantly watching me and paying careful attention to my reactions. One little girl, Jessica, gave me the most attention. She even kept trying to come up to me and talk. She would ask me questions about what kind of dance I did. Lisa was not happy about this, but at the same time she thought it was kind of funny.

Lisa definitely made the correction to hold in their tummies on several instances. It was never made to one girl in particular but to the class as a whole. They are kids so they do not have much of anything on them besides baby fat. Most of them do not know how to engage the proper muscles to pull up and use their abs. When this is said I see kids correcting it by simply sucking in their rib cage, which is not way they want to do.

Overall the way that Lisa teaches her classes is teacher-like and mother-like at the same time. It is obvious that she feels very comfortable with telling them what to do or yelling at them. The parents have respect for Lisa and seem to appreciate her as the teacher. Because she owns the studio she has a bit more leverage on how she can act and what she can say. For instance, with Lauren and the candy situation. Although the parents are the ones paying the money, Lisa only has to please them to an extent. She is the one in charge and if their child is misbehaving, she has every right to put them in a time-out because it takes away from the other children.

1 Brooke Schneider

2

3 Transcribed Interview

4

5 Methods-Edley

6

7 25 March 2004

8

9 **1) Brooke: Can you explain typical dance classes you teach to the children**

10 **you have between the ages of 3-7?**

11 **Lisa:** Well typically I teach a 55-minute class. I do ballet and tap with them

12 because they are too young to stay focused for an entire ballet class. I stretch with

13 them, I do counting, they learn how to count to eight, and they learn how to follow

14 direction. Listening to the teacher is important because dance is discipline. So I

15 teach them basically how to stretch and count and very simple, but fun. They

16 learn how to do ballet walks, kicks, jumping is the first half hour and then the next

17 half hour they go put their tap shoes on and it is more rhythmic. They learn how

18 to tap toe, toe, toe and heel, heel, heel and if I think they can do a little more I will

19 add a little bit like heel toes and shuffles. That is what I do with my 3-5 year olds.

20 With my 5-7 year olds it is almost the same thing except the next level up. I do

21 the same activities and exercises with either a more difficult variation and add a

22 few steps. A little more is accepted from this age group. Not a lot, but they have

23 been in dance a little longer, most of them, so they know how class should be run.

24 **2) Brooke: Is there a difference in the teaching techniques you use when there**

25 **are males in the class?**

26 Lisa: Yes there is [enthusiasm]! And more so because there are stereotypes

27 [hesitation], the fathers that bring in their sons want them to learn not necessarily
28 how to be a ballerina, but to learn balancing and stretching and they learn that
29 here. In the adult ballet class we have a football player. Um, so ok if I say hold
30 your hands out and show me your ballet fingers I will say to the girls pretend like
31 you are holding a teacup. I won't say "teacup" to the little boys I will just say
32 hold a "cup" in your hands. I also won't say extend your arms like a "butterfly", I
33 will say make your arms like "airplane" arms. I do this mostly for the parents, not
34 the little boy.

35 **3) Brooke: In addition to this, in what other ways does your language differ in**
36 **talking to the girls in comparison to the boys? Not only in using analogies, but**
37 **also in general?**

38 **Lisa:** Do you mean more technically?

39 **Brooke: Yes, more technically.**

40 **Lisa:** Well, I don't say the word "pretty" for "pretty ballet walks" if there is a boy
41 in the class. I say "strong", I use the word "strong", point your feet "hard", lift
42 your chest, stand up tall. For kicks I will say that I want a big karate kick with
43 straight legs. I will change it. Yeah I do [laughs].

44 **4) Brooke: What is the attire that the children are required to wear?**

45 **Lisa:** Um, leotards and tights. Boys can wear white t-shirt and black sweats. The
46 babies pick out whatever they want to wear because that is the fun in it.

47 **5) Brooke: Why does the attire differ for girls and boys?**

48 **Lisa:** Well again, it is mostly for the parents. I have taken many classes at adult

49 levels where men wear leotard and spandex, but it is their choice and they are
50 comfortable with it. A child that is that young, if we are talking about three years
51 old is going to wear what they have to for the most part. We could have the boys
52 wear leotards and they would think nothing of it, but it is the parents that do not
53 want their son in a ballet class with tights and a leotard on. It again goes back to
54 the stereotypes. A male in dance should appear manly.

55 **6) Brooke: In the dance world, what do you feel some of the stereotypical**
56 **gender differences between males and females?**

57 **Lisa:** In the adult dance world?

58 **Brooke: Yes, primarily ballet?**

59 **Lisa:** Stereotypically? Well, unfortunately, I think the adult male dancer has the
60 stereotype of being feminine and homosexual, quite frankly. You don't usually
61 think of a ballet dancer as a strong male who has a family and kids. Balanchine
62 and some of them broke that vault. But, typically most of those people that don't
63 even know about dance think that the male dancer as a , a, fruit-cake [stumbled
64 over words]. Yeah know?

65 **Brooke: Yes, I understand.**

66 **Lisa:** The female is usually looked at like a Prima Donna. Typically assumed and
67 appeared to have an eating disorder. They are looked at as weak and frail. But,
68 hopefully we are going to change that. Times have changed and women should
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70 **7) Brooke: How do you see these stereotypes being depicted in different aspects**

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72 **Lisa:** Honestly, I don't see any of that going on in choreography. When I see
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75 **8) Brooke: Do you encourage these stereotypes in your teaching style because**
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86 choreographer wants.

87 **Brooke: So versatility?**

88 **Lisa:** Yeah, versatility. And I don't only train them to be really pretty little
89 ballerinas because everyone is a different shape and different size. So I try to
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91 **9) Brooke: That actually leads to my next question. At this young of an age, are**

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93 **Lisa:** I never make anything about body image. I never discuss that at this young
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95 **10) Brooke: How about corrections like “hold in your stomach” which are**
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109 **11) Brooke: Do you feel that in choreography when you are dealing with both**
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113 have had, um, I did *The Lion King* two or three years ago and I had males and
114 females and they all had the same part, they were all strong, all of them. I wanted
115 everyone strong and really athletic. I mean, people were flying off chairs and,
116 yeah know.

117 **Brooke: Yeah, I understand**

118 **Lisa:** I didn't want anyone feminine at all up there. I wanted it just hard dancing.

119 **Brooke: So by them being athletic, strong and participating in strong dancing,**
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121 **Lisa:** Well, not necessarily [hesitates]. When we are talking about the typical
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129 **13) Brooke: My final question is, what role do you feel responsible for taking**
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134 [pause] take a class with an entire group of male homosexual dancers and think

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136 that way. I just try to shape them into their own person and train them and I let
137 them worry about the social aspect of it, later, when they are out of my reach. I
138 don't really get into that too much here at my studio. I don't make an issue out of
139 it.

140 **Brooke: What do you mean by social aspect?**

141 **Lisa:** Well...[pauses] it is always a big controversy about boys in dance as far as
142 school goes and families. I have had boys quit before based completely on the fact
143 that they were teased in school. That is the social part that I try to stay out of.

144 **Brooke: What about the stereotypes for girls?**

145 **Lisa:** For girls, I would say that I always try to make them appear strong. Just as
146 we talked about, it is more typical for a female to be passive, especially in ballet. I
147 just hope that I can encourage them to be more versatile. I don't want them to go
148 on to a professional dance career and only be able to be the typical pretty ballerina.
149 I want them to also have an edge to their dancing, even if it is ballet. I also just
150 hope that my choreography will enable them to have the tools to do this and be
151 this person. I try to stay away from the whole body image aspect as much as
152 possible, but I hope that the stereotype that is usually true about dancers with
153 eating disorders can get better. For a ballerina, this probably will never change, but
154 for other aspects of dance. It is sad, but I really don't see the extremely thin
155 ballerina icon ever becoming a girl who has a little meat on her bones.

My Personal Dance Aesthetic

Brooke N. Schneider

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According to Graham, “to understand dance for what it is, it is necessary we know where it comes from and where it goes (The Four Pioneers, p.50). When I evaluate the development of my own personal dance aesthetic through my career at Loyola, this statement holds such truth. In order to articulate my dance aesthetic in words, I have to explain where I have come from and where I see myself going in the future. My dancing has developed in such a new and exciting way throughout my time at LMU and I am even more anxious to see where it will go from here. Every genre of dance has influenced the way in which I move today. Although I appreciate and enjoy most all styles of dance, I feel that my personal dance aesthetic would be classified in the lyrical-jazz category. However, I do feel that it has a slight modern influence as well.

I began my dance training at the age of three in ballet and tap. By the age of seven, I was taking jazz classes as well. The studios I was trained at were very old fashioned and not very challenging. It wasn't until I was a freshman in high school that I began training at a studio that challenged the dancer in an artistic way physically and mentally. This is also when I took my first lyrical class and I immediately fell in love. The slow and flowing nature of this movement felt so good to me. I felt it easy to express my emotions while I danced. Although I liked the forced, rigid and fast paced movement qualities of jazz were fun and challenging for me to perform, lyrical movement was more natural to my body.

At this point in my dance career, my teacher stressed to us the importance of being a versatile dancer and practicing all dance styles. So, in addition to

taking ballet, jazz, lyrical and tap, I added in hip-hop as well. I was awful, but it taught me to move in a different way and as a result I became more coordinated and discovered different movement in my body. Throughout my time at Midwest Dance Company, I trained on a regular basis with ballet, jazz, lyrical, tap and hip-hop, but I also had taken classes in swing and tango. One of the main techniques of dance I had never experienced, but today has helped me on my journey in developing my dance aesthetic was modern.

As a freshman at LMU, taking my first modern class was an interesting experience. Given my training, it was very challenging for me to excel in this style. I was so technically trained that the organic movement felt foreign to my body and was hard for me to accomplish. It was difficult for me to explore the movement and actually feel it within my own body without focusing on the presentation of it. One of the main differences in the styles of modern and jazz is that modern is exploration and jazz is presentation. Most of my training was so disciplined and detailed that the freedom of modern technique was a challenge physically and mentally. Since freshman year, I have come a long way with modern and the movement that used to feel forced, feels more natural to me. I have developed a love for modern and it has definitely influenced my dance aesthetic.

In the lyrical-jazz style, it is important to explore the movement through the music. The music is telling a story and as the dancer, it is your responsibility to tell the story through your movement. The best part about it is that as the

performer, you get to determine the story you want to tell. For the lyrical-jazz choreographer, as I learned in choreographing my piece for the dance concert, improvisation is the most useful tool in the process. Blom and Chaplin state that with improv “we learn to respond to ideas with our own artistry, spontaneously discovering innate responses with ourselves” (The Moment of Movement: Dance Improvisation, p.35). Improv has assisted me in being capable to own my personal lyrical-jazz dance aesthetic. The title of a lyrical-jazz aesthetic is a name that many people can label their own movement quality, but the actual physicality behind it, comes out of improvisation cannot be created by any other human being.

Improv has also helped me to classify my personal dance aesthetic. It has allowed the movement that is already within my own body come out, without holding back. I enjoy improv so that I can further develop my performance skills, gain a fuller sense and use of the body, and enjoy movement for its own sake. With improv, I also realized that my dance aesthetic contains a lot of flow movement, but incorporates dynamics as well.

Different laban concepts also helped also contributed to my definition of my dance aesthetic. When I choreograph in the lyrical-jazz style, I enjoy exploring the concepts of time and energy. As Laban states, “the great frequency of time qualities may indicate an intuitive readiness for decision making, either suddenly or with sustainment” (Introduction to Laban Concepts, p.1). This is how dynamics are created. It is important to sustain the movement and wait until the last second to hit the movement. Energy change is crucial in creating a dynamic

because the quality has to change. When you are delaying the movement, the quality is slow and light until it hits the accent and then it is fast and sharp.

The spacial patterns I use in my choreography are where the modern influence is seen. As I stated before, modern is more exploratory and lyrical-jazz is more presentational. When I first choreographed my dance for the concert, the entire thing faced the audience and reflected the lyrical-jazz style. Later, I went through and spacially changed many of the facings and created more exploration on the stage. Although later I realized this needed more attention and I could expand on this even more, I definitely felt comfortable and confident in the changes that were made. This made me realize that the modern influence was in my body, but I was holding back to try and make it more presentational. I wasn't fulfilling what was trying to come out from inside me in fear of not presenting the audience with my work to its highest level of honesty.

I feel that of all the laban concepts my aesthetic explores, it is deep into flow. Laban also states, "When the flow factor replaces qualities of space, the action may transform into a more emotionally stressed drive also referred to as passion drive" (Introduction to Laban Concepts, p.2). In creating my dance, I allow my innermost emotions to come out before I worry about time or space. When I dance, I love the feeling of flow; my body just understands this movement. I mostly create it with my upper body, through my arms and torso.

Through my journey at LMU, I have discovered my own personal dance aesthetic and would categorize it as lyrical-jazz with some modern influence. I am

very grateful for the experiences I have had in every dance class I have taken at LMU. Every time I dance it is a new discovery of who I am as a dancer and performer. Within the exploration of my dance aesthetic I discovered that telling a story through movement with intention, different dynamics, spacial patterns, a passion drive and slow is what matters the most. I have a reason and intent in my movement and it is important to me to get a story across to the audience when I dance. This is what makes me a lyrical-jazz dancer.

What is Dance?

Examining Education in Dance Through the Perspective of Nora Ambrosio

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“We dance for laughter, we dance for tears, we dance for madness, we dance for fears, we dance for hopes, we dance for screams, we are the dancers, and we create the dreams.” As a dancer it is easier to communicate the reasons why I dance as opposed to an actual translation of what dance is. Dance exists through many different genres and cannot be easily defined by one particular word or even sentence. Defining what dance means within my life can be described far more easily than the actual definition of the word dance. The problem is that there is no one meaning that articulates what dance is because it is different for each individual.

An important view of dance that is essential to look at when defining the actual meaning is the education of dance. Looking through a ‘lens’ of how dance is taught will bring us to some answers of what dance is. In explaining how a particular idea is taught and the benefits of its teachings, an individual can in turn gain a better understanding of what the art is. I will be examining the question of what is dance is from the perspective of Nora Ambrosio in her book, Learning About Dance. I am going to examine this question through an education perspective, which is included in chapter one in Ambrosio’s book, *Dance in Education and Careers in Dance*.

For many years, dance has been included in school's educational methods.

However, according to Ambrosio (1994) "the relationship between dance and the majority of the educational institutions has not always been positive" (p.139). The lack of respect dance has gained as a whole within the educational system stems from the strict regulations of what genre of dances are taught. Typically, the only types of dances that educators are allowed to teach in school's physical education programs were folk dance or square dancing. However, if these are the only type of genres being taught to our children, America lacks the learning of dance as an art form.

Dance as an art form entails movement expressed through the human body (Ambrosio, 1994, p.3). H'Doubler (1940) attempted to sum up the quite complex meaning into one sentence that dance is "projection of inner thought and feeling into movement" (p.3). If the only medians dance education programs are using to show this aspect of dance is strictly through folk dance and square dance, there is a large historical importance that is missing from these teachings. Therefore, dance as an art form is being disregarded in teachings. In addition to this, it is denying both the dance teacher and

dance student to express her or his own creative self-expression by being able to learn about many other genres of dance.

For a dancer to further her or his understanding about the art, the individual can research and attend to some of the different places that offer classes. Some of these places, as referred to by Ambrosio (1994) include private or professional studios, recreation centers, public and private schools for elementary, junior high, high schools and universities. A reputable facility a student decided to attend can enable them to gain a better understanding of all the different ideas and creative outlets dance offers.

Breaking away from the same teacher or same genre of dance helps the individual to grow into her or his own creative expression. While there are many facets an individual can turn to in order to learn about dance physically, mentally or emotionally, Ambrosio examines the dance education in grades K-12 at public schools as well as university level dance.

The main issue in dance education today is that there is a struggle to gain the financial support to maintain programs for levels K-12 (Ambrosio, 1994). The benefits that a child can receive from experiencing dance have the potential to be so beneficial to

the individual's life as a whole. This is the primary reason that most dance teachers fight to have educational dance programs at schools. Even though there are ways an individual can pursue dance when it is not offered in the educational system, this creates discrimination through the art. Privileged children are the only ones who can engage in the activity, if someone cannot afford it, they are denied the privilege. However, additionally to the money issue, there is an overall lack of knowledge about the benefits of dance (Ambrosio, 1994). There is a strong hope that when parents gain understanding of their child's benefit to studying all the arts, this will change. Similarly to music or any other art form, it has been proven that many advantages correlate in the human being who takes dance classes.

As stated by Ambrosio (1994), "through dance, children have the potential to: become more aware and in-tune with their bodies; develop a positive sense of one's self (there are no winners or losers in dance); socialize with other children, learn to cooperate with other children; use critical thinking skills; use problem solving skills; improve balance and coordination; increase strength and flexibility; and become aesthetically aware" (p.140). With all the opportunities that dance has to offer, it is obvious that by

establishing dance education programs in schools, it will only help the students grow into a more well-rounded individual. The distinctive difference in dance that sets it apart from many of the other arts offered in educational systems is that it offers both a cognitive and physical challenge at the same time. In addition to this, it is not only a personal challenge within the dancer's own heart and mind, but it encourages them to interact with others as well.

Dance in higher education is much more secure and has much more value placed on it from society (Ambrosio, 1994, p. 140). These programs focus on shaping the dancer as a performer, choreographer and teacher. Because of this, they require more effort to maintain, but it is well done because of the individuals who work behind the scenes. More dedication and seriousness is taken from the higher level dancer and this is why their programs have an easier time being funded. In addition to this, these individuals are part of the cycle within dance culture that are going to grow to shape the new generation of dancers. This is why learning about dance education is so important.

One of the most important things for a dance instructor to remember is that she is responsible for shaping the students way of dancing. But, even more importantly the

teacher has a great influence on the student's idea about dance. This is a very powerful position to be in which creates pressure for a teaching technique that is sufficient in assisting young beings to discover their creative self through movement. There are a lot of things that go into being a dance instructor, perhaps the most important is a passion for teaching.

In conclusion, when examining education in dance through the perspective of Nora Ambrosio's book, Learning About Dance we see many of the constraints in the world of dance education that need to be altered. Some of the alterations would provide dance culture with stronger programs that filter out the new generation dancers of America. Looking into dance education can provide dancers and non-dancers with a definition of what dance is. The cognitive and physical challenges along with the artistic creativity and expression prove dance to be an art form that can help to shape individuals into more well-rounded people. We must not let the school's education programs to let dance education slip through the cracks. The overall benefits are far too great.

References

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Dance Reflections

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&

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World Dance

Beginning Swing and Ballroom Dance is a course that trains students to broaden their dance skills beyond the traditional styles of modern, jazz, ballet and tap. By taking this class a student becomes more educated about different social dances. Some of the dances that are taught within the semester are Swing, Meringue, Salsa, Waltz, Argentinean Tango, Cha Cha, Bolero, Cumbia, Country Line dance, Rumba, and Samba. The student will learn not only to be able to recognize the specific style, but also to dance it and master the technique behind it with clarity, proficiency, strength, endurance and balance. The main goals of this class include being able to learn the correct body alignment, footwork, and hand positions for various social dances. The dancer will also develop a kinesthetic awareness of his or her body, learn how to lead and or follow, and acquire a greater awareness of dance as an expressive art form.

Music for Dance/Drumming

The Music for Dance class is offered as a class that aids the student in being able to recognize and write rhythm note values in traditional notation. The student is able to transfer what they hear in the music to paper and explain it with formal language. Definitions of words like beat, tempo, meter, harmony etc. are taught to the student so they are able to recognize it in the song. By the end of the term, students will also be able to input musical ideas into a computer assisted midi-sequencing program. Within this program, students can compose their own music.

Drumming offers some similar skills, but is different in its approach. It is more hands-on and calls for the student to be able to listen to a rhythm and play it independently. The overall content is less technical and freer. There is a specific drumming technique, but does not require for the class to know and write certain notes. Students learn to play with three different types of drums.

Jazz

The Commercial Jazz program taught at LMU exposes dancers to advanced jazz technique and styles. The student will explore and expound basic technical execution, movement styles, performance qualities, articulation of movement and musicality. The emphasis for this class is establishing a broad technical foundation while exploring performance of diverse jazz styles. Some of the goals the dancer wishes to accomplish in this class are increased application of advanced jazz technique, increased movement articulation, increased musicality and jazz style, increased flexibility, strength and stamina, motor control and coordination. The class is challenging and tries to prepare students for the fast pace, competitive world of auditioning in the professional field.

Principles of Teaching

This class explores the theory and practice of teaching dance. It does so through trying to find answers to some questions such as:

- Why is dance education important?
- What is dance education?
- How do people teach and learn dance: what ways, processes?
- What is the role of dance in context of Visual and Performing arts and Physical education?

Information from philosophy, history, learning, creativity, teaching, improvisation, composition, curriculum, standards and assessment will aid them in answering these questions. This course offers information to teach children in a safe and educated way within both the mind and body. Injury prevention and creative freedom are two main topics that are explored in length.

Styles and Forms

Styles and Forms is a class that encourages unique, aggressive, personal, authentic and rigorous discovery of movement through exploration and research. The content, execution and creativity of each movement study is what the grading criteria is based off. It challenges each student in presenting an idea of a motif then developing the motif into a movement phrase and finally linking the phrases into a movement study. Overall the class teaches the student how to choreograph a movement study using diversity, organization, thoughtfulness, personal reflection, originality, and articulation. The content, form, creativity, and execution of the movement is what the student should focus on.

Fundamentals of Dance Composition I and II

This course is an exploration of many different aspects of dance. It is getting your foot in to begin a unique journey of exploration and experimentation of choreography in dance. In this class, the student will improvise, compose, perform, write, and read about dance studies. The community that the class is built in creates structure, pattern and an atmosphere in which the dancer feels they can take risk and express their creative spirit. It is important to establish trust within yourself, the teacher and your peers in order to fully benefit from this process. This class creates the foundation you will use for the rest of your time at LMU with choreography, improv and composition.

The second part of this course completely embodies all of what is expected and offered the first part however, the exploration is even further and more in depth.

Laban Movement Analysis

Introduction to the history of Rudolph Laban and how his work with patterns and formations developed into vocabulary and notation for dancers.

Space, Time and Energy notation, how to write it and use it choreographically.

How the body develops through movement. Examining the stages from infant to adult (crawling to walking). Looking into our past to see how we naturally moved from infant to now.

Body Mind Centering using principles and methods to look at our body as a container with the mind as part of its contents.

The Structure of Breath through tai chi exercises as well as partnering.

Discovering how our body's insides (muscles, cells, and fluids) effect our body's outsides (posture, health).

Use of journaling and communication with family members to track our questions and findings during this exploration.

Dance History

Tracking dance development through time beginning with court ballet and its transfer onto the proscenium stage.

Important historical figures of ballet, a look into the development of ballet technique, the schools, conservatories, costuming, stage design, and themes.

Balanchine's creation of the ideal female dancer.

Evolution of Modern dance as part of American history and its influence it had around the world.

How Modern dance was used to make social statements and its rebellious tendencies.

Redefining the roles of females in Modern dance (Martha Graham).

African Americans in dance and how it tied into the civil rights movement.

Dance in film, what the movement is saying about the plot, time period, symbolism, and character development.

Contact Improvisation: it's use in choreography and sense of community.

A critical look at dance: how dance has been reviewed, what articles have influenced dance in society.

To Dance is Human: Dance, Culture and Society

Learning to find culture in our lives to see where it exists in every day living through conversations with friends and family.

Telling stories about ourselves, learning to listen to other stories, allowing stories to effect us.

Tactics in communication and story telling to get the information you want and the information across to others.

Cultural dance in different origins such as Pacific Islands, Hawaii, India, and Native America.

Dance as a way to bring people together in celebration, performance, or for communication purposes.

Spiritual and religious dance, looking into the sacred and the history of dance as a healing entity.

Appropriation and commercialization of dance. What it says to the subconscious and who it could be offending.

The human mind and the ways people receive information. (A study of the neuron)

Why we dance, what appeals to us personally and how it influences our lives.

Kinesiology I and II

Action Potential and Physiology for Dance.

Defining how different systems work and relate to each other, such as the cardio respiratory system, energy systems, cells and tissues and the components to physical conditioning.

How the body functions to maintain optimal health.

Creating integrated or supplemental strength programs to maintain dance fitness.

How to reduce injury potential through alignment studies and exercises.

Pointing out the intricacies of the body through PowerPoint presentations and partner work.

Understanding of how to fine tune, protect and maintain the body through pilates exercises.

Ballet

Classical technique that analyzes set movement exercises to develop artistically and physically.

Alignment is a focus for core work and supplies a foundation for all dance forms.

Learning complex combinations to test memory and coordination.

Working on increasing flexibility, strength and stamina.

Discipline is utilized with challenging enchainments and muscular control.

Sense of musicality and artistry is developed as one becomes familiar with their bodies and personal aesthetic.

Learning of positions, ballet vocabulary as well as anatomy.

How to break down combinations and apply them to other dance classes.

Dedication and full engagement in the work is required for improvement.

Modern

Body is used as a “movement tool for exploration”.

Physicality includes improved body image as well as how our body moves in terms of space time and energy.

Community feel to class, supportive environment with improved sensitivity to fellow dancers.

How to assess our body and work towards its development.

Different forms including classical and contemporary and how they blend together.

Inversions, moving into the floor, integration of breath.

Pushing out of our comfort zones to develop a more open approach.

Improvisation, contact and partnering with integration of weight sharing.

Use of Yoga and Pilates as a way to train the body and warm up for class.

Articulation in hands, feet, head. How to initiate with different parts of our body.

Body halves, levels, and directions in space, (getting away from using the mirror too much)

Identifying strengths and weaknesses in ourselves to develop self esteem and constant improvement.

Moving to a City

Montreal, Canada

Prepared by: Brooke Schneider

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Loyola Marymount University

Dance Program

SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN THIS CITY:

Arthur Murray Dance Schools
4847 RUE JEAN-TALON OUEST
MONTRÉAL, QC