Re-envisioning dance technique pedagogy

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Abstract

This pedagogical practice-based research flows from the dance studio. It explores experiences of learning dance technique with groups of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. The study is contextually located within the multifaceted discourses of higher education, conservatoire training and contemporary dance techniques. Central to this is the experiences of learners which are considered through three overlapping and concomitant dimensions: engagement with movement materials, relationship with the teacher and the influence of peers.

Critical feminist pedagogy provides an overarching theoretical frame through which to critically reflect upon the pedagogical values underpinning transformative learning and educational empowerment as they are experienced in practice. A feminist interpretive ethnographic approach has been employed enabling an inductive process that prioritises subjective and embodied knowing. In this way, the dance technique class is posited as a situated cultural site wherein the teacher/researcher is co-participant.

Through the unfolding discussion, a re-envisioning of dance technique pedagogy is developed. Its polymorphic potentialities are explored through the pedagogical priorities of active learning, shared responsibility and interdependent relationships. Thus, learning among students, teacher and peers is reconceptualised thematically, as explorative, comfort(able) and collective. Arising from the research findings, in-depth and intimate insights of dance technique pedagogy are revealed in their richly layered and multidimensional complexity.

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INTRODUCTION

Starting

> Three girls, aged about 7 years old, stand before me dressed in pink. They dutifully do the things I ask them to do, 'point, close, bend, straight'. They dare not do anything else; I am their teacher. Beyond the thinly-partitioned studio walls their parents congregate to collect them from their ballet lesson with 'Master Jamie'. I am 15 years old and aware that I am performing the role of the teacher, not only for the pupils who hang on every word I say, doing their best, but also for their parents. I have a reputation for being exacting and I'm proud of it. And why wouldn't I be, this is what I understand good teaching to be, a disciplined class of focused attention where the pupils do their best at all times.
>
> Another time, I am kneeling at the feet of a girl as she holds on to the barre. I am encouraging her to extend her foot in tendu, using my hands to gently lengthen the reach of the leg. The other pupils stand diligently behind, waiting patiently, silently. At one moment I sense that I am being watched and as I look up, I catch the principal Miss Straw, my dance teacher, watching us surreptitiously, her head jutting around the studio door. In that moment I recognise several things. My teaching is being evaluated and I have been caught doing good teaching with pupils who are all behaving well. I was giving instructions carefully and diligently. I understand that I will have been judged positively. I am good at this.

The above recollections are from when I started teaching at my local dance school. This was a private after-school dance club in the Midlands in the mid 1980's, and I spent most afternoons and evenings there. I had been given the responsibility to teach primary ballet to a small group of girls. I did not get paid as it was a privilege, a symbol of status, to be given the opportunity to teach. At that time, I was studying how to teach dance, alongside various dance technique styles, through the International Dance Teacher's Association (IDTA) syllabi whereby dance content was taught from the book. The IDTA is an international dance organisation providing graded certification in various dance styles for performance and teaching. Beyond this I have had no actual training as a teacher and in those early experiences I regurgitated many of the teaching strategies I had encountered as a learner. Strong discipline, careful attention and an air of authority were all necessary while following the syllabus to the letter. This was my starting point as a teacher.

Looking back now, thirty years and a dance career later, I can appreciate that this was not an ideal launch into the realm of teaching dance. It was, among other things, formulaic, unsympathetic and unreflective. However, I recognise too that right from those early experiences I found pleasure in leading learning through dance technique. I felt satisfied by delivering a dance class, I liked being responsible, I liked the experience of passing something on. Some of these pleasures remain for me today as I enter the studio and work with young people, teaching contemporary dance technique in a conservatoire setting. I have been doing this consistently, as a professional dance artist in various contexts, for twenty-two years.

Through this time my teaching has transformed in numerous ways in response to various factors in my experiences with learners in the studio. My practice has also been influenced by my career as a dancer and changes in circumstances of my personal life. For example, an important shift occurred, after my formal dance training, as I developed my understanding of embodiment through somatic practices in my early to mid- twenties. Similarly, in my late- twenties while dancing with Candoco, an integrated dance company of disabled and non-disabled dancers, my experiences of inclusion realised a shift in my priorities for less exclusive dance practices. My pedagogical style evolved further when I became the adoptive father of three young children as my awareness of their learning needs encouraged a more compassionate way of being with others. These, and many other, influences have enabled me to develop a personalised practice of dance technique that I enjoy sharing with others as a teacher and facilitator. Currently, located as lecturer at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (Trinity Laban), I teach release-based contemporary dance technique, among other contextual studies, to undergraduate and post-graduate students. Dance technique is core to the learners' programmes and, while I am only one of many teachers who will 'deliver' technique classes during the course of their programme, I feel a deep sense of responsibility to ensure learning experiences that enable them to fulfil their potential. Much like when I first began to teach, I want to know that I am good at it, but the ways in which I recognise good things arising from pedagogical encounters in the dance technique studio have changed considerably. What might be meant by good teaching has been continually opened up for me through ongoing reflection and a strong desire to do/be better. This has been enriched and magnified through the

process of conducting this research project in which I have become increasingly aware of dance technique pedagogy as a complex phenomenon that is far from benign.

Trinity Laban is one of three contemporary dance conservatoires in the UK, it's focus is on training professional artists and has an international reputation for doing so. Trinity Laban is also the place where I studied for my undergraduate degree, between 1992 and 1995, and somewhere I have taught, on-and-off as part of my portfolio dance career, ever since. I discuss the purposes, priorities and pressures of Trinity Laban as an institution of higher education in chapter one, and examine my complicated positioning as teacher/researcher/alum with respect of the research approach in chapter four. Accordingly, this research flows from a profound interest in exploring what is going on in the studio when students and teacher are involved in learning dance technique. It is not an attempt to define best practice, in fact it is a movement away from the idea that there might even be a best practice. It is, instead, an investigation of the possibilities of pedagogical approaches and ways of being with each other in the studio. It explores the underlying values at work in the studio and the impacts of specific teaching intentions.

The lived experience of the dance technique class has informed all aspects of the development of this research. Pedagogical practice has honed the questions, shaped the methodological approach and methods, and facilitated the nuance of insights discussed through the data chapter findings. Although my experiences as teacher and co-participant are enmeshed in this research, the primary focus is away from my experiences. Rather I unpack the experiences of those who are engaged with learning as students. Their reflections, stories and perspectives have determined this study and throughout the thesis I bring the research alive through their comments. Their voices bring nuance, meaning and layered understanding to the issues being explored. Alongside this multiplicity of participant voices, I integrate reflective accounts from my teaching journal. This allows me to offer an additional perspective, as co-participant, with which to critically reflect upon pedagogy and the co-construction of learning processes.

The concerns of this practice-based research are located in three overlapping and interdependent areas: the learners' engagement with the materials, their relationship with the teacher and the influence of their peers. I articulate learning dance technique through

these three converging areas of student-relating in order to build a strategically layered inquiry that generates an in-depth, immersive and multidimensional understanding of this phenomenon. The lens of critical feminist pedagogy, outlined below and discussed in relation to dance education research in chapter three, provides an overarching framework through which I consider the educational objectives, ethical imperatives, and consequential impacts of teaching dance technique. Subsequently, this study critically reflects on the pedagogical values underpinning transformative learning and the lived realities of this approach in the concrete experience of practice.

This research is motivated by the desire to enhance experiences of learning in the dance technique studio. The inquiry involves developing greater understanding and insight of those experiences as they unfold. The study is not directly concerned with the possibility for learners to achieve higher assessment results. While this may be a consequential outcome of the approaches explored in this thesis, what I am primarily concerned with is the development of dance technique pedagogy in relation to the wider aims of education. Thus, the research extends beyond learner outcomes achieved in summative assessments of dance technique, albeit they are important for all involved. Consequently, I focus on learning with respect to development of the student as a person: their perspectives, practices, and place in the world. This is not to negate the significance of outcomes of dance technique training with regard to standards but rather reorient that which is the focus of the learning process. Thus, the research re-envisions learning dance technique as a means by which the student might develop their movement capabilities and personhood.

By drawing attention to the impacts of transformative pedagogical approaches this study critically analyses active learning in the dance technique class and how this process may be imbued with inquiry, engagement and personal interest. Relational ways of learning focus this study on individual particularity, accumulative learning and shared process in common project. Through the process of exploration the research has addressed dance technique pedagogy in a UK conservatoire through the following questions:

- How might we understand empowerment and transformation through processes of learning dance technique that are embodied, somatic and arising from materials?
- What does it mean to develop dance technique pedagogies that foreground relationality and shared experience?
- In what ways might individually responsive and personally relevant learning be activated in the dance technique studio?

Conceptual Frameworks

The conceptual framework upon which this research builds derives from an amalgam of pedagogical approaches that are critical and feminist. What has become established as critical feminist pedagogy is described here through the founding of critical pedagogy and its evolution as a consequence of feminist critiques and expansions in practice (Ellsworth, 1989, Gore 2003, hooks 1994, Weiner 1994). Of particular significance for this thesis is the problematic conception of learner empowerment which is unpacked through the ensuing discussion and problematised throughout the thesis. As will be detailed in chapter three, the application of critical feminist pedagogy has been increasingly embedded in thinking about transformative learning in dance contexts (Anttila 2004, Barbour 2011, Barr 2015, Barr and Risner 2014, Kerr-Berry, Clemente and Risner 2008, Morris 2012, Shapiro 1998, Stinson 1998). Building upon this, my project explores the multidimensional features of learning dance technique in a UK conservatoire setting in ways that deepen our understanding of how this pedagogical approach has impact in practice. The utilisation of critical feminist pedagogy, as a conceptual frame through which to explore experiences of learning dance technique, locates this study as a continuation and expansion of the ongoing dialogues in dance research. Fundamentally, critical feminist pedagogy reconfigures the conventional ways in which power functions in the learning context and aims to realise greater social justice through learner transformation. Central to this educational aim is learner empowerment which, it is claimed, serves to reconfigure the expert/novice hierarchy of the dance studio that disempowers the learner, as will be discussed. However, this research exposes the problematic potentiality of empowerment in the dance technique studio and consequently disrupts the transformative aims of learning dance technique. My intention in doing so is not to discredit the aims of critical feminist pedagogy or refute

current discourses in dance scholarship but rather to refine understanding of empowerment and what this might mean in the concrete and particular setting of the dance technique studio.

Education is identified as 'a practice of freedom' by Brazilian radical educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1970, 1973, 1985, 1993). His seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993, translated into English in 1970) sets out an approach to learning and teaching that is ascribed as the foundation of critical pedagogy whereby learners engage critically and transform the world around them (Brookfield 1987, Burbles and Berk 1999, Giroux 2003). Teaching through literacy among peasant workers in Brazil, Freire ideologically rejected the conception of education as mere transmission of knowledge. He articulated this as the banking method in which the student is conceived as an empty vessel into which the teacher might deposit knowledge. This approach disempowers the student because it fosters passive learning, reinforces the status quo and consequently perpetuates social inequality and unjust social structures (Freire 1993). Through dialogical processes, Freire aimed instead to enable learners to experience education as non-hierarchical and a means of transformation in perception about their possibilities to affect change.

According to Freire, dialogical learning is a means of vital revolutionary education. The pedagogical integration of participation, voice, and social action generates a humanizing culture in the classroom that fosters the politically emancipatory aims of critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2003, 11). Thus, dialogical learning works to reconfigure educational structures and accordingly, critical pedagogy has been heralded as a practice of emancipation. While diverse, the radical expressions of critical pedagogy as they have evolved are consolidated through 'an underlying and explicit intent and commitment to the unwavering liberation of oppressed populations' (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2003, 10). From a Freirean perspective, empowerment is fundamentally concerned with disruptive activism through liberation of the learner. Therefore, education that develops critical consciousness (or conscientization), facilitates a radical revisioning by the learner of themselves, social structures and their place in the world. This has been called a 'practice of freedom' that can liberate students from ways of thinking and behaving that limit, disempower and perpetuate their own oppression (Freire 1993, 62). Thus, it can be

understood then that the aim of critical pedagogy is 'to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices' (McLaren 1989, 160).

The transformative aims of critical pedagogy have been developed and expanded through feminist perspectives. African-American activist bel hooks (1990, 1994, 2000, 201201, 2015b) is an influential voice with respect to feminist expansions of critical pedagogy and I utilize her theoretical work throughout this thesis. hooks' conception of engaged pedagogy, described in her seminal work *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) is particularly helpful in reframing liberatory practices in educational settings in ways that foreground feminist concerns with the relational, personal, intuitive and embodied. hooks has drawn from and developed Freire's conception of emancipatory learning by integrating her experiences of education through racial segregation and enforced inclusion as a person of colour in the US. Flowing from this, she acknowledges the pedagogical importance of individual and interdependent experiences of learning through an ongoing demonstration of care by the teacher, where active learners contribute to stimulating environments, and understanding is accumulated in collective effort. Engaged pedagogy, as hooks defines it, re-orients critical pedagogy toward relational ways of learning that reconceptualise what empowerment through education might mean. In chapter six, I utilize engagement to conceptualise the learner's active approach to learning dance technique in particular reference to the movement materials.

Instrumentally, feminist perspectives critique conceptions of learner empowerment through education. Definitions of power as a commodity that is distributed between those involved are recognised to be flawed. Accordingly, power is not to be understood as a zero-sum entity that can be bestowed by the teacher to the student. Consequently, the Freirean reformation of the teacher-student relationship, as non-hierarchical, is problematised for an over determinism in its binary positionality of power; the powerless students and the powerful and empowering teacher (Lather and Ellsworth 1996, Stanley 1997, Weiler 1991). Feminist theorist Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) states that the effect of such binary thinking is to support 'the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact' (306). Furthermore, uncritical conceptions of empowerment are problematic because they are overly optimistic regarding learner agency, neglectful of contextual particularities and make universal claims of liberation that

lack reflexivity (Gore 2003). Critical feminist pedagogy is responsive to these issues and by reconceptualising how power functions redefines the educational aim of empowerment.

Pedagogy scholar Jennifer Gore (2003) redefines empowerment as the exercise of power in an attempt to help others exercise their power in ways that are contextually-specific and related to practices. Thus, power incorporates multiplicity and contradiction that is historically and politically defined (336-338). Any attempt to help learners exercise power, Gore contends, necessitates that the teacher confronts the unforeseeable and contradictory effects of doing so. This definition highlights power as dynamically generated among those involved and, thus, serves as a central tenet of my research argument. Pedagogy scholars Patti Lather and Ellsworth (1996) discuss how the teacher might create initiatives that integrate responsiveness to histories of oppression and the complexities of the actual situation in an attempt to make sense of and act within the arising teaching moment (71). They encourage a pedagogical fluidity that is not predetermined by specific conceptions such as transformation and participation. Instead they contend, teachers can be responsive to the particular circumstances of the learning process as it evolves. Underpinning this conception of responsive pedagogy is learning as a situated practice wherein power has morphic potentialities.

Understanding learning as a situated practice is important because it concedes that pedagogy is located, specific and grounded and consequently it is also limited (Stanley 1997). In this regard it becomes necessary to acknowledge that ‘our intellectual inheritance has disguised a particular perspective (white, middle-class male) as universal’ (Anne Seller 1997, 21). Feminist perspectives reject universal claims of pedagogical liberation wherein empowerment is narrowly defined. The conflictual and unresolvable character of learner empowerment is at the heart of this study. Throughout, I grapple with the dilemmas of the learning situation and explore the critical incidents of the dance technique class, through participant data, as they arise in the studio. While pedagogical approaches may aim to empower learners, how this is perceived and its impact on learners in the studio may not always feel empowering. It is the multiple, diverse and conflicting experiences of empowerment in practice that is explored in this research through feminist perspectives. This is furthered by an alliance between feminism and queer.

Feminism and queer

Through this project, I seek an alignment of feminist theory and queer studies while acknowledging that both perspectives 'can be understood as consciously multiple, multi-layered, ambiguous and challenging' (Quilty 2017, 123, Lykke 2010). Queer, like feminism, is an engagement with critiques of gender and sexuality within a larger call for resisting normativity (Croft 2017, 9). Therefore, feminism as it is positioned in this research, is an attitude and activism that is primarily concerned with dismantling intersectional oppressions of racism, classism, homophobia, ageism, and ableism. I define feminism in this project as work toward gender equality alongside wider social justice aims that resist the structural forces of patriarchy that marginalise, exclude and silence some populations. Patriarchal oppression is intersectional and functions across numerous identities (Crenshaw 1991). Consequently, in attempting to address oppression through disruption of unjust educational structures, it is necessary to understand who is consistently marginalised by the normalising impacts of patriarchy. As a gay man who is also white, middle class, non-disabled, cis-gendered and middle-aged I experience prejudice while also benefiting from the social imbalance of patriarchal power. Thus, I am implicated in the oppression of minority groups while also being committed to seeking a more just society. It is from this location of implication and solidarity that I assume a feminist/queer perspective through which to explore my research.

Feminism and queer are uneasily aligned. In their research queer performance academic Doran George (2014), is transparent about not bringing the positions of feminism, queer and transgender to a single location and purposefully not erasing their 'myriad historical and theoretical interdependencies and antagonisms' (84). George articulates their deliberate 'failure' to identify coherently with any one identity position and to inhibit a crystallizing and stable sense of self. Consequently, their analysis of dance can involve/resolve tensions between feminism, queer and transgender viewpoints while also sometimes reaffirming patriarchal gender asymmetry and exclusionary normative identity. As such the term queer can be utilised to 'overcome unimaginative categorizations that conceptualize gender difference as an essentialized, physical difference' (Croft 2017, 6). Dance academic and performer, Thomas deFrantz (2017) discusses his queer experience in artistic research as being 'alert to possible queer disavowal; but attendant to queer's inevitable arrival and always-already-thereness' (169). Therefore, I am aligning feminism

and queer through my approach to this research, not to eradicate their differences or simplify their complexities as theoretical fields and lived realities, but rather to acknowledge some of their fundamental allegiances in disrupting inequities of power and re-envisioning society in more inclusive ways.

Questioning the efficacy of empowerment, queer education researcher Barry Troyna (1994) emphasises the importance of dealing with 'the messiness' of an individual's complex positioning. He advocates avoiding 'the reductionist logic which sees the ubiquitous determinacy of a single identity' (13). For example, an individual, such as a student or teacher, may have power in certain circumstances while having little or no power in others. Therefore, assumptions by teachers about what empowerment means for students, can set the teacher apart and reinforce attitudes of dominance. Pedagogy scholar Aideen Quilty (2017) discusses the theoretical alliance of feminism and queer stating that within 'our norm-limiting educational worlds' both act as discomforting forces of disruption that are 'potentially transformative at the individual and collective, community and institutional levels' (111). Thus, pedagogic disruptions can create rich new meanings (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006, xii) and develop an inclusive ethical perspective that underpin respect for difference (Adams, Bell, and Griffin 2007). The intersectional, antagonistic and disruptive forces of feminism and queer redefine social justice in ways that are relevant and responsive to pluralistic conceptions of marginalisation. These theoretical perspectives realise the lens through which critical feminist pedagogical approaches in the dance technique class are put to work throughout this thesis. For example, in chapter two I explore somatic approaches to learning dance technique and problematize claims of the natural body. Through this I highlight the significance of the body as a means of knowing in feminist terms while simultaneously troubling the assumed incompatibility of somatic practices and codified dance technique excellence. The alliance/agitation of feminism and queer is further employed in chapter four, wherein I outline a feminist interpretive ethnographic approach and discuss the arising issues in relation to disruption, or queer spoiling, of normative research structures. Thus, as a queer feminist researcher, I harness the combined disruptive forces of feminism and queer to see-saw between the potentialities and problematical implications of critical feminist approaches in the dance technique studio.

Implications for learning dance technique

Critical feminist pedagogy disrupts conventional approaches to dance technique teaching in Western concert dance. Dance scholar Robin Lakes (2005) draws attention to the poor alignment between 'the liberating power that an arts education can provide and the continuing history of authoritarian teaching modes in this field' (3). He states that authoritarian pedagogical methods, prevalent in teaching dance, can foster 'emotionally (and sometimes physically) abusive atmospheres' (16). Dance research has stated that critical feminist pedagogies reform the authoritarian relationship of traditional teaching approaches in dance technique classes (Alterwitz 2014, Burnidge 2012, Green 2001, Lakes 2005, Risner 2008, Smith 1998). I expand on the ways in which dance research literature has employed critical feminist perspectives in chapter three, and in chapter seven I synthesis participant experiences to consider these perspectives in alignment with the ethics of care developed by educational theorist Nel Noddings (2013).

The ethics of care has been realized as a moral paradigm in wide educational contexts (Alexander 2013, Bozalek et al. 2014, Johannesen 2000, McGregor 2004, Noddings 2013, Zembylas, Bozalek, and Shefer 2014). Care is central to teaching and is characterised by what Nodding's terms 'engrossment' which requires that the teacher give full attention to the student in the learning moment. 'Motivational displacement' is a further requirement of the teacher to set aside their own agenda in order that learning processes might be led by student inquiry. The ethics of care positions the teacher as adaptively receptive to the needs of the learner and this has been applied to dance education by, among others, pedagogy researcher Edward Warburton (2004). Warburton utilises the conception of the de-centred teacher to describe acting in readiness to engage with students from a position of respect. In consideration of hooks' engaged pedagogy, though, attention must also be paid to the sustained well-being of the teacher which can be at risk by prioritising the needs of learners above their own (Zembylas et al. 2014).

Ethics of care has been criticised by some feminists because it has evolved from idealised considerations of motherhood as selfless and self-sacrificing (Smeyers 1999, 237). Traditionally, caring roles have been largely undertaken by women and consequently ethics of care can be perceived as reinforcing the lower status of roles ascribed to women. Feminist perspectives raise further concerns about the conceptions of Nodding's theory, as

threating the teacher's autonomy, restricting their power to act and limiting the roles of women to care givers. Furthermore, the ethics of care has been critiqued for the primacy of the affective nature of the caring encounter at the exclusion of reason and its subsequent non-adherence to objective parameters. This is significant for our thinking about empowerment in the classroom/studio because, in critical feminist terms, pedagogy involves an emotionally and intuitively informed relating wherein the needs of the learner are prioritised. Educational theorist Peter Nelson (2013) seeks to ameliorate the tension between reason and the affective dimension of caring. In his view, reason and affect are inseparable aspects of the process of inquiry in educational settings (352). The inquiry of care, he states, entails the shared project of exploring what it means to care about an idea, an area of study, a question, a passion (367). Irrespective of these criticisms, ethics of care is useful to this project because pedagogically it centralises the needs to the learners as individuals and places the onus on the teacher to be responsive to learners on a human level. These issues are explored through my findings in chapter seven wherein the experience of participants reveal the complexity and conflict of non-hierarchical relationships with the teacher.

By foregrounding affect in the discussion of findings, chapters six, seven and eight, I am able to think through the concrete lived realities of abstract theories in terms of the emotional, relational and embodied nature of the particular situations as they unfold in the studio. In addition to the centrality of the teacher's role to demonstrate care for the learner, hooks (1994) highlights the importance of the teacher to stimulate learning. This flows from her concern that the learning proposition should be relevant, appropriate and personal to the learners. hooks, following on from Freire's call to active learning, insists that all learners contribute to the learning endeavour as active participants. Thus, students co-construct learning in shared responsibility with the teacher through processes that 'recognise their own uniqueness and particularity' (hooks 1994, 151). I develop this thinking, in chapter six, by examining explorative learning in the dance technique class and consider the ways in which student engagement and agency might be fostered. Critical feminist pedagogy, locates engagement with learning as a consequence of stimulation derived through the prioritisation of active participation. This focus is strikingly different

from those employed in current neo-liberal initiatives around student engagement and this is discussed in the proceeding chapter through the competing agendas of higher education.

In further consideration of stimulating learning in the dance technique class, I integrate theory of the 'skilful practitioner' developed by social anthropologist Tim Ingold (2011b). It is unusual to draw educational and anthropological theories together. However, various conceptions of Ingold's work, namely the use of materials and the meshwork, are employed in this thesis to expand our thinking about dance pedagogy. His consideration of approaches to materials is particularly helpful in reconsidering what it might mean to learn with/through/by the movement materials in the dance technique class. Movement materials, such as dance sequences, exercises or movement tasks that have been devised by the teacher, are transferred to the student and repeated by them. This practice can be critiqued for reinforcing a passive learning approach to learning dance technique. However, Ingold opens up the more nuanced consideration of skilful practice as the honing of precision through repetition. Precision, he argues, is the ability to be consistent with one's action intent while adapting to any contextual shifts such as changes to the environment. In chapter six, I employ the idea of skilful practice to discuss somatic approaches and the development of embodied knowing in learning dance technique.

In order to explore learning collectively as a social engagement, in chapter eight, I integrate further social theory by Tim Ingold. His conception of The Meshwork (2007, 2011a, 2018) is useful for thinking through the complexity of shared learning. Through this, Ingold describes lives as threads that are lived along lines of movement through time and space and in our interactions with others, we join with, knot, wrap around and pull away from each other as a tangle of threads; the meshwork. Derived from this, social interaction is conceived as an entanglement of dynamic movement in relation with others that emerges 'from the interplay of forces that are conducted along the lines of the meshwork' (Ingold 2011a, 92). In consideration of peer relationships in the dance class as an entanglement of interwoven threads, we can appreciate the complexity and interdependency of the learning process (Mreiwed et al., 2017). This is to acknowledge that peers influence, and are influenced by, each other in ways that are collectively entangled. I use this theoretical conception to reflect on how the empowering aims of critical feminist pedagogy are

troubled by experiences of dissonance among peers while advocating the potentiality of the dance technique class to model the ideals of democratic society.

In further consideration of the relational dimension of learning dance technique in chapter eight, I explore hooks' conception of collective effort. Collective effort concerns the participation of all learners in the development and enhancement of the learning process through cooperation among interdependent participants (Gilligan 1982, Tronto and Fisher 1990). This, enabling 'individuals to find communion with others' while developing their independence as a learner is central to the empowering strategies of feminist pedagogy (Shrewsbury 1987, 9). As such, educational experiences can be defined as shared processes realised through relations of cooperation, reciprocity and mutuality. Within this framing of a learning collective, the teacher does not abdicate authority but rather shares power and responsibility for making learning possible (hooks 1994, Dryburgh 2018a). As will be discussed through the findings in chapter eight, this potentiality can be extended to conceive of participant contribution in the dance technique class as generative of learning affordances that are interdependent and entwined with peers.

Redirecting the students' attention away from teacher instruction and toward the contribution of their peers can be, hooks (1994) states, 'to act responsibly together to create a learning environment' (152). Developing a learning environment wherein students act responsibly together necessitates shifting a student's awareness beyond solely themselves in the dance technique class to establish a culture of learning engagement among peers. This expands how learning is conceived in the dance technique class from the individualistic pursuit of personal goals in isolation to an interdependent experience of mutual support and shared advantage. According to hooks (1994) 'education can only be liberatory when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labour' (14). The inclusiveness of labour redefines what we are doing together in the dance technique class from individuals in isolation to connectivity with each other. This implicates all learners in the realisation and deepening of embodied knowing through processes that are shared and accumulative. According to Carolyn Shrewsbury (1987) feminist pedagogy reconceptualises community to include 'the autonomy and individuality of members who share a sense of relationship and connectedness with each other' (11). Hence, learning collectively entails experiencing a community of difference and togetherness that, according to pedagogy

scholars Hala Mreiwed et al. (2017), 'is in pursuit of finding commonalities and joint achievements' (52). Therefore, it can be stated that a learning community requires mutually-based interdependence and reciprocity (Selznik and Jackson 1996) and in the classroom, or dance studio, this creates a communal context for learning (hooks 1994, 159).

The promotion of diversity as a pedagogical imperative that arises from this communal context, flows through my thesis. Diversity is discussed in particular ways and developed in consideration of the various features of the research. In particular, diversity is considered as the presence of pluralism in the studio wherein the learner is recognised as an individual and their particular responses to movement concepts are encouraged. Assumptions about backgrounds, for example, are avoided and work is exercised to prevent the expectation of singular student perspectives and approaches. Consequently movement materials in the dance technique class, as will be explored, are not be exclusively defined with respect to how learners will encounter them. Furthermore, diversity will be considered as part of enhanced learning realised through collective effort. Thus, the pedagogical imperative of working towards inclusion of diversity is unpacked as a fundamental characteristic of the critical feminist dance class.

In setting up this contextual frame I have laid the foundations from which this thesis will build. Critical feminist pedagogy provides a lens through which the experience of learning dance technique will be explored and while potentially enabling of empowerment, the transformative potentialities of this approach are shown to be not unproblematically enacted. The research opens up this troubled conception through nuance of participant perspectives and their attributed meanings. The critically reflexive synthesis of diverse experiences reveals new insights of learning dance technique, re-envisioning that with which we are involved together. As a contribution to new knowledge, this research holds in tension the multiple and diverse ways in which pedagogy is lived in the dance technique studio. It works to spoil easily assumed findings that reduce and oversimplify the richness and multidimensionality of experience. Instead this research project navigates the fragile and fleeting understandings of how learning functions among/with/for diverse participants. It grapples with the contradictory struggles of employing critical feminist pedagogy in learning dance technique as part of a professionally-oriented dance training. Flowing from this complex positioning, this study offers an unsettling, yet hopeful, voicing

of bodies from the dance technique studio that forward insights of how we might live and learn well together.

Synopsis of chapters

In order to provide an overview of the ensuing discussion as it will unfold, I give a brief synopsis of the chapters of the thesis. In chapters one, two and three I establish the contexts of the research field. The landscape of UK higher education and conservatoire training, within which this study is located, is detailed in chapter one. In it I discuss the conflicting ideologies of higher arts education and the various factors impacting today's UK conservatoire. In chapter two, I locate my teaching practice, release-based and somatically influenced contemporary dance, in terms of its heritage, stylistic priorities and emphasis of movement qualities. Through these chapters, I unpack the prevalent excellence agenda and problematise ideologies of virtuosity and rigour for training dance artists of the future. Through this explication of the lay of the land, it becomes apparent that this study is complexly and dynamically situated in intersecting practices of higher education, dance technique, and conservatoire training. There are numerous factors that influence the aims, intentions and expectations of learning dance technique and these are explored through the underpinning literatures and ongoing research dialogues.

In chapter three, critical feminist pedagogies are discussed in relation to dance research literature through which I build on the concepts introduced in this introduction. I consider dialogical approaches as dynamic evolving in relation to the context within which they are employed. I discuss in detail the focus of critical feminist pedagogy in terms of relational ways of being in the learning context, and the value placed in the emotional, intuitive self. Feminist perspectives are furthered through the emphasis on embodied knowing as a legitimate and credible source of knowledge, especially in dance. This gives rise to the recognition of experience as multidimensional and the acknowledgement of individual perceptions as authoritative. Beyond this, I state that critical feminist pedagogies allow me, as researcher/teacher, to locate my lived experience as the means through which I might voice my sensed, embodied and intuitive knowing.

Having established the context of this study, I move on through chapters four and five to describe the process of conducting the research. In chapter four, I detail feminist interpretive ethnography as the methodological approach through which this research has been undertaken. This is a practice-based study of qualitative data deriving from subjective experience of the participants. Therefore, I expand on the implications of foregrounding the experience of learners and account for the privileging of their voices to guide the discussion of themes. Reflexivity is discussed as important feature of this approach, particularly in relation to research transparency as a means of navigating my role as researcher/teacher. Furthermore, this chapter considers the dance studio as a situated cultural site and embodied fieldwork and relational ethics are discussed as arising from this location. I then move on to describe the evolution of the research methods in chapter five. In this I take the reader through the process of data gathering and the various iterations of refining the focus of the research project. I explain the means by which I have gathered data so as to enable frank and explicit accounts of experiences by the participants. I consider that, as in much qualitative research, there was propensity for participants to resist sharing negative or unflattering experiences with me because of my relationship with them as teacher and in fear of potential consequences. Therefore, the use of teacher journal accounts has been instrumental in problematising critical incidents in the studio.

Chapters six, seven and eight discuss the research findings through the themes of explorative, comfort(able) and collective learning. Chapter six discusses explorative learning, student engagement and the significance of active learning in the dance technique class. Conceptualisations of agential engagement and somatic attentiveness are developed in order to explore participant experiences and reflect upon the diverse ways in which responsibility for learning, agency and increasing autonomy are encountered. As has been discussed, Tim Ingold's work around the use of materials to enable fluidity of approach is utilised in considering what it means to develop a skilful practice and the honing of precision. In this way learning dance technique is advanced as not necessarily coercive or reinforcing of normativity. In chapter seven the theme of comfort(able) learning is explored. I unpack the student-teacher relationship and consider what it might mean to be at ease in an enabling learning environment. Through this chapter the pedagogical relationship is examined in terms of roles, the exercise of power and conduciveness of

environment. An emphasis is placed on understanding how respect and trust may be engendered and Nel Nodding's ethics of care are employed towards this. As already discussed, through ethics of care the teacher's role shifts from delivering a curriculum to enabling learning together and what this might mean is brought to life through the participants' accounts.

In chapter eight, I delve further into the relational character of pedagogy in the dance technique class and explore the influence of peers through the theme of collective learning. The discussion deals with the multifaceted experience of shared processes and the potentiality of accumulative ways of learning among others. Through collective effort and acts of recognition the work of bell hooks is employed to develop ways of learning well with peers and this reconceptualises the learning process in the dance technique class as being *among* others rather than simply *alongside* others. In this way, learning is conceived as an act of mutual accountability. In chapter nine, the concluding chapter, I attempt to weave these various threads together so as to give an account of the contribution made through this research to new knowledge. I consider the limitations of the research process and unpack the confluent implications of the research findings. I draw out the ways in which our understanding of learning dance technique class may be experienced as contribution to common project, voicing of bodies and disruptive empowerment.

Through this introduction, I have outlined my research focus and introduced the main concepts and theoretical frameworks that underpin the study. I have set up the reflexive premise with which I will proceed to discuss the arising issues and how I am inculcated in the precarity of partial yet deep knowing. The ensuing articulation of learning dance technique is accordingly, explorative, fluid and resistant to definition. Going forward, I purposefully delve into the multidimensionality of positions, perspectives and practices that arise through this research and thoughtfully unpack the nuance of participant experiences in order to illuminate insights from the dance technique studio. What is revealed is a densely woven reflective description, analysis and re-envisioning of dance technique pedagogy. In the following chapter, I situate the research by discussing the context of the UK conservatoire and the different educational agendas, political imperatives and stakeholder expectations impacting their function and purpose.

CHAPTER 1

Conservatoire training in the UK

This research is located within the context of conservatoire training in the UK. What follows is an outline of the diverse and conflicting perspectives that influence this context, the aims of higher education in general and the requirements of dance training in particular. I begin by entwining the historical narrative of the evolution of dance education with the story of my own relationship with dance. By doing so I illustrate the ways in which dance has developed in the UK by bringing it in relief to my own formative experiences with learning dance. From this I define the ways in which I understand and mobilise terms such as modern, post-modern, contemporary dance, release-technique and somatic practices, among others. I turn then to introduce Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance as the specific location of this research project, and I outline the perceptions of its current functions in the UK dance sector and the pressures that bear upon its ongoing viability. The chapter proceeds to consider the value of dance in education and the purposes of conservatoire training for students, the wider arts sector and society at large. Through the ensuing discussion, I expose the unresolved complexities and competing priorities of the contextual factors that bear upon this research.

Historical and personal dance education narratives

Through the ensuing narrative I integrate the salient shifts in British dance education and the formulating influences of contemporary dance while simultaneously situating my own developing relationship with dance. Dance education in the UK has been impelled by numerous and divergent stakeholder forces, creative impulses and political directives throughout its history, many of these conflicting, ambivalent and overlapping. While I will chart a pathway through that story, I hope to retain a sense of the myriad influences on dance training by highlighting their concrete and discrete impacts on my learning journey through dance.

I started ‘doing dance’ in 1983, at the age of nine. I had developed an interest in dancing largely from seeing it on television. My family encouraged my interest and so I went to dance classes as an after-school activity in the small town in the Midlands where I grew up. My family had a history of participation in local amateur operatic societies and drama clubs. This familial connection with the performing arts was significant in facilitating dance as a possible hobby for me, as it was particularly unconventional for boys to dance at that time and in that place. Dance was introduced as part of the National Curriculum to all state schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1988. Yet, despite a brief experience with folk dancing at primary level (about aged 7 years) I did not encounter dance at school. This was unremarkable to me at the time as I did not question whether dance was appropriate in a school setting but instead saw it as a fun hobby.

During 1970s and 80s in Britain, while I was growing up, dance in schools was being championed by among others, Peter Brinson, an influential ambassador of dance education. In *Dance as education: towards a national dance culture* (1991) he states that dance in education should be seen as ‘a way of preparing people for qualities in life shared with others’ (79). My early experiences of participating in dance, though, were separate from my general education; taught through adherence to the disciplinary strands of modern, musical theatre, tap and ballet syllabi. As a consequence, my childhood experiences of dance were considerably informed by ideas of the centrality of dance technique, its gradated development and an ethos of discipline. Doing dance was something that I enjoyed, I did well in it and I felt ‘at home’ in the setting. However, my experience was in contrast to the ways in which dance was being delivered in educational settings elsewhere, as ‘free’ movement. In those settings, approaches to dance privileged individual creative responses. I shall discuss this and other, dualistic tensions of the function and focus of dance technique in the proceeding chapter.

Following the completion of my A’ levels (UK exams aged 18 years) I went on to study for a degree in Dance Theatre at what was then called the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance (Laban). Laban was originally founded in Manchester in 1946 as the Art of Movement Studio by Rudolf Laban, an Austro-Hungarian dancer, choreographer and a dance/movement theoretician. The school expanded when it moved to Addleston, Surrey in 1953 and then again when it moved to New Cross in South East London in 1975. I had

not encountered contemporary dance before applying to dance schools. I had shifted my interest from musical theatre and the study of contemporary dance seemed the logically creative alternative, despite my lack of understanding of what it might entail. Contemporary dance is a term that is used, largely in Britain, to describe a range of dance practices that have evolved from modern and post-modern Western theatre dance.

Some of the most significant influences on the development of contemporary dance as it is currently practiced in the UK, came from America in the 1960s and 70s when some dance artists reacted against the expressive, narrative and structural forms of modern dance and ballet. Modern dance had itself been a rejection of classical ballet and choreographers such as Martha Graham, Isadora Duncan and Mary Wigman had developed approaches that moved dance away from balletic traditions. The Graham technique was very influential in the British dance scene from late 1960's alongside Limon, Humphrey and Horton. The Martha Graham company had performed for the first time in London in 1945. Later, in 1966 the contemporary dance trust was established in London by Robin Howard and what is now called London Contemporary Dance School was set up under the leadership of Robert Cohan (of the Martha Graham company). Later Cunningham technique, often identified as the instigation of post-modern dance became very influential in dance training in the UK. Post-modern dance developed in part as in response to 1960s society that was questioning societal norms, privileging experimentation and looking toward the radical.

While I was a student at Laban between 1992 and 1995, I learnt Ballet, Graham and Limon dance techniques. I experienced these as making very different demands of my body and I was highly motivated by challenges of hard physical effort in pursuit of technical improvements. Another important, yet contrasting, feature of the dance education I encountered at Laban was the creativity and expansive processes of choreography. As a central component of the programme it opened up possibilities of movement that I had perhaps not encountered in my experiences of dance thus far. As my exposure to, and conceptualisation of, dance was expanding the identity of contemporary dance continued to evolve in the UK. In some settings, post-modern dance heralded an aesthetic shift from the esoteric forms of codified dance techniques. Through her historical and critical study of post-modern dance, Sally Banes (1987) articulates the ways in which the dancing body was redefined as 'the subject of the dance, rather than serving as an instrument for expressive

metaphors' (xvii). According to her, 'the impulse of the post-modern choreographers was to deny virtuosity and to relinquish technical polish, literally to let go of bodily constraints and inhibitions' (xxvii). With this focus, new dance techniques emerged responding to interests in functional movement, relaxation and loosening of body control (Mackrell 1992). Through the 1990s, wider movement philosophies, approaches and techniques, such as release, somatic practices and non-Western classical dances, were being introduced to some 'mainstream' dance settings. However, in the United States at the same time, African American dance artists adhered to modern dance aesthetics reluctant to dismantle the traditions of dance they had struggled to become part of (Goldman 2010, 19). This culturally inscribed divergence of experience was in part replicated in the UK as some, largely white dance artists rejected the codified techniques of their training (Adair and Burt 2016). Culturally defined perspectives of Contemporary dance are acknowledged in the proceeding chapter through critiques of the bias of terms such as 'Western dance' that draws attention to the prevalent presumption of 'whiteness' of dance education and academia.

Release technique, the style of dancing I now base my teaching upon, was not part of my student experience of training. The foundations of this style of dance are largely attributed to the dance artists of Judson Church in New York who developed work that used non-virtuosic, or pedestrian, movement objectives during 1960s and 70s (Banes 1993). Movement artists Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, and Steve Paxton, among others, while not unified in their aesthetic, were united by 'their radical approach to choreography, their urge to reconceive the medium of dance' (Sally Banes 1987, xiv). Yvonne Rainer's notorious 'No Manifesto' (1965) set the tone for her, and others', minimalist choreographic approach. In Rainer's *Trio A* for example, the movement phrasing was levelled out and 'neutrally' performed (Mackrell 1991, 45). In further transformation of expectations, dance performances moved to non-traditional performances spaces and in the 1970s Steve Paxton developed contact improvisation as a radical movement practice that focused on ways for the dancer to give weight into the floor and with/through partners (Novack 1990). As a result, dance technique teaching became less virtuosic, efficient and more idiosyncratically experimental (Banes 1993). This furthered a disjunction between dance technique training and choreography due to a proliferation of technique styles and

amalgamation of diverse specifications (Bales and Nettl-Fiol 2008). These issues will be picked up in the following chapter in consideration of the fluidity of dance techniques.

The artistic concerns of American post-modern choreographers influenced the development of dance in Britain. The first wave of British post-modern dance emerged in the mid-1970s through the work of choreographers such as Siobhan Davies, Rosemary Butcher and Richard Alston. Other influences of British dance in the 1970s came from European political art. These radical influences were disseminated through, among others, the dance collective X6, an alternative UK dance organisation that provided classes, workshops and events in release, improvisation and contact improvisation as well as producing a publication called New Dance (Mackrell 1991). The work of the X6 collective was politically motivated along democratic ideals and sought, in particular, greater equality between gender roles in dance. At this time, the term New Dance became associated in Britain with more experimental approaches to dance that were seen initially as marginal and non-mainstream. Consequently, New Dance techniques were not immediately applied in dance training programmes, with the exception of Dartington College where American dancer/choreographer Mary Fulkerson pioneered the release method of technique in the UK (De Wit 2000). Release technique, initially referred to as releasing, was one form of dancing that emerged from this New Dance era (George 2014, Mackrell 1992, Richterich 1998).

For me, it was not until after I had graduated that I encountered release technique. After a few years performing with dance companies based in Belgium, I began to establish myself as an independent dance artist in London. At this time, I was particularly attracted to the choreographic work of Siobhan Davies and the approach to technique of her dancers who regularly taught open dance classes in London. This was the late 1990s and early 2000s and I, like many of my contemporaries, was exploring the affordances of techniques that encouraged relinquishing habits in the body so as to realise greater ease and efficiency of motion. Immersion in these aesthetic and philosophical ideals offered me new ways to enhance my movement practice while simultaneously confronting the idealisation of my previous training. Importantly for the focus of this research project, my engagement with release technique, and latterly somatic practices, was through my own initiative and not part of an education programme. While I did not find it immediately easily to assimilate this

new approach to movement, it did represent for me an agential claim of my own dancing and sense of bodily self.

During this period in British dance, the late 1990s, somatic practices were becoming increasingly integrated with release technique classes. Whilst distinct and developed from other movement-based sources, somatic practices align with the aims of release technique in that they privilege first-person experience (Diehl and Lampert 2011, 217, Reed 2016). In consideration of somatic practice within the training and education of dance students, Sara Reed (2011) identifies the key concepts of dance-somatics as 'namely increased sensory awareness, bodymind integration and efficiency of movement' (188). The overarching term 'somatics' was coined by Thomas Hanna in the 1970s to describe the field of diverse body-based practices that foster somatic inquiry. Somatic pioneers realised 'the potency of listening deeply to the body' and discovered that 'by being engaged in attentive dialogue with one's bodily self we, as humans, can learn newly […] and perform with greater vitality and expressiveness' (Martha Eddy 2009, 6). The original Somatic pioneers include, Gerda and FM Alexander, Mosche Felendkrais, Rudolph Laban, Ida Rolf, Mabel Todd, Irmgard Bartenieff, and Lulu Sweigard, among others. These practitioners capitalised on new perspectives of the body made possible at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, with the end of the Victorian era. These practitioners were involved in numerous, seemingly divergent, body practices for particular individual reasons such as recovery from injury. They drew from numerous newly developing body-mind sources including philosophical influences (i.e. existentialism and phenomenology), shifts in education (i.e. experiential learning and student-centred approaches), and ancient Eastern cultural traditions (i.e. Buddhism, Butoh, Judo, Tai chi and Yoga). Rudolf Laban was one such dance pioneer who was instrumental in developing somatic approaches in dance. He laid the foundations of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) through his work studying movement efficiency in industry following his defection from Hitler's Germany. Several of his students, for example Irmgard Bartenieff and Lisa Ullmann, subsequently developed this field of dance practice. Thus, dance practitioners have been and continue to be, instrumental in the further evolution and application of somatics (Eddy 2002, 2009).

For me at the turn of this century, as a young dance artist in the freelance sector, the experience of learning release technique was very much imbued with somatics. When

taking class for example, I was not always aware of when a teacher would switch between activities that were sourced from somatics or release. I have recollections from that time when a dance teacher would deliver a session that sustained a small movement exercise (often of the floor) for an extended duration and then require us, the participants, to get up and quickly learn a dance phrase. Looking back, this disjointed body experience demonstrated early attempts by contemporary dance teachers to integrate somatic approaches within release technique classes. The integration of somatics with dance technique heralded a fundamental shift whereby the dancer's first-person experience is a privileged source of learning. I expand on the ways in which somatics have been integrated with dance techniques towards deepening practice in the following chapter and I discuss the experience of tuning-into the body in the dance technique class as somatic attentiveness in chapter six.

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Having established the historical context within which dance education and contemporary techniques have evolved, I turn now to introduce the location of this study; Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (Trinity Laban). Presently, Trinity Laban is defined as a small specialist higher education institution in London. It was formed in 2005 through the merger of Trinity College of Music with Laban and is comprised of two-faculties; music and dance. As an institution, it trains musicians and dance artists who intend to make careers as practitioners (Quality Assurance Agency 2012). Both faculties provide programmes at foundation, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels, and additionally deliver access and participation activities, professional development programmes and a Centre for Advanced Training (CAT Dance). Trinity Laban's focus, as a conservatoire, is on 'nurturing and training the professional practitioner' (Quality Assurance Agency 2019, 3) and in order to do so it receives institution-specific funding (ISTA) that subsidises the real cost of high-intensity tuition. This additional funding is awarded on a discretionary basis by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in recognition of world leading provision. HEFCE was replaced in April 2018 by UK Research and Innovation and the Office for Students. An important distinguishing feature of Trinity Laban in respect of its training offer is the specialism and expertise of the faculty, many of whom are practising artists who 'contribute

to the life of the conservatoire in many ways [through] extensive professional experience and reputations' (Quality Assurance Agency 2015, 4).

Currently, there are numerous pressures on Trinity Laban, as with all conservatoires, in terms of global trends in higher education. Multiple financial and environmental factors impact the ongoing critical success of Trinity Laban and this highlights the institutions' imperative function as a business. Trinity Laban is reliant upon student tuition fees for financial survival and the challenges to future recruitment is an ongoing concern. In recent years there have been lower application for study at Trinity Laban, as with many arts institutions, and this is attributed to demographic changes resulting in less 18-year olds, drops in student numbers able to study dance at GCSE and A level (45% drop in dance since 2010) and the impact of environmental factors such as Brexit. As a teacher without responsibility for the financial viability of the institution, I am largely shielded from these concerns, however their influence is prevalent on a daily basis as, for example, class sizes get bigger, timetabling is increasingly busy, there are fewer shared faculty breaks for collegiate dialogue and the reduction of salaried contracts reduce career security. Consequently, the institutional need to cut costs and increase funds is felt continuously in the studio, and as a member of faculty I am complicit with acceptance of the 'new normal' in my co-opted role as supportive employee. While this does not diminish my commitment to ensuring the best possible learning experiences for the students with whom I work, it does erode my confidence in the value of dance in education and my self-worth as dance lecturer. The arising purposes, priorities and pressures, of Trinity Laban as an institution of higher education, as they have been discussed above, are situated within the wider context of higher educational. It must be remembered that Trinity Laban is not alone in these pressures as the marketisation of education is having impoverishing impacts on teaching and teachers in the west. I will turn now to consider the divergent perspectives of the value of dance education and the wide-ranging discourses of vocationally-oriented arts-based higher education in the UK of which Trinity Laban is a part.

Discourses of dance in higher education

There are divergent arguments about the value of art education, specifically dance in higher education, and consequently education is modelled in various and often conflicting ways. It is important to bear in mind that the Latin roots of the word education has two derivatives: educare (to mould) and educere (to lead out), and consequently there is an etymological basis for many of the current debates about the purposes of education (Bass and Good 2004). Education, on these divergent terms, can be understood to concern moulding the learner to fit within some predetermined form and/or enabling the conditions through which they might forge their way in the world. In order to highlight the most significant ideas about what dance education could be, in the context of this thesis, I frame the ensuing discourse through three distinct models of education: the liberal model that creates free space for debate and contestation, the neoliberal model that sets about creating the skills for the workforce and the knowledge economy, and the critical model that purposes learning as a tool for liberation and social change (Sabaratnam and Owens 2019). These differing models of education allow us to build an understanding of the various perspectives that are being applied to the pursuit of dance education.

To begin, I will focus on the liberal model of education and the ways in which dance can make a particular contribution to forming self-identity and benefiting society. This is eruditely articulated by Brinson (1991) who states that 'the arts offer direct ways of exploring values, of raising questions of personal, moral and aesthetic value and of discussing the ideas and perceptions to which they relate' (70). He expands his argument by acknowledging the affordances of learning in the arts to appreciate cultural diversity through aesthetic and intellectual development. For Brinson, arts in education facilitate social harmony, individual humanity and 'wealth from which to nourish social living' (73). He states that education through the arts realise understanding and experiences that include:

> moral purpose and values; historical understanding; capacity for artistic and aesthetic appreciation; stimulus of ideas and innovation; criticism and self-criticism; exchanges of knowledge, meaning and modes of consciousness; balance in learning and leisure occupation; development of capacities for decision-making, self-discipline and attention to detail; finally, ways of understanding and making sense of the world around us (73).

This comprehensive list of attributes acknowledges the potentially fundamental personal and societal benefits of an education in dance, along with other arts disciplines. Brinson's valorisation of the arts in education is arguably as potent now as it was then, thirty years ago. It envisions an alternative to current directives in education, higher education in particular, toward employment, productivity and economic viability. Instead Brinson highlights the liberal possibilities of education to enable quality of life through the development of artistic criticality and citizenship.

Dance pedagogue, Margaret H'Doubler (1925) writing almost a century ago, states that the purpose of arts education is 'to find meaning in life and joy in living it' (6) and in this way make 'a more adequate man of oneself' (5). She advocates education as a means by which one might carry over childlike creative impulses 'into the realities of adult life with heightened power and more enlightened purpose' (6). Similarly, contemporary dance scholar Fiona Bannon (2010) describes dance as 'a self-actualising interdiscipline, where individuals can become qualitatively transformed' (58). Qualitative transformation, as Bannon frames it, signals an enhancement in the student's perception of self and their role in society that aligns with critical feminist perspectives. Expanding further the transformation afforded through dance education, dance scholar Anne Burnidge (2012) discusses the cultivation of 'critical, revolutionary, out-of-the-box thinkers and movers' (46). In this way, dance education can continue to be 'a particular form of knowledge and experience […] a way of organising and communicating individual perceptions of the world […] Hence the particular and special contribution dance can make to the education of citizens' (Brinson 1991, 69, Kerr-Berry 2007).

Currently in the UK and across much of the global West a neoliberal model of education is politically dominant and focuses on the agenda of employability (Barnett 2007, Martin 2017). Education, considered through this instrumentalist view, is the means through which students become employable. Their studies serve as a process through which they can make a productive contribution to the economy. The neoliberal shift in the higher education ecology has occurred in Britain over the past three decades. University commentator, Stefan Collini (2017) states that universities have been corralled into identifying their primary role as being engines of economic growth and to aligning their activities with the needs of industry, finance and commerce. Collini acknowledges that

universities have always in part, served practical ends and prepared graduates for employment. However, previously they had also been characterised by collegiate and civic ideals whereby student character formation was inspired by relationships with teachers and peers, and citizens were formed through a shared ethic (18). The distinctive value of universities, Collini claims, is the provision of 'a partly-protected space within which trying to extend and deepen human understanding has priority' (25). This concept of a partly-protected space is a contested feature of higher education, as we shall see. Collini affirms that since people live by beliefs and goals other than those of wealth maximising exclusively, the purpose of universities should not be defined on the grounds of economic prosperity alone. Writing in the Guardian, David Ruebain (20 May 2019), chief executive officer at the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama UK, makes a similar point that 'we must challenge the dangerous narrative that equates success with the level of a graduate's income and which reduces education to a financial transaction. If we don't, we risk losing the next generation of artists and all that they contribute to our wellbeing and society' (not paginated).

Neoliberalism has developed in the UK through agendas of capitalism and market forces wherein 'greed is good' (Noreena Hertz 2005). This has given rise to an increasingly individualistic society where moral responsibility is relinquished to market forces. It is rationalised that if everyone works toward their own self-interest then society as a whole will benefit due to increased financial prosperity. However, Neoliberalism tends to perpetuate inequities of resources due to being dominated by global corporations and policies that advocate 'free, unrestrained markets, and an ethic of individualism and individual choice, operating on a global scale' (Michael Rustin 2016, 153). In the same way, universities are increasingly expected to compete for resources and status through regulatory structures such as national league tables, for example the National Students Survey (NSS) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). They are expected to vie in attracting students, faculty, research resources and private endowments in order to prosper. Such commercial pressures are exacerbated by high student fees, funded by loans repaid through future earnings, that encourage students to define their university education as a long-term financial investment. This positions students as consumers of education and consequently they are more likely to assume an instrumental relationship to

educational and feel less trust in their institutions (Stefan Collini 2012, Michael Rustin 2016). Noreena Hertz (2005) argues that current student populations no longer trust institutions to work for the benefit of all and believe that the state and the market has failed to realise a more equitable society. This is significant because today's students arrive in higher education, Herts asserts, disillusioned by the promise of capitalism but not having known any alternatives. As such, it can be argued, those of us who are involved in higher education have a responsibility to support the moral inquisitiveness of learners and model these alternatives in the ways we operate.

For many students at Trinity Laban, their aims for education in a conservatoire are not necessarily financially motivated, rather they may be ambitious to be professional artists and, as conservatoire pedagogy researcher Biranda Ford (2010) states, for many 'the opportunity to practise a particular art is more important than the source of income' (42). As such, the investment they make in themselves might be the fulfilment of aspirations for a career in dance. However, Ford (2010) claims that students are being misled by conservatoires by a promise of employment following a vocational training. She states that 'specialist arts institutions have a moral obligation to address employment as a central purpose of education' (46). This perspective might be seen to play into the economic arguments of neoliberal education as discussed above. However, it is argued that students of conservatoires often have unrealistic expectations of the possibilities to work as a professional artist (Bennett 2009), albeit through the course of their programme they may become aware of, and interested in, wider opportunities to work within the cultural arts sector and beyond (Miller and Baker 2007). Ford (2010) calls for a shift away from definitions of performing arts programme outcomes in discrete terms of performance or applied vocation because it suggests that an art form is a luxury divorced from the 'real world'. Instead, 'by merging concepts of artistic creativity and innovation […] arts graduates become uniquely placed to succeed in modern society' (45). Brown (2007), another researcher from within the conservatoire setting, states similarly, that courses in the performing arts provide 'excellent preparation for the demands of the creative industries' (28). Therefore, despite a clearly defined purpose of conservatoire education as vocationally-oriented there are diverse ways in which successful graduate outcomes can be conceived.

Another perspective of the purposes and possibilities of education comes from the critical model. This model of education troubles the normative framing of a liberal education wherein social inequalities are structurally reinforced. Political educationalist and specialist in International Relations, Meera Sabaratnam (2011) suggests that in the dominant liberal vision of UK higher education, the university exists philosophically outside of society; as a protected space for debate (as advocated by Collini above). This outside-of-society location privileges meritocracy, among other things, and consequently perpetuates the structural inequalities that serve the interests of some at the expense of others. Within the meritocratic university for example, competition functions to realise the best ideas, and these ideas are considered to be independently embodied by the thinker. However, universities are embedded in society and mirror the power structures within it. Competition within and between universities corresponds with the dominant narrow views and as such, the values of merit are located within this biased structural system. The critical model of education seeks to use learning alternatively; as a tool for liberation of marginalised groups and to enable social reform. Alongside the qualitative transformation of learners, it can be argued that dance education enables such reform through aesthetic social critique, contribution and commentary. In their consideration of the influence of arts graduates to society, academics Tregear et al. (2016) state that socially engaged performers might aspire to 'make a statement, seek, uncover or offer truth, a meaning or message about the music [or dance] they perform that also offer the audience something new to play with (conceptually, intellectually, spiritually and so on)' (284). In the same way, the value of dance training can be evidenced not only in the quality of achievements by the individual learner, as artistic citizen (Bannon 2018, Schupp 2018), but also in the ways in which it facilitates disruptive social commentary through artistic impacts. I discuss these ideas further in chapter three, through feminist critical pedagogy which is predicated on the aim of education to transform the individual, their place in the world and work toward a more just society.

The excellence agenda

Having defined the competing models of education that influence the conservatoire, I will now move to explore further the distinct purposes of dance training. As higher education institutions that offer vocationally oriented training, UK conservatoires serve a distinct and

somewhat different purpose from that of arts programmes in universities (Quality Assurance Agency 2015). The work of conservatoires might be conceived as, among other things, hot-housing talented performers, preserving dance heritages and linearity, enabling standards of technical excellence, being critically subversive and resourcing cultural disruption. These agendas jostle for privilege by various stakeholders and structural forces. One agenda that is particularly relevant for the purposes of this thesis is that of excellence because of its prevalence in current perceptions of what a conservatoire should do.

Excellence is a contested term in educational discourses and with respect to conservatoire training it is often ascribed to the technical proficiency of student outcomes. Excellence has long been utilised as a way for conservatoires to define their distinctiveness in the marketisation of higher arts education and consequently the means by which they retain vital sources of income. Alongside the implication of high technical proficiency, excellence also intimates elitist processes and aesthetic exclusivity of the conservatoire. Excellence is additionally attributed to the quality of teaching that students may expect to receive throughout their training. It has become synonymous with the conception of a high-quality 'product' that generates reliably proficient dancers for the dance sector. In terms of teaching and learning, excellence is not, in and of itself, deleterious to the wider aims of liberal and critical models of education as stated above. However, it is argued that processes of learning that foster individualism and competition among students in order to achieve such results may not be the best way to prepare students for life as an elite performer if the cost is of a life well lived (Tregear et al. 2016, 283).

Conservatoires have been seen historically as elitist and exclusive both in terms of who is able study at them and the performance-oriented curriculum content (Davis 2018). As such the conservatoire has, to some extent, reinforced rather than disrupted social norms. In critique of this heritage, journalist and writer for The Independent Sophie Morris (2006) states that 'Britain's conservatoires need to dispel their stuffy, inaccessible image to attract applicants from every socio-economic background' (not paginated). She goes on to identify that a factor inhibitive of widening participation, and consequently extending diversity, in such programmes is that some applicants might not have acquired the pre-requisite standard of skills and cultural capital. Reasons for this are complex but can often be due to the inaccessibility of expensive, and exclusionary, foundational learning. Therefore, despite

the rhetoric of many conservatoires in response to government initiatives, about their commitment to widening participation and developing diversity, dance training continues to reinforce many of the social inequalities they claim to be actively challenging (Bowie 1997). Later I discuss the assumption of whiteness of contemporary dance and how this acts as a further barrier to inclusion. It is suggested, however, that educational policy should focus, not solely on widening participation in terms of access but also on retention and progression of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. In this way, social mobility might be more fully realised to ensure that such students achieve more successful outcomes from their educational experiences.

A further dimension of the excellence agenda is the expectation of dance industry stakeholders in relation to the technical capabilities of UK dance conservatoire graduates. In 2015, three renowned and influential UK-based choreographers, Lloyd Newson, Akram Khan and Hofesch Shechter made joint statements that criticised UK conservatoire training. They raised concerns about the quality of dance training in the UK claiming that the dancers were 'consistently outclassed by fitter, stronger and more versatile counterparts from Europe, Asia and the USA' (Shechter). It was stated that dancers who train in UK conservatoires 'more often than not, lack rigour, technique and performance skills' (Newson). Although, it was admitted that the fault lay broadly with the lack of dance throughout education in the UK, the contemporary dance conservatoires were further criticised for a 'passive approach to addressing this already existing disadvantage' (Mackrel 2015, Mead 2015, Reed 2018). In this way the critique of conservatoires, while tempered by acknowledgement of the need to provide greater access to dance education at all levels, again laid the blame for unfulfilled student outcomes with these institutions.

In response to these statements UK conservatoire leaders expanded the issues being addressed with regard to the purposes of dance education beyond capacities of technique. Veronica Lewis, then principal of London Contemporary Dance School, highlighted the imperative of preparing students for 'lifelong careers in dance' and the consequent need for breadth of artistic skills. Kenneth Tharp, then chief executive of The Place, drew attention to the institutional challenges of preparing dancers for an increasingly diverse dance sector and the limitations of what might be realisable in three years of dance training. While Anthony Bowne, principal of Trinity Laban, made the point that many of the

dancers that are trained at UK conservatoires come from Europe and around the world. Consequently, the provocation by Newson, Khan and Shechter, the subsequent media interest and official conservatoire responses raised questions about the purposes, quality and value of dance training in the UK.

The criticism of training rigour, and consequent dancer quality, might be usefully addressed beyond the proclivities of three choreographers (Reed 2018). Important issues were raised, though, about what might be realisable in terms of standards of technique given relatively large student intakes and the limitations of some student's previous dance experience. However, what has unfortunately been reinforced through this 'critical incident', is a destabilisation of the fragile confidence achieved around the validity of progressive approaches to technique within conservatoires and the value of higher education in dance in general. Thus, it seems to me, codified techniques with more quantifiably determined progression are re-emerging as preferable training regimes and the liberal aims of learning as previously discussed, are being deprioritised. Lamentably, while the questions that Newson, Kahn, Shechter, among others, raise about the quality of dance technique training can be useful in ensuring dance education sustains excellent student outcomes, they could also be detrimental to the reputation of, and consequently the support for, UK conservatoires.

Through this chapter, I have unpacked the various forces affecting the provision of vocationally oriented dance training in UK conservatoires. As has been discussed, there are diverse contextual features determining how arts-based higher education training programmes purposes are perceived. These perceptions have ideological, historical, philosophical and personal roots and can often be in tension. In the following chapter, I will continue to define the context of this research project by turning to consider the function, focus and fluidity of dance techniques. In doing so, I focus-in from the global perspectives that impact conservatoire education to the localised perspectives that influence studio-based practices of learning dance technique.

CHAPTER 2

Contemporary dance techniques

Focusing-in on the context within which this thesis is located, I outline in this chapter the practice of release-based contemporary dance technique. In doing so, I weave through the wider discourses of the previous chapter that outlined the historical narratives and ideological framing of dance education in the UK conservatoire. In what follows, I critically reflect upon the complexity of the purposes, and fluidity of, contemporary dance techniques with respect to their divergent styles and influences. I discuss the consequent idiosyncrasy of current contemporary dance teaching practices; paying particular attention to perceptions of virtuosity. Flowing from this, I describe the relationship of dance technique and somatics and consequently articulate embodied knowing as learning that is gained through the body (Batson and Scwartz 2007, Bresler 2004, Foster 1976). With respect to these ends, I highlight the use of dance materials in my own dance technique teaching and the importance of student particularity and individuality through movement exploration.

Focus, function and fluidity of dance techniques

As we saw in the previous chapter, ideas and attitudes about the purposes of dance education in general and consequently the functions of dance technique training in particular are diverse and multifaceted. In order to delve into this complexity further I critique the dualistic perspectives of dance technique in terms of focus: creatively expressive (participatory) or body-skills based (professional) and function, high art (elitist) or art for all (accessible). These dichotomies underpin many considerations of the aims of dance education and consequently the role of dance technique in fulfilling these aims. While it is my supposition that these dualisms are not imperative, and are in many ways reductive, they are useful for thinking through the multifarious ways in which learning dance technique is currently positioned and how it might be re-envisioned.

Dance scholar, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2015) in her discussion of the phenomenology of dance, positions dance technique as a preparation of the body. Perceived in this way, technique is at the service of forming (creating) and performing dance (for an audience). She states that the educative value of dance originates in the creation of dance itself and that technique, while necessary for meeting the demands of the dance, is not of ultimate concern for the dancer. She states that 'the concern with the body as a technical instrument must not lead to a *preoccupation* with flexibility, strength, kinaesthetic awareness, coordination skills, and the like' (123 italics original). This way of thinking about the function of dance technique is echoed in the words of influential dance practitioner Gill Clarke who states that dance technique is not an end in itself but is rather concerned with 'trying to make your body available to you as an instrument' (Reed 2018, 17). However, the denigration of technique as necessary but not of ultimate concern sets up an overly simplistic and unhelpful hierarchical distinction between that which is creative or performative and that which is technical about dancing (Akinleye 2018).

The function of learning in dance technique as body-skills proficiency, I contend, is limited and too narrowly defined. Dance technique may not be art in the sense that Sheets-Johnstone means it; a formed and performed communication of emotion, however it can, and perhaps should, be more than the mere acquisition of body skills. Through processes of learning dance technique, the student can develop capabilities as a moving person: becoming more fully embodied, kinaesthetically aware, present and responsive as an individual. This conception aligns with but is not limited to that of making the body available, as Gill Clarke describes above. As such, the dance technique class may be an end in and of itself, in that it does not necessarily need to serve as preparation toward some more significant activity such as creative forming or performing dances. In terms of the lived experience, I suggest, engagement with dance technique can fulfil the artful criteria of movement explored, refined and declared in space.

Another area of long-held dualistic tension in dance education that influences how the purposes of learning dance technique are perceived, is between high art and art for all. The philosophy of expressionistic dance developed by Rudolf Laban, during 1920s in Germany and 1940s in Britain, encouraged ideologies of participation in dance for everyone. This aligned with the expansive approaches of child-centred education that was developing in

Britain at that time. However, according to Peter Brinson (1991), 'the application of Laban's thinking in the educational context was interpreted too selectively' and had become 'a rigid form of teaching' in the UK, during 1950s and 1960s (65-66). This 'rigidity' excluded studying dance forms such as ballet, jazz or tap on the grounds that 'the discipline of studying techniques might inhibit a child's natural creativity and musical response' (66). Such distinctions set up an unhelpful binary in dance between what some perceived as rigid technique and natural creativity.

Brinson, working to support dance in education in Britain during the 1980s and 90s, believed that exposure to ballet techniques in schools would 'extend interests and perceptions in dance' forging links between 'free' dance and dance technique. Influential dance pedagogue, Ruth Foster (1976) believed opposingly, that this would be confusing and 'contrary to what [pupil's] absorbed in school'. The conflict here has to do with attributing technique skills to high art, and creativity (and suggested lack of technique skills) to low art. Again, the hierarchical distinction between forms of exclusivity or inclusivity of dance practices set up barriers which are unhelpful in thinking about possibilities of dance in its widest terms. There is a need for pluralism, Brinson argues, in dance education, and his thinking aligns with the work of dance educationalist, Jacqueline Smith-Autard (2002), who developed the mid-way model of dance education. The midway model, originally developed in the late 1980s, proposed an integration and development of two dynamically opposed approaches in dance education: dance as creative expression and dance as skills-based (education and professional models respectively). The midway model focuses on dance education as a whole entity that necessarily includes three facets: creating, performing and appreciating dance. While not specific to thinking about the dance technique class (that would be subsumed as preparation just as with Sheets-Johnstone above) Smith-Autard does articulate, awkwardly as I see it, an attempt to integrate dichotomous perspectives of dance technique. However, she does so without indicating how to resolve the inherent tension between two seemingly oppositional intentions.

Smith-Autard (2002) claims that the midway model might retain an emphasis on dance as a set of principles that locate the pupil as agent in their own learning and an emphasis on stylistically defined dance techniques as content locating pupil as apprentice (6). The possibility to retain an emphasis on the pupil as both agent and apprentice of dance

technique appears problematic as the two roles have particularly different pedagogical objectives: agent as autonomous learner, apprentice as subservient learner. This tension of the function of the learner's role highlights the ambivalence of dance pedagogues that might want the dance student to be both obedient to the discipline of training, so as to attain excellent technique skills, while also expecting the dance student to develop autonomy and artistic independence. In dance education the tensions between skills acquisition and creative expression, autonomous and subservient learner, high art and art for all are complex and many of these distinctions are being actively challenged (Akinleye 2018). However, dance technique pedagogy can sometimes reinforce an ideological assumption that the student conforms to, or is coerced by, the discipline of the hierarchically positioned expert teacher. These pedagogical issues will be critiqued in the following chapter dealing with the application of critical feminist pedagogy in dance education.

Another area of complexity with regard to the objectives of contemporary dance techniques is its diverse range of styles which cannot easily be described as one coherent form or set of movement principles. There are various influences through which dancers and consequently dance teachers develop contemporary dance skills, and current trends in teaching have resulted in hybrid formulations of dance techniques and movement-based practices (Diehl and Lampert 2011). Consequently, each teacher's dance technique is often a development and assimilation of varied movement techniques resulting in an idiosyncratic stylistic practice (Bales and Nettl-Fiol 2008). These personalised conceptions of technique are subject to change and evolution as the influences and experiences of the teacher develop and shift. The field of contemporary dance technique is therefore multifarious, complexly layered and dynamically evolutionary.

Dance techniques have always been in a process of evolution. According to Margaret Lloyd, describing dance techniques in 1949, modern dance developed from previous dance forms and was subject to constant change. She defines what was then, new forms of dance technique, modern dance as 'the continuous opening of new paths for the expression of the human spirit through the human body' (xvii). In the post-modern dance era, defined in the previous chapter, training of professional dancers was not directly linked to specific choreographic movement styles as it had previously been. Dance educationalists, Melanie

Bales and Rebecca Nettl-Fiol (2008) state that dancers were rather encouraged to 'become more themselves rather than strive to mirror those they work for' (x). This resulted in a 'disjunction between technique training and performance' and the dancer was increasingly expected to take 'an eclectic approach to training' (1). Other more recent developments in some dance settings, have included incorporation of somatic practices and non-western dance forms, and the adjunction of ballet. Such shifts indicate trends in thinking about what should be privileged in programmes of dance training so that the dance student has optimum preparation for their potential dance career. Consequently, a training agenda, such as within a conservatoire undergraduate programme, might be structured by the interests of the dancer in ways that reflect the 'radical juxtaposition' of the post-modern (Bales and Nettl-Fiol 2008, 3). However, there is no one career path in dance just as there is no one student of dance. Consequently, any choices about what to prioritise in dance training programmes will inevitably be selective and favour some student preferences and particular pathways above others.

At a recent symposium focused on dance technique at Winchester University and ten years on from the publication of their influential work around eclectic practices of dance techniques, *The body eclectic: evolving practices in dance training* (2008), authors Melanie Bales and Rebecca Nettl-Fiol were asked to reflect on what they thought should be 'core' to dance technique training. They were unable to identify where emphasis might be placed with regard to training. I contend that what should be core, depends largely on the sort of dancer one wishes to develop/become. Irrespective of this, I would like to suggest that potentially the more important question, regarding what is essential to dance technique training, pertains less to *what* should be taught, in terms of content design and stylistic preferences, and more to *how* dance techniques are experienced by the learner. I therefore, wish to make a distinction between teaching approaches and dance technique styles. One does not necessitate or preclude a particular form of the other. In this regard, traditional teaching approaches that require obedience and encourage notions of correctness can be distinct from particular stylistic forms that have become associated, in part, with those ways of teaching, for example: Cunningham, Ballet, Graham, Jazz. Consequently, codified techniques do not necessitate particular pedagogical approaches.

Pedagogical approaches to dance technique vary, and this is a further complicating factor with regard to their purpose. A useful way of thinking about how dance technique might be approached is encapsulated in the term 'Technique-ing'. This term originated in Gill Clarke's explication of her practice to define technique training as something that may be engaged with rather than something to be achieved (Clarke, Cramer and Muller 2011). Approached in this way, dance technique is not about the acquisition and attainment of body skills as fixed entities but rather an evolving process of bodily engagement and honing of movement-based principles and conceptions. In his erudite consideration what the body can do, Ben Spatz (2015) attempts to articulate this dynamism in a similar way, albeit he defines technique as a noun, like water. His suggestion is that technique is not one singularly defined entity but malleable and vibrantly potent. From such conceptualisations of the non-fixity of dance techniques, the aims of learning can be expansively defined. The dance learner can develop technical proficiency in release, for example, through an ongoing explorative process toward increasing movement specificity. In this way, the development of technical proficiency can concern that which is available to the moving person through bodily readiness, sophistication of articulation, control and particularity. Gill Clarke articulated this as empowering students with an 'embodied movement intelligence' (Reed 2018, 18). These issues will be considered through a pedagogical lens in chapter three, and further in relation to participant experiences of explorative learning processes in chapter six.

Expanding conceptions of virtuosity

Having considered the function, focus and fluidity of dance techniques, I turn now to consider virtuosity as an aim of such practices. Conventional definitions of dance technique virtuosity, as high skill and experience, are problematic (Burt 2017). In terms of release technique, they would appear to contradict the aims of enabling 'a participant to guide themselves and ultimately to generate their own practice rather than producing something existing' (Diehl and Lampert 2011, 221). Approaches to dance technique that encourage participants to guide their own learning in this way have been criticised as inhibiting rigour and not fulfilling virtuosic potentialities. Dance scholar, Emlyn Claid (2006) raised questions about whether it is possible for dance technique training to be both rigorous, ensuring that the learner realises their full potential, and ethical, ensuring the learner is treated

humanely. She asks 'whether a practice of ethical respect for difference and diversity is at all feasible within hierarchical working processes, production and performance of spectacle' (125). This opens up a further dualism of dance: to 'push' or nurture the student. In posing this critique, Claid is thinking through the virtuosic in dance training and whether aspirations of the spectacular are compromised by ethically defined teaching approaches, particularly with reference to diversity. She challenges the value of teaching techniques, namely release, that are not fully realised in terms of their stylistic preferences. Claid suggests that 'spectacular-ness' of bodily capability might be achieved through diversely extreme techniques that focus on purity of form: distinct, separate, untainted. Accordingly, she troubles the validity of techniques that attempt to integrate various movement concepts (as discussed earlier). She provocatively, uses the term 'middle-mush' to describe such approaches, highlighting a propensity for under-realisation of student's potential. Despite the terminology and tone, and assuming that her critique is more than hankering after a golden age, it might be appreciated that Claid's concerns reflect on how best to train dancers. The claim that release techniques are undistinctive because they try to realise movement intentions that bridge somatic and codified dance forms, is a familiar critique of this dance style and often crystalizes around contested pedagogical issues such as subservience, discipline, authority and expertise. These pedagogical issues will be explored in detail in the proceeding chapter.

Fortin (2003) suggests that the 'apparent discrepancy' between sensing-oriented somatics and moving-oriented dancing is alleviated through the contextualisation of somatics to the 'functional demands of dancing, larger issues or long-term goals' (Fortin 2003, 7). In the dance technique class, she contends, students might appropriately alternate their attention in order to 'cultivate their embodied experience' or 'foster their virtuosity'. This reconciliation of alternative focuses works to foreground different movement objectives; described as 'the interface between sensorium and motorium' (Fortin et al. 2002, 172). Embodied practice researcher, Ben Spatz (2015) defines techniques of yoga in similarly non-binary terms and this is useful for thinking through the seemingly divergent perspectives about virtuosity in dance. In his discussion of the gendering of yoga technique, he draws attention to two physical cultures of technique: athletics and somatics. Athletics is conceived in traditionally masculine terms such as competition, strength, speed and

virtuosity. Somatics is conceived 'as a major alternative to athletics, one that is radically *unspectacular* and which emphasizes physical sensation over visual display and "performance"' (97). He suggests that athletics and somatics 'define an important spectrum of technique' (96) and that diverse practices, in his case of yoga, might be understood as a balance between these two physical cultures (98). This consideration of balance rather than dichotomy resonates with dance techniques in as much as somatic approaches need not necessarily preclude dance as athletic. Rather the influence of somatics in dance techniques might indicate an integration of, or enmeshment, of athletic and somatic aims. As such, virtuosity in dance athleticism may be assimilated with the sensorial awareness of somatics.

Claid's conflation of codified techniques with rigour and somatics as ethical is overly simplistic and the issues raised are more nuanced than the dismissive 'middle-mush' might suggest. It *is* important, however, that in dance training students are enabled to learn enhanced sophistication and virtuosity as stylistically defined. I would like to suggest that this is one dimension of excellence, as discussed in the previous chapter, that dance education should aspire particularly but not exclusively in a conservatoire context. Virtuosity in dance can be defined as the individual development of divergent embodiment, depth of practice and creative complexity. Dance pedagogue, Wendell Beavers (2008) discusses a newly conceived virtuosity in which expanded qualities of movement develop through 'the subtle level of sensing, perceiving and doing' (129). The middle-mush is the antithesis of these features of embodied knowing and furthermore they are not limited to particular styles of dance technique. Technical sophistication, honing skills and layered complexity are made possible through pedagogical approaches that are rigorous, immersive and responsive to learners. In this regard I would suggest that a middle-mush might be the resultant lack of spectacular-ness in any technique form or movement practice.

Somatic approach to dance technique

As noted previously, Somatics is an overarching term used for a diverse range of body-mind integrated practices that are unified by a focus on first-person experience and individually

particular responses. Here I explore the relationship between somatics and/as dance technique in order to unpack how techniques are learnt in dance. Somatics can support the dance student in developing a deepening awareness of sensation, connectivity and holistic learning of dance technique (Bannon and Holt 2015, Batson 2008, Dryburgh 2018b, Eddy 2002, Reed 2011, 2018, Weber 2009). As such somatics can underpin approaches to dance technique through which the learner becomes increasingly aware of movement through their own sensorial experience of it. Dance pedagogue Susan Stinson (2004) has termed this approach to movement as 'thinking with what we know in our bones' (162). Jill Green (2001) articulates this as 'a focus on and affirmation of what goes on inside the body rather than a sole focus on what the body looks like or how it 'should' behave' (157). With a somatic approach, in contrast to traditional approaches, the personal experience of the dancer necessarily forms the learning afforded through heightened attentiveness in/to/through movement. The implication for dance technique learning, therefore, is that while the teacher may instruct, or guide the learner, it is the student themselves who has access the learning affordances of movement concepts.

Through a somatic approach, learning dance technique comprises of responsiveness by the individual learner to both external prompts and internal sensation. Dance researcher and practitioner, Ann Cooper Albright (2017) articulates this dual sensibility as cultivating a 'responsive body' (63) that can respond to a variety of environments and events from an embodied perspective. Therefore, dance technique can be conceived not simply as developing a series of stylistically defined body skills but also a process that involves 'training students for a life of thinking with, though, and about their embodied perspective' (Cooper Albright 2017, 63). As such, learning dance technique can be understood as a practice through which students develop bodily sophistication in holistic terms. As dance researcher Karen Barbour (2016) states a 'dance class informed by somatics is not only about constructing our dancing bodies; it is also about developing a more accurate sense of the world we live in' (190). Dance-Somatics researcher Sara Reed (2011) states that 'somatics can empower and lead to the questioning of accepted practice and stereotypes and therefore provide a tool for students' (167). By prioritising inner experiences and self-knowledge, a somatic approach to dance 'seeks to facilitate an environment where students can be supported to discover self-agency and the inner empowerment that

sensory authority can engender' (Burnidge 2012, 44). Therefore, learning dance technique, approached in this way, can facilitate processes wherein students 'take ownership of their bodies through attention to inner bodily processes' (Green 2001, 157). These ideas will be developed further through exploration of dance as declaration of voice in chapter six.

The integration of somatics with dance technique has been critiqued by among others, queer dance academic Doran George (2014) who repudiates the claim that somatics are based on essential bodily principles that realise the natural body. They describe this as a conceit, stating that 'while dancers often feel they are working with bodily truths, [somatic] concepts are socially constructed and result from dominant cultural values' (2). They contend that rather than freeing the dancer from the constraints of codified techniques, somatics have generated a different set of dance technique standards to which dancers are now expected to comply. These standards are 'based on the ideal of the universal applicability of proper anatomical function' (33). This critique raises scepticism of the claims for somatics as non-coercive, without constraints and outside aesthetically defined boundaries.

The relationship of dance technique and somatics is further complicated by claims that codified techniques that are often conceived as ideologically incompatible with somatic philosophies, such as Ballet and Graham, can be taught in ways that are somatic (Reed 2018). For example, dance researcher Henrietta Bannerman (2010) claims that 'a full embodiment of Graham-based dance prevents any tendency for the external shape and design of these signature movements to override the internal physiological processes that drive them' (10). She asserts that modern dance pioneers, such as Martha Graham, developed her self-named technique as a consequence of dancing 'from the inside'. Bannerman's implication is that the arising technique, in its original iteration was generated through bodily inquiry and emotional integrity and was therefore, somatic. Codification of the Graham technique, Bannerman suggest, has occurred through time and as a consequence of the technique being used in separation, or at a distance, from the original source (Martha Graham herself). Therefore, the technique has been rendered non-somatic. While this perspective is useful in thinking through the possible somatic source of the origins of techniques, I will be utilising the terms somatics and somatic approach to focus on the dancers' sensorial experiences while learning technique as a development of their

own ‘inner authority’ (Green 2001: 157, Enghauser 2007, Batson 2009). Simply put, the prioritisation of the dancer’s experience of movement is fundamental to their learning of dance technique. This section has explored somatic approaches to dance technique and I will now move on to consider the development of embodied knowing through the use of movement materials.

Embodied Knowing and the use of movement materials

Embodied knowing anchors meaning in experiences of the dancing body (Fortin et al. 2002, Fraleigh 1987, Green 2002, Monni 2008, Parviainen 2002, Rouhiainen 2003, 2008 Sheets-Johnstone 2015). Embodied knowledge is gained *through* the body (Batson 2009) and involves ‘thinking and feeling as well as doing’ (Stinson 2004, 164). It refers to learning that occurs through body practices that bring attention to sensory intelligence and an appreciation of our placed-ness in society. Embodied knowing, formed through the practice of moving and sensing in dance technique learning, is central to my discussion. Dance techniques are embodied practices wherein mind and body are ‘holistically intertwined’ (Spatz 2015, 11), although I will argue through the course of this thesis that the possibility for such holism is principally pedagogical and not determined by stylistic content. According to Lloyd (1949) dance is ‘not an art of the shallow minds’ rather it is ‘intellectually conceived and projected’ (xxii). Embodiment researcher, Thomas Csordas (1994) conceives of the body as representation and being-in-the-world. He states that the body ‘should be understood not as a constant amidst flux but as an epitome of that flux’ (2) and thus, ‘indeterminacy is an essential characteristic of embodiment’ (5). He states that the body is both the original tool with which humans shape their world and the original substance out of which the human world is shaped. Arising from this perspective embodied practices, such as dance technique, can be conceived in ways through which the body is at once tool, agent, and object. This has important implications for redefining the dancing body as an instrument. Embodiment is rather a ‘perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement in the world’ (Csordas 1994, 12).

The dance technique class affords processes of engagement with movement through which the learner might develop embodied knowing. Such ways of knowing that arise through the body, states dance scholar Jaana Parviainen (2002), offer possibilities to choose how to move. They enable the dancer to make distinctions in motion (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, 57).

In the dance technique class, embodied knowing can be enabled through for example, practising exploration, attentive noticing and making choices in response to movement. According to dance scholar Leena Rouhiainen (2008) it is through exploration of movement that dance becomes experientially and personally meaningful. Thus, the development of embodied knowing reconceptualises dance technique capability from what movement looks like to how movement feels, from prescribed rules to responses to ideas, and from refining a standardised ideal to exploration of possibilities. Flowing from this, embodied learning can be reconceived as tuning-into the body. This will be discussed through the experiences of participants in chapter six.

Embodied learning can involve processes of ambiguity and not-yet-knowing (Bannon and Holt 2015, Barbour 2011, Rouhiainen 2008). The value of being 'usefully ignorant' is discussed by Erica McWilliams (2009) as allowing 'students to stay in the grey of unresolvedness, supporting any and all attempts on the part of [the student] to experiment with possibilities in ways that put their ignorance to work' (289). Thus, explorative learning can harness ambiguity as a means through which students can develop inquiry-oriented approaches to learning. This is described by Parviainen (2002), as learning through which 'the dancer wrestles with sensations and images of movement, its meaning, quality, shapes, and textures, struggling to capture some half-grasped or intuitive complexity of visual-kinetic form' (13). One of the ways in which learners may be enabled to 'wrestle' with movement towards deepening embodied knowing, is through an engagement with the specificities of the movement materials.

Movement materials, as I mean it here, refer to dance content generated by the teacher and taught to the students as 'set' exercises, tasks, phrases or sequences. They can provide the framework of the dance technique class through which processes of exploration, discovery and honing can deepen embodied knowing (Dryburgh 2018b, McWilliams 2009). In the dance technique class, the materials may be repeated and returned to multiple times during a session or subsequent sessions. They are content that is utilised as 'a vehicle for the learning, not as an end-product with its own value' (Diehl and Lampert 2011, 221). The reason to emphasise this feature of release technique, and my teaching in particular, is that sequences taught by the teacher have been associated with restrictive conceptions of pedagogy whereby the student is engaged with copying as imitation. Materials in the dance

technique class need not necessarily be approached as fixed entities and while the student might copy the teacher in order to learn them, the materials afford the means to practice precision and movement specificity beyond mere replication.

Accordingly embodied knowing realised through engagement with movement materials concern, what dance academic Glenna Batson (2008) terms, 'kinaesthetic dexterity'. This describes 'the ability to access one's movement potential […] to repeat movements with great precision, while being able to shift instantaneously to meet new movement challenges' (138). Technique-ing (Gill Clarke's term described earlier) then, involves the development of skill 'to hone the matter/the material of movement, to sustain a working and reworking process from an initial sketch towards a deeper perception and more detailed articulation' (Diehl and Lampert 2011, 223). This process of learning concerns rigour, immersion and intensity through which to develop excellence of technique capabilities as embodied knowing. Dance techniques can be realised in particular and individual ways and bodily learning that is approached exploratively 'gives the dancer a possibility to embody movement in multiple, divergent ways' (Anttila 2004, 58). The realisation of dance techniques was discussed in similarly pluralistic ways by Lloyd (1949) who considered modern dance as individually creative. She believed that each artist needed to conceive their own technique in their own way. This conception of technique as personal and particular is useful for this thesis in as much as it shifts thinking about technique as an entity, owned by its author and disseminated by the teacher. Rather technique can be conceived as a personally embodied knowing that emanates from the individual as their bodily understanding and capabilities develop. Dance technique as an emanating practice will resonate through the thesis and be considered as an implication of this research in chapter nine.

Bias of contemporary dance as Western and White

As was discussed in the proceeding chapter, contemporary dance is a contested term that is used, largely in Britain, to describe a range of dance practices that have evolved from modern and post-modern Western theatre dance. However, the terms contemporary dance, somatic practices and Western theatre dance, while widely used in dance research literature, are problematic as that they disguise the implicit whiteness of their conceptions (Adair and Burt 2016, Amin 2016, Davis 2018, George 2014, Kerr-Berry 2010, McCarthy-

Brown 2014). In the UK, critiques of the default presence of whiteness in the field of contemporary dance have sought the decolonialisation of dance education and the promotion of anti-racist agendas. In addressing anti-racism, practices of solidarity and allyship are being explored so that 'whiteness' may be dismantled (Mitra, Stanger and Ellis 2019). Addressing racism in dance in higher education is vital because an imbalance of power persists through institutional structures that work to marginalise black and brown people and global majority populations and their perspectives (Kerr-Berry 2010, Mitra 2017). Therefore, what I aim to do in this section is acknowledge the complex construction and problematical nature of the terms 'Western dance' and 'Contemporary technique' in the hope that by doing so I can at least position these key concepts, and myself, within this study in respect of their cultural heritage and inherent, often racist, assumptions.

Dance scholar Crystal Davis (2018) states that to use the term Western is to act with familiar bias when describing Eurocentric dance forms such as contemporary dance. She states that it is an incorrect categorisation which excludes other dance forms that have been developed in the Western hemisphere such as hip hop (121). In this way, the term Western hides, or assumes, the ethnic and cultural origins of the dance forms being discussed. Whereas, discussion of the dance forms of Black bodies often include mention of racial or ethnic signifiers detailing the locations of origin (Kealiinohomoku 2001). Thus white perspectives, heritage and traditions are perpetuated as standard in dance. The term contemporary dance is rendered problematic with respect to its exclusive alignment with Western practices. This is dismantled by anti-racist dance scholar, Royona Mitra (2017) by challenging Western perceptions of non-Western cultural heritages. In consideration of the work of choreographer Akram Khan, Mitra rethinks the artist's 'dance heritage', kathak in the case of Khan, as a proactive processing of a dance form that 'becomes inhabited and transformed into lived knowledge, to reflect the realities of the artist herself' (41). Thus, she rejects the assumption that Khan's kathak becomes contemporary only when it comes into contact with his Western dance training as this equates contemporisation with Westernisation (32). Instead she situates 'the dancing body as an ongoing and unfolding living history that can claim a plurality of heritages with equal prowess'(32). Thus, she reframes dance artists of colour as agents of change by shifting concepts of dance heritage as processual and lived, rather than fixed and acquired (41).

The field of somatic practices is similarly problematised in its alignment with contemporary dance despite its foundational claims of inclusivity. Although, as George (2014) identifies, the 'cultural labor' of early somatic practitioners worked to disband polarized gender ideals in dance, they continued to marginalize non-white bodies (41). George states that, during the 1970s artists constructed a concept of nature by incorporating somatic practices with dance that seemed to embrace the evolutionary potential of aspects of non-white people and women, which had historically been used as evidence of their lesser status (43). However, this largely left unchallenged the idea of a 'natural body' at the center of dance training that continued to reinforce whiteness (136).

In relation to the cultural provenance of dance education in the UK and much of the global west, 'Whiteness' determines our frames of reference and the perspectives with which we view the world and each other. In acknowledgement of this, Davis (2018) advocates pedagogical practices in dance that make racial bias visible, recognise its embeddedness in our experiences and remain attentive to its presence in the studio. Thus, while I continue to use the terms contemporary dance and western theatre dance through the thesis I do so in acknowledgement of the above critiques. Furthermore, I hope that this study might disrupt rather than reinforce the exclusionary pressures of dance technique pedagogy. While this thesis does not directly address the racial biases of contemporary dance in terms of its construction, I work to address issues of respect for diversity that can arise from recognition of the multiplicity of learners' backgrounds, cultural and personal identities. I aim to think through what it can mean to create a learning environment that does not assume a hegemonic learner experience or identity. Instead, I approach pedagogy as a means to diminish assumptions by creating space for individuals in acknowledgement of a broad range of student experiences, responses and contributions. In this way, while the form of the technique class is not directly challenged through this research, I do reconsider the applications of pedagogical conceptions in the studio in recognition of the diversification of learner experiences.

One of the ways I am able to explore respect for diversity in this study is through the pedagogical theories of bell hooks. As a black American scholar, pedagogue and activist, her knowledge and insight arise from lived cultural and historical experiences of racism and her struggle against it. The perspectives grounded in her work enable me to expand my

understanding, reflect upon my practices and problematise my own assumptions. By centralising the work of bell hooks, notably her expansion of critical pedagogy, I acknowledge that her approach to the transformative aims of education arise from lived experiences of oppression that are different to that of my privileged experience as white male. In chapter three, I unpack the theoretical basis of bell hooks' 'engaged pedagogy' and its evolving impacts in dance education research. However, In doing so I am mindful of the troubling potential of research to appropriate the experiences of others as an act of further marginalisation. Influential critical theorist, Stephen Brookfield (2003), is explicit about the contradictions in research of White male exploration of African American feminist thought due to having 'no experiential, visceral access to the philosophy born of struggle that comprises the central dimension of [such lived- experience]' (213). In attempting to address this in his review of the work of bell hooks and Angela Davis he considers it important that the words of these thinkers be more prominent than his interpretation. Thus, I follow his lead in as much as the pedagogical theory of bell hooks consistently flows through this thesis. Her pedagogical conceptions have guided my research at every level. As will be established in the proceeding chapter, hook's emphasis on contribution through active participation, personally relevant learning, collective effort and difference frame my thesis. These concepts are developed in relation to participant experience and researcher reflexivity throughout the study such that they inform my understandings of dance technique pedagogy and have resonance with the research findings.

Through this chapter the context of this research has been expounded in relation to dance techniques. In consideration the numerous dichotomies of thinking that are pervasive in dance, I have stated that dance technique can fulfil the artful criteria of movement explored, refined and declared in space. As such it need not be denigrated to the role of preparation for creating and performing dances. Accordingly, I have critically explored the integration of dance technique functions as based in the acquisition of body skill (elitist) or creatively 'free' (participatory) and the balance between athletic and somatic modalities. Flowing from this, the complexity of contemporary dance has been explored through its fluidity of form; uncontained by a fixed set of movement principles. Release technique has been widely defined in terms of its underpinning movement conceptions and philosophical imperatives. The influences of somatics as they are integrated with dance techniques have

been explored in order to expand conventionally defined conceptions of virtuosity. Therefore, learning in the dance technique class has been described as giving rise to embodied knowing in ways that can be individually variable and particularly precise.

Throughout this and the previous situating chapter, I have unpacked the diverse contextual factors that influence this research project and its location. The issues raised and explored here will have resonance throughout the thesis, particularly in relation to the pedagogical imperatives that might necessarily be mobilised in response to our present condition. In the following chapter, I explore critical feminist pedagogy in dance: its empowering potentialities, inherent tensions, struggles and constraints.

CHAPTER 3

Critical feminist pedagogy and dance education

Over the past three decades, a definitive discourse in dance education has been established utilising feminist perspectives of critical pedagogy. Among the many important purposes of this discourse has been a distinction between traditional and progressive approaches to learning in dance contexts. This chapter builds upon the concepts of education, feminism and critical pedagogy outlined in the introduction and critically analyses the conflation of critical feminist pedagogy and dance education through the research literatures of associated fields. The discourse of these fields is defined through current dance research and consequently this chapter provides the theoretical nexus within which this pedagogical thesis is located. Toward this, I describe critical pedagogies, their development through feminist critiques and the influence of these perspectives on teaching dance technique. Flowing from this, the complexities and conflicts of a critical feminist pedagogical approach are unpacked through its various features of empowerment: non-hierarchical roles, dialogical processes and active participation, having voice, and relational learning.

Critical and feminist pedagogies have been instrumental in challenging conventional attitudes in dance education, as they have in wider educational fields. They are based in a rejection of the hierarchical assumptions that underpin authoritarian approaches and thereby, redefine the purpose of learning dance in more holistic and just terms. As was outlined in the introduction, critical pedagogy developed from the work of Paulo Freire (1993) as an alternative to the banking method of education. He championed education as a transformative experience through which the learner develops skills, in his case literacy skills, while becoming critically conscious of the possibilities to overcome oppression and realise social change. Feminist perspectives have expanded critical pedagogy to include relational, non-rational, collective dimensions while troubling reductive ideas about student voice, empowerment and respect for diversity. As a dynamic amalgam of these approaches, critical feminist pedagogy offers a progressive lens through which to explore learning, for our purposes learning dance technique. In order to provide a through line and theoretical frame for the ongoing discussion of this research, I centralize the work of African

American pedagogue and activist bell hooks (1990, 1994, 2000, 201201, 2015b). Of particular relevance is her explication of engaged pedagogy as articulated in her seminal book *Teaching to transgress: education as the practice of freedom* (1994). Through this work hooks provides an insightful and realigned articulation of Freire's emancipatory intentions for education grounded in her personal experiences as a woman of colour, and her perspectives proliferate dance education research literature.

Critical feminist pedagogies, were pioneered in research concerning approaches to dance in the early 1990s, by American dance practitioner/researchers Sherry Shapiro (1991, 1998, 1999) and Sue Stinson (1998, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Both were based in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and worked in collaboration to integrate critical theory, educational philosophies, feminist studies and dance. Their seminal and much cited contributions in the publication of *Dance, power and difference: critical and feminist perspectives on dance education* (1998) serve as the foundations upon which much dance pedagogy research has since developed. Stinson, in her chapter, conflates Freire's banking method with traditional modes of teaching dance and in so doing lays the foundations for criticism of conventional dance training. Shapiro as editor, drew attention to the problematic purposes of dance education and discussed the importance of embodied knowing as generated by the learner.

Previously, Shapiro (1991) had established an interest in critical pedagogy in the dance class as the means of human liberation and social transformation. Importantly, she made links to feminist perspectives of the personal political by framing the body as the material base in dance from which it is possible to make sense of existence (288). Shapiro (1999)'s research rethought Western philosophical traditions in relation to Cartesian duality of mind and body. She explored processes in dance that connect self-reflection and understanding to knowledge. In order to do this Shapiro, as a dance teacher, focused on the student voice as part of a dialogical process of learning: hearing their concerns, interests and needs. Building upon these foundations dance research has, largely, established critical feminist pedagogies as the antithesis of authoritarian teaching approaches and the means by which dance education might become more 'just' (Risner 2008). As will become evident in the ensuing discussion of literature, critical feminist pedagogy establishes an important approach through which the transformative aims of education may be realized in dance.

Non-hierarchical roles

Empowerment of the learner is a fundamental feature of critical feminist pedagogy. As we have already seen, this is a complicated concept and weaves through all pedagogical thinking. Empowerment is discussed in this section, with particular focus on the reconfiguration of traditional pedagogical roles toward non-hierarchical relationships within the dance studio. Through the lens of critical feminist pedagogy, the reciprocal relationship between student and teacher is fundamental in realising the educational aim of student empowerment (Råman 2009, Shapiro 1998). This has particular ramifications for the dance technique class because traditional approaches in Western concert dance are often subsumed with authoritarian practices of teaching (Alterowitz 2014, Burnidge 2012, Green 2001, Lakes 2005, Smith 1998). In dance training, uncritical pedagogical approaches can reinforce and perpetuate authoritarian teaching (Burnidge 2012) wherein students are taught obedience, conformity, and reproduction (Risner 2008). Authoritarian approaches to dance technique, in particular, are negatively discussed in dance education research, as 'standard' (Alterowitz 2014, 8) and perpetuating experiences of humiliation due to strategies of correction, judgement and ideologies of deficit that evidence a lack of respect for the learner (Anttila 2008).

Through authoritarian teaching, negative motivational strategies are sometimes normalised in the dance technique studio even when this is incongruent with the way students expect to be treated in other settings. For example, in some dance technique contexts, shouting at students by the teacher is tolerated, expected and even desired (Dyer 2010). The dance studio can, therefore, be a site of emotional and physical abuse where negative behaviours by teachers towards students are not always challenged or even perceived as inappropriate (Green 2001). Students can be complicit with authoritarian teaching and, as dance researcher Robin Lakes (2005) states, this is perhaps not surprising given the prevalence of uncritical ideas about dance training as necessarily harsh. According to Anne Burnidge (2012) in her research illuminating the alignment of somatics and feminist/democratic pedagogy, there is an expectation and acceptance, by both students and teachers, that dance teachers will or must assert control over students (44). Such domineering teaching practices model 'regressive, antidemocratic relationships' and do not

'foster deep, higher-order thinking' (Lakes 2005, 16). Critical feminist pedagogy reconfigures the student-teacher relationship through the co-construction of learning experiences, thereby interrupting relations of dominance and subordination (Lather 1991, xvii). Thus, shared responsibility for learning is encouraged between teacher and student which remediate assumptions based on authority. According to dance scholars Sherrie Barr and Doug Risner (2014), 'when teaching becomes a mutual responsibility of power, the potential for students to find empowerment is heightened' (139). Accordingly, the dance technique teacher might not assume absolute control of the learning setting with an unassailable power to act, make decisions and dictate the learning process. Such approaches disempower students who acquiesce by 'consequently giving their bodies to their teachers' (Green 2001, 157).

Dance scholar Becky Dyer (2009, 2010, 2014) utilizes critical feminist pedagogy as a research lens on her dance technique practices. She states that by encouraging learners to consider the consequences of their relationship with the teacher, the learner can shape their identity in the studio and this affects how they learn and the meaning of knowledge (2010, 114). Dance researchers Julie Kerr-Berry, Karen Clemente and Doug Risner (2008) examine teacher identities when applying critical feminist pedagogy to dance defining it as 'an approach to teaching that seeks to help students question and challenge domination by exposing taken-for-granted assumptions and practices that limit, marginalize, and disenfranchise human agency and freedom' (95). By reconfiguring the student-teacher relationship, critical feminist pedagogy locates the classroom/studio as a place where students can state their preferences, acknowledge their uncertainties, reflect on their experiences, share their awareness's, and include their full-selves in the learning process. These personally meaningful ways of being as a learner shall be discussed later in the section; *having voice*.

As made evident through postmodern feminist critiques of critical pedagogy it is not possible, or even necessarily desirable, to dispense entirely with the hierarchy of the roles of teacher and student (Lather 2007, McLaren and Hammer 1989). For example, the learning institution usually requires the teacher to set and assess student learning outcomes. This can obfuscate pedagogical conceptions of empowerment and what might be understood as non-hierarchical relationships between the teacher and learner. This will

be critically discussed through participant experiences in chapter seven. Underpinning this discussion is the feminist perspective of sharing power through participatory and democratic learning processes where 'the goal is to increase the power of all actors' (Shrewsbury 1987, 8). In this way non-hierarchical power can be defined as functioning among participants in the classroom/studio as energy, capacity and potential. The means by which such potentiality becomes enacted, with regards to critical feminist pedagogy, is through dialogical learning.

Dialogical processes and active participation

Dialogical approaches to learning enable empowerment in the classroom/studio by establishing a collaborative environment and the means for active participation by each learner. Freire (1993) considered dialogue and critical reflection as the means of liberation through education for oppressed and marginalised populations. The roots and wide-ranging influences of critical pedagogy can be traced through a long history of radical social thought including, among others: the democratic ideals of education theorist John Dewey (2007), critical theory based in the Frankfurt school (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2003) and the philosophical theories of Maxine Greene (1978, 1995) for whom education is a practice of democracy. Dewey's progressive pedagogical thinking focused on education based on experiential learning. His discourse of democracy and freedom attempted to link notions of the individual and cooperative social intelligence (McLaren and Hammer 1989). Therefore, it can be understood that an emancipatory education is not necessarily restricted to one model but can be defined as 'a model of education which is based on communication and dialogue' (Anne Seller 1997, 27). A dialogical approach to learning is based in reciprocity between teacher and student that acknowledges the subjectivity of the learner. In the dance technique class, this begins with an acknowledgement of the student as a human being and not, as previously discussed, a machine or instrument.

Dialogical learning poses significant challenges to the dominant methods of interaction in the traditional dance technique class which functions predominantly through teacher instruction and feedback. In the studio, teacher feedback is 'used primarily to correct errors and generate a new response that is closer to the targeted skill than the previous response'

(Kimmerle and Côté-Laurence 2003, 190). This corrective information tends to concern the mechanics and form of a skill and is given in a one directional modality of knowledge transfer from teacher to student. Feedback is not dialogical when it functions as a direct form of information transfer because it can 'intimidate students into silent, submissive dancers' (Alterwitz 2014, 15). Whereas, through dialogical processes, feedback can function more expansively as part of an on-going communicative act between all participants in the dance technique class (Akinleye and Payne 2016, Dryburgh and Jackson 2016). In this way, the student and teacher engage with multidirectional communication in the dance technique class that can inform, challenge and extend learning affordances.

Dialogical processes, alongside reciprocal relationships with the teacher, enable active participation by the learner. Critical feminist pedagogy is grounded upon the learner being an active participant, not a passive consumer, in the learning process (hooks 1994, 14). Active participation involves the student in assuming an approach to learning that searches for meaning and understanding, taking-on greater responsibility for their own progress, and being concerned with knowledge and skills beyond completion of the task (Denicolo, Entwistle and Hounsell 1992, 3). This approach is based on a constructivist view of education that intends to involve students in the process of learning and encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning. There is, therefore, an expectation that the learner will contribute to the pedagogical endeavour and assume autonomy. Accordingly, the learning environment can be constructed as 'a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute' (hooks 1994, 39).

Developing active participation, through dialogical learning, can enable students to become increasingly autonomous learners; critically engaged and less reliant on the teacher as a source of knowing. However, enabling the learner to assume responsibility for their learning does not negate the involvement of the teacher. In order to encourage active participation, the dance technique teacher can position learning in ways that are neither militaristic (Lakes 2005), instrumentalist fine-tuning (Bailey and Pickard 2010), or accepting of laziness (Dyer 2010). Instead teaching should, according to hooks (1994), serve as a catalyst of learning that 'calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning' (11). Similarly, pedagogy researchers Fraser and Lamble (2015), assert that a key challenge for teachers is finding ways to 'incite and cultivate

students' passions and desires for learning' as this propels students toward transformational change (61). While it is useful to consider the influential role, the teacher can play in generating learning that is stimulating, it remains important to be alert to how the burden of responsibility for learning may be shared between teacher and learners. Situating the teacher as the catalyst for learning, as hooks does, is intended to emphasis the shared responsibility for learning and not render learning motivation as solely dependent on the teacher, as this would contradict the aim of empowerment through critical feminist pedagogy.

A further complicating factor of active participation in learning by students is that it cannot necessarily be assumed and may need to be encouraged, reinforced and validated. Active learning is not always embraced by learners in the dance technique class, especially if it contradicts previous or preferred ways of learning (Schupp 2010). Students can experience expectations of active participation as variously burdensome, irrelevant, or obstructive. In such situations dialogical processes can appear to exclude learners who are not able or willing to contribute in the expected way (Shor and Freire 1987). This was experienced in the dance technique class by Becky Dyer (2010) who was unsettled to recognise that her dance technique students 'continued to feel a need for absolute critiques framed from the perspective of right and wrong' (122). Dyer sates that some students felt that her student-centred approaches allowed them to be too lenient on themselves and that by not being strict enough, teachers encourage laziness (119). This is an important issue in the dance technique class, as it brings into contestation the distinction between teacher's role to stimulate learning and motivational strategies that can deepen the learner's dependency on the enaction teacher. This will be explored through concepts arising from participant accounts, 'spotlight it or skip it', in chapter six.

In some dance technique settings, the teacher is situated as the expert who is presumed to know best 'how to challenge and push each individual' (Barr 2009, 40). In considering how teaching might serve as a catalyst for increasing active participation and hence empowerment, it is important to think through the ways in which extending challenge might be (in)congruent with critical feminist values. In her consideration of care as a pedagogy for citizenship, Catherine McGregor (2004), states that creating the conditions for dialogue in the classroom is not a question of what the teacher does 'but rather how

[teachers] can create a collaborative culture that will permit personal and collective critical engagement" (102). Creating a collaborative culture in the classroom/studio, therefore, is not dependent on instigating the correct strategies, but can rely upon establishing an enabling environment. This gives rise to questions about how teaching might stimulate learning without developing an 'overly harsh' environment or infantilising the students and stifling their capabilities. These issues will be explored in chapter six where I discuss, through participant experience, learning exploratively through agential engagement.

Having voice

Through dialogical approaches to learning and the encouragement of active participation in the studio the learner has voice. To have voice in the learning context, as hooks (1994) means it, concerns not just the telling of one's experience but also the ability to speak freely, to interrogate the experiences of others and how the learner responds to that which is presented (148-9). Dialogical approaches can be used to enable all learners to speak and be heard, seen and felt (Dyer and Löytönen 2012). In terms of dance education, having voice shifts experiences of movement away from an abstract conception (Shapiro 1998). This is to counteract the features of the dance technique class that can perpetuate the objectification of the dance student. For example, the intention to achieve a specific look, the process of being corrected and the conception of there being a 'proper' technique (Green 2001, 157). Instead, having voice is a personal modality that defines the learner as subject in the dance technique class wherein they assume 'active roles in constructing their own bodily knowledge' (Dyer 2010, 123). Thus, the learner is required to engage with movement beyond absorption and replication of teacher-demonstrated instructions. This can necessitate making sense of technique concepts for oneself through their application (Dryburgh 2018b) and thereby moving beyond the limited conception of movement being either right or wrong (Råman 2009). Thus, making connections for themselves between experience and reflection can enable 'depth of the students' personal investigations' (Burnidge 2012, 38). Consequently, the student can become the author of their own learning; able to 'exert agency in regards to applying knowledge offered by the teacher' and thereby realising 'meaningful understanding' (Dyer 2010, 119).

An important feature of environments where learners might have voice is feeling safe and building trust in emotionally engaged pedagogical relationships (McGregor 2004, 100). Towards this end, the dance technique class can be a location where the learner feels valued as a person by the teacher (Barr 2009, Dryburgh 2018a). Generating a learning environment that feels safe is of particular significance in the dance technique class because students can be required to move through space in ways that are potentially exposing. In order to develop feelings of safety and trust, the teacher can demonstrate the value they place in the students on a continual basis (hooks 1994, Owens and Ennis 2005). This is echoed in the claim for safe spaces to develop student voice as a guiding principle of critical feminist pedagogy by researchers Brady and Dentith (2001) who suggest that an honest dialogue can be forged by the 'teachers' willingness to display strong affirmations of students' experiences' (168). In such teacher-forged affirmative, safe spaces, students can 'reclaim their own voice within their own historical and cultural place' (168). Considering this in the dance technique class, dance researcher Edward Warburton (2004) emphasizes the teacher's role in being responsive to learners' needs stating that the dance studio should be a place where 'dancers feel physically prepared to attempt difficult movements and emotionally safe to take intellectual and creative risks' (93). Similarly, Burnidge (2012) acknowledges that creating a safe environment is imperative to inviting deep, personal exploration by the students and that this is in contrast to her previous traditional mode of instruction (38). Accordingly, we can see that the emotionally-safe dance technique class environment is a significant contributing factor in the enhancement of learning.

A conducive and emotionally-safe learning environment can be generated in the classroom or dance technique studio, by the manner with which the teacher models the validity of imperfection and risk-taking (hooks 1994). This may be evidenced in the teacher's readiness to be vulnerable and not disguise their own flaws. In their articulation of feminist pedagogy, Mary Belenky et al. (1997) state that the teacher should not 'hide the imperfect processes of their thinking' but instead 'do all they can to avoid the appearance of omniscience' (126). This is important, they state, because students 'need models of thinking as a human, imperfect, and attainable activity' (127). By acknowledging their limitations, teachers might afford ways of learning for the student that rely less on being correct and validation by the

'expert' (Dryburgh 2018a). This may, in turn, embolden learners in the dance studio by recognising dance technique as embodied knowing that is imperfect, fluid yet realisable. However, this has implication for destabilising perceptions about where knowledge is located in the dance technique class. If learning is not dispensed or deposited by the teacher then sources of learning can appear to be precarious rendering the learning context less safe. I discuss these issues in chapters seven and eight where I explore safe and brave space respectively.

In the above, I have identified having voice as learning that is personally relevant, I will turn now to briefly intimate that having voice is also an embodied facet of learning through dialogical processes in the dance technique studio. Voice, within the context of dance, can be conceived more holistically than the verbalisation of thoughts and ideas; as an expression of oneself through movement. Anttila (2007) articulated embodied dialogue in dance education as an 'inner and outer movement of turning toward the other, sensing, feeling, and listening, as well as bodily involvement with other bodies, as in touch and contact work' (46). Evolving from this premise, I posit, that to move in space with intention is to declare oneself. The dancing body, as an expression of the personal, can be conceived as 'the vehicle of the human making and remaking, constantly shifting location, capable of revealing endlessly new 'points of view' on things' (Bordo 1993, 144). Somatic approaches to dance technique highlight the particularity of an individual's embodied experience and the integration of personal perspectives. Thus, voice concerns a sensed attunement to the subjective-self or a perspective declared in the way one dances. Therefore, the individuality of bodily experience is relevant to learning, in critical feminist terms, as it enables students to 'find their fully embodied voice within the act of dancing' (Barr 2009, 43). I discuss the implications of embodied voice arising from this research in chapter nine, as the declarative enaction of personal perspectives through movement.

Relational learning

Critical feminist pedagogy is concerned with the relational dimensions of learning. This flows from the intention of non-hierarchical processes discussed earlier, and extends beyond the student-teacher relationship to include all participants. In dance education

research, relational learning has been identified as a means to experience how we take our place among others and in the world (Barr 2015, Chatterjea 2011, Morris 2012). Relational learning among all participants is articulated through bell hooks' conception of collective effort, briefly outlined in the introduction chapter. Collective effort, concerns the interdependency of leaners wherein each participant has an integral contribution to make to the accumulative experience of shared learning. Risner (2009) states that the collective in dance learning encourages 'collaboration and group work, social awareness, emotional connectivity, risk taking and collective achievement'. Collectiveness is prioritised in critical feminist pedagogy through ways of learning that acknowledge the learner as an individual among diverse others. This can be characterised in educational settings by respect for difference, integration of multiple perspectives and facilitation of belonging (Macartney 2012, Webb, Allen and Walker 2002). Therefore, relational learning concerns, acknowledgement of pluralism, respect for diversity and building communities.

Relational learning processes can involve constructive engagement with difference in order to expand perspectives and develop one's understanding. Sherrie Shapiro (1998), whose pioneering integration of critical feminist pedagogy and dance was discussed earlier, states that it is through the acknowledgement of individualized voices and situated knowing that one understands 'the multiplicity and plurality of human experience' (10). Similarly, Risner (2008) states that 'to really know something is to know it in relation to others—others' perspectives, experiences, thinking, context, and histories' (96). In the same way, Judith Chapman (1998) considers dance education as involving the social and cultural perceptions of all participants. This inclusively pluralistic approach, when applied to the dance technique class, can encourage 'an environment that actively honours diversity of experience, culture, and personal identity' (Barr and Risner 2014, 139, Warburton 2004). As dance pedagogue Fiona Bannon (2018) posits, in her articulation of dance ethics, cooperative action 'relates to a felt sense of interconnectedness, to be recognised by any one individual and between individuals as they relate in social settings' (77). This highlights the importance of being recognised and feeling connected as a learner when participating in a collective experience, such as the dance technique class.

Respecting diversity in educational settings concerns wider ways of learning among others that disrupt conceptions of perfection and universality. As renowned critical pedagogy

scholar Stephen Brookfield (1987) states, learning processes that do not seek an idealized form of perfection, encourage diversity of ways of thinking and responding, risk taking and spontaneity, openness and critical analysis, and scepticism of final answers. When applied to dance this approach brings attention to bodies, people as embodied beings, in a way that 'validates difference, denies universal claims to truth, and seeks to empower people for social transformation' (Shapiro 1998, 8). In this regard it can be acknowledged that movement concepts and dance technique principles are diversely embodied (Dryburgh 2018b). Consequently, encouragement of differences among learners in the dance technique class, rather than attempting to diminish individuality, can be a means of respecting diversity. This concerns all facets of diversity including different approaches to learning and diversely realised movement outcomes.

Relational learning necessitates ways of being and knowing in the dance studio that are oppositional to 'separate, distanced, solitary, and independent thinking' (Risner 2008 page). Burnidge (2012), discusses encouraging community connections through peer dialogue in the dance technique class as a means to offer learning experiences where everyone is a vital, contributing member (39). This is similarly articulated by Judith Chapman (1998) in her explication of dance education and the social mode of thinking. She states that 'by means of talking, information is exchanged, explanations and comments are offered, ideas may change and alternative perspectives become available' (200). Concordantly, Dyer (2010) asserts that it is through the social characteristics of the dance technique class that 'autonomous thinking and a sense of community' can be encouraged (121). Thus, it can be understood that the pedagogical affordance of learning dance technique can be enhanced by means of connection with peers and shared dialogical processes. However, Alterowitz (2014) discusses building a sense of community in ballet technique classes in a slightly but significantly different way. She states 'community is built as dancers take class and rehearse together daily, striving as a group toward unreachable ideals' (11). The tension here between striving for unreachable goals and building community is problematic for me because Alterowitz declares this same community is an 'intensely competitive' environment where learners try to 'gain skills faster or to go further in the technique than [their] peers' (11). Dyer (2010) acknowledges this tendency to

competition, commenting that 'learning communities in dance can often encourage individualism, autonomy, egoism and relationships of privilege and power' (101).

A further complicating factor of relational learning arises from the way in which Burnidge (2012) outlines co-creative environments in the dance technique class. She states that such environments encourage students to become 'accountable for the role that they play in the class and in their own learning process' (44). Thus, learners are held accountable to each other in respect of the contributions they make to the ongoing stimulation of learning and for valuing the contribution made by peers. I concur, however, becoming accountable to each other as interdependent learners can place additional responsibility on students not only with respect for their own learning but also for that of their peers. I will expand on this issue in chapter eight in discussion of the influence of peers as entanglement.

While dialogical approaches can function as a means to consider movement from varying viewpoints (Barr 2009, 36), they can also generate dissonance among peers (Dyer and Löytönen 2012). Dissonance can occur where conflicting perspectives become apparent among peers due to foregrounding personal experiences and particular preferences. Although dissonance can have diverse impacts on the learning process in dance technique, the teacher need not seek to eliminate conflict. Burnidge (2012) states that she has 'learned to expect a clash of contrasting values, beliefs, or expectations and to use these collisions as part of the ongoing class dialogue' (44). According to dance pedagogues Becky Dyer and Teija Löytönen (2012) in the presence of dissonance, care can be demonstrated through ongoing relationships and in recognition of wider contexts. Consequently, differences need not be avoided or smoothed over in order for relational learning to be constructively collective. Dissonance can disrupt learning in ways that inspire change (Boler and Zembylas 2003) that go 'beyond the sharing of our differences' (Bannon 2018, 86). However, experiences of dissonance among peers can be uncomfortable for some learners and it is not always conducive to maintaining a learning environment that facilitates feeling safe and taking risks (Anttila 2004, Leonard 2014). The conception of dissonance will be discussed through the experience of the research participants in chapter eight and mobilised in chapter nine as part of 'voicing bodies' which expands upon the implications of embodied dialogue in the dance technique class.

Through this chapter, I have discussed critical feminist pedagogy through its various dimensions and explored the ways in which it has been utilised as lens in dance education research. This approach and the arising discourses form the theoretical basis upon which my study is constructed. As has been made evident critical feminist pedagogies have been utilised as an alternative to authoritarian approaches to dance technique and through the reconfiguration of relationship between teacher, learner and peers, ways of learning can be more democratic, equitable and just. Dialogical learning is fundamental to this approach and what this might mean for the dance technique class is relatively undefined and therefore its implications for embodied knowing will be an ongoing consideration through this thesis. Relational learning is a contestable idea as the impact in the dance studio can be multifarious and present wider considerations regarding responsiveness to difference for learners. Through chapters six, seven and eight, I shall pursue these threads further using participants' comments and teacher journal accounts to critically reflect upon the research findings. By doing so I develop understanding of critical feminist pedagogy in the dance technique class, through diverse perspectives and insight from the concrete experience of studio practice. Much of what has been laid out here will be expanded and problematised further by the multi-vocal discourse that unfolds. However, before this I will outline the methodological approach undertaken (chapter four) and the methods used (chapter five) in conducting this research. In this way I aim to be transparent about my role as teacher/researcher, account for the inductive means by which the participant data was gathered and unpack the layered process of thematic analysis that was employed in order to ensure the credibility of my findings.

CHAPTER 4

Research approach

I have approached this practice-based dance pedagogy research through feminist interpretive ethnography (Bernard 2006, Creswell 2009, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, Denzin 1997). The focus of the research is to gain insight of the learner's lived experience of learning dance technique and feminist interpretive ethnography enables me to engage with qualitative data in order to foreground nuanced perspectives and layered meanings. Toward this, the dance technique studio is considered as a cultural site wherein students and teacher, as member population, are involved in ways of being with each other that are primarily focused around the intention to learn dance technique. The ways in which individual's approach, experience and make sense of this common project is distinct and dynamic. Thus, meaning is attributed by individuals to the shared experiences of learning in varied ways that inevitably shift, merge and contradict each other. This research aims to reveal the complexity of ways in which learning happens in the dance technique studio as individual participants experience shared processes of learning together. A feminist interpretive ethnographic approach facilitates this aim as it affords possibilities to hold together the multiple features of shared experiences, it foregrounds subjectivity as a basis for knowing and recognises the validity of the lived experiences of individuals. Consequently, the findings of this research approach are appreciated as partial, fluid and conflicted while the arising insights are immersive, in depth, complex and multidimensional. The ensuing discussion describes feminist interpretive ethnography, its affordances, complexities and implications.

Feminist Interpretive Ethnography

Ethnography is a methodological approach that aims to create an understanding of those people being studied, their cultures and values (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013, 196). Feminist interpretive ethnography deliberately blends features of feminist and interpretive ethnographic approaches to facilitate engagement with complexity, nuance and layered

meanings of shared experiences. It enables an inductive process through which the research aims become increasingly refined. As Beverley Skeggs (2001), a UK-based sociologist and leading voice in feminist cultural theory, advocates feminist ethnography seeks to demolish rather than reinforce binaries such as the subjective-objective divide that would overly identify feminist research as subjective, emotional and irrational. Feminist and interpretive ethnography are therefore, aligned in that they focus on experiences, definitions, meanings and subjectivity while maintaining awareness of contextual factors that inform the actions of the participants. Epistemologically, they adhere to the perspective that 'all knowledge is situated, partial, contingent and interpretative' (Skeggs 2001, 435).

No research is value-free and consequently, it is the ways in which political and ethical dimensions are applied that make this research identifiably feminist. Accordingly, feminist ethnography makes explicit the ways in which power operates within the context of the research (Maher and Tetreault 1993). It seeks to take responsibility for the reproduction of power while understanding that it may not be possible to realise equality. Ethnography enables integration of research perspectives through the exploration of the intersections of multi-faceted identities. Thus, individual experiences, beliefs and influences are recognised to be constituted by a complex matrix of influences such as race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age. This approach involves acknowledging the relations of power in determining how interactions are framed within the research project. Prestigious researcher Norman Denzin (1997) discusses this as seeking 'texts that speak to the logic and cultures of these communities' (54). An aim of this research project is to centralise the voice of the participants. Towards this end however, Skeggs (2001) raises important concerns about how 'giving voice' may obscure the functions of power within the setting as if it were enough to counter the marginalising impact of research. The researcher may, for example, assume the classed, raced, gendered identities of participants to be self-evident. Feminist ethnography should therefore remain vigilant of the power relations within which the research is inscribed.

Feminist research is a complex and contested area in academia held together by an attention to difference and a commitment to the empowerment of women and other oppressed groups through which it is asked: who can know? And what can be known?

(Ahmed 2017, Hesse-Biber 2012, Osgood 2010). This research is designed to draw understanding of the phenomenon, dance technique pedagogy, from those who are involved, the participants, and by doing so it prioritises the learner's voice rather than that of the teacher or education institution. Ethically, feminist ethnography is concerned with the non-exploitation of the research participants and this is founded in the respectful treatment of participants that is made tangible through reciprocity, honesty, accountability, responsibility, equality and so on. This way of being in relationship informs the research process throughout and 'this is why reflexivity has always been a differentiating motif of feminist ethnography' (Skeggs 2001, p 434). However, a concern with the limits of ethnography to realise the aims of feminist research is in the development of the research product, the written account, that is largely determined by the purposes of the researcher despite participant collaboration. Consequently, the dissemination of research can be criticised for its distance or removal from the site and population of its participants. This research study, conversely, is to remain within the location within which it has been generated because an aim of this study is to contribute to the ongoing discussions and dialogues within the dance education field.

Feminist research is fundamentally concerned about whose interests are served by the outcomes and reconsiders traditional conceptions of knowledge. While I cannot deny the significance of this PhD for me personally, as emergent academic, and my decision to pursue this area of research for my own interests, it is my hope that the arising contribution to new knowledge will serve the interests of all of us who are part of the dance education community. A significant way in which this will be achieved is through an embodied and immersive approach while additionally integrating the perceptions, experiences and frameworks of those who have been largely hidden by conventional research, in this instance; the learners. As stated by Mary Evans (1997) feminist research approaches attack 'the very way in which knowledge is constructed' (56). They propose, alternatively, realities that are often complex and contradictory through ways of thinking about the world which do not impose absolutes upon relationships (57).

As a queer feminist researcher, I aim to draw attention to and critique the ways in which power is enacted through the pedagogical experience and the research paradigm itself. Feminist research perspectives recognize the importance of the lived experiences of

women and other marginalised groups 'to the goal of unearthing subjugated knowledge […] that challenge the encircling of knowledge claims by those who occupy privileged positions' (Hesse-Biber 2012, 3). In allegiance, queer researchers O'Malley et al (2018) state that 'queer experiences, subjectivities, histories, knowledges, and theories are overwhelmingly underrepresented and under engaged in qualitative research studies in education' (573). Therefore, feminist and queer research pays particular attention to issues of power, authority, reflexivity, ethics and difference while troubling the constructs of power at work in research itself (Eisner and Peshkin 1990, Skeggs 2001). As has already been addressed in the introduction, intersectionality recognises the ways in which multiple identities work in particular contexts to reinforce the marginalisation of some people while privileging others (Crenshaw 1991). Feminist and queer research asks new questions that disrupt the status quo of structural power by placing the lives of women, queer-identifying and other marginalised people at the centre of social enquiry (Osgood 2010, Croft 2017). In this study, hierarchical power is upended in that the participant student voices are privileged; the experience of learning presented in this project foregrounds their experiences as the locus of knowing. By listening to and enabling the student voice this research privileges their concerns and interests, and highlights the nuances of their experiences of learning. At the same time, I recognise that this representation of voice will be partial (Arnot and Reay 2007). Therefore, this thesis presents the research field as multifaceted and works to be transparent about the diversity and tensions inherent in the participant experiences and theoretical perspectives. In so doing, deliberate efforts are made to not offer an artificial coherence by smoothing out inconsistencies of the research findings.

According to ethnography scholars Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (1995) researchers 'should try to minimise any distortion of their finding by their political convictions and practical interests' (21). However, for the purposes of this research and in response to the research questions I intend to ground this endeavour in the very particular concerns of feminism and queer that involve social justice and empowerment, as articulated in the introduction. This political agenda first generated and subsequently sustained my interest in this research endeavour. The acknowledgement of such does not mean that I intend to manipulate the research to further those political objectives or that I

will allow myself to be unvigilant with regard to my own bias and assumptions. What it does mean, however, is that I understand and take responsibility for the fact that I am motivated by particular values and that this orientates the research choices I make.

Feminist research aligns with the aims of critical educational research that seeks to emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011, 31). This research approach aligns with queer in that it works towards resistances that disrupt and destabilise the normative. As stated by ethnographer Soyini Madison (2012), 'to be queer is to "spoil" discourses and practices based on exclusivity and oppressive normativity' (80). Queer claims difference as a necessity in the world and functions ontologically to 'shift the ground of being itself' (Case 1990, 2). bell hooks (1990) states that oppressed people offer resistance by 'identifying themselves as subjects by defining their reality, shaping new identity, naming their history, telling their story' (43). Through this research, I represent diverse participants voices in large part because these voices are often unheard in dance research, especially in relation to the practice of dance technique pedagogies at conservatoire level. At the same time, I have needed to understand where my position as teacher/researcher has perhaps inhibited, and therefore further marginalised, some participants experiences. Consequently, I acknowledge my own troubled situatedness and utilise this awareness in the ways in which I use methods of data gathering, as outlined in the proceeding chapter and thereafter in the discussion of findings (chapters six, seven and eight).

This research takes a subjectivist position in that it assumes, ontologically, that reality is constructed by individuals, the nature of knowing is subjective and meaning is assigned (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013, 59). Subjectivist research approaches view the social world as personal and humanly created and place emphasis on explanation and understanding of the unique and particular situation rather than universal claims (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011, 6). Thus, the research engages in contemplation of subjective human experiences, contingencies of truth claims and value-laden inquiry (Madison 2012, 13). Working from feminist positions, to foreground the subjective is to acknowledge that in research with qualitative data 'there is no one stable and overriding interpretation' (Buckland 1999, 197). This leads to appreciation of personal experience as subjective and

consequent intention to hear from those involved about their lived experiences with regard to the phenomenon being explored. Furthermore, the rejection of the grand narrative as an outcome of research is to afford insight that is more complex, sophisticated and in depth. My research makes use of the subjective experience of learning dance technique to build discordant understandings from the site of the dance technique studio with respect to the diverse and sometimes conflicting character of interwoven experiences among learners.

An ethnographic approach works to make sense of shared experiences as it is perceived by and made sense on the individual participants. Accordingly, Charlotte Aull Davies (1999) states that ethnographers 'must seek to develop forms of research that fully acknowledge and utilize subjective experience as an intrinsic part of research' (5). It is imperative, states dance researcher Theresa Buckland (1999), that empirical research is drawn from the meanings imbued within participants' stories. For dance ethnographer Diedre Sklar (1991) 'the ethnographer wants to know nothing less than how a given group of people find or, more accurately, make meaning' (6). Ethnographic research utilises participant narratives and storied accounts to reveal such meaning making within group experiences. It is concerned with 'what makes the people in the study tick - how they behave, how they define their world, what is important to them, why they say and do what they do, and what structural or contextual features influence their thoughts, behaviours and relationships' (leCompte and Schensul 1999, 84). The researcher's task then is to get under the skin, as it were, of the participants, to be able to gain insight into their experiences, and consequently understand their meaning, significance and import in their lives. It is for these reasons that I foreground the participants experience through the thesis and draw understanding from their accounts of our learning processes. The data gathering process and my immersive engagement with the arising issues, discussed in the proceeding chapter, are grounded in the premise that knowing is subjective and qualitative data can be explored in ways that resist reductive representation.

Interpretive ethnography, foregrounds the ways in which the researcher's 'subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others' (Denzin 1997, 27). As Buckland (2006), states, ethnographic research addresses 'consensual meanings and the sociocultural contextualization of dance' (5). Thus, ethnographic research is 'grounded in specific and

contextualized acts of knowing' (Stanley 1997, 15). What is known, understood and meaningful is contextually dependent. Perceptions of experience are dependent on multiple factors of personal identity such as race, sexuality, gender, class, ethnicity, education, personal histories etc. As a consequence, I do not attempt to articulate one fixed objective truth of learning in dance as it 'can never be captured' (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, 7). Instead this research results in 'messy text', so called by ethnographer George Marcus (1994), to describe research processes 'that are aware of their own narrative apparatuses, that are sensitive to how reality is socially constructed, and that understanding that writing is a way of "framing" reality […] the text becomes a place where multiple interpretive experiences occur' (Denzin 1997, 224-5). Marcus (2007) has described messy texts as 'self-conscious experiments in bringing out the experiential, interpretive, dialogical, and polyphonic at work in any ethnography' (1128). Therefore, messy texts reflexively map multiple interpretive experiences occurring in the social space, in this instance, the dance technique class. Feminist interpretive ethnography is enabled through messy texts by means of realising research processes that take account of multiple, partial and interrelated voices.

Features of a feminist interpretive ethnographic process

In this section will discuss the features of ethnographic research process as inductive, situated and reflective. Inductive research processes evolve through the duration of the project and consequently the foci may responsively shift. In terms of being situated, feminist perspectives foreground the influencing role of the researcher in the design, realisation and findings arising from the research project. Thus, the researcher is imbricated in the process at every level and this is particularly relevant for this project given my situated position as researcher/teacher. The discussion is furthered by consideration of ways in which the influence of the researcher upon the research may be ameliorated by reflexivity and transparency.

A feminist interpretive ethnographic approach to research is inductive; the process has an evolutionary character with unforeseeable destinations that follows the developing data/theory nexus. Ethnographers, according to Peter Woods (1996), do not know what

they will find and initial work is typically messy and chaotic (7). The research process is therefore, unlikely to be straightforward but rather characterised by seeking out the unknown. Such research processes can be considered as acts of careful creativity through which entanglements of thoughts, feelings, stories, and layers of meaning are woven together. The resulting tapestry reveals, through thick description and critical analysis, that which was always there but hidden, neglected or unappreciated. The use of tapestry as a metaphor may be somewhat misleading as it suggests a neatly formed pattern or picture and such resultant neatness is not a usual or intended outcome of feminist research that remains with the fullness of conflict and fluidity. However, this seemingly haphazard process is not without rigour, specificity and systematicity.

In the following recounted experience, I describe an embodied experience of finding ways to move forward. Well into my PhD study, I participated in a dance intensive led by, American dance pioneer, Lisa Nelson. In the account, I articulate moving through a progression pathway alert to the numerous potential ways onward. The writing is in another register, personal and reflective in character, and I use it here as a metaphor of the ways in which I have similarly experienced the inductive research process as an intuitively sensed onward-ing.

> I'm in a dance studio and I have my eyes closed. Lisa has guided us in an activity called mapping the bones. This entails focusing somatically on the bony-structure of the body and moving, first along the floor, and then building out of the ground, as a process of 'laying-out' of bones. Tracing through the body, following bone-by-bone, a movement pathway continually forms and reforms my bodily structure through space.
>
> Earlier we had been sliding through the surfaces of our skin and whereas that had felt fluid, evolving easily as if dancing molten motion, this mapping of bones task is clunky. I awkwardly negotiate bony possibilities as I dance slowly, eyes closed, sensing inwardly ways onward. If I follow this bone I might journey along the leg, or take another direction and open an alternative path through to the head. I shift my weight. At each knotty junction I could lay out another bone, round another contoured surface or trace back to where I had come from. Each journey forward presenting new options and each option leading to unknown destinations. This embodied journey through ambiguity, reveals itself only as it evolves, and by trusting each decision as it is proposed I discover my structure, surprised by the ways in which body has made the decisions before being fully aware of the choices.

> And it occurred to me, in the midst of bone mapping, that this was how I experienced the searching out of structure in my PhD process. A building up, making sense of, following intuitively, noticing where I was as I moved through, laying out the bones of an argument, a series of contoured ideas. And as I arrived towards standing tall, a resolved structure, I acknowledge that I was a supported whole, aware of the journey I'm moving through. A traced arriving.
>
> Jamieson, reflective account April 2017

The above account describes a danced experienced of seeking ways forward that speaks to the inductive nature of my research process. The ethnographic approach by the very nature of its open-ended inquiry has the capacity to follow the trail of the research as it unfolds and it is responsive to the 'continuous dialogue between theory and empirical investigation' (Buckland 1999, 8). In this way, feminist interpretive ethnography is aligned with the expressive and emergent practice of teaching, according to Woods (1996) because of 'its emphases on respecting the empirical world, penetrating layers of meaning, facilitating 'taking the role of the other', defining situations and grasping a sense of process' (7). There are various parallel processes being enacted through this research. They concern a pedagogical approach that is fluid and responsive and a methodological approach that is inductive. There is a synergy between the researched experience (student learning) and the experience of research (emergent process). This lies in part in the involvement in processes of not-yet-knowing, knowing-in-part and knowing-in relation-to. According to dance academic Ann Cooper Albright (2011) the researcher is implicated in an involvement with ambiguity, partiality, elusiveness and shifting paradigms (15). While antithetical to neatness and linearity such involvement does maintain an accessibility to the multi-layered richness of experiences. Ambiguity and multiplicity then are features of this inductive research process.

According to Kahn (2015) unstructured data within ethnographic research makes it possible to address uncertainty in the emerging data through sustained reflexivity. He states that learning to appreciate that uncertainties are inherent in knowledge has 'an emancipatory dimension' (451) enabling the researcher to recognize a range of possibilities in interpretation of data. However, resisting the interpretation of human experience as a single, final entity can be unnerving for the researcher as 'it exposes our actual selves to our potential selves' (Grau 1999, 170). My experience of the research process has involved

remaining with uncertainty and not-yet-knowingness. This has been disquieting and exhilarating in turn. I have navigated the research by responding to the issues as I have encountered them. I have been guided by and propelled onward by my multifarious and diverse involvements with students, research participants, colleagues and peers, supervisors, pedagogical theorists, and research academics, while simultaneously making sense of my ongoing teaching practice in the studio.

I turn now to think through the implications of one's situatedness while pursuing research. Feminist ethnography explicitly situates the researcher within the research by way of acknowledging their relation to, or involvement with, the field (Haraway 1988, Harding 1991). Traditionally the anthropological ethnographer developed detailed descriptions of the cultural practices of others as an 'outsider' principally utilising observation as a fieldwork tool. The resultant 'God trick' (Haraway 1988, 584) concealed the researchers influence and established a divide between researcher and researched. It highlights the problematic omniscient viewpoint of the traditionally conceived researcher as if from everywhere and nowhere. Thus, it critiques research that fails to account for the impact of the researcher's biases and assumptions and to disavow the influence of their presence. Without paying attention to these factors the research conceals the power structures upon which it is built. Contrastingly, Haraway defines strong objectivity in feminist research as a 'situated knowledge' wherein knowledge and truth are partial, situated, subjective, power imbued and relational. When knowledge is understood as plural and context dependent, it is important that research processes take account of how knowledge claims are made. As dance anthropologist Theresa Buckland (1999) metaphorically asserts '"The truth" is a kaleidoscope of possibilities' (205). In light of this, I situate myself here and consistently throughout the thesis so as to remain alert to my positioning and the impacts of my roles upon the research.

In my dual role as both researcher and teacher, I am immersed in the research field as co-participant. My presence contributes to the unfolding pedagogical process, as teacher, and these experiences develop my understanding of the learning process, as researcher. These roles are intimately entwined as I am not only immersed in the field but I am concurrently involved in defining what the field can be. I 'wear two hats' simultaneously by maintaining the practice of teaching while being observant of that practice as embodied researcher. I

shall discuss embodied fieldwork later. Through my complex and precarious situated-ness I have been aware through the research process of simultaneously present multiple voices. This was divergently present as an inner-dialogical tussle between observant teacher and immersed researcher in the studio/field. The former was concerned for the learning progress of the individuals within the group while the later critiqued the impact of the decisions I was making. While often mutual, these inner-dialogues would invariably result in a hyper-aware state and an over-thinking of the processes that would ordinarily have been intuitive. I troubled my own knowing and second-guessed my own expertise and this subsequently opened up chasms of un-knowing while in the evolving pedagogical act.

While my roles as teacher and researcher trouble the research, it is my intention to demonstrate the ways in which my situated-ness enhances rather than obfuscates insight (Alexander 2003). Beyond my multiple research roles my identity further informs how I approach, navigate and realise this project. As Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state 'research is an interactive process shaped by [the researcher's] own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting' (8). The subjective nature of my own biases and prejudices need to be navigated through the process of the research so as to offer authentic insights. The researcher's perspective is a lens through which the research is filtered. Interpretation is therefore dependent upon the researcher to, not set aside their biases but rather, recognise and acknowledge how who they are impacts the research from initial conception, through the interpretation of data and choices regarding how the project is written. As stated by ethnographer Soyini Madison (2012) positionality 'forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we denounce the power structures that surround our subjects' (8). It is therefore incumbent upon the researcher to contextualize their own positionality and the ways in which intuition, senses and emotions are 'powerfully woven into and inseparable from the process' of research (Madison 2012, 9). Important ways in which I am enabled to do this is through reflexivity and transparency (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013).

Situating the researcher; acknowledging that one's own identity has influence on the research process necessitates the use of reflexivity to recognise what that influence has been (Denzin 1997, Marcus 1994, Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013). In consideration of researching self and others, Charlotte Aull Davies (1999) defines reflexivity as 'a turning

back on oneself, a process of self-reference' (4). This involves critical reflexivity in the various processes of conducting, analysing and disseminating ethnographic research. Reflexivity requires an examining of research bias and assumptions and recognition of the ways in which the research has been determined by them. It is both a moral and methodological issue (Etherington 2004, 32) because it explicitly makes the reader aware of the researcher and their influence on the research process. I will develop this in the thesis through the deliberate use of autobiographical comment and discussion of researcher decisions and teaching dilemmas. A feminist interpretive ethnographic approach, then, allows me to undertake this research project in acknowledgement of its particular and complex features while attending to them in ways that are reflexively transparent. The intention of this transparency is, in part, to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. Ethnographic research is often referred to as seeing in new ways that which has become familiar (Cutforth 1995). In other words, the researcher should question what they have come to assume or taken for granted in the field. This is to acknowledge the propensity of the researcher to negate or misconceive that which has become implicit. As such reflexivity counters the criticism of researcher subjectivity as a distortion of the aims of research. It offers reassurance of a rigorously thoughtful and ruthless researcher self-inquiry (Ellis 2007).

A further significant dimension of reflexivity in ethnographic research is in terms of the representation of participants. It is important to attend to the ways in which the subjectivity of the researcher informs and is informed by their engagement and representation of others (Madison 2012, 10). I will discuss these issues later as part of research ethics. Here, though, I reassert that to privilege the voices of the students is motivated by my aim to reconfigure power structures within pedagogical research and this is enhanced by the contextualisation of researcher/teacher reflexivity and narrative transparency. Autobiographical aspects of my experience, from my teacher journal, will be integrated in discussion of the data in order to further reveal the learning culture. Autoethnographic researcher and therapist Kim Etherington (2004) has demonstrated how the use of reflexivity can reveal the layers of textual meaning that occur during the research interview. Through her writing of research, she includes her own thought processes in the act of

hearing the participant as integral to the data. Thus, she is able to lay bare the ways in which connections are made, questions arise, and analysis develops. She states that:

> Reflexive research encourages us to display in our writing/conversations the interactions between ourselves and our participants […] so that our work can be understood, not only in terms of *what* we have discovered, but *how* we have discovered it. (Etherington 2004, 601)

As researcher, Etherington lays bare in her writing congruent dialogue and explication of her thought processes within research interviews. This enables the reader to perceive the multiplicity of the process and the mutuality of her relationships with the participants. Consequently, her research reveals more of the lived experience of both therapist and client by the foregrounding of inner dialogues. I am attracted to this raw exposure in research as it reveals the structures of the researchers thinking/feeling/being. I aspire to infuse my research with some elements of this unguarded auto-ethnographic approach. However, due to the fact that there is a power imbalance between myself as teacher and the participants who are students, I felt that it was imperative I approached the interview process in another way. In the interviews with the research participants, I purposefully withheld my own thoughts so as to not impose my perspectives. Through this I aimed to enable them to articulate as fully as possible their own authentic responses to the research questions and issues arising. For example, I used strategies that were intended to lead the participant to go further with what they were discussing by reflecting back what I had heard, asking them to tell me more about an aspect they had mentioned or leaving the silences in case more information might be volunteered. In this way I have amplified the voice of the participants, through interviews that facilitated frank and open reflection, while bringing my own voice to the research analysis, in concert with theirs.

My research includes autobiographical accounts in order to provide a fuller insight into that which is researched and the process through which the findings have occurred. Buckland (1999) states that ‘when exercised with rigour, reflexivity permits the revelation of power relationships, values and ethics in field relations’ (7). However, criticism has been made of such approaches to research for being overly self-indulgent, narcissistic and irrelevant naval gazing. Davies (1999) discusses the need for a balanced approach to ethnographic research that 'embraces its intrinsic multi-layered reflexivity without turning inward to complete

self-absorption' (25). Data that are drawn from the personal experiences of the researcher can be important ‘not as “introspectionists,” but in judicious, and sometimes courageous, use of reflexivity’ (Csordas 1994, 13). It may require that the researcher expose aspects of themselves and the research process that makes them vulnerable. In the process of engaging with this research project aspects of my personal story have become intertwined with those of the participants. At the outset, I had been reluctant to include myself in the research in concern that doing so might crowd out or somehow distract from hearing the voices of the participants. I have come to appreciate that I should not, or rather cannot, erase myself from the research as any attempt to do so would be a distortion of how things have evolved and my part in them.

The reflexive and subjective nature of this inquiry has brought forward the need to be transparent about the diverse impacts upon the research of my experiences. There are layers of complexity to be negotiated in particular with respect to the alignment of being both teacher and researcher as well as the alignment of the experience of learning of both the participant students and myself as a PhD student. These alignments and parallels of processes have a bearing on the way the research is conceived. Being a teacher for me, involves being responsive to the needs of the students. Over the many years that I have been teaching I have allowed myself to increasingly rely on my sense of the group dynamic to guide the pedagogical moment. This ‘tuning-in’ as a teacher is a kind of embodied observation and this is aligned with the state of being as the insider researcher (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1993). Through the process of teaching groups of students whom I had invited to be research participants, I became aware of the synergy between ‘reading’ the students in order to enable the development of their learning and the process of observation of the learning encounter for the purposes of research. In essence they are the same form of attending to the behaviours, responses, utterances, and so on, that feed my understanding as a teacher. This careful and deliberate noticing of the teacherly process enables my researcher observation.

A further alignment, or entwinement, of this research process is between the learning processes of the participant students and myself as PhD student. This is particularly significant given that an emergent theme from the data discussed in chapter six, is learning as exploration; a process of discovery. I too have been involved in an explorative learning

journey as a PhD student and emergent academic. As such, I have been aware of the diverse and impactful feelings associated with learning challenges such as disorientation, anxiety and excitement. While I recognise that I cannot assume that my experiences map onto those of the students I teach I have, nonetheless, noticed how reflecting on the pedagogical processes and student data have connected in ways that have been particularly meaningful for me and potentially for them. For example, one participant, William, commented on his feelings of frustration when he doesn't get the material, and another participant, Louise, talked about needing to believe in herself. These articulations of the felt-experience of learning resonate with me as they articulate some of my own concurrent feelings. Such resonances enable research empathy and help me to recognise the implications of co-participation as researcher/teacher and fellow learner. As researcher Bryant Alexander (2006) states with regard to critical reflexivity, 'we are always and already complicit' (xviii) in the production and effects of our scholarship with the communities within which we circulate. Being explicit about my imbrication through, and complicity with, the research process is integral to the reliability and authenticity of my discussion and contribution to the field of dance academia in this thesis. Having discussed feminist interpretive ethnography in terms of its values, features, implications and imperatives, I turn now to consider the site of this research project; the dance technique class.

The dance technique studio as a research site

The dance technique class is considered as a situated cultural site in this research. I unpack what that means here, and discuss embodied fieldwork and relational ethics that arise from this location. As stated by eminent research writer John Creswell (2013b), the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviour, beliefs and language of a culture-sharing group (90). The social norms of behaviour of the dance technique class are established by the individuals within the group in ways that are both unique and conforming. According to Alexander (2003) 'the classroom as a practiced place offers rich opportunity for interpretive ethnographic reflections and analysis by teachers… [because] interpretive ethnography offers a journey into the personal experiences and reflections of teachers within that space' (423). This research is located in the setting of the dance technique studio and concerns the processes of learning that are undertaken there

by groups of students with their teacher. The classroom is a cultural site that is socially negotiated and constructed; in which diverse lived experiences and disparate ways of being and knowing come together to negotiate the sometimes collectivizing, cultural practices of education. The teacher thus becomes 'the ethnographer of her own experience and that of the classroom environment' (Alexander 2003, 423). Through this study of dance technique pedagogy, I am concerned with exploring what it is that we are doing while learning together. I am focusing on our cultural practices of behaviour with inherent and evolving 'norms' of behaviour realised through conduct, expectation, aspirations, assumptions, approach to learning and inter-relationality. These ways of being together are co-constructed by each of us and are influenced by individual and collective behaviours. The cultural practices of the dance technique class as a field of study, is informed by many features including the individual students previous and preferred ways of learning, the teacher's pedagogical approach and wider institutional and dance sector structures, as discussed in chapters one, two and three.

In the context of this research at Trinity Laban the collective student identity of each dance technique group is established by the bringing together of its members: the students and the teacher. Membership/belonging to the group is allocated by the institution and each member is committed to involvement in part due to the successful completion of the student's programme being dependent on their attendance. An attendance policy and assessment process are usually in place for each technique group. There is a distinct purpose for the group to be together, to learn contemporary dance technique, and for a specified time frame with respect to duration, length of sessions, and frequency of sessions. Perhaps most significantly, the aspirations of the student's future dance career rests in no small part on their own expectations of technique capability development and consequently strong commitment tends to be displayed to the common project. Similarly, the teacher's motivations for commitment to the group can be understood as numerous for example: vocation, wage, reputation, professionalism, and lifestyle choice. No two groups of dance cohorts are the same, although there are considerable ways in which dance technique classes are similar both in structure of a single class but also across a component of learning; typically 90-minute classes, three times a week, for 15 weeks. While development of a learning dynamic might be attributed in no small part to the pedagogical

approach and personality of the teacher, for example the teacher encourages or discourages dialogue, the responses and approaches of the students has important impacts on the learning environment. As will be discussed later, interaction among students and their readiness to engage reciprocally in learning influences the learning affordances and cultural practices of the group.

Through the process of learning together and shared experiences the population of a dance technique class develops a cultural history. This unfolds through the lived experience of learning together as features of the process become established as a shared heritage. For example, movement vocabularies may be developed with particular references, events of significance will be remembered and specific statements or questions that arise through the process of learning together will form the shared journey. This might mean that someone who enters the group after it has become established would feel out-of-the-loop. It is important to remember, though, that while these features of the history of the group are shared the ways in which individuals experience them may be diverse. How group dynamics form and fluctuate is an important strand of discussion through this research thesis. By considering the dance technique class as a situated cultural site, the focus of this research shifts from being about *what* is done to *how* things are experienced. Thus, the inquiry orients toward the unfolding learning process and the ways in which this is characterised by inter-relatedness of learner, teacher and peers.

Fieldwork in the dance site is an embodied entity functioning through various immersive layers of researcher observation and participation. As an imperative feature of ethnography, fieldwork serves to develop understanding of the cultural group from within the research site. This is an area of interest for a number of dance ethnographers (Browning 1995, Buckland 2001, 2006, Dankworth 2007, Ness 1992, 2004, Sklar 1991, Thomas 2003). In this research project, the conception of fieldwork is defined through participation in embodied practices such that the gathering of data from the site of the dance studio involves bodily sensing/moving as integral to observation (Ness 2004). This bodily sensing/moving concerns teacher/researcher attentiveness to that which is happening among and through the moving bodies of the students and their own embodied experience of the learning situation. This signifies an epistemological shift in fieldwork toward an embodied practice of observation that yields 'very different forms of cultural insight' (Ness

2004, 138). Thus, my own body-sensed experience of being in-between, alongside and throughout these processes enable an understanding of the meanings grounded in my lived experience and the moving body. In the 'juggling' of roles as teacher, researcher and co-participant I am able to utilise my embodied experience as a means of observation both in the pedagogical act and in the more 'academically recognised' research processes of fieldwork, data gathering and analysis. Embodied fieldwork concerns dialogue, intersubjectivity, building bridges of somatic understanding between self and other. Therefore, trying to make sense of the other requires insight, empathy, imagination, perceptivity and humility by both anthropologist and 'natives' (Grau 1999, 167).

The dance researcher draws understanding from embodied experience. As an epistemological assumption, embodiment underpins the academic endeavours of many dance educator researchers (Anttila, 2004, 2007, Bannon, 2010, Fraleigh 1987, Green, 2001, Råman, 2009, Stinson, 1998, 2004). In the same way, the fieldwork of this research project is concerned with bodily connections made and relationships lived, while in the act of dancing together. In feminist research, ways of knowing and what it means to know something are of the body wherein the body is at once tool, agent, and object, as discussed in chapter two. In approaching the study of the cultural experience of the dance technique class then, I use my own embodiment to gain understanding of the participant experience as it is danced. The embodied fieldwork of this research utilises observation 'grounded in the body's experience' (Buckland 2006, 8). This has been enabled for me in this project by remaining alert to my sensing/feeling/being self and this aligns with somatic approaches to movement, as described in the preceding chapter.

Embodied fieldwork has numerous implications for the methodology of my research by expanding what it means to observe in the field. As the teacher/researcher, located within the dance technique studio, I am able to perceive the learning process through movement. Furthermore, while dancing together, sharing movement problems, considering movement concepts and exploring movement possibilities, I am co-participant and embodied researcher. I am tuned-in to the unfolding and shared experience of being in the studio together in the fullness of its vibrancy. I am bodily engaged with sensing how the students are involved with the pedagogical act. Buckland (2006) discusses the researcher's participation in and reflection upon dancing by stating that 'the researcher's own

movement experiences become part of the means of comparative analyses' (13). Embodied fieldwork has been instrumental in gathering and analysing the data because I have been able to recall and reflect on experiences discussed by the participants in ways that had physical traces in my own body. For example, as the participants illustrated their stories with me through gestural movements my embodied-self had a sense of their felt meaning and dynamic qualities. Most importantly though, in the studio I was able to recognise the decision-making process the students were involved in as responses to the choices that lay before them. Physically doing and being alongside the dancing participants in the studio afforded ways to experience participant learning in terms of their struggles, triumphs, determination, insecurity, encouragement, fortitude and failure. I do not assume to know in any complete way what might be going on for any individual at any particular time but rather that being immersed in the field enabled somatic empathy (Bannon 2010, Green 1999, Rimmer-Piekarczyk 2018). At the same time, I also acknowledge that this felt sense (Bainbridge Cohen 2012, Gendlin 2003) is limited by my restricted involvement as a mover through my multidimensional role as teacher.

Finally, in my consideration of the dance studio as site, I consider the ethical implications of this research design. In order to do so I draw from dance academic Fiona Bannon's relational ethics (Bannon 2012) that require the researcher to go beyond institutional compliance in conducting research ethically among those with whom we have an established relationship. The risk of harm may be greater between student and teacher due to the level of trust established in the relationship. The research could undermine the pedagogical relationship and bring the learning process into question. It is not possible for the researcher to fully predict or eliminate the ethical implications of research for the participant students. It is necessary, though, to consider rigorously the potential harmful impacts of the research and continually act to minimise them. It is also incumbent upon me to state that this research complies with the regulations and has been approved by the ethics boards, of Middlesex university where I am a PhD candidate and Trinity Laban where the research has been conducted. These processes have involved demonstrating my understanding and commitment to the British Education Research Association (BERA) regulations as well as complying to ongoing oversight by a senior member of faculty at Trinity Laban.

The most significant ethical questions to be addressed in relation to the design of this research concern the safe guarding and wellbeing of all students involved as research participants or non-participants. In contexts of imbalances of power and status such as this study where the researcher is also the participants' teacher, the risk of harm is exacerbated. The imbalance of power further 'troubles' this research due to the potential for coercion of student participation. For example, the student may feel obliged to participate in research when asked to do so by their teacher. The teacher has greater power afforded by their role and this is reinforced by the educational institution and society at large. Similarly, the role of teacher is usually assumed to have ultimate responsibility for making learning possible and assessing student outcomes. The need to mitigate potential negative impacts has been a concern for me throughout this research process. As I will discuss in the proceeding chapter that outlines the design of methods, I had intended for my research to have as little impact on the students' experience of learning as possible. However, as ethnographic researcher Tony Adams (2008) states, 'we do not know how others will respond to and/or interpret our work' (179). Therefore, the potential impacts of research are never definitively known.

The fear of potential consequences of being involved or not being involved as a research participant is an important ethical consideration of any research with human participants (Maxwell 2013). For example, the participant may be reluctant to speak honestly about their experience or may only discuss positive aspects of their experience in fear of potential negative consequences. This censorship can be made particularly problematic in situations where students have concerns that being honest about their experience may upset their teacher, potentially damage their relationship with the teacher, and impact negatively on their grades or future prospects. For similar reasons, students may not feel able to refuse participation even when they are reassured that there will be no consequences for doing so. To mitigate the potential harm to students by participating in research, informed consent can be approached as a process rather than something that can be given in any one moment. The concept of informed consent is problematic in that it is often required from research participants at the beginning of a process that has no predeterminable outcome. Despite a 'full' explanation of the research intentions a participant cannot be fully appraised of what their involvement in the research will entail and at what personal cost.

It is for this reason that participation can be thought about ethically as being on an ongoing basis and negotiable. At the same time, it is incumbent upon the researcher to enable the participant to have a sufficient understanding of the potential, and as yet unforeseen, consequences of their participation (Etherington 2004). The researcher may be in a much better situation, due to experience and involvement in the process, to be able to perceive the potential impacts of the research on the participant and therefore can make these issues explicit.

In this research process it was inevitable that by introducing the research at the outset of the learning processes the students' sense of what we were doing together and my commitment to their learning was affected to some extent. Some of the participants discussed in the data gathering process that they had reservations about what my research might mean for them. They shared their distrust of my apparent 'niceness' as potentially artificial and for the sake of the research. While conversely some students commented on the positive ways in which it contributed to the learning context because, as they perceived it, I was more committed to their learning experience due to the research. For some, it encouraged them reflect on the process of learning for themselves. Therefore, it can be understood that introducing research as a factor in the pedagogical process can have numerous impacts for learners. In consideration of the unknowability of the impacts of the research for the students in the groups who were involved in the research I have tried to emphasise at each stage the possibility for them to keep in contact with me and to share the development of the process. This has been facilitated in large part by the fact that I continue to be a member of faculty at their institution and therefore it is relatively easy for them to contact me both formally and informally. I have made examples of my previous research writing available to them, responded to emails from those who have taken up the opportunity to discuss the process with me via email and offered 'closed session' meetings for those involved to outline how I was dealing with the data. I have the impression that for some of the participants there is a positive sense of investment in my research process and that they are interested in my progress and wished to support me personally while for others it appears to be of little significance. The research has functioned as a vehicle for ongoing dialogue for some participants when we happen to meet around the building. For example, they might ask me how the research is going. Consequently, I assume an ongoing

responsibility for those students for whom my research was part of their learning process, both participant or non-participant, as part of an ethical relating that flows out of the dance studio site.

There are further ethical considerations that are pertinent to this project, with respect to representation of participants formalised through the thematic analysis and writing process. This was discussed above as part of reflexivity and the representation of the voice of others while here I consider the ethics of research dissemination that involves the experiences of others. Endeavouring toward authentic representation (Skeggs 2001) this research aims to utilise the participants' frames of reference in order to build a rich description of their experiences of learning. Thus, the participants are quoted through the data discussion chapters and their terminology is frequently adopted in order to retain the resonance of particular meanings. It must be remembered though, that despite the inclusion of participant voices and diverse perspectives it is the researcher who is ultimately responsible for the production of the text (in this case a PhD thesis). In light of this, the researcher might assume an ethnographic attitude that involves being ethically responsive to and responsible for the research participants (Etherington 2004). Thus, in the writing of a research process, reflexive researchers can be transparent about their encounter with the dilemmas and difficulties of the research process and how they were un/resolved. It is important, therefore, that the challenges of research are not artificially resolved to present the process as neater than it actually was. The difficulties, limitations and stuck-ness of a research process can be clearly articulated so that the reader might understand how and why decisions are made in the rich complexity of a research project as it unfolds. This is an ethical issue as it speaks to the integrity of the research. Therefore, through this thesis I remain transparent about the dilemmas and conflicts of the research process even when this may present my teaching in an unfavourable light. I do so that I might reveal the dance technique site as it is rather than how I might like it to be or how I believe it should be. In the ongoing process of literature review, I have been attracted to academic writing that deals frankly with the tussles and unknowing-ness involved in research (for example, Susan Stinson 1998, 2004 and Eeva Anttila 2004, 2007, 2008). I am drawn to the grounded-ness of research that embraces the humanity of dealing with the complex issues of pedagogy. I aim to emulate this approach through discussion of the research findings.

Through this chapter, I have discussed the research design with respect to its methodological approach and orienting perspectives. Feminist interpretive ethnography enables the research to recognise the value of subjective perspectives, acknowledge the implications of the situated teacher/researcher and trouble the assumptions of power inequities implicit in this project. This approach necessitates an inductive and situated process that disrupts what it means to know and who can know. These processes are realised through the various facets of the research wherein knowing is understood to be embodied, immersive, reflexive, partial, complex, unresolved and relational. In the following chapter I outline the data gathering processes. This is articulated as a narrative of methods that charts the development of the research. It brings forward the pragmatic considerations of conducting this research and as such demonstrates how a feminist interpretive ethnographic approach can evolve.

CHAPTER 5

The methods process

Another starting place

Prior to commencing my PhD study proper, I undertook two preliminary discussion groups with students at Trinity Laban in order to start hearing from the learners. This was to serve as a start; somewhere to practise conducting research without it really counting. Little did I realise just how much, for me, this was going to count.

Ethical permission was sought, consent forms were signed and even a flipchart paper was prepared to brief the participants about expectations of conduct. I had prepared a series of questions designed to encourage the learners to articulate their thoughts about learning contemporary dance technique. I was particularly interested in their approaches to learning. For context, and as a gentle way in to the format, I started my very first methods gathering process by asking the participants to tell me a little bit about their experiences of dance before they came to Trinity Laban.

I was prepared for this discussion in many ways, but certainly not for what I heard and how it affected me. Jacob was at the beginning of the circle of eight participants sitting around the table. My seemingly innocuous question went to him first. What was his experience of dance before coming to Trinity Laban?

Dance had saved his life, he told me. I shiver. He went on to explain how he had suffered from a rare and life-threatening trauma during his late teens and that dance had been the means by which he had been able to stay alive, to heal.

As he spoke, he was quite matter of fact. This was part of his story. He did not appear to be emotional or upset despite the enormity of his experience. It appeared that the other participants had heard this before as none of them reacted. As far as I could tell no one in that space had a strong emotional response to what had just been stated. Except me. And I was performing the role of researcher. I believed I was supposed to not react to disclosures in case it communicated how I felt. I should remain responsive but neutral in case my feelings tainted the data. And before this moment that had seemed very possible, even appropriate, except now, in the face of this heavy sharing, I was stumped.

This was a moment of departure for me, I became aware of many things pertaining to conducting research. Gathering data among participants, real people from diverse backgrounds with stories that might otherwise have been invisible, has impacts. It is precious. I realised that for some, dance is a matter of life and death. It matters. And that by asking participants to share their stories with me I have a duty of care to them and myself that goes far beyond interesting anecdotes and untainted data.

> It is a peeling away from pretence. It is exposure to potential hurt and potential healing. It concerns the actual, the lived, the unvarnished textures of life. Gathering data involves encountering the personhood of the student and so, at this staring place, I appreciated that I too needed to be alive to the vibrancy of this. The researcher me, he needed to not pretend to be somehow detached, but rather in the moment with the participant(s), not to impose my stuff upon theirs, but to meet them person to person. To be responsive in ways that acknowledge the significance of their stories; their effects on me.
>
> Jamieson, reflective account February 2015

The above reflective account describes a fragment of my experience in conducting data gathering processes at the outset of my PhD story. It serves to illustrate the human dimension of research methods and I intend for it to colour the ways in which this chapter is read. In what follows, I outline the rigour with which I have pursued this research project in respect of gathering data. However, this is not to give the impression that the methods somehow validate the process, although they are an important component in doing so. Rather, as will be demonstrated, this research project has credibility due to its listening from the inside, hearing through layers of meaning, the experiences of the participants. Consequently, I do not intend to prove my research findings as I am not attempting to state incontestable truths. Rather through this chapter, I chart the journey through which I have encountered the voices of the participants and make myself accountable for the decisions I have made in attempting to hear through them what is revealed of learning dance technique.

The qualitative data gathering process of this research project is discussed as an unfolding process in the following ways: how I gathered the data, what data was generated and how I have analysed the data. In this, I outline the various phases and development of research methods as an evolving narrative. Thus, I expand on the context, issues arising and consequential impacts of each phase so that the emergent nature of the research might be made explicit to the reader. This research study was conducted at Trinity Laban with three student groups that were each engaged in contemporary dance programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate study wherein I was the teacher. These programmes of study were at levels 4-7 as set out in the UK quality code for higher education (Quality Assurance Agency 2019). The data gathering process concerned gaining insight into

participant experiences of learning contemporary dance technique with me, in the studio, at this UK conservatoire.

In approaching PhD study, I was initially interested in how students might be enabled to develop a deep approach to learning in contemporary dance technique. During my preliminary research, I became aware of critical pedagogy and the work of Paulo Freire. This emancipatory approach to pedagogy interested me because of its focus on liberation from oppression and marginalisation. I orientated my research to consider the ways in which this pedagogical approach might be applicable/relevant/aligned with my teaching practice. I began to explore this in a series of pilot studies with students at Trinity Laban. Within the ethical parameters stipulated by the conservatoire, I gathered initial student data about the process of learning in contemporary dance technique. The above reflective account was part of this initial process. From this preliminary process, I began to recognise that my interest in the interpersonal experiences of students in dance technique classes might be credibly researched within my own pedagogical context. Upon entering the PhD programme at Middlesex University, I was able to refine my research interest further. The process of gathering data, as described below, allowed me to deepen this inquiry by following the concerns of the research participants.

The three phases of gathering data

The research data has been gathered in three distinct phases. These stages each represent different student groups I was teaching during a two-year period (September 2015-February 2017). These groups are:

- ‘4D’ first year undergraduates (level 4)
- ‘6/7A’ graduate/post-graduate diploma students (level 6)
- ‘5A’ second year undergraduate students (level 5)

These three student groups span a range of undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate contemporary dance programmes. Each teaching period lasted 15 weeks (half an academic year) and all classes lasted 90 minutes. The data population are relatively representative of the diversity of people with whom I teach at Trinity Laban. All of the students from each of

these groups were invited to participate in this research project on a voluntary basis. The methods used, though, varied from group to group. Table 1. (below) shows some of the specific features of each group and the method(s) used.

Group	**4D**	**6/7A**	**5A**
Programme and year	First year undergrad	Graduate Diploma (full/part-time)	Second year undergrad
Streaming set	highest of four groups	Lowest of three groups	One of two lower-half groups
HE level	4	6	5
Assessment	No	Yes	No
Classes per week	3	2	3
Total no. of students	28	7	26
Method #1	Forum groups x3	Individual interviews	Student-led focus group 'feedback sessions' x2
No. of participants	16	5	10 (2 by email)
Date	Feb 2016	May/June 2016	Oct 2016
Method #2			Outside observers x3
Date			Jan 2017
Method #3			Individual interview
No. of participants			18
Date			Feb 2017

Figure 1. table of participant group specifics and data gathering methods

Each of these three groups are distinct in terms of the range of the students' previous dance experiences and consequently my pedagogical approach to the particular requirements of each group was responsive and evolutionary. What remains consistent, in large part, across the three groups is my teaching philosophy and the stylistic concepts that frame the teaching content. Albeit teaching evolves and is not a static or fixed entity. During this time of data gathering I was involved in reading and thinking about teaching and learning.

Consequently, this has changed who I am and how I approach teaching. What this data process offers, then, is not a comparative study of three different groups responses to being taught by one teacher. Instead a range of voices from unique and diverse perspectives brought together so that they might speak in concert. Each of the three phases will be discussed below in terms of the group context, the methods used to gather data, and any particular arising issues.

4D

I taught this group of 28 first-year undergraduate students during September 2015-February 2016. I was their first release-based contemporary dance teacher at Trinity Laban. This is significant because for some of them, although they had considerable previous dance technique experience, they had little or no experience of release-based contemporary style. Consequently, these students were being introduced to this movement practice for the first time while for others it was very familiar. The students had been through a levelling process upon entering Trinity Laban, of which I am not a part, and placed in this "top" streaming set. As I perceived it, for the students for whom this style and its approach was familiar there were a spectrum of responses from enthusiasm and excitement to complacency and assumption. While for those students for whom the style was different to what they were used to there was a slightly different range of responses from engagement and openness to reluctance and mistrust.

The diverse student responses, as I perceived them, are understandable and in many ways typical. It is my experience, as teacher, that irrespective of the levelling process all groups engage in learning in diverse ways. Due to the considerable previous technique experiences many of the students had developed particular patterns of learning and expectations of what the technique class is supposed to be. My initial experience of the group was that they were, generally speaking, highly motivated, disciplined, and ambitious, but similarly reliant on teacher-led instruction and embedded habits of passive/submissive learning. Some of the students particularly needed to be encouraged to explore movement for themselves and enabled to recognise the value of doing so. Being active as a learner by contributing to dialogue, expanding questions, offering feedback, being curious about

movement, responding as an individual, was initially limited and needed to be opened up to many of them as a way of learning in the dance technique class at a conservatoire.

In this first phase of data gathering, I conducted three forum groups to which all of the students of group 4D were invited to participate. The research project was articulated to them in broad terms and the forum group process was explained in a participant information sheet (Appendix 1). Sixteen students participated and each gave their consent to utilise the data based on the parameters set out in the informed consent form (Appendix 2). The intention of the forum groups was to open up the considerations of the research field for me with respect to what was relevant to the participants about learning in contemporary dance technique. I wanted to hear from them about what they thought was important about our learning together. In order to make this possible the participants were shown two video clips from class and asked to discuss what they could see was going on. Each student was given time to speak in turn about their thoughts so that each voice could be heard.

The video clips showed two different sections from one of our recent dance sessions. Each lasted about five minutes and evidenced different modes of learning in the studio. The first clip showed an activity where the students were taking it in turns to dance a piece of set material that travelled across the studio space. Several groups can be seen (from the back) to dance the sequence while the teacher and fellow students observe. When the dancers arrive at the end of the studio, they stop dancing and observe the dancers who are following them. Some of the students can be seen to talk to their peers at the side of the studio. I chose this clip because it represented a 'typical' way of learning-through-doing in the technique studio. The second clip showed a different teacher-initiated activity based on peer feedback that followed on from the activity shown in the first clip. The students are seen sitting at one end of the studio talking animatedly in small groups. The teacher approaches the group but stands to one side while the dialogues, that involve some demonstration of movement, continue. I chose this clip because it evidenced dialogical learning in a structured feedback task.

The participants were encouraged to speak freely about what they noticed in the clips and again each participant spoke in turn initially. The format was rather formal and led to considerable agreement and reinforcement of each other's ideas; one after the other. Only

rarely did a participant contradict their peer. The forum groups were videoed and this contributed to the formality of the experience. Some spontaneous dialogue developed eventually however, because there was no particular direction from the researcher other than to ask clarifying questions the issues discussed were meandering. My intention in choosing these two clips was to open up commentary and discussion of the various ways in which the students had experienced learning in the technique class. Both clips represented positive learning scenarios and I had expected that the participants might share their experience of learning in terms of the different ways through which learning can be enabled. However, there was some evident apprehension from the participants about how to respond especially as there was confusion about whether the second clip (where they were sitting and talking) represented learning at all.

A significant feature of this data gathering process was that there was no assessment of learning for this group. The forum groups occurred at the end of the learning process and so the student-teacher relationships were relatively well formed and although the participants were not used to being in a forum group setting with me (sat in a meeting room around a table taking turns to talk) there appeared to be a relatively open and honest discussion of thoughts if somewhat stilted to begin with. This method enabled the grounds upon which my research project would be pursued and the participant reflections raised several issues. For example, what constitutes learning and the role of dialogue in the dance technique class.

For me, the conflict between my two roles as researcher and teacher was part of an ongoing and uncomfortable internal dialogue during this process of gathering data. An example of this occurred during one of the forum groups when the participants began to talk about appearing to be lazy because they were sitting down during the peer feedback activity. This surprised me and I felt conflicted about whether I should, as their teacher, disabuse the students of this mis/conception, as I saw it. One part of me wanted to spontaneously state how valuable I thought the dialogue was for their learning and that sitting down in dialogue at such times is not lazy but was rather conducive for shared learning. The researcher part of me managed to hold back from making such statements and in doing so I became aware of ‘performing’ the researcher by acting how I believed the researcher should act. I was guided by my desire for the student voice to come forward rather than my own. I

understood that it was important to not direct their contribution with any comments that might distract the students' flow.

My internal tussle with this location of my researcher-self was on ethical grounds and concerned trying to ensure the students were not left feeling confused by the forum group discussion. I also recognised that my instinct is to correct something that I believe needs to be clarified. In this moment, I was confronted with the unease of my own ambiguity of purpose as teacher/researcher. Ethnographic academics Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (1995) discuss such incongruence as 'a matter of self-conscious impression management' (91). Perhaps my discomfort was in my desire to resolve my own confusion rather than that of the students. This illustrates a distinction of my methodological approach from autoethnography as discussed in the preceding chapter. By withholding my authentic response to particular dimensions of the learning experience, as co-participant, I hoped to enable further elucidation of the participants perspectives.

There were some concerns for me about the efficacy of the forum group method and the potential limitations of the participant contributions. While appropriate in the first phase of data gathering, for the purposes of opening up the potential areas for consideration, this method appeared to limit the depth of participant reflection on an individual basis. The participants largely commented by agreeing with each other. A set response was established by the first participant that was difficult to challenge. A further concern was that it was evident to me that those students who volunteered to participate in the study were those who were most enthusiastic about our process of learning. To some extent this is an inevitable consequence of research participation being made on a voluntary basis. However, this was problematic for me because I was eager to hear from students who represented a range of responses to the learning experiences and not only those who felt confident that they had something positive to contribute. I was aware that the research had the potential to become self-congratulatory and further marginalising of those students who found learning in contemporary dance technique (with me) challenging. This led me to consider methods of enabling wider representation in the research process from a more diverse participant group.

The forum group video data were not transcribed, rather the researcher reflected on the various issues brought forward by the participants and the process itself. A written

reflection was made by the researcher detailing these issues which served as a discussion point for supervision and development of the research project. As a consequence, the research design developed considerably in scope and started to focus on experiences of active learning and learning with others in the dance technique class.

6/7A

This group of students and the issues pertaining to their learning are substantially different to those of 4D. The graduate programmes that these students are involved in means that they are studying at Trinity Laban for one year (full time) or two years (part time). I took over the teaching of this group for the second half of the academic year and for some of them this represented the culmination of their programme of study in which they would be assessed. The group size was particularly small and each had limited or no experience of contemporary dance. There were seven students in this group but due to individual personal circumstances the class size was often reduced to be between three and five people. This situation is very atypical for Trinity Laban (and consequently myself) where student sizes are usually between 26-30 students. There were some particular challenges for me as teacher with this group of students. I found my engagement with the teaching process not fulfilling due to the lack of continuous attendance and accumulative energy. Although some of the students were very committed when they were in class, the sessions could feel dry to me because of the limitations to motivational drive. In order to address this at an early stage I presented the group with the opportunity to combine classes with another, similarly small, group of peers. I had anticipated that this would be met with enthusiasm however the students preferred to remain as a separate group and to combine classes only occasionally. The students stated that they saw the chance to work in a small group as an opportunity to get a lot of attention from the teacher. While I was anxious that the long-term impact would be to diminish the accumulative effect of learning together, I accepted the students' stated preference.

The student-teacher relationships were well developed with these mature students partly because of the small group size and also due to the fact that I was encountering them frequently in other roles outside of the technique class. It was important to recognise the

beginner status of some of these student's in terms of dance technique and to adapt my teaching strategies accordingly. I am usually stimulated by working with students with little dance experience and I have a reputation among my colleagues for achieving favourable outcomes for such groups. It became apparent to me during this phase of my research, that what makes teaching personally exciting in learning contexts such as these is that there are usually one or two students whose learning becomes accelerated. For various reasons some students are able to make vast progress in a short amount of time and for me to be part of such learning journeys can be very rewarding. In this particular group of 6/7A students, while my relationships with some of the students felt generatively reciprocal, progress was steady and the pacing of learning was stilted at times.

In order to gather data, the students were invited in person and by means of a participation information sheet (Appendix 3), to voluntarily participate in a one-to-one semi-structured interview with me. My research interests were discussed in detail with the participants at several stages throughout the learning process and in response to their individual interest. They each signed an informed consent form (Appendix 4) and the interviews were conducted at the end of the learning process, after the assessment process was completed. Five students participated and the videoed interviews were conducted outside of their scheduled class times. A list of questions was designed in no small part from the considerations that evolved from the first phase of data gathering (Appendix 5). The semi-structured interviews were intended to enable the participants to speak expansively about their experiences of our contemporary dance technique classes, with particular focus on describing what we had been doing together, how they interacted with peers and any barriers to their learning in the studio. The interview data were analysed through a layered process, as outlined below:

1. Mapping

To begin with each interview was "mapped". Through deep listening, each participant's account was marked-up in posters to capture their ideas and reflections. These maps mark out the prominent features of the discussion with key words, notes of issues, details of stories, links to other concepts, and some personal researcher reflections. This was an intuitive and personal way for me to connect to the participants accounts freed from the type of listening needed as an interviewer. Thus, the mapping was a reflective process that

provided me with a visual overview of the range of ways the participants discussed the experience of learning. As figure 2. (below) shows these maps were put on a wall in my home for many months so that I might keep coming back to look at them.

Figure 2. 6/7A data wall and details

2. Coding and areas of interest

I identified a number of codes that distinguished areas of significance or of particular interest. This stage of analysis was a reflective way for me to begin to make links through the data set that were not defined by the questions. I was drawn to the way the participants discussed related concepts often using the same vocabulary but from slightly different perspectives or with a particular personal meaning. It felt imperative to find ways of drawing out those nuances in the data analysis. I used coding to group these concepts-in-common and explored the given meanings among the participants. These can be identified on yellow post-it notes in Figure 2.

3. Transcription

The data was transcribed in full by the researcher. This process facilitated more detailed codes and researcher reflections to be made as an expansion of the issues previously brought forward by the forum groups with 4D. A wider series of issues were presented by these participants, facilitated in part by the individuation of the interview process (rather than forum group format). Pseudonyms were given to each participant (by the teacher or by the participant) to enable anonymity.

4. Observation

Videos were made of some taught sessions for the purposes of observation. These served as additional resources for reflexivity for the researcher.

Conducting research with these students was complicated by the fact that while I was their teacher, I was simultaneously their programme leader and component leader for dance technique. This meant that I was ultimately responsible not only for the assessment grades of these students for technique but also responsible for overseeing all of the grades of their programme. This had significant ethical implications for the gathering of research data with these students as it intensified the power imbalance, as discussed in chapter four. For this reason, it became necessary to seek additional ethical permissions from Trinity Laban research ethics board. Approval was conditionally granted in that I was to make it explicit to the students that the usual Trinity Laban policy procedures would be fully adhered to. I was also to meet regularly with a representative of the ethics board to discuss the progress of data gathering. I complied with these additional institutional requirements.

There were some further concerns for me regarding this process of data gathering. Again, those students for whom the learning process was most positive were the students that participated in the research. The possibility to engage with the two students who did not participate was very limited due to their self-exclusion in multiple areas of their programme. I was again frustrated that the research might only include voices of students for whom the learning process was easily accessible. I had hoped to reflect a more comprehensive picture in the research, even if this would be personally challenging. Another factor that became apparent through this process of data gathering was the depth of connection achieved through the act of interview dialogue. Through this connection I had a much more in depth understanding of the students concerns and interests as

individuals. It seemed to me that this understanding could have been very useful for me earlier, as their teacher. It felt as though I was finding out about important aspects of the student as a learner when it was too late to use this understanding to support their learning. I was uneasy about getting to know the students well only when it was of benefit to my research. I resolved to make the third stage of data gathering, with the next group of students, address this. I aimed to conduct part of the research earlier in the learning process and find ways to encourage participation by the students who might have less than favourable things to say. In doing so I hoped to facilitate potential wider reflections and insights

5A

For this third and final phase of data gathering I requested from the management team that I teach a second-year group of undergraduate students (instead of first-year students) in order to see the new in the familiar. I had not taught second years for several years and I was interested to consider the ways in which my teaching would adapt to their specific needs. I anticipated that the features of learning with this group of students would potentially be different to some of those of 4D and 6/7A (outlined above). For example, the stylistic preferences and expectations of learning in release-based techniques would be more familiar to them and there would be a greater known-ness about the institutional learning expectations. I was scheduled to teach group 5A which was one of the lower streamed sets in terms of technique ability. There were 26 students in total and the group seemed to me to be relatively divided and “cliquey”. There were some relatively underconfident/timid behaviours displayed and it appeared to me from the outset that there was a lack of motivation or resistance to learning by a small number of students. This was challenging due to the significantly detrimental impact it appeared to have on others and myself. I was also aware that I was approaching this group of students in a self-conscious way because I intended to invite them to participate in my research. I was mindful that this data might be particularly important for me as it was likely to be the last and potentially most significant data set. This generated a sense of self-inflicted pressure.

My research with this group of students was designed in three distinct stages:

I. Student-led focus group ‘feedback sessions’
II. Outsider observation
III. Individual interviews

These stages of research data gathering were designed to enable an evolutionary development of the research data that was potentially less influenced by researcher bias and responded to the student experience as it progressed.

I. Student-led focus group ‘feedback sessions’

I introduced the research to the students at an early stage and after our ways of learning had become established, I invited them to participate in what I referred to as ‘student feedback sessions’ that functioned as student-led focus groups. This invitation was extended in person and presented to the students in a participation information sheet (Appendix 6). The ‘feedback sessions’ were designed such that the teacher/researcher would set up the event and then leave in order for the students to have dialogue that was not ‘overseen’ by me; their teacher. Thus, the intention for this format was to remove, as much as may be possible, any concerns students might have about fear of consequences from participation. Two sessions were scheduled in consultation with the students and 12 students participated. The ‘feedback sessions’ were conducted among the students facilitated by a set of instructions and questions (Appendix 7). At the end of each session I returned to the group so that there was an opportunity to discuss any outstanding issues with me.

II. Outside observers

Three external guests were invited to observe the learning sessions and make observations to the researcher of what they noticed was going on in the studio. These guests were from areas other than dance and as such had different perspectives from which to make observations. They had expertise in teaching martial arts, group therapy and educational research. It seemed to me that one way to support my understanding of the dance studio as a cultural site (see chapter four) would be to have an outside eye. The guest observers, as outsiders, might see the setting from other perspectives and with a different lens. Their observations were to enable me, the researcher/teacher, to see the familiar anew albeit this time through the use of others’ seeing. Each of the guests observed one class on

separate occasions and had been given a brief outline of my research interests. Following the observation, the guests were invited to recount what they had observed and reflect on their experience of the learning context with me privately. This spontaneously developed each time into a collegiate discussion based on the studio session that had been observed.

III. Individual interviews

Toward the end of the learning process and following individual tutorials with every student as institutionally required, I invited the students to participate in a one-to-one interview with me in person and through a participation information sheet (Appendix 8). 18 students participated on a voluntary basis. They gave their consent for their data to be used and created their own pseudonyms (Appendix 9). These semi-structured interviews were designed to address the various issues brought forward from the earlier stages of the research (with this group and from previous data). The questions (Appendix 10) were intended to address agency (i.e. making choices and contributions), relatedness (i.e. influence of peers) and the learning experience (i.e. student teacher relationship, recognising progress). The interview data were analysed through various layers of process, as outlined below:

1. Mapping

Each interview was “mapped” in sketch books as with the 6/7A data wall described above.

2. Coding and areas of interest

From these sketched maps over 500 codes were identified and made into poster formats that were stuck on my wall at home. These codes were then grouped into areas of similarity generating various areas of interest. As with 6/7A (above) this intuitively creative analysis developed because many of the students discussed related concepts (often using the same vocabulary) but with a particular emphasis given their experience. These areas of interest might be considered as preliminary themes of data. For example, exploration, confidence, enjoyment. What became apparent in this was that the nuance of meaning ascribed to each code was of more interest to me than the quantity or frequency with which it had been raised.

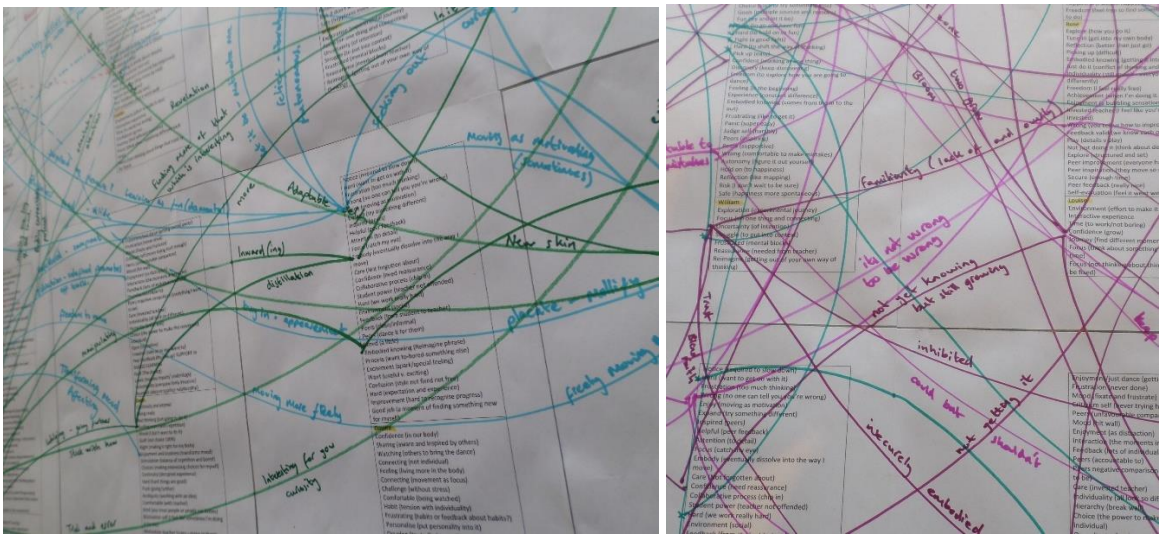

Figure 3. 5A flightpath details

3. Flightpaths

In order to ‘see into’ the particular ways in which the participants had discussed issues and concepts and features of learning experiences a further process of analysis was undertaken by creating “flightpaths”. These flightpaths charted across the wall posters from code to code as if destinations on a map (see figure 3 above). By connecting up these locations I was able to draw out the diverse ways in which different learners commented on the same area of interest. For example, one area of interest ‘enjoyment’ included the codes ‘pleasure’ and ‘fun’. Using a flightpath to connect individual participants that had discussed these linked codes enabled me to think through various dimensions of enjoyment, to continue our example, as it was experienced in the studio. And so, by connecting the codes pleasure and fun, Hibiscus’s account of pleasure “going with it” was connected via a flightpath to Gio’s account of fun “try and let it be”. This led to processes of conceptualisation.

4. Conceptualising

Each flightpath was attributed a concept or series of concepts that generated ways of thinking around how these two emphases might reveal different dimensions of the same feature of learning dance technique and hence deepen insight of the research. These flightpath conceptions were useful for me to be able to think around the particular meanings ascribed by the participants to what might otherwise be considered to be the

same thing. For example, the flightpath connecting “going with it” and “try and let it be” was imagined conceptually as: relinquishing, going with the flow, free-falling and submitting/trusting. This draws attention to how enjoyment in the dance technique class for some learners involves not being in control.

5. Member checking

The entire group of students of 5A were invited to attend a ‘closed’ presentation of the data process (March 2017). The term ‘closed’ here means that it was only for those students who had participated in the research. A small group of students attended. In this event I shared a presentation that I was intending to give at Dance Fields Conference, Roehampton (April 2017), discussed the research process development and invited questions. This event was intended to give the students’ an opportunity to understand how their research data were being used as a means of member checking. It also provided me with a way of being confident that I was representing the learning experience such that the participants were happy to extend their consent.

6. Data transcription and the three categories

Full data transcription of each participant interview was completed and these detailed accounts were considered in the light of the connections identified above. This facilitated a checking-in with the participant accounts in an ongoing cyclical process that drew closer-in to the details of their meanings building upon the wider imagining-out of the data set as a whole. During this period of transcription, I was able to begin to organise the many elements of the data through key words that were put into one of three categories of *Finding, Feeling*, and *Forcing* (see Figure 4. Three categories data wall and details below). The figure below shows how these categories were represented as overlapping and many of the key words could fit into more than one category for different reasons. This part of the process did allow me to bring some sense of overview to the complexity of the data as a whole.

Figure 4. Three categories data wall and details

This third phase of the data gathering process with 5A, had some particular issues which should be highlighted here. Of significance for me was the intention of the student-led focus group discussion to enable the gathering of data in ways that were less potentially coercive. It was evident from the ending of the sessions (when I returned to the participants) that the questions had provoked considerable dialogue and reflection among the students. However, their written responses (my data) were limited and rather superficial and I suspect that the writing did not capture the fullness of the discussions. While initially disappointing I hoped that this process might have stimulated the students in ways of thinking about the research that would resonate in the learning process somehow. The written responses served as a navigation point around which to design the questions for later interviews.

The outside observer contributions were provoking for me as teacher/researcher as each guest emphasised different aspects of the field as they had observed it. For example, my apparent reluctance to tell the students that they were wrong so as to not undermine the imperative to take risks and the imposition of presence by an individual student whose domineering behaviour was actively ignored by me so that it might not distract his peers.

These observations proved to be instrumental for me as researcher by refreshing my seeing and igniting further reflection. It is important to highlight also that each guest reinforced the warmth and expansiveness of my teaching approach which I found to be very encouraging. Upon reflection this use of 'critical friend' from within the studio might have been developed further. I had expected them to point out aspects of the studio that I had perhaps not seen/noticed as significant due to my immersion in the setting. However, their contribution was more subtle and more profound than that in as much as their comments helped me to appreciate the pedagogical wisdom and humanity involved in the complexity of learning processes.

The intuitively layered analysis process following the participant interviews, as described above, facilitated conceptual thinking beyond the vocabulary of the identified codes. In imaginative ways I was able to move beyond the framing of the interview questions and widen the consideration of the meanings of the data. However, the complexity and density of the interviews generated many divergent areas of interest. This has resulted in gestation of research in consideration of how the research might be 'contained'. The initially identified three categories (see figure 4 above), while useful did not adequately resolve the need to hold the myriad ideas pertaining to the data. For example, the category of 'feeling' had been drawn from the student's focus on the need to feel comfortable, safe, cared about. Other feelings and emotional responses to learning were also important and needed to be brought forward in other areas. In effect, feelings were part of each aspect of the data and should not be segregated to one theme. Similarly, the category 'force' which included ideas of push, drive, and competition became folded into the ideas about what it means to be an active learner when considered through a critical feminist lens. Thus, these and other issues have meant that the process of identifying the emergent themes needed to be explored further.

Emergence of themes

Through consideration of the full participant data set and following further reflexivity, I identified themes that emerge from and frame the learners experience of dance technique pedagogy in relation to the materials, the teacher and their peers. These themes are

explorative learning, comfort(able) learning, and collective learning. Each theme serves as foundational conceptions of the ensuing discussion of findings chapters. As figure 5 (below) illustrates, the themes reveal three dimensions of learning dance technique wherein the student is at the centre of the research.

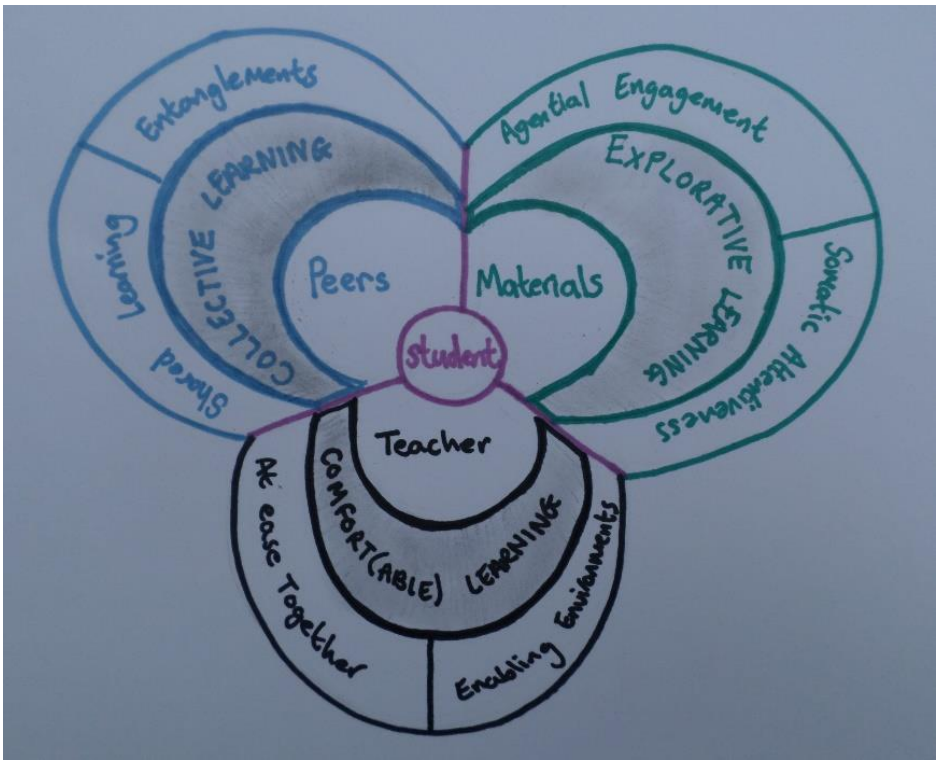

Figure 5. Diagram of research themes and components of discussion

The above diagram shows the way in which the thematic analysis of data is discussed in chapters six, seven and eight. Chapter six, entitled 'Explorative learning with movement materials' considers the student's involvement with the movement materials in the dance technique class. Explorative learning as a research theme is discussed with two foci: agential engagement and somatic attentiveness. Chapter seven, entitled 'Comfort(able) learning and the pedagogical relationship' considers the student's relationship with the teacher in the dance technique class. Comfort(able) learning as a research theme is discussed with two foci: being at ease together and enabling learning environments. Chapter eight, entitled 'Collective learning and peer influence' considers the student's relationship with their peers in the dance technique class. Collective learning as research theme is discussed with two foci: shared learning and entanglement. These distinct yet

interconnected and overlapping discussions are brought together in chapter nine in order to discuss the confluence of research findings and the research contribution.

As has been described in this chapter, the research data analysis process was intuitively layered and immersive. Digital software could have been used to analyse codes and this is recommended in most research methods handbooks. However, as I tried to get beneath the skin of the participants experiences of learning in the studio, this idiosyncratic process made sense to me as a researcher. It offered me ways of remaining closely tied to how experience revealed itself by undertaking numerous procedures of thinking with and through personal accounts from within the pedagogical act. By returning to and integrating participant accounts from different groups I was able to ground the process of synthesis in the experiences of the participants as they had shared them with me. Other data materials have also been accumulated through this process i.e. student feedback flipcharts, student reflective writing, teacher journal, photographs, videos, email correspondence. This further layering of the data works in concert with the emerging data themes offering me rich contextual sources with which to retain the vibrancy of the lived experiences.

During this process of data gathering it has become increasingly apparent to me that my teacher/researcher location may be utilised to offer valuable insight as co-participant. I have kept a teacher journal throughout this research process. In it I reflect on issues as they have arisen in the studio and speak back to myself, as it were, about the things I am noticing as the learning encounters have unfolded. The ways in which these accounts will be used in the discussion of findings chapters that follow is as another voice. Importantly, I use my comments in reference to the participants ideas and consequently I am able to offer another perspective through which to develop understanding. This use of teacher journal, or embodied fieldnotes, addresses another concern of the research; that the accounts should not be overly positive. Through teacher reflective accounts, I have been able to bring forward my concerns around issues that were troubling for me and in this way I problematise features of the participants experience.

While It is not my intention to over emphasise the negative features of the learning processes, what is helpful through use of my reflective journal accounts is an acknowledgement of alternative perspectives and experiences as I was aware of them from my viewpoint. Drawing all of these perspectives together has meant dealing with

complexity that might be structured through seemingly myriad frames. It felt to me at times as if there was no way in which I might draw lines between the issues being discussed as one idea flowed from something and implicated several others. I am aware that I might have resolved this research dilemma in any one of several ways and each with their own compromises. However, the analysis has settled into three distinct but interconnected themes which I feel offer a comprehensive and immersive exploration of the experience of learning contemporary dance technique.

This research interweaves participant data, researcher reflexivity and theoretical perspectives to bring insight to the ways in which learning is experienced in the contemporary dance class. As has been stated, this has been an unfolding process that has evolved in response to numerous influences such as the concerns of participants, the dynamic pedagogical process, the provocations of theoretical perspectives, and my growing understanding of what research can be. I have needed to instinctively follow and assertively guide the development of this inductive research process. At times I have been led into new areas of thinking and perspectives that have provoked, delighted and daunted me such as the indeterminate nature of qualitative research and the activism inherent in critical perspectives. At other times I have needed to stake a claim, be selective and foreground some things while reducing the potential prominence of others such as identifying as a feminist researcher and embracing ambiguity.

What I have done here, through this specific methods process, is to privilege the underrepresented voices in dance pedagogical research of students and to focus on their lived experience in the studio with all its partiality, fragmentariness and incompleteness. How the multiple voices speak to each other and how this dialogue answers to the aims critical feminist pedagogy will become clear through the dense data of narratives, ideas and beliefs of the participants in the following chapters. Therefore, having defined the contextual framing, methodological approach and methods of this research, I will now move on to the discussion of findings. In the next three chapters I will discuss the results and critically reflect on the experience of learning dance technique through three themes: Explorative learning (chapter six), Comfort(able) learning (chapter seven) and Collective learning (chapter eight).

CHAPTER 6

Explorative learning with movement materials

In this chapter I discuss explorative learning with movement materials in the contemporary dance technique class. The ensuing investigation focuses on student experiences of pedagogical approaches in the dance technique class that foreground active learning, participant contribution and assuming responsibility for learning as concepts at the heart of hooks' engaged pedagogy (1994). In order to think through the imperatives of this approach the discussion traverse's perspectives of student engagement in higher education. I consider the function of the movement materials in developing technique capabilities and examine tuning into the body as means of engagement with these materials. In what follows, I utilise various theoretical and pedagogical framings of engagement; in particular Tim Ingold's conception of precision and the skilful practitioner.

Explorative learning will be considered through two interwoven dimensions: agential engagement and somatic attentiveness. These dimensions expand the conception of dance technique pedagogy as both an approach to learning by the student, agential engagement, and a state of bodily-being, somatic attentiveness. While the former focuses on approaches to what we learn, the latter concerns movement as a means of knowing. Throughout, I draw from the experience of participants to develop concrete understandings of the application of active approaches to learning in the dance technique class. In this, it is apparent that the participants offer reflective responses of the particular experience of learning wherein I, as teacher, employed critical feminist pedagogical approaches. As such, this discussion of explorative learning reveals what it might mean to be an actively embodied learner in the context of the dance technique class.

Agential engagement

> I guess you've always got a choice about whether you're going to take the most out of class and switch on or just be in class […] I always make sure I walk into the class switched on and I'm going to take the most out of it.
>
> Amy

> Any correction that you [the teacher] may give to anybody at any given moment is an opportunity to soak up that knowledge, that input from you […] I find myself at times focusing on one or two points that I've taken in that day.
>
> Christopher

The above participant comments highlight attitudes to learning that assume responsibility as a learner for focus and attention. They evidence an understanding of the active learner's role in the dance technique class to be switched on (Amy) and ready to soak up knowledge to use (Christopher). This understanding is built, in part, upon conceptions about good learning in dance as working hard, with determined focus and disciplined behaviour. Indeed, broadly accepted definitions of learner engagement are defined in these terms (Kahn 2014). However, these comments suggest an active approach to learning that goes beyond simply making the most of the teaching offer. They also demonstrate a particular self-regulating attitude toward their learning. Amy states that she always makes sure that she walks into the class switched on. In this she acknowledges her part in ensuring that she is ready to learn. While Christopher states that he finds himself focusing on one or two points from teacher instruction. In this he evidences the capacity to orientate his learning attention so as to direct his learning through reflection. Through these comments, both learners indicate a sense of agency to shape how their learning might be determined. Through these introductory comments I hope to establish the foundations for the ensuing discussion regarding being an active learner in the dance technique class; an approach that extends beyond being present, paying attention and trying hard.

Acting deliberately

Acting deliberately in the dance technique class expands the conception of student engagement. It involves approaches to learning whereby students may influence, affect and define what occurs in the studio. Acting deliberately is thus a feature of agential engagement that is distinct from current higher educational discourses. Increasingly, student engagement is defined as a characteristic of high-quality teaching and learning (Kahn 2014, Ashwin and McVitty 2015) and an important influence on achievement (Kahu 2013). This conception of learner engagement has been articulated in dance education as partnership; 'involving and empowering students in the process of shaping the student

learning experience' (Quality Assurance Agency 2015). Student engagement, thought about in these ways, appears to resonate with the transformative aims of critical feminist pedagogy. However, issues arise with respect to an overly simplified correlation between engagement and attainment. This is further troubled by the conceptual ambiguity of engagement that disguises contradictory goals and an over emphasis of the teacher's responsibility to ensure compliance with the curriculum (Vuori 2014, Ashwin and Mcvitty 2015). Agential engagement, contrastingly, involves learning wherein students may act deliberately to affect their particular learning experiences in contradiction to passive behaviours as consumers, as outlined in chapter one, or dutiful diligence, as will be discussed in chapter seven.

Agential engagement determines, to greater or lesser degree, how the learning process develops as a consequence of what the individual learner contributes. In dance, active learning approaches have been stated to enable inquiry-oriented approaches to dance technique (Dyer 2010) and empower the learner through mutual responsibility for learning (Barr and Risner 2014). Through the prioritisation of the student voice, the aims of critical feminist pedagogy may be furthered with regard to affecting the learning process (Stinson, Blumenfield-Jones and Van Dyke 2016) and the importance of learning grounded in personal meanings (Kahlich 2001, Leonard 2014). However, as will become clear in the unfolding discussion, these features of transformative learning in the context of the dance technique class, are not unproblematic.

Engagement is a multifaceted conception and as has been defined by leading educational psychologists Jennifer Fredricks and colleagues (2004), involves behavioural, emotional and cognitive components. These components of engagement, while overlapping, have particular characteristics. Behavioural engagement involves participation, effort, attention, persistence, positive and non-disruptive conduct. Emotional engagement involves both positive and negative reactions to teacher and peers, belonging and identification. Cognitive engagement involves investment in learning, thoughtfulness, being strategic and willingness to exert effort for understanding of complex ideas. These components of learner engagement are understood to be 'dynamically interrelated within the individual' (Fredricks et al. 2004, 61) and this is useful as it acknowledges that engagement is not usually straightforward but multifaceted and dependent on various contextual factors

(Mercer 2011). However, this definition of student engagement has been criticised for ignoring how students choose to learn (Kahn 2014, Macfarlane 2017).

Addressing this, pedagogy scholars Reeve and Tseng (2011) propose agential learning as a further component of engagement that includes the intentional and proactive behaviour of learners to 'personalize and otherwise enrich both what is to be learned and the conditions and circumstances under which it is to be learned' (258). Agential learning is conceptually useful for thinking about the influences of critical feminist pedagogies in the learning process because it aligns with the foundational conceptions of learner empowerment enabled through active learning approaches and prioritisation of participant voice. Consequently, I have developed the term agential engagement to thematically analyse experiences of acting deliberately while learning dance technique. Agential engagement concerns learning as a process of discovery that mobilises learner agency.

Conceptions of human agency have been developed from the seminal work of social cognitive theorist Albert Bandura (1986, 2006). He adopts an agentic perspective toward human development, adaptation, and change and states that in addition to the deliberative ability to make choices, agency involves 'the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution' (Bandura 2006, 165). I use this thinking to locate agentic engagement, not just as the means by which the student, as agent, actively participates in and contributes to learning but also the ways in which they might act to direct their learning process. This is to bring alignment with hooks' conception of engaged pedagogy which encourages contributions to learning in ways that are personally relevant to the individual learner. Therefore, in the dance technique class, the learner may be encouraged to assume agency as a power to act, to deliberately develop their learning in ways that respond to personal interest. However, students may need to be encouraged to imagine the dance technique class as a location wherein they might utilise such power. One such way that can enable learners to engage with agency is through making choices.

Choice making and assuming responsibility

> I remember you [the teacher] were saying 'what do you want to do today?' the first thing that everyone would like to begin would be [with pitiful voice] "Massage, Improvise" and everything. And then actually think: what do I

> actually need to do to improve? He's actually giving me the chance to think about what I need to do in the class to improve. And this made me feel free.
>
> Ino

> Sometimes, I get the feeling I'm in this class for an hour and a half and maybe I don't feel like doing it today but I'm there and I don't have a choice about whether I leave or sit down or how much I do.
>
> Carol

Pedagogical strategies that involve the students in choice making can serve to develop learner agency and encourage autonomy through shared responsibility for learning (Fredrick et al. 2004, 81). As teacher, I strategically encourage agential engagement in the studio by generating situations wherein the students can be involved in making choices. For example, at the beginning of the class I will consult with them regarding what we will do in the session together. This usually involves outlining my proposed plan and then asking the students what they think about it, or I might simply ask them what they would like to do that day. This process, while brief, elicits responses from the students that I can use to make adaptations to my plans regarding what we end up doing together. It also opens up considerations from the outset, of what the student understands they might need in order to progress, as indicated by Ino above. In establishing a shared understanding in this way, an informal agreement is set up between us such that the student is not simply 'taking' what is proposed by the teacher. Inviting the students to amend my proposed lesson plan and responding positively demonstrates my readiness to collaborate with them; to adapt. This can shift the power of decision making from being the sole province of the teacher, and has the potential to 'awaken an exciting learning process' (hooks 1994, 156) by means of ensuring the learning offer has relevance for the learner.

> You took the feedback and fitted it to what you did before. You made it match or transformed it maybe. […] I am feeling that a lot of times at the beginning or the end of class you make sure to know how the general feeling in the group is and then check with your plans whether that's alright.
>
> Ana

By including learners in decisions about our learning plans, they can become accountable to themselves and each other for their own development. Dialogically, some negotiation may be necessary between myself and the learners in order to reach agreement regarding ways forward, especially when diverse opinions are presented. I might, for example, need to unpack the rationale of my proposal or ask the learners about their choices. Whilst I encourage student involvement in this way, I assume ultimate responsibility for the learning of the entire group and, as I discuss later, this can result in sensitive situations comprised of divergent pedagogical considerations. Thus, the agency of students is limited in this strategy; they are not for example, extended the opportunity to co-design curricular. Choice making in this instance, rather prioritises individual responses to that which is proposed by the teacher and consequently focuses learning as a process that might be actively pursued instead of passively received.

Coming to a negotiated agreement at the beginning of a session is a strategy that serves to bring choice-making to the attention of the learner, albeit with a light touch. It gently unsettles expectations of roles and responsibilities in the technique class and affords the student opportunities for ways-in to engage with agency. Being involved in choice making such as this, can encourage students to recognise that they may have 'a voice' in determining the process of their learning and that the teacher can be led by their decision making and question raising, among other contributions. Such strategies indicate direction of travel and can be a non-invasive way of reinforcing a critical feminist pedagogical approach. Having voice is not solely concerned with what the student contributes, it also arises from having the opportunity to be heard and the conviction that in the learning context one's contribution has value (hooks 1994, 149). Thus, student voice is as much, if not more, to do with the constructed understanding that it is worthwhile to speak out, declare oneself, with the confidence that doing so will be met receptively, than the act of speaking itself. The significance of the student-teacher relationship in establishing a conducive learning environment will be explored at length in the proceeding chapter. However, it is important to point out here that the agential engagement of students can be predicated on the establishment of trust among participants. Agential engagement, as I present it here, is a feature of explorative learning and is based on respect for learner contributions. In the dance technique class, the expectation of students to direct their

learning may first need to be established as a possibility before becoming part of the practice. Therefore, making choices by the student at the beginning of class, as I have described, can serve strategically to render this possibility accessible. Having once established the possibility to learn with agency, then this active approach to learning can be applied by the learners in diverse ways with regard to acting deliberately in the dance technique sessions.

> We can choose how we do the movement or interpret the movement […] It's like a freedom but it's also a choice.
>
> Suzanne

> It's nice working with boundaries that you can set within your movement or how a phrase is given to you. And do you want to take on the boundaries of that movement or do you want to push them and make them your own? […] Taking aspects from what I like or what can challenge me into my movement and performance. And doing them. I'm pushing them.
>
> Hibiscus

> There's more interpretation for us in your class […] That openness is nice because you can explore more.
>
> Syafiqah

Explorative learning in the dance technique class can be understood in part as an individualised process of inquiry, oriented around particular interests, curiosities and personalised goals. Syafiqah, above, uses the term interpretation to articulate the openness to explore the materials that she experienced in our classes. The incorporation and encouragement of choice making, to take on the boundaries of movement as Hibiscus describes it, concerns agential engagement that supports an explorative learning process that is determined by the student in relation to the specificities of the technique style. For Suzanne, above, this was experienced like a freedom. Agential engagement can enhance student learning by means of opening up the possibilities of choice making independent of teacher instruction. However, this freedom is relative and limited, as it would not be viable for the student to engage with the dance class in whatever way they saw fit, in ways that

were obstructive to others for example. I discuss later what we might mean by freedom in the dance technique class as freedom to learn and readiness. Hence, agential engagement, as I have set it up through this discussion, serves to enable the development of a learning approach that draws upon the student's interest in movement. It is less reliant on teacher stimulation and becomes the vehicle through which the learner might propel their own dance technique progress. Consequently, learning dance technique can become an individualised and particular practice (Bannon 2010). The following participant comments suggest choice making can be applied to all facets of learning in the dance technique class.

> I feel I have the power to choose what I'm working on in the movement […] I think it's just like your personal goals or your goals for that day […] It would come as I'm doing the movement or as I'm learning the movement […] I think that's a choice because I could just be doing the movement without thinking about it.
>
> Lauren

> I can choose also what I want to focus on of course, because maybe if we have a long sequence, we're going through it's hardly ever I can think about everything, almost never, I try but… For me the choice is either to stick with the thing that I have to so it's like OK you have to work on this, this and that. So, think about it. Or say, maybe today I'll try something else.
>
> Gio

Through generative processes that afford opportunities to make choices, ask questions and find for oneself learning dance technique can develop as an individualised practice. Agential engagement involves students in the co-construction of what is to be learned and the circumstances through which it is to be learned (Reeve and Tseng 2011, 258). In this way each student can be usefully encouraged to approach learning dance technique as a personalised process in which they can act deliberately to determine its development. The above participant comments describe having the power to choose what to work on (Lauren) and to stick with something or try something new (Gio). These choices are not only made as an explicit invitation by the teacher, such as the negotiation at the beginning of a session, but as agential engagement by the learner. However, I would suggest that inviting the learner to make choices needs to be embedded in a learning culture of ongoing shared responsibility in order for this approach to learning to be meaningfully integrated. I will

develop this thinking in relation to the importance of asking questions of the teacher in chapter seven and making mistakes among peers in chapter eight. What I hope to underscore here is that active learning is not only something that might be expected of the learner but can be encouraged and progressively enabled by the teacher through an invitation to learn with agential engagement.

An example from my teaching practice that encourages this approach, is to ask the learners what they understand the objectives of a movement activity might be in between rounds of dancing the materials. Dialogically as a group, we might accumulate a list of objectives and this develops shared understanding of what might be achieved. At this point, I would ask the learners to choose one objective to focus on as we re-do the material (Stanton 2011). Following this re-doing I would ask the learners to reflect, usually with partners, on what they had noticed, how their dancing had been affected as a consequence of their chosen focus. This process guides the learners through an activity that is directed by their own goals and evaluated through their own reflection. Thus, active learning is modelled as a process wherein the students direct their own progress. As teacher, I might develop this pedagogical strategy by, among other things, inviting the students to remain with their selected focus for a period of a few weeks, asking them to consider how they might evaluate the progress they are making with this focus, using peer buddies to support them with this focus, swapping their focus with that of a peer. These strategies serve to enable the learner to become increasingly capable to act deliberately with regard to their own learning and acknowledging the consequential enhancement of learning outcomes.

> [You were] giving opportunities to us for responsibility of our own learning. Thinking and questioning what worked for us. What didn't work for us […] then it brings it back to what is happening for us in the class as well. Rather than just being a receiver of information.
>
> Victoria

> I want to gain more control over my body. I think this could be achieved by repetition of exercises in my own time to strengthen and control my muscles
>
> 5A Student-led focus group

Learning in ways that enable agential engagement by the student facilitates an incremental shift in responsibility from the teacher to the learner. According to hooks (1994) one of the particular joys of education as the practice of freedom is that it 'allows students to assume responsibility for their choices' (19). Assuming responsibility for choice making can be experienced in positive ways by the learner especially when, as in hooks' case, this is in contrast to other experiences of authoritarian teaching. Such positive responses to shared responsibility for learning are evidenced in the participant comments thus far. However, the pedagogical freedom, or imperative, to learn with agency, is not always without impediment. Students may experience choice making in the dance technique class as obstructive, distracting and irrelevant. I discuss these responses to explorative learning as dissent, agentic behaviour that problematises unconflicted notions of student engagement.

Dissent

> We can also choose not to do it.
>
> Suzanne

> Sometimes if I'm having a bad day or if I am wracking my brain as to why I'm doing something and I can't find an answer, then I get frustrated.
>
> William

> Working on every correction you receive could become quite overwhelming.
>
> 5A Student-led focus group

> I just felt like I was so far behind everyone maybe […] and it was a real struggle just to motivate myself to stick at it.
>
> Nicholas

There are potentially many reasons why students are not, or may not appear to be, fully engaged in the learning process, as the above participant comments suggest. Disengagement by the learner can be perceived as non-participation and contrary to the empowering aims of critical feminist pedagogy. However, pedagogy researcher Amanda Fulford (2017) offers an interpretation of disengagement that is '*not* as a failure to act and an absence of will, but rather as an awakening of voice that is an active expression of a commitment to one's language, community, and education' (108 italics original). Reconceiving disengagement as potentially positive reactions to the learning context, in this way, identifies such behaviour alternatively as dissent. Dissent in the classroom/studio

can be an active refusal by the student to engage in learning as it is proposed and a rejection of the criteria of engagement (Fulford 2017). On these terms, disengagement shifts from perceived dysfunctional behaviours to active response of non-consent by the learner. By expanding our conception of agential engagement to include dissent we are able to focus on student freedoms to learn rather than a compulsion to be engaged. According to pedagogy researcher Bruce Macfarlane (2017), students' freedom to learn is 'to exercise freedoms that will promote their personal growth as independent thinkers' (xvi). Student engagement defined in this way extends beyond performative behaviours to include the complex, disruptive aspects of learning that can lead toward student autonomy, choice and agency (Kahn 2017, Klemenčič and Primožič 2015, Kohl 1991).

To experience dissent in the studio can be challenging for the teacher and yet, it may usefully lead to considerations of how particular pedagogical approaches and learning activities exclude some learners (Dyer 2014). Discomfort and encounters in education with that disturbs us, such as learner dissent, can inspire change (Boler 1999). For the teacher, dissent, while an experience of discomfort, can deter complacency about the effectiveness of the teaching approach (Burnidge 2012). In their discussion of addressing the challenges of higher education in the contemporary neoliberal landscape, Jennifer Fraser and Sarah Lamble (2015) state that when considering responses to dissent it is important for teachers to 'distinguish between when we have good reason to "push back" and when we are being unnecessarily rigid, defensive or unreflexive in our practice' (73). This is to compel the teacher to reflexively consider the impacts of our pedagogies and to be discerning about where we might insist and where we might relent. These issues highlight the complexity of agential engagement in the classroom/studio and problematise fixed conceptions of student empowerment.

Here again I turn to a particular teaching strategy to think through the complexity and unintended pedagogical implications of choice. In the unfolding process of the dance technique class, I might invite the students to choose what we do next between two alternative tasks. The underpinning pedagogical intention of this strategy is to facilitate the development of learning as directed by the body, or more accurately in this case, the students' bodily-selves. It is my conviction that learning through movement, as in dance technique, might be directed by the students' bodily 'appetite' for movement; an

embodied state of readiness that is dynamically changeable. For example, towards the end of a class the exhilarated body might be ready for jumping rather than lying on the floor. By asking the students at a particular moment what they might prefer to do next as an option between two alternative activities, I am seeking out an understanding of their bodily readiness(es) and consequently drawing the students' attention to their embodied selves. This is important, I posit, as it continues to acknowledge the students as individual human beings who, through attending to the body, might pay attention to their preferences. By acknowledging these preferences and responding appropriately, the experience of learning through dance technique can become more personally meaningful and relevant.

Nevertheless, upon reflection, I can see that my inclusion of decision making between two alternatives is not always helpful in supporting agential engagement because in the learning moment, the students are not necessarily well placed to make such decisions. It can serve as an abrupt encounter, a distraction, for some students that raises questions about what their learning might be predicated upon. This was made evident during one particular activity designed to enable learner reflection. I had set up the activity such that the students would dance the materials in small groups and then leave the studio in order to discuss together and make notes about their experiences of dancing. The learning objective was for the students to reflectively draw out some of the particularities of their evolving embodied knowing in dialogue with each other. The following is a reflective account from my teaching journal that describes the pedagogical considerations of that particular class activity. At one point I asked the students how they wanted to proceed...

> 'Move on!'
>
> The response came as quite a shock, not because it was not a legitimate response to my question but because of its decisiveness, it's speediness of reply and who had said it.
>
> Katherina was answering a question I had put to the whole group and in that moment, it seemed to me that she spoke on behalf of them all. There was that instantaneous sense in the air among us as when someone states boldly something you would not dare to say. A collective "phew!" It was both strangely reassuring and unsettling for me, the teacher. In this two-word directive I had been told by Katherina, in no uncertain terms, what she wanted. She did not want to repeat the activity we had been doing. She

> wanted to move on to something else. And I sensed that in that moment the rest of the group were for the most part in agreement with her.
>
> I had been caught off guard because of the judgement. Well, this is what opening student choice looks like, I told myself.
>
> Katherina is one of those learners who says very little. She works diligently and appears to be able to learn effectively with little need for nudges by the teacher. Nudges that keep other students on track. I was not expecting such a forthright response to come from Katherina and it was partly this that had unsettled me. But perhaps, if truth be told, I guess I was a little affronted by the speed of her response. It was as if she couldn't wait to move on from what we had been doing; that she had not been enjoying it. Momentarily my pride was punctured.
>
> The task had been challenging in that it had been stressful […] I had wanted it to be exciting. Evidently it was not successful in all aspects. Perhaps this was in part due to the fragility of the phrase knowledge (particularly on the second side). It may also have been too many people moving on the space at the same time (4 people; two doing set material and two doing impro). It may also have been too distracting to go outside the studio to reflect.
>
> It was all perhaps a step too far…
>
> Jamieson, reflective account January 2017

In thinking through the complexity of agential engagement in learning, this account testifies to the potential unexpected consequential impacts of extending decision making as a shared responsibility. On an individual level this moment felt like a break-through because Katherina's imposition was uncharacteristically agential. It is important to highlight that a learning environment that encourages agential engagement should empower all learners to contribute not just provide further opportunities for those who might ordinarily speak up. Therefore, it is incumbent upon me, as teacher, to ensure that any strategy employed in the dance technique studio to enable the voice of students does not inadvertently serve to perpetuate the status quo with regard to how power functions among the learners. Some students are more capable of stating preferences, for example, simply by default of their privilege. Teaching strategies, such as offering choice between two alternative activities, could disproportionately further empower those students. Therefore, teaching strategies intended to challenge the norms of traditional pedagogical approaches should seek to enable those students who might ordinarily be marginalised, or silenced (Webb, Allen and Walker 2002). However, it is apparent in my journal account above, that in this

instance the choice made by this student appeared to leave the potential learning affordances of this unfamiliar activity unfulfilled.

Teachers might only extend choice strategically when genuinely content to follow whichever path the students choose. However, this may not always be easily achieved and in some ways inhibits learner agency by restricting its appropriateness. In the pedagogical moment, the teacher might need to decide what is of most importance; offering choice and following learner appetite or unilaterally deciding to proceed with a particular activity. Thus, teacher decisions, about whether to extend choice, can be based on an intuitively informed understanding of the potential learning affordances for the learners. Therefore, the teacher might act to not extend choice, and may even pursue learning in contradiction to the stated preferences of the learners if by doing so learning is enhanced. The wider understanding of the teacher may need to direct the learning process, particularly when the learners are not necessarily aware of the potential outcomes. This complicates what empowerment can be in the dance technique class. Learner empowerment is not an automatic consequence of relinquishment of power by the teacher, especially if the impact of doing so is to diminish learning affordances. Consequently, the greater aims of critical feminist pedagogy may be realised by guiding learners towards successful encounters with that which they might not otherwise have chosen to explore for themselves.

On this basis, learning as a practice of freedom operates beyond superficially extending choices to students regarding their preferences, as I had done in the example above. The teacher might more meaningfully balance opportunities for making choices and acting deliberately to encourage agential engagement as part of learning processes that expand and redefine the learners' capabilities. Potentially this may be necessary to ensure that learners remain with challenges toward enhanced learning. According to hooks (1994) 'grappling with difficult material' (154) is important and therefore, empowerment should not constrain or work to contradict engagement with learning that is challenging. This issue will be explored further in discussion of freedom and readiness, later. Through this discussion of explorative learning it can be understood that agential engagement does not principally address learning in terms of commitment by the student but rather the quality of the pursuit of learning. Flowing from this, in the dance technique class, engagement is insufficiently conceived simply as the student doing everything with maximum effort and

attention because while this may demonstrate compliant diligence it is unlikely to lead to transformative learning. Beyond this, agential engagement, fostered through teaching strategies that support active approaches to learning, encourages students to increasingly assume responsibility to direct their own learning. This may be developed through pedagogical strategies that enable the learner to acknowledge the possibility, legitimacy and value of doing so. As a consequence, the student can act deliberately, alongside the teacher, to determine how our learning process will develop. Having defined what is meant by agential engagement, I now move on to discuss the second feature of explorative learning in the dance technique class; somatic attentiveness.

Somatic attentiveness

> So, from feeling what we were exploring and then putting a form into it […] I think the freedom is the choice you can make personally to focus on that specific area or thought or connection or whatever.
>
> Gio

> I feel there's a lot of exploration which is nice. And experimental journey […] It's simple for you [the teacher] to set an exercise and for us [the learners] to take it as just an exercise but then I guess the next stage is figuring out how that can be useful to take from and to take to other classes as well.
>
> William

Somatic attentiveness is the second way in which I will consider learning as exploration in the dance technique class. This concerns bodily attunement with the multidimensional possibilities of movement as they unfold for the dancer (Dryburgh 2018b, Farnell and Wood 2011). Learning approached in this way involves tuning in, paying attention to, noticing and deepening awareness of bodily sensation (Batson and Schwartz 2007, Enghauser 2007, Fortin, Long and Lord 2002). It encourages a state of openness within the danced moment that has to do with 'an improvisational mind' (Clarke et al. 2011, 202). A somatic approach to learning affords awareness in the dancing moment of purposeful embodiment, as discussed in chapter two. For example, while dancing the learner might bring their

attention to; how the weight may be variously utilised to affect a moment of suspension, or how altering the rhythm of an action impacts subsequent movement momentum. The somatically attentive learner is immersed in an ever unfolding and deepening process of negotiating bodily possibilities through the felt senses (Gendlin 2003). In the ensuing discussion, I unpack the ways in which the learner may deepen their appreciation of the affordances of movement materials by becoming somatically attentive to that which is revealed through the body.

In order to enable somatic attentiveness in my teaching I locate the movement materials as propositions. As such the materials are movement content through which the learner can explore, practice and hone technique concepts. Approached in this way, rather than being used as a fixed form to be replicated, the movement materials function as dance problems or puzzles that invite discovery. Exploration of the specificities of the materials are in this way, intended to open up possibilities for student inquiry, or as William puts it above, figuring out how it can be useful, so that the dancing of the materials has polymorphous potentiality.

Play and precision

> I can really let go and make the phrase, not my own, but play with it more and choose different timings or something.
>
> Rose

> Making the movement my own is making it comfortable within my body; that I can play around maybe with the different dynamics that I'd like to do (suspension and travel) or make it quite direct, clear or detailed. That's sort of along the lines of making it my own. So comfortable in my body and perhaps show a bit of my personality through the movement.
>
> Hibiscus

> I can turn an exercise into something that means something to me […] For me, it's helpful because I'm learning more about myself and how I can learn in general.
>
> Gio

The above participant quotes articulate the attentive manner with which dance technique materials can be utilised as a means of explorative learning: playing with it more (Rose), making it comfortable within my body (Hibiscus), turning it into something meaningful (Gio). The materials provide the matter through which embodied knowing might be realised in terms of their defined specificities. This approach encourages an alertness to the vibrant possibilities of the body in motion while undertaking that which is proposed by the materials. Therefore, somatic attentiveness in the dance technique class is diametrically opposed to mechanistic automaticity where movement materials are repeated thoughtlessly. Conversely, somatic attentiveness can involve becoming increasingly precise in the execution of movement material specificities, as stylistically defined, while refraining from technique fixity.

In order to think through what it can mean to hone precision and retain an improvisational mindset I mobilise the distinction between accuracy and precision articulated by social anthropologist and pedagogue Tim Ingold (2011b). In his theory of the skilful practitioner, Ingold states that while accuracy indicates a mechanical ability to replicate the same function, precision is the ability to accommodate contextual changes so that the specificities of the movement might be realised irrespective of the conditions. Therefore, accuracy is limited by its fixedness whereas precision can adapt to environmental factors and is constantly responsive even when repeated. It is precision that I am interested in here. The skill of bodily technique, and therefore the capacity to be precise, according to Ingold is in the 'tuning' of movement in response to the ever-changing conditions of an unfolding task (46). This state of 'tuning' is aligned with somatic attentiveness and is helpful in consideration of what the learner might be involved in doing through explorative learning in the dance technique class.

According to dance researchers Brenda Farnell and Robert Wood (2011), from whom Ingold draws insight, skilled practice is a path to be followed and the dancing body is the dynamic centre of unfolding activity. Thus, dance technique might be conceptualised as skilful practice that leads onwards; a process through which the dancer might realise increasing precision. Ingold (2011b) states that bodily skill 'lies not in the execution of motor operations but in the sensitivity with which these operations can be adjusted to a close perceptual monitoring of the task as it unfolds' (161). Sensitivity to the unfolding task can

be encouraged in the dance technique class by drawing attention, or tuning in, to that which arises while dancing exploratively. The distinction, between precision and accuracy, is valuable in recognising that even when movement materials have been generated by the teacher and are repeated numerous times by the student there remains expansive affordances for vibrant learning. In the following participant comment, Rose describes the process of exploring the movement material by identifying the various ways with which she might play with it.

> To explore it […] play with the movement so you can either do it really full out or maybe you could go into some bits more softly than others so it's got different levels to it. Compared to if I just did it and just did the movement through space. And maybe thinking about the transitions more and playing with the different ways you can go into the different movements […] maybe with playing with somethings I drop some of the original phrase. So, I think while playing I need to pick up the details as well.
>
> Rose

Rose articulates exploring material as different from just doing the movement through space. She uses the term 'play' when considering the various ways in which she might continue to engage with the material. Play can be an important feature of learning. In the context of higher education, according to education theorists Alison James and Chrissi Nerantzi (2019), play can function 'to have greater freedom, more personal involvement and less structure, to be instinctive, open and explore without fixed outcome in mind' (xliii). Playfulness can also be defined as the disposition to explore alternative possibilities (Fisher and Gaydon 2019, 78). This disposition, in the dance technique class can locate the movement materials, generated by the teacher, as malleable to mould in ways that are particular to the individual learner (Dryburgh 2018b). Thus, I posit, diversity can be foregrounded through this approach as the realisation of the materials is not exclusively defined. Exploring the alternative possibilities of materials in diverse ways can be realised through teaching strategies that encourage learners to expand upon that which they are noticing through the body. As a consequence, and in alignment with the aims of feminist critical pedagogy, dance technique learning can be explored in ways that are relevant and

personally meaningful for the individual student. Accordingly, an invitation can be extended to the learner to develop their dancing in respect to their focus, interest and objectives and thus, generate a sense of ownership of the materials. In this way, the aim of explorative learning through somatic attentiveness is to enable the learner to hone their technique capabilities by becoming increasingly precise through an expansive inquiry of the affordances of the materials and to playfully engage with technique in ways that are divergently meaningful.

> You find room in [the phrase of movement] to breathe, to look, to notice things and to play with it a bit more.
>
> Christopher

Playfulness, though, can be uncomfortable as a learning proposition as it suggests the necessity to enjoy that with which one is engaged. For some learners, who may be feeling frustrated with trying to understand what they should be working on in order to make progress for example, the invitation to play with the materials may be unhelpful, as it can feel too ambiguous and open-ended. Making progress through explorative learning in the dance technique class is not necessarily direct, straightforward or formulaic and as such ways to be an active learner can feel unplayfully obscure.

> It's like an on and off thing. It's like some days I can get it. Some days if I'm like really tuning in […] then it can happen.
>
> Syafiqah

> I think sometimes I'm not entirely sure what the focus is. Sometimes I think for me, I know that it's there but sometimes I can't pinpoint what I'm working towards or what I'm working on that lesson.
>
> William

> This thing of discovering is great, and sometimes you would just like to get it. You would like to do it right. Or in the way you think it's right.
>
> Gio

The experience of explorative learning can be both playful in terms of the various options available and/or somewhat beguiling and frustratingly ambiguous. For William, it's not always possible to pinpoint what he's working on. Such learning experiences can inspire ambivalence because although discovery is great, as Gio articulates above, sometimes you would just like to get it. These mixed feelings are understandable. Embodied learning that focuses on first person experience is not always easily perceived or defined. Learning exploratively requires trust by the learner in the validity of the approach and the ability of the teacher to guide you towards understanding. This would seem to contradict the development of agential engagement as we have discussed it thus far. However, what arises from this sense of ambivalence about learning through somatic attentiveness is an extension of our thinking about the practice of freedom in the dance technique class concerning the possibility to remain with that which is challenging. In the next section, I discuss ways in which somatic attentiveness may be experienced in seemingly opposing ways as freshness and familiarity. These concepts help to develop understanding of the experience of challenge through the materials.

Freshness and familiarity

> Finding a freshness so not getting bogged down in the 'oh doing this one again' or this is the way I dance this phrase. It's easy to lose that.
>
> William

> When we do the phrase more and more after a while, we start putting those things inside the phrase so it gets more like a dance. Not only movement but really dance, like we start to feel it […] With that repetition thing we can achieve that feeling because you can let go, you can just do it.
>
> Suzanne

Explorative processes through movement materials in the dance technique class can realise a troubled conjoining of freshness and familiarity. Sustaining freshness of approach while remaining with the same materials can be a disciplined practice for the student as well as an artful science for the teacher. This dimension of somatic attentiveness is closely aligned with stimulating learning, a conception of engaged pedagogy discussed earlier as part of agential engagement. It concerns sustaining vibrancy of bodily exploration while staying

with the same materials, through re-doing (Dryburgh 2018b, Stanton 2011). Tim Ingold (2011b) troubles the perception of dance training to limit bodily sensitivity by 'habituating movement, dulling the senses, and sending conscious awareness into retreat' (10). Conversely, training that aims to engender heightened sensitivity through repetitiveness, he suggests, concerns precise correspondence between the movements of the practitioner and movements in the world. I contend that in order to do this it is necessary for learners to become familiar, even overly familiar, with the materials in the dance technique class. Accordingly, the learner's experience can shift from remembering *what* the materials are to being able to attend to *how* the materials are being embodied. This is what it can mean to be somatically attentive by remaining alert to the possibilities of knowing through the bodily while being precise. As such somatic attentiveness is a modality of engaged vibrancy realised through the constancy of paying attention to that with which the body is involved.

> Once you have that grounding and understanding of the movement, which you can achieve through the repetition, you can then think how you can work through it more.
>
> Hibiscus

> I sometimes won't shut out from what I'm doing but I won't be thinking about what's coming next, and that's when it opens up to me.
>
> Christopher

> We have a different sense of how to move other than just learning material and performing it. Being able to embody the material without having to think about what's the next step. And by doing that finding more about how we move in space.
>
> Lauren

Familiarity with the material affords a shift of attention that was referred to by some of the participants as not needing to think anymore. However, this is misleading as it suggests that the dancer is able to somehow switch-off and go into automatic pilot mode. While this vacancy of thought may be possible, it is not advantageous for explorative learning because

the essential attention to somatic experience is unrealised. Rather than not thinking when the materials are well known, the dancer might otherwise be able to engage deeply with the specificity of the materials in an investigative process of embodiment. Researcher and embodied practitioner, Ben Spatz (2015) discusses the possibility to pursue technique as a deep and complex practice which has the capacity to unfold indefinitely (63). As bell hooks (1994) states 'when the classroom is truly engaged, it's dynamic. It's fluid. It's always changing' (158). Accordingly, learning as exploration in the dance technique class is not only concerned with being physically engaged with the movement materials themselves but being alert to that which may be experienced dynamically through them.

> When you know the steps or the form, it's just keep discovering […] You know how it's going to go. So, you're free to explore *how* you want to dance.
>
> Gio

> I was living in the moment which made me think; Ok now that I know it, enjoying it, maybe I work on pushing myself a little bit more.
>
> Richard

Living in the moment, to use Richard's phrase above, while dancing the materials with somatic attentiveness can require approaching the materials as a means of unrelenting discovery. In the dance technique class, learning as exploration is largely dependent on student confidence as enquirer; to commence, sustain and stimulate their personal engagement with embodied knowing. When the learner has confidence in the *what* of the doing, the re-doing of the materials can enable noticing *how* they might be done, and consequently the dancing of them can become more deliberate, more fluent. This confidence should not be confused for knowing already what will be done, or achieved, but rather an ability to go forth into not-yet-knowing as a process of finding through movement. It is my experience that movement fluency is most apparent when the dancer is absorbed in the materials. Being absorbed in the materials I contend, is a state of awareness where the doing body generates knowledge, where the unfolding movement experience brings forward its own solutioning, its own expansive ways of perceiving.

Therefore, the focus of active participation as a learner is less concerned with the cognitive process of making decisions about what the body might do, but rather being attuned to the fluency of motion wherever the body leads.

However, I want to hold in tension as the discussion progresses, that while using the expansive languages of discovery and finding, learning dance technique involves objectives and specificities particular to the style. It is useful to draw a link between discovery and specificity and the conception of choice as was discussed earlier. Through processes of exploration the learner may become aware of, and able to navigate, the bodily choices that arise from within the dancing moment. Thus, somatic attentiveness is the manner with which this knowledge becomes apparent to the knower. Consequently, technique is revealed, practiced and honed through the explorative dancing of its stylistic specifications variously imbued within the materials.

> You can choose to do something or not, to follow rules or not […] It's about that position of knowledge from which to then make choices; to understand and also to get your body to a point where it has the highest ability of things it can do in order to then make a choice within that. In part it sometimes feels more about just opening you up to understanding what choices are available.
>
> Nicholas

> I felt I was at a point where I really knew the material and I could actually do other things with this […] me finding my own things that are interesting […] That doesn't have to be the same goal as the teacher has set for the class.
>
> Katherina

Explorative learning can facilitate an unfolding of bodily choices as part of an increasing familiarity with the movement materials. This is an embodied process of discovery that has the potential to exponentially open up more things that the body can do (Spatz 2015) or understanding what choices are available as Nicholas describes above. In the dance technique class, a teaching strategy I utilise to maintain the dynamism of exploring that which has become familiar, is to layer the inquiry of materials. Varied foci purpose the materials to 'act as a container through which to pour specific attention' (Clarke et al. 2011,

216). Attention may be paid to any of the specific features of the movement material and stylistic preferences of the technique style, for example the connection between head and tail or the weight of the arms, and thus stimulate fresh inquiry. Layering the foci of the materials can generate a 'multidirectional availability in each student by sharpening their curiosity, igniting their imagination, and engaging them in the immediacy and challenge of continually examining movement and compositional choices' (Karczag 2014, 149). In order to strategically open up and simultaneously direct exploration of the materials I might, as the teacher, raise questions about the learners' movement experiences. For example, 'What's going on through the diagonal reach of the body right now?' or 'In what ways can you change the dynamic as you transition into the next action?'. These problem-based questions, are intended to foreground somatic attentiveness, reorienting the dancer by tuning-in to the possibilities of their bodily experience while dancing. These prompts serve to progressively shift the learning approach from unthinking replication to unknowable discovery. Thus, embodied knowing comes from the learner's perception but may be guided by that to which the teacher draws attention. Therefore, somatic attentiveness can enable developing familiarity with the materials in order to 'freshly' open up the affordances of explorative learning and thereby realising depth of practice.

However, such layering might also lead to feelings of confusion, anxiety, and lack of confidence for the student. As the following participant comments testify, stimulation is potentially negatively experienced as a consequence of explorative learning through open-ended processes.

> There are so many options to explore.
>
> Hibiscus

> There is always something you haven't realised yet about the movement and your way of doing something.
>
> Ino

While somatic attentiveness can be strategically directed by the teacher, through such layering of movement concepts to reinvigorate the focus of inquiry, this approach can feel

overwhelming for some students at some times. This is a further dimension of the ambiguity of the learning focus as discussed earlier. Only now rather than not being clear about what to focus on, the learners express concern about having too many concepts to consider. Explorative learning in dance technique positioned as an immersive and unending endeavour, multi-layered yet always incomplete, can be both a daunting and stimulating experience. Directing attention through varied foci while exploring the movement material can refine the dancer's capabilities in the dance technique class but it may also obfuscate. The potential for explorative learning to be over-stimulating is important to bear in mind as I now consider depth of practice as forms of freedom.

Freedom and readiness

> There is freedom inside the movement […] It's obvious that there's a choice in that dynamic quality. And then you make it clear when something is specific. So *those* moments are important. And then you have those in your head but you have freedom around the rest of it.
>
> Louise

> The end phrase is usually a big movement and you can throw yourself into it. Obviously, there's certain counts most of the time or parts of it that are more controlled but there's a sense of freedom because personally I like to go quite fast, that's what I enjoy, how I like to move, so there's freedom to do that. Or take time with movements, a bit freer. Yeah, I just like the actually moving… In my opinion that's what it's all building for; when you're actually dancing. It's when I feel like you're dancing the most.
>
> Jenny

> There's always a freedom of choice. There's always that ability to choose what you want to do […] That power to mould the space and yourself around other people is quite great when it is given that power of choice.
>
> Christopher

These participants comments articulate experiences of freedoms with the materials and the ability to make choices in the dance technique class. Freedom, states Bandura (2006), 'is conceived not just passively as the absence of constraints, but also proactively as the exercise of self-influence in the service of selected goals and desired outcomes' (165).

Conceived in this way, freedom has more to do with the possibility to act with agency than to not have some constraints within which one acts. Similarly, in her articulation of 'tight places', dance improvisation scholar Danielle Goldman (2010) warns against ignoring constraints that would deny the real conditions that dancers encounter. She troubles the conception of freedom as something that is achievable because it can encourage a 'hardened stance to an inevitably changing world' (Goldman 2010, 3). She endorses an approach of 'flexibility and perpetual readiness' as a powerful 'full-bodied critical engagement with the world' (2010, 5). In consideration of Goldman's state of perpetual readiness in the dance technique class, exploration of the movement materials might be usefully situated as engagement that has critical dimensions of constraint. Conceptually, readiness can ground learning dance technique in the actual circumstances within which it is being explored and who is doing the exploring. Hibiscus evidences in the following comment, an awareness of this conception of playful possibilities within the boundaries of constraint.

> I feel like with these different dynamics if you play with them in the detail or the limitations of you can only go here and here and here you can play within that boundary of how you can make it different.
>
> Hibiscus

Hibiscus recognises that the playfulness of explorative learning has detail and limitation. Accordingly, it is not an unlimited freedom that is promoted through this approach to learning dance technique. Indeed Goldman (2010) claims that to dance without surrendering one's agency is achieved by becoming 'intimately acquainted with constraint, figuring out in the movement what is desirable and what is possible to change' (2010, 145). This figuring out is the embodied experience of making choices for oneself in relation to what becomes available in the dancing moment. It is a way of being through which the dancer negotiates with readiness, to borrow Goldman's term, the onward possibilities of movement given their particular parameters. While the movement unfolds, the dancer is informed by somatic attentiveness; alert to the potentiality of each moment of consequential transitioning. Thus, embodied learning sustains a live agency through the

learners engaged readiness with the movement materials. Reeve and Tseng (2011) who were discussed earlier as originating agential learning as a feature of engagement, state that when students act with agency, they 'initiate a process in which they generate for themselves a wider array of options that expand their freedom of action' (258). Hence, generating a wider array of options can expand learning freedoms. In the dance technique class freedoms may be generated through the process of tuning into the materials with a state of readiness to make choices as they unfold. However, this may not always be the case.

The resultant experience of explorative learning may not always be the generation of options that expand freedoms and can instead lead to unfulfillment of potentialities. Learning potential may be unfulfilled if learners are unable to recognise the expansive affordances of the materials or are not ready to explore them with critical engagement. Accordingly, explorative learning may not in-and-of-itself lead to enhanced capabilities in the dance technique class. I became acutely aware of such possibilities through the early research forum group (4D) discussions. The participants evidenced ambiguity about how to be active learners and revealed how explorative learning could lead to an under-realisation of the affordances of the movement materials. 'Skip it' and 'spotlight it' were terms the participants used in reflecting upon part of their experience of learning exploratively. These terms 'languaged' their concerns about how they might engage with self-directed learning and exposed how, in the moment of dancing, they might choose to highlight or hide certain features of the materials. While agential, the process of how they chose to do this was troubling for me.

The learning process had made it possible to skip-over or spotlight certain features of the material in ways that inhibited the potential further affordances of exploration. While this process enabled some personal adaptation of the movement materials as discussed above, what became apparent was that it also disguised superficiality. The possibility to skip over movements that presented challenges while spotlighting those movements that felt most successful was to some extent reinforcing movement habits, building competition, encouraging superficial approaches and reducing the possibility for risk taking. What had been intended to encourage a deeper engagement with the materials by making choices and taking ownership of the material had resulted, in part, to contradictory approaches to

learning than those aimed for through critical feminist pedagogy. This revealed to me that the relative freedoms in/through/with movement materials could inhibit student exploration rather than extend it. The following reflective account thinks through some of these tensions for me as teacher.

> I felt uneasy watching Benjamin hit that high-tilt splits. It was evidently his 'party piece' and the materials, as I had created them, set up this moment for him to show off.
>
> Initially, it was really exciting to witness him moving powerfully into this shape, standing on one leg with the other high in the air, body tilting to the side. It was impressive. But after a while it started to become predictable, expected, unremarkable even. It was difficult to know how to guide him further in his realisation of this moment as for all intents and purposes it was already 'perfect'. But somehow it was not full.
>
> Another thing that troubled me was that some of the others appeared to become uncomfortable in their own performance of this one action; less sure. I noticed how they might try to move through it quickly or even self-consciously. I sensed the comparisons build in the space.
>
> Jamieson, reflective account March 2016

When the research participants talked about the possibility to spotlight and skip features of the movement material, I was mindful of this experience with Benjamin in the studio, described above. It set up, or rather reinforced, a hierarchy among the learners of those who could and those who could not realise a particular body shape. While evidencing a certain learner agency, the resultant experience highlights the ability, or lack thereof, to confidently engage with movement materials in ways that might deepen technique practice. Instead it allowed the students to approach their dancing of the movement materials in ways that were not always fully explorative and consequently less rigorous. It inadvertently facilitated passivity and this opens up questions about the explicitness of the teaching proposal, what it means for learning as exploration to stimulate challenge and notions of technical rigour. It is important to highlight that this passivity is different from student dissent, discussed earlier, as the former is misguided superficiality while the latter is informed rejection.

Explorative processes of learning in the dance technique class can when made explicit and enabled, establish a culture of enquiry that leads students toward increasing readiness for the expansive affordances of dance technique. With this aim agential engagement might be directed by the learner, while dancing, towards those features of technique that have as yet been under-realised. Features of technique afforded by the movement materials that the student might have otherwise skipped-over could then be proposed as further layers of detailed precision. Thus, that which might otherwise have been spotlighted due to being easily achieved could be approached in alternative ways that expand the individual's movement capabilities. Arising from this, it can be surmised that learning as exploration in the dance technique class concerns an agential engagement with the learning process and a somatic attentiveness through ever-deepening movement precision. Furthermore, explorative learning in dance grapples with the unknowable, expansive, fluid and challenging characteristics of embodied knowing as a practice. Through an openness to pursue the movement materials with precision and particularity the learner practices remaining attentive to, and rigorous readiness for, embodied learning. The following participant comments each evidence an understanding of their readiness for learning and the explorative manner with which they intend to engage with the materials.

> It's not important for you [the teacher] that we *do* the things perfectly but that we push ourselves and keep trying and find something in it.
>
> Katherina

> I allow myself in all classes, all aspects of physical being, to find. […] I've recently given myself permission to do anything.
>
> Christopher

> My goal was to immerse myself […] to gain enough understanding to then make choices, to have options in the future, whatever dance I end up doing; to not be confined to one way of moving.
>
> Nicholas

Dance technique is held within the individual dancer's capacity to respond with readiness, to be skilfully precise and remain alert to the unfolding potentially of movement. This can flow from learning in the dance technique class where the learner is encouraged to engage with agency and be somatically attentive. These are intertwined conceptions of explorative learning that afford and trouble the aims of critical feminist pedagogy. To be an active learner of dance technique involves participation in and contribution to the learning process. However, as this chapter has discussed, engagement with learning approached through critical feminist pedagogy is not immediately indicative of student empowerment. Strategies that are designed to include the learner in processes of choice making so that they might shape the learning process can facilitate increasing learner responsibility while also potentially limiting the affordances of learning activities. As such, learning in the dance technique class can be usefully thought about as deliberate whilst also fluid; purposefully morphing through readiness and rejection.

As has been testified through the participant comments, learning as exploration has the potential to enable learners to acquire confidence in approaching the movement materials of the dance technique class in ways that are immersive, open ended and expansive. Therefore, it can be understood that the possibility to approach learning as a process of discovery heralds experiences of freedom and playfulness. However, what has also become apparent is the potential fragility of such learning experiences wherein uncertainty and not-yet-knowing-ness can conjure up feelings of insecurity and desire for explicit boundaries. There also remains tension in the known-ness of the materials, discussed as familiarity, while sustaining freshness of inquiry. This is complicated further by considerations of strategies designed to develop understanding such as layering of foci having the propensity to over-complicate the learning process. Consequently, while learning as an invitation for inquiry can lead to the enhancement of embodied knowing this is by no means straightforward or simplistic. While seemingly aligned to pedagogical aims of active learning, empowerment and student voice, explorative learning is not galvanised without conflict and compromise. As will be explored in the proceeding data chapters, the transformative ambitions of dance technique pedagogy are concomitantly dependent upon the learner's relationship with the teacher and the influence of peers.

CHAPTER 7

Comfort(able) learning and pedagogical relationships

Towards the emancipatory aims of critical feminist pedagogy, the relationship between learner and teacher can be fundamental to enabling learning, enhancing outcomes and empowering the learner. This chapter explores the experience of student-teacher relationships and is concerned with being comfort(able) in contemporary dance technique classes. Hence, attention is turned to the relational imperatives of pedagogical approaches that reconfigure power hierarchies between students and teacher and the generation of conducive learning environments. In alignment with hooks imperative of an ongoing demonstration of care by the teacher through engaged pedagogy, Comfort(able) learning will be critically reflected upon through the lens of ethics of care, developed by pedagogy scholar Nel Noddings (2013). Further to this, the conceptions of teacher investment, development of trust and learner confidence in the dance technique class are considered as complexly interwoven and concomitant.

I am using the term comfort(able) throughout this chapter to hold together the multiple ways in which the participants reflected upon their experiences of our pedagogical relationships and the resultant learning climate. The use of parenthesis in the word comfort(able) draws attention to the two-fold conception of the term as simultaneously about being at ease and enabling. In order to explore comfort(able) learning the ensuing discussion is divided in two halves. The first half, at ease together, considers comfort(able) learning through reciprocal relationships with the teacher and concerns demonstrations of care, reconfiguring roles and discomfort. While the second half, enabling learning environments, considers comfort(able) learning through generative studio cultures and concerns conduciveness and rigour, teacher investment and making mistakes.

At ease together

Essentially, the role of the teacher can be understood to be facilitation of learning. The quality of the student-teacher relationship is of fundamental importance in establishing the

conditions through which learning may happen. Thus, this relationship can be instrumental in establishing the rules of behaviour, expectations of roles and development of the learning process in environments that function as its own micro climate, such as the dance technique class (Dragon 2015). How these rules of engagement are established in the studio are diverse and may be dependent on the teacher's pedagogical approaches, the learning context and the stylistic priorities of specific dance techniques (Bales and Nettl-Foil 2008). While interaction between the students and the teacher will inevitably influence how the learning culture develops, in the dance technique class it is largely the teacher who is instrumental in setting up the features of the pedagogical process and defining expectations of engagement. The teacher will determine, by and large, the ways in which the learning culture should function and how the learners are be expected to behave.

Demonstrating care

> I feel like I'm quite comfortable with you and I could ask you questions and it wouldn't be a problem […] I feel like it's quite a safe, open space to ask and say if you have problems. That relationship is quite easy […] we feel part of the work rather than you just telling us what to do.
>
> Carol

> I felt sometimes a bit unimportant with a teacher, which didn't affect my learning but I would've liked it better in another way.
>
> 5A Student-led focus group

The above participant comments illustrate the significance of the learner's relationship with the teacher on a felt emotional level in the dance technique class. They highlight that the quality of the student-teacher relationship impacts how learning is experienced. Noddings (2013) contends that the aim of 'every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring' (172) and that the teacher must receive the student 'completely and nonselectively' (176). This ethically oriented perspective highlights the importance of the teacher to maintain care of the learner as a priority. This exceeds care *for* the learner as it encompasses care *of* the person in holistic terms. Carols comments above, in particular draw attention to several features of the lived experience of care in the dance technique studio. She mentions such features as: being comfortable, asking

questions, safe open space, easy relationship, feeling part of the work. These, among other, features of our learning together are critically discussed in what follows as an entwinement of ethics of care and critical feminist pedagogical approaches.

In thinking through the relational aspects of learning, in regard to critical feminist pedagogy, being at ease in a learning context can flow from teaching that is dialogical and non-didactic. A particular priority for me as teacher, is to encourage reciprocity with learners through which we build our practice of learning together (Dryburgh and Jackson 2016). Dialogical processes can enable pedagogical reciprocity, wherein student-teacher interaction is a mutual two-way exchange, which can in turn influence the pedagogical culture that is generated in the studio. Thus, in the dance technique class the teacher can be instrumental in opening up the possibility of a dialogical approach as an alternative to traditional expectations of the student as obedient, passive and silent (Lakes 2005, Burnidge 2012). As was discussed in chapter three, critical feminist pedagogy offers an alternative to authoritarian teaching by centralising dialogue. Dialogue can facilitate conditions through which students feel part of the learning process in ways that counter expectations of dutiful diligence. In order to enable reciprocal pedagogical relationships in the dance technique class, the teacher may establish themselves as relatable and amenable; developing connections and exchanges that demonstrate recognition of the student as a human being and individual. This can act to promote the understanding of difference as valued and the possibility of diversity to be centralised in the development of the pedagogical approach. Thus, the relatable teacher may need to convey that it matters to them that each student feels able to learn and that the learning environment is inclusive of their particular needs.

> I really need to know my teacher cares about the group and about me. Not in a way that I tell you about my personal life or something but that you care about my mood and about my improving […] I know in this relationship [gesturing herself and me] I feel I'm being given a good soil in order to grow [hands moving upwards].
>
> Ana

> You are really approachable and it's not just dance… a human to human approach rather than dancer to master-dancer approach [hands gesturing different levels]. We're all people and we all need to make sure we're alright. I think you're really good at having that in our class. Which is really helpful for learning as well because it just feels comfortable.
>
> Lauren

The implications of the imperatives of care for the dance technique class are manifold, especially regarding how students are made to feel throughout the learning process, how we might behave with each other and consequently the lived experience of the studio learning environment. As such, enhancement of care in dance technique classes goes beyond the standard conceptions of fairness in general terms, such as treating everyone equally and behaving without favouritism. In addition, for the teacher, it concerns meeting students as people, responding to their diverse and changing needs, being ready to adapt and working to generate a learning environment that is a space of invitation. The above participants comments capture a sense of this and the ways in which care had been experienced in our relationships; you care about my mood and about my improving (Ana), a human-human approach (Lauren).

According to higher education scholars Blackie et al. (2010) caring begins with viewing the student as a valued human person and treating them with respect. In the dance technique class, teaching that demonstrates ethical care communicates that each student matters to their teacher and that the teacher is committed to supporting them personally (Dyer 2014). For me, as teacher, this involves approaching teaching as connecting with the person, recognising that each learner is an individual and that the learning encounter is that which we make happen together. Through reciprocal relationships, established in ethical care, teachers and students become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow, positioning students as critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher (Freire 1993, 61). This can be seen as the ethical basis of comfort(able) learning where the teacher is understood by the student to be approachable and the student feels important to the teacher. Both Gio and Louise, below, articulate their experience of this in terms of overcoming that which separates us; a bit less of a boundary and break of some sort of wall.

> For me it's a lot about sharing […] The thing about these sharing things is sometimes you don't have to share with a lot of words sometimes it's the energy, sometimes it's the feeling that you share with each other. And there is a bit less of a boundary between. So even if I know that there's the teacher and I'm the student there's a sense of communication.
>
> Gio

> It feels like there's a break of some sort of wall. There is a teacher-student relationship [gesturing hands in two separate spaces] it's not so as you're up here [raising one hand above her head] and we are just dancers who are at Laban and we're down here [bringing same hand down].
>
> Louise

In terms of feminist critical pedagogy, the teacher needs to demonstrate, on a continual basis, the value they place in the student (hooks 1994, Owens and Ennis 2005). This can mean that the teacher remains alert to the changing needs of the individual students, and the evolving dynamics of the group. Care is therefore realised through relationships as part of an evolving process. It is not something that is established once and for all, but needs to be reinforced and sustained. In consideration of feminist ethics, pedagogy researcher Donna Engelmann (2009) states that teaching is 'incomplete without the attentiveness, responsiveness, and responsibility called for in a caring relationship' (63). Thus, ethics of care is helpful in thinking about ways of being for the teacher in the dance technique class, such as attentiveness and responsiveness, as it highlights that the role of teacher assumes an ongoing responsibility to care (Noddings 2013, Warburton 2004, Enghauser 2012). An important function of the demonstration of ethical care in the dance technique class is the realignment of the conventional hierarchical structure of the dance technique class.

Reconfiguring roles

> Obviously, you are the teacher and I am the student. I think it's quite nice the moments where if someone asks a question and you're [the teacher] not quite sure and therefore we find it together. Those are the really nice moments. It's obviously your class and we're taking the class but, it's almost like, sometimes it's like, not the lines are blurred but we take from each other in a way.
>
> Syafiqah

> I think, although the teacher's still teaching, the student is always going to learn more from that, I think it's nice how I feel comfortable to have conversations with the teacher and with the other students that relates to the class. We can then both learn from each other […] you're more on an even playing field kind of thing.
>
> Amy

> I've never had a teacher like you before who treated us like equals.
>
> 4D forum group

In dance, pedagogical relationships that reconfigure the conventional roles of teacher and student can realise more democratically conceived ways of being in the studio (Kahlich 2001, Burnidge 2012, Dyer 2014). The participants' comments above describe this as being treated like equals (4D forum group comment), being on an even playing field (Amy) and finding together when the teacher is not sure (Syafiqah). Consequently, being comfort(able) in our dance technique classes can be understood to have been based in student-teacher reciprocity; manifest in the relative easiness of our two-way interactions. This way of relating can have important implications because it challenges prevalent expectations of how power might function and interrupts normative relations of dominance and subordination (Lather 1991, xvii). In the dance technique class, this can facilitate a reconsideration and working through of wider concerns in relation to social injustice, inequality, asymmetrical power, and the lack of human rights or dignity of learners (Barr 1999, 15). Consequently, dialogical learning through its aim to empower students, can be understood as pedagogical disruption that serves to prioritise environments of respect and trust (Freire 1993). Dance pedagogy approached in this way redefines normative studio hierarchies and harnesses the expansive affordances of easy relationships between students and teacher.

In the dance technique class, reciprocity can be enabled through teaching strategies that encourage students to ask questions. The endorsement of asking questions can have empowering impacts by acknowledging the learners needs and foregrounding their personal understanding (Rimmer-Piekarczyk 2018). Furthermore, questions that arise from

the experience of learning can be the conduit through which pedagogical relationships may develop and enhanced understanding is facilitated.

> [Our student-teacher relationship] is great. It's fantastic because I like how it's really thorough and there's always open to questions. If someone is stuck there's always that time to go through it [the materials] by yourself or with the teacher […] in this class, it's so clear what you're trying to give across and there's always that time and chance to explain it.
>
> Richard

> I think you're really approachable as a teacher and no-one's scared to ask you questions or have a dialogue with you […] It just means if we have questions we don't feel the need to try to figure it out ourselves so we get a sense of tension that can sometimes happen in other classes where […] it's not as encouraged to be questioning things […] You are so open to questions and so ready to answer them.
>
> Lauren

It was apparent through the research that the possibility to ask questions, particularly for the purpose of clarification, in the dance technique class was important to the participants. It enabled time and space for individual learners to participate fully in the learning activities. Additionally, the ability to ask questions can reduce stress particularly if predicated on a felt sense of the teacher preparedness to answer them. Thus, by asking questions the participants were able to feel comfort(able) about what we were doing. This was described above, as always having time to go through the materials (Richard) and mitigating the tension of feeling the need to figure it out (Lauren). The students were able to clarify, for example, the details of the movement materials and while this may seem relatively elementary, the possibility to ask questions in the dance technique class cannot be assumed. In other settings, dance learners can be expected to 'pick-up' quickly and the provision of additional time to seek clarification might be perceived as pedagogically inefficient, not rigorous and lowering of expectations.

Dialogue functions to enhance understanding. However, the integration of dialogue in the dance technique class, of which asking questions is an example, can impact the pacing and

rhythm of the evolving movement experience. This can be experienced as detrimental to climactic processes of the dance technique class and may be seen as limiting the affordances of high intensity movement activities. However, the intention to maintain the pace of teaching should not, I believe, lead to excluding those learners who might need additional time to be ready to proceed. In competitive dance contexts it might be acceptable or even inevitable that some students will get left-behind, marginalised by not learning the material quickly enough or not having understood some pertinent detail. However, this is to be avoided through feminist approaches that foreground relationship, personal learning and respect for diversity (Webb, Allen and Walker 2002). Additionally, through somatic approaches to dance technique first person experience is privileged, as was discussed in the previous chapter, and this has much more to do with quality and depth of engagement than quantity or speed of enaction. While the teacher can aim to maintain the highest possible standards of learning through sustaining a stimulating pace for example, it is important that all learners have what they need in order to fully participate in learning. This, I contend, is not so much to do with the asking of questions per se, but through the demonstration of care in the teacher-learner relationships. The possibility to ask questions, can arise from this care, and affords the opportunity for learners to feel comfort(able) enough to seek out what they need. At the same time, learners can be encouraged to try materials without fear of going wrong, for example, and reinforce the possibility to develop confidence to approach movement concepts exploratively as discussed in the previous chapter. In this way, asking questions is indicative of a pedagogical culture wherein learners can realise greater agency and assume personal responsibility for their learning.

The seemingly straightforward issue of asking questions in the dance technique class can be complicated for the teacher. The possibility to meet individual needs among diverse learners is challenging in itself, and can require balancing conflicting needs. For example, some learners might respond well to greater challenges while others need more support, time, clarification and so on. In my experience, if a dance student is preoccupied in trying to keep up, in whatever from that may take, they will not be able to learn with confidence. And if this is an ongoing experience it can marginalise the learner, and generate an exclusionary learning experience. As a teacher, by demonstrating care through a

commitment to meet all learners needs, especially those who might ordinarily get left behind/marginalised/silenced, it is possible to redefine how power functions in normative dance technique contexts.

Discomfort

Challenges to the status quo of student-teacher relationship, such as demonstration of care and reconfiguring roles, can be disruptive and they are not necessarily experienced as comfort(able). Students can variously experience discomfort when teaching approaches challenge their normative learning expectations (Ganote and Longo 2015). This can lead some students to resist engaging with reciprocity and shared responsibility, at least initially. Resistance by students can arise in the studio for numerous reasons and may be a consequence of not being able, ready or willing to actively assume responsibility for learning (Reed 2011). In chapter six, experiences of dissent were opened up for consideration as affirmative action by the student. An important distinction though, is that dissent concerns approaches to the learning practice whereas resistance, as it is being discussed here, concerns relationship.

When I am confronted by resistance from learners in the studio, I can notice an increased tension for me to be more didactic as a teacher in order to ameliorate self-excluding student behaviours and to teach in a way that they might find more appealing. This tension comes from what I imagine learners expect of their teacher and my perceived need to maintain responsibility for the ongoing learning of the whole group. Nodding's (2013) states that when we choose to behave ethically as teachers there is commitment to the learners and to our own continual receptivity. She goes on to state that each choice we make as teachers 'tends to maintain, enhance, or diminish us as ones-caring' (175). The 'pull', I experience, towards more didactic modes of teaching when confronted with resistance, challenges the choices I have made to teach in ways that remain receptive to the learners and counter competitive forces. However, I recognise that this pedagogical approach can be experienced as an imposition that is far from empowering for some learners. This tension may be resolved in various ways in the learning moment, and as teacher I rely on my intuitive sense of what might be most effective to enable greater comfort while sustaining a commitment to critical feminist pedagogy. My responses in the studio can range from strategies such as: active ignoring of resistance, praising other more

positive behaviours, making explicit, but generalised, statements to the group about my expectations of our practice, talking directly but discreetly with particular students about my experience of their resistance and in some extreme cases pursuing more formal institutional policy processes regarding student conduct. Consequently, this requires a continued commitment on my part to not abandon care ethics, relational, receptive, attentive ways of being, when they do not feel easy. And while this resistance is not something I need to navigate consistently; I am often aware of the potential jeopardy of not being able to convince students of the value of working in ways that are more democratic and inclusive than they may be used to.

Meeting resistance can be understood as an inevitable part of reconfiguring the student-teacher relationship in the dance technique class. This is the struggle hooks (1994) describes in pursuing empowerment through education. While I feel relatively capable of managing some resistance as part and parcel of the learning process in the dance technique class, there are times when these tensions are obstructive. The following teacher journal account articulates some of my feelings following a tutorial with a student, Emily, with whom I was experiencing a disquieting relationship.

> I felt a level of disrespect from Emily that was disquieting. Often when I was offering information to the group instead of paying attention she would be looking away or having a private conversation. On several occasions, I observed her rolling her eyes while I was talking […]
>
> During a tutorial Emily made comments about her interest in moving in other ways (than we had been doing). While this is not in itself offensive, I felt manipulated by her demeanour as someone who needed to be treated with special attention. She stated at one moment that 'it is all shit'. I understand that this statement was about the programme in general but I felt it necessary to end the tutorial at this stage […]
>
> I am left feeling somewhat unresolved in relation to Emily. I feel that I was not able to reach her and for some reason there was a disconnect between us. I suspect this is largely to do with her work ethic being so apparently different from my own, a sense of wasted opportunity and offended pride in my ability/value as a teacher.
>
> Jamieson, reflective account February 2017

From this reflective teacher journal account, it can be understood that there are risks for me in assuming dialogical approaches in the dance technique class. Those risks are associated with accepting that as the teacher the process of learning is not within my complete control and that I cannot negate the possibility of unresolvable resistance. While not relinquishing my responsibility to enable the possibility for learning I recognise that emancipatory learning happens, or not, through the complexity of interpersonal environments. My experience with Emily evidences that I was unable to affect change in our learning together that was satisfactory for me and I strongly expect for her too. In my comments about her work ethic it is clear that I made judgments about her efforts to learn, and while potentially justified, this signals my own resistances. This is disturbing for me, because I have to acknowledge that despite my 'best' efforts I was not able to 'reach' Emily. This illustrates the limitations of the teacher's power and requires an acceptance that easiness between teacher and learner might not always be achievable. Being at ease is not an inevitable consequence of shifts away from hierarchical structures. Thus, as teachers it can be necessary to accept that sometimes some learners will not find our learning encounter appealing, or even possible, and that this disconnection can invariably impact the learning experience of the whole group. I shall expand upon this in the following chapter in discussion of the influence of peers.

While potentially troubling, discomfort need not be avoided in the development of dialogical learning. Discomforting learning situations, such as meeting with resistance, can give rise to emotions that create possibilities for individual and social transformation (Zembylas and McGlynn 2012, 41). Pedagogy scholar Melanie Boler (1999) locates discomfort as an invitation to 'inhabit a more ambiguous and flexible sense of self' (176). As teacher, I am often aware that I have responsibility for meeting the, sometimes contradicting, needs and requirements of the student group. Care in this context can involve a degree of my own discomfort in attempting to empower diverse learners while accepting the confines of my own power as teacher. Maintaining care in the dance studio is not, therefore unproblematically comfort(able) as it can require an engagement by the teacher with their own limitations, resistant responses from some students and remaining with relationships that are unresolved. At the same time, it can be important that the teacher does not infantilise students, when acting with ethical care in the face of resistance,

further disempowering them through over protectiveness and compromised expectations. I contend that being at ease together is not to prevent encounters with discomfort, so that students might not respond with resistance, but rather to create the conditions within which learners might successfully engage with that which is not yet comfort(able).

Enabling learning environments

The aim of our pedagogical efforts as teachers is to enable "the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (hooks 1994, 13). In teaching dance technique, it is important that the studio environment is conducive to learning wherein pressures that might otherwise inhibit learning are minimised. In this section, I explore the impact of care with respect to the resultant learning environment in the dance technique studio. In order to critically reflect on what comfort(able) learning might mean I first consider the tension between conducive learning environments arising from being at ease and the necessity for rigour as learning thoroughness.

Conduciveness and rigour

> Something about the atmosphere of the class makes me calmer […] I think we are never made to feel by you stress and it's always like, calm and supportive.
>
> Lauren

> I think there's an effort to make it into a nice environment that I quite like […] I think it's not so much to do with the way the exercises are taught but it's more kind of the moments in between.
>
> Louise

> It's funny because sometimes it's really challenging but it's playful […] OK you can laugh, but then break the laugh because you go.
>
> Gabriella

As the above participant comments attest, the opportunity for being comfort(able) in our learning environment, while simultaneously maintaining rigour, had been enabling for the

participants of this study. This practice exemplified a pedagogical approach that many students recognised as distinct from their other experiences of learning dance technique. The enabling environment was characterised by an intimacy of embodied learning that generated connectivity among the participants due to being visceral and interactive. For example, the 'moments in-between', as articulated by Louise, might refer to the space around the dancing activities where we can come together at ease, to discuss what had been happening and prepare for what can come next. These moments can be light hearted, urgent, self-deprecating, focused, instructive, forensic, anecdotal among many other ways of learning dialogically. They set the tone in the studio for pedagogical relationality such as calm and supportive (Lauren) and really challenging but playful (Gabriella). These moments of coming together can be instrumental in establishing and sustaining the conduciveness of an interactive learning setting, such as the dance technique class, because the attitude of the teacher is demonstrated through them. They can provide opportunities for 'easy' exchanges that strengthen student-teacher relationships and flow of dialogue. In our studio environment, the manner with which I responded to the students with observational comment, introduction of new ideas or asking reflective questions, for example, reinforced, to some extent, an ease with regard to how we can approach what do together.

Comfort(able) learning environments that establish 'easy' student-teacher interaction in the dance technique class, as they have been discussed thus far, can be misunderstood as lacking rigour, focus or discipline. However, in enabling learning environments, I posit, affirming student-teacher relationships can be sustained even when constructively critical. Constructive criticism can be experienced as part of an ongoing demonstration of care by the teacher. Therefore, learning environments that aim to retain thoroughness of rigour, such as the dance technique class in a conservatoire setting, may utilise 'uneasy' criticism but this requires further consideration. In dance training contexts that work toward excellence, care and rigour are often conceptualised as diametrically oppositional and this was discussed in chapter two. This dualism perpetuates a misapprehension about the effectiveness of learning in dance technique where making progress is understood to be proportional to the harshness with which the student is taught. While harshness, or authoritarian teacher behaviours, may be effective for some students in some situations,

this way of experiencing dance technique is potentially harmful, particularly in terms of student self-esteem and long-term development.

In dance, especially dance technique, the harsh treatment of an authoritarian teacher can be perceived to be desirable by students (Lakes 2005, Schupp 2010), while simultaneously impacting negatively how they feel about themselves and their technical ability (Dryburgh 2018a). My contention is that Comfort(able) learning environments, as they are conceived here, enable holistic and inclusive processes that expansively define dance technique capabilities. As a consequence, an enabling learning environment might be characterised as supportive and affirming. The contrasting experiences of learning in dance technique classes was discussed by the research participants as they reflected on our learning process. In the following comments they articulate diverse and ambivalent feelings about the various impacts of critical teaching.

> I've had teachers who are quite strict and even mean, not mean but quite harsh, and I find that really helpful as well. I find that can be more [click fingers] just makes you switch on. Some techniques will be quite strict and then it's more facilitated by someone screaming at you when it's wrong.
>
> Jenny

> I've had teachers who are quite aggressive in their making you do this. They will shout at you to do it better and better (repeatedly hitting the air with a fist). That does make you better but I don't think it's OK. I don't think it's a good way of working because if you don't get it you might feel negatively about yourself or you might feel less than other people.
>
> Carol

> I do appreciate a range of approaches teachers have. There are teachers like Anthea [pseudonym] that shout at you and get super angry but you always know that it is because she truly cares and wants the students that *want* to work (to) become better.
>
> 5A Student-led focus group

These accounts problematise what we might understand as care in the dance technique class. The participants describe, above, their experiences of teachers who are quite harsh,

quite aggressive, and super angry while justifying such behaviours as being really helpful, making you better, and because the teacher truly cares. This could suggest a willing subservience and belief in the effectiveness of harsh teaching, even when understood as 'not OK' as in Carol's case. The apparent aggressiveness of some teaching experienced by the participants is troubling for me, but not surprising. My own experiences as a dance student featured similar harsh treatment which I believed, at the time, indicated the teacher's belief in my potential. While I do not condone such displays of teacher harshness towards student's, as described by the participants above, I recognise how entwined this can be with beliefs about what is required to realise dance technique capabilities. Therefore, in considering dance technique pedagogy as comfort(able) it is essential to reflect on what we mean by enabling learning environments.

Describing her intention as one-caring teacher, Noddings (2013) states that the student 'must be aware always that for me he is more important, more valuable, than the subject' (174). Through this she asserts that in terms of ethics of care, of upmost importance for the teacher is to convey the value placed in the learner. However, while this aim is clear the manner with which this objective may be manifest can be diverse. Later, I shall discuss teacher investment as part of generating an enabling learning environment. Here, I think through the balance of care and rigour in the dance technique class and how there are many modalities through which care may be demonstrated. In recognition of this, dance scholar Edward Warburton (2004) states that 'we must accept modes of caring that seem sweet or sour, but not pathological or indifferent' (95). This distinction is helpful because what might be regarded as un/acceptable teacher behaviour is not always easily perceived by those who are not relationally involved. Similarly, co-option in negative beliefs about how students expect teachers to treat them can prevent learners from perceiving their learning environment as counter-productive, limited or potentially abusive. The appropriateness of teacher behaviour with learners might be necessarily judged by the concreteness of quality of the particular relationships in the specific context (Dryburgh 2018a). However, the research revealed that some of the participants were able to identify various teacher attitudes that they perceived as disabling of learning, such as being negative, being too friendly, and not caring, as the following comments describe.

> I've experienced that no matter what you do the teacher's going to be negative about you or about the class. And that is really hard sometimes when you're trying so hard and no matter what it is, you're going to get negative feedback. And not necessarily always constructive either. Constructive feedback is good feedback but negative is not helpful for me.
>
> Lauren

> I sometimes experienced teachers that were a bit 'too friendly' and couldn't create a concentrated atmosphere.
>
> 5A Student-led focus group

> I feel as though in some lessons the teachers don't care so I don't. Even though I'm here for myself and I do always try to remember that, but it just makes you just [shrug shoulders].
>
> Louise

How teacher's behave toward learners, and the resultant learning environment, evidences their attitude towards them and this can have significant impact on the learner's sense of self and motivation for learning. While rejecting authoritarian teaching, a more nuanced exploration is needed in consideration of how the one-caring teacher might assert authority in order to generate enabling learning environments. Critical feedback can be understood as an example of this complex balancing of care and rigour.

commn, and its impact on the learner. It raises questions about how to balance ways of being as a teacher that do not compromise critical challenge, as part of rigorous thoroughness, while sustaining a comfort(able) environment, as part of care. Such considerations affect how distinctions are made between acceptable and unacceptable teacher behaviours. As previously stated, this is not necessarily usefully defined in dualistic terms, such as, for example, rigour versus care, but might rather be helpful to perceive that which is recognised by the student to be constructively exacting and emotionally affirming. For example, it can be important to challenge learners who appear to consistently resist risks. As teacher, I will speak privately to students on a one-to-one basis if I have concerns about their manner of engagement. In doing so I hope to demonstrate to them that they are important to me, I have noticed how they are applying themselves and that I have high

expectations of our learning together. What can perhaps enable this to remain a demonstration of care rather than a critique of blame is that the teacher would enter this exchange with the understanding that there may be factors impacting the learner's engagement that they are not aware of. Accordingly, the teacher might be able to assist the learner in overcoming barriers to learning. Consequently, the teacher does not relinquish their authoritative role in realising learning potentialities with each individual while building a comfort(able) learning environment.

Generating learning environments that are constructively exacting and emotionally affirming requires sensitivity and discernment by the teacher. Demonstrations of care might not be experienced as enabling and therefore the possibility for challenges to be generative is complex. Attempts to open up possibilities for the learner might not immediately be perceived as comfort(able). Teachers who constructively respond to learners in ways that exemplify care, might need to deliver challenging statements, especially with regards to expectations of etiquette and safe practice that warrant urgency. In my teaching practice, despite my intention to act with care, I acknowledge that I do not always get it right in terms of delivering difficult and important messages so that they are heard without causing offence or hurt. The following excerpt from my teacher journal reflects on an occasion where I believe my behaviour was intimidating and not adequately careful.

> Yesterday I shouted at a student, really shouted. I found it extremely disquieting and it has left me feeling guilty, upset and confused. […] we were doing jumps travelling across the diagonal in an intricate phrase with many changes of direction […] There was a certain amount of risk in that the students were travelling through space at speed and crossing each other's path. […]
>
> As the students finished their turn, though, rather than moving out of the way for the next person who was coming, some of them were remaining in the space or moving into the space of the oncoming student. […] I shouted to be heard above the loud music and waved my arms to indicate that they should move back away from the oncoming students who were following them. Most students responded immediately to this, knowing that it was important. However, [one particular] student on the next time round, again walked into the pathway of the next student creating again a serious risk of harm to herself and others.

> I was frustrated by this and raised my voice to be heard and approached her. It is unusual for me to approach a student in this way, as I am aware that it may be experienced as threatening. However, the student did not seem to be responding to me by acknowledging what I had said. There was no change in her demeanour to suggest to me that she had understood. I said loudly and with anger "What on earth do you think you are doing? It's not safe. Move away." I moved away and the exercise continued, however the mood had changed.
>
> As the sequence finished, I apologised to the student for shouting at her and then I apologised to the whole group.
>
> Jamieson, reflective account January 2016

This is an account of an isolated event and while it does not serve as an illustration of my overall teaching practice, it highlights the fragility of the dance technique class with respect to what might be conducive to learning in particular circumstances. In some ways it can be understood that in the moment of teaching described above, I instinctively behaved assertively in order to maintain student safety. However, the experience disturbed me at the time and upon reflection I can acknowledge the inappropriateness of angrily approaching an individual student and how I should have rather stopped the group activity in order to calmly outline necessary conduct. Reflecting on my behaviour in this incident highlights my humanity and gives me pause to recognise the inevitability of making mistakes at times in the teaching moment. I remember that in that particular moment I had been frustrated by specific behaviours that I perceived to be getting in the way of the developing movement experience. While this frustration was potentially justifiable, what I should have appreciated was some learners need me to reinforce basic ground rules about how to share space safely. To be fair to myself such outbursts are very rare, but the account serves as a signifier of teacher fallibility in the studio. For teachers invested in the student's possibilities to learn, aggressive behaviour should be acknowledged in order to puncture the perception of the teacher as infallible (Engelmann 2009).

Furthermore, the above journal commentary speaks to the need for teacher reflexivity and openness as much as it speaks to the in/appropriate behaviour of teachers. It is important for a teacher to recognise when their behaviour is flawed and recommit to being with the learners in ways that consistently demonstrate care. It is not enough, then, to simply be an approachable teacher in the dance technique class (Warburton 2004). To be comfort(able),

it can be necessary for the learner to know, sense and feel that their teacher, while fallible, is committed to caring for them while ensuring their overall development in ways that do not compromise critical challenge. It was important I think, that following this incident I apologised publicly to the individual student and the group as a whole. This act of acknowledgement of fault by me the teacher, was potentially not expected by the students and might have been impactful in terms of how it continued to dismantle the student-teacher hierarchy. It was a demonstration of vulnerability and as such vital in modelling risk-taking by the teacher. As hooks (1994) asserts, if teachers invite learners to move beyond their comfort zones, students should not be the only ones who are expected to be vulnerable (21). McGregor (2004) develops this further by stating that through critical pedagogy, the teacher's 'goal becomes not to transform the other but to transform ourselves and then share this transformational process with others' (102). Some of the ways in which I try to realise this in the studio is by sharing more of myself with the learners and to trust them by being less guarded. For example, I am increasingly transparent about my own feelings, my not knowing and allow my teaching to be side-tracked by that which is pertinent in the moment of teaching. This is a commitment to a way of being with learners that is more open in order to dismantle conventional expectations of the 'expert' and puncture the elitist pretentions of technique.

I recognise that by sharing more of myself with the learners, while retaining professionalism, our relationship can be more intimate, transparent and connected. This allows me to be more at ease myself in the learning context; where I feel less need to present myself as an all-knowing teacher and I can be more spontaneous. I recognise, though, for some learners the experience of a teacher apologising for shouting, as described above, may have been confusing, seem unnecessary or a sign of weakness. However, this critical incident afforded an experience of a teacher owning rather than erasing his mistake and this may serve as further tangibility of ethical care. As such acknowledgements of vulnerability by the teacher can lead students to reconsider their expectations of the teacher's role.

Teacher investment

> It feels like you're teaching us and you're paying attention to us rather than coming in and doing a set class that you could be teaching to some toasters

> because it doesn't matter what we're doing. And I know that's probably really extreme but I've felt like that in classes before. That we might as well be inanimate objects because they weren't paying attention to what we were doing.
>
> Lauren

> I feel that you're interested in my work. From other classes I don't get the same vibe from teachers. It can make you feel like you're not doing the right thing because they aren't invested in you […] Obviously, all the teachers are friendly but I just feel like you're more invested. I feel like you're more in it.
>
> Rose

> I like how you were fast at learning everyone's names […] there's just something about it that feels more caring in some ways when someone actually calls you by your name instead of just 'you'. And when you know that someone is investing their time into you it makes you want to give back as well more.
>
> Louise

A further consideration of how teacher authority might function to establish an enabling learning environment in the dance technique class, concerns student perceptions of the teacher's investment in them and their learning process. As has been discussed, the teacher who rejects authoritarianism, thereby diminishing hierarchy, aims to empower the learner. Teaching towards this aim can concern investment by the teacher in the learner's project while simultaneously de-centring themselves (Warburton 2004, Engelmann 2009). 'Engrossment' is the term Noddings uses to describe the imperative of the teacher to give full attention to the student in the learning moment. It requires 'motivational displacement' in as much as the teacher sets aside their own agenda in order that learning processes might be led by student inquiry. This perspective is useful for considering learning as functioning from the interests of the learner and positions the teacher as enabling facilitator. In this way teacher investment is a further demonstration of care of the learner.

The participants comments above describe their experience of investment by the teacher, in terms of paying attention (Lauren) and being interested in their work (Rose). It can have enabling effects in the dance technique class as, in Louise's words, it makes you want to

give back. Thus, teacher investment in the learning of the students can be a stimulating signal of a teacher's 'readiness to engage' (Warburton 2004, 91). Through her articulation of engaged pedagogy hooks (1994) describes the teacher as being a catalyst for learning and in so doing indicates the instrumental role teachers serve to activate learning. The dance technique teacher can share their dance practice with students by communicating passion thereby infusing the learning context with focus, drive and energy and consequently generate a compelling invitation to learn. I would contend that in dance technique classes teachers might go further than this because, while the teacher can instigate learning, it is important that learning is not contingent on teacher enaction as this would serve to disempower learners by fostering passive reliance on teacher-led directives. Therefore, teacher investment can stimulate learning, but it should not become the condition upon which student engagement is predicated.

> I rely on you [the teacher] too much. I'm waiting for you to motivate me.
>
> 4D forum group

In the dance technique class, the experience of comfort(able) learning can be understood to concern a felt sense of investment and care by the teacher that leads to increasing agential engagement by the student. According to influential dance pedagogy researcher Susan Stinson (1998), it is important for the teacher to remain aware of the possibility that care can have detrimental impacts on learning if it leads to student dependency by 'denying them the opportunity to set and meet challenges' (34). Accordingly, by de-centring the teacher and establishing an enabling learning environment, the role of the teacher is not an abdication of responsibility or a diminishment of investment. It can rather be a commitment to facilitating the conditions through which the student might most effectively learn. However, demonstrating investment might not be easily achieved by the teacher or enthusiastically perceived by the learner.

There are particular considerations for the teacher who aims to act in non-authoritarian ways as it can be mis-interpreted by the learners as disinterest. The following excerpt from my teacher journal reflects on a tutorial with Heidi, a student who was struggling in her

learning with me due to lack of feedback and the consequential impact on her perceived progress.

> Heidi appeared to be angry about a number of issues. It seemed that she might cry. Her face and neck became red and blotchy. At times, she took deep breaths. She found it difficult to look at me while she was talking.
>
> There were a number of issues that she presented to me as problematic. One of the most pressing seemed to be about her feeling 'lost' during technique class. She needed individualised feedback to know how she was doing. She stated several times that I had not given her any personal feedback during the entire first term. She felt that only giving 'general' feedback was insufficient. She stated that I was good at making the group feel comfortable (I can't quite remember the term but got the impression that she meant an inclusive environment) but that I was not meeting her need of feedback that would allow her to know how she was doing personally.
>
> […] I found her tone throughout the tutorial (that lasted half an hour) to be challenging. I felt accused by her of neglecting her as a student. I felt judged by her as being inadequate as a teacher. I was surprised by her strength of feeling as I had not picked up on this in our learning together. I tried hard throughout the exchange to remain calm, personally acknowledging my own feelings of hurt and anger, while trying to hear what was being communicated to me. I wanted to be able to help Heidi. I wanted to offer her understanding and to help her know that she was important to me as a learner.
>
> I felt that what Heidi was requiring of me was some sort of sign that I knew who she was as a learner and that I had some feedback for her. I felt very conflicted because although in a tutorial I do usually give some individualised feedback about things that the student had been doing well and what they might continue to work on, in this moment giving such nuggets of information would not be adequate. It was as if they would not amount to enough in response to such need. The information might be too flimsy to nourish potential forward trajectory.
>
> […] In this case, with Heidi, I offered her some information about the progress I had witnessed and some elements that she might focus on for development going forward. Interestingly after each of these elements she nodded and stated that this was something she had had an understanding of or had been thinking about for herself. As I was outlining my feedback in this way it felt as if I was reinforcing some of the things Heidi had been noticing for herself. In this I hoped I was helping to establish an understanding of her own ability to recognise her knowing and potential to give feedback to herself. I tried to make a comment to this effect but it did not appear to be well received.
>
> Jamieson, reflective account June 2016

This account evidences the potentially highly emotive stakes of learning in the dance technique class and its troubling consequences for the pedagogical relationship. I was troubled by Heidi's feeling that I had not been sufficiently invested in her as a learner. Through the journal account it is evident that I had taken on an emotional responsibility for this experience and I was conflicted by how to respond during the tutorial that might be adequately meaningful. Simply offering Heidi the feedback that she had been missing throughout the term would not sufficiently make up for its perceived absence. Doing so might also undermine the important ways in which, from my perspective, we had been learning together. I was concerned that offering direct feedback, in the tutorial, would seem that I agreed with her account. And while I did not want to dismiss the strength of her feeling and the validity of her experience, I wanted to help Heidi recognise that there were ways in which her embodied knowing had been developing as well as the fact that she had not been overlooked by me.

This critical incident highlights the complexly important ways of being with the learner through a process of learning that demonstrates care. Heidi was anxious and, in some ways, her accusatory manner made me feel defensive and yet, as teacher, it felt necessary to listen with readiness to engage, to use Warburton's phrase above. In their consideration of the emotional experience of learning and teaching, educational theorists Isca Salzberger-Wittenberg, Gianna Henry and Elsie Osbourne (1996) discuss the teacher acting as a temporary container for the anxiety of students at points of stress. They posit that this resembles the parental function wherein the learner might maintain curiosity in the face of chaos (60). Both Heidi and I were, evidently, not comfort(able) through the tutorial. I appreciated that she had shared her feelings with me and it is right, I feel, that I am held accountable by the learner for my part in our learning process. Upon reflection, I recognise that I was able to demonstrate my care for Heidi in the tutorial by how I responded in that moment. Listening to her, taking seriously what she had to say and reflecting on the changes I might make to enable her progression communicated care as a 'temporary container' although it could not, in and of itself, make up for what had been experienced as loss.

In thinking through enabling learning environments that aim to empower all participants, it can be understood that the teacher is limited in their possibility to realise this irrespective

of their investment in the process. The teacher cannot have sole responsibility to make learning a generative experience. Similarly, despite the ways a student may present in the studio, teachers cannot assume that comfort(able) learning is contingent on what they do. Through the lens of critical feminist pedagogy, the teacher's role is reconfigured, purposefully de-centred. This limitation of power, though, within the context of the concrete experience of the studio can feel uncomfortable. As teacher, I want to make an important contribution to the learning of each of my students. However, by withdrawing from the assertiveness of authoritarian approaches my teaching is constrained, or rather reoriented, in ways that may be experienced as uninvested. Additionally, despite an intention to demonstrate ethical care, the learner's needs may not be perceived or meet in ways that the student would find satisfying.

Being invested in the learning of students as teacher, is insufficient on its own to realise learning that is empowering. Reciprocal relationships based in care, though, may facilitate the conditions necessary for discomfort to be expressed and worked through as part of a process in which all participants are invested. Thus, care might not always be most effectively realised by an immediate resolution to the challenges faced by the student. The teacher might, instead, support the learner to stay with their discomfort in order to find their own solutions and develop resilience in the learning context (Boler 1999). Therefore, enabling learning environments might be locations where challenges are not necessarily to be avoided but can contain the emotionality of discomfort, remaining with the yet-unresolved. With Heidi for example, following our tutorial, I made a point of offering personalised feedback comments to her in the studio but measured this so as to not jeopardise her developing capability to draw from her own embodied knowing. Through this process, I witnessed what appeared to be a resolution and growing confidence in her learning approach.

Teaching in the dance technique class that is aligned with critical feminist pedagogy requires not only an approach based in care but also a vigilance for and commitment to the student's capacity to manage their own learning journey. Developing reciprocity and trust between student and teacher, then, should be in constant negotiation; becoming increasingly established through the teacher's demonstration of care without diminishing the student's possibilities for self-reliance. This negotiation will be particular for each

learner and consequently their relationship with the teacher necessitates fluidity, responsiveness and adaptability to ensure comfort(able) learning in the dance technique class. In the following section, I consider how mistake making might be positioned in a comfort(able) experience of learning in the dance technique class.

Mistake making

> You create an atmosphere where I think we all can learn from the point where we are […] I think there's a really friendly and respectful relationship which is good for just trying out things without feeling ashamed.
>
> Katherina

> We are there to enjoy to learn, and you give a nice atmosphere, and we are open to dance together. And I think this playfulness is really important. And that's why the flow that you give to the class; go try, try, try, is really important because it's about self-confidence. It's about trying to find on your own and it's fine that you have different approaches.
>
> Gabriella

> There's a sense of, because we are comfortable with each other we are able to open up and be a bit more vulnerable and say 'I don't know what this is' or to have that sense of not judging.
>
> Nicholas

Learning experiences in the dance technique class should not be characterised by fear of getting things wrong or the pressure to respond in specific ways as this, it is argued, reinforces coercion and compliance (Warburton 2004, Schupp 2010, Enghauser 2012, Barr 2013). From this perspective, comfort(able) learning in the dance technique class can mean the students becoming less concerned about revealing themselves as not-yet-knowing. Katherina described this above, as being able to try out things without feeling ashamed. Dialogical learning approaches that invite student voice, through asking questions for example, could be experienced as risky for the student due to exposing their 'deficiencies' to the teacher. The aim of the dance technique class approached through critical feminist pedagogy, is not that the students *should* make mistakes only that they might make mistakes fearlessly. This has to do with the learner's possibility to try, confident that if they make mistakes they are not going to be exposed to ridicule or blame. Rather, that mistakes

are an inevitable part of a learning process wherein possibilities are explored and risks are embraced. Framed in this way mistakes can indicate student inquiry and propensity to learn. This should not be confused with lowering expectations of learning outcomes but rather indicative of a comfort(able) practice wherein challenges are engaged with confidently. Accordingly, to not make mistakes while learning would be a mistake; an overly self-protective approach to learning devoid of ambition. Thus, in the dance technique class what is understood as being correct shifts to assume increasing confidence to explore expansively.

Mistake making, as I am considering it here, is largely concerned with mistakes in dancing of the materials such as forgetting what comes next, moving in the wrong direction or using the 'wrong' leg, wobbling in balances and so on. This is distinctly different from considerations of mistakes in terms of 'safe body practice' wherein the resultant consequences can be fundamental with respect of dancer injury, for example. The teacher has a duty of care to ensure every possible precaution is taken to prevent such experiences in the dance studio and all such mistakes should be addressed explicitly and directly. However, I am focusing here on what may be perceived as 'going wrong' in ways that do not risk physical health but rather 'mistakenly' veer from the specificities of the movement materials. In addition, it is worth highlighting that the encouragement to make mistakes, as I will go on to explore, remains an open invitation rather than a requirement because it might otherwise be experienced by some learners as uncomfortable, potentially oppressive and compromising to well-being. The possibility to learn confidently by feeling able to make mistakes might be usefully positioned as enabling agential engagement, as discussed in the previous chapter. This can lead the learner toward greater responsibility for their learning and less concern about getting it right for the teacher. This confidence of approach to learning can flow from strategies such as the encouragement of asking questions, discussed earlier. The following participant comments describe their growing confidence.

> It's more of a confidence thing […] Rather than worrying [about] how I look or how other people see me or how other people are doing well […] I can confidently try [the movement] because I know where it is going rather than being a bit iffy about it […] I can actually say now; this is where it's going, this is what I'll be doing.

Richard

> Most of the people in this class are really confident about what they're doing. Which I didn't have at all […] Not all but most of them are so confident and I realised even if I'm not perfect I can be confident with what I have now, which was also really helpful.

Ino

That the student will most likely make mistakes can be an inevitable and necessary part of any process of learning. How this is positioned with respect to learning in the dance technique class, as enabling of exploration or indicative of failure, is dependent, in large part, on the learning environment. In the dance technique class learners are particularly vulnerable given that their mistakes, danced in space, are often highly visible. Due to the declarative function of movement, the learner moves out into space regardless of how assured they may or may not feel about what they are doing. Confidence, or the lack of it, is readable in the body and as such the dance student can be exposed as not knowing and further identified as lacking confidence, often perceived as essential for good performance. Through pedagogical approaches that foster enabling learning environments the learner can be encouraged to not fear the possibility of making mistakes. However, this mindset can be challenging for students particularly if it requires them to approach learning dance technique in ways that are unfamiliar or contradictory to previous learning experiences. It can also further privilege those learners who are already confident enough to make mistakes and therefore, it is important to consider the impact of this teaching strategy on the inequity among peers.

Learning in dance technique as the elimination or hiding of mistakes can develop an overly conscientious focus on being correct and this can lead to *presenting* rather than *exploring* dancing (Barr 2013). Learners can, however, be encouraged to be less concerned about their mistakes by the teacher signalling support for risk-taking and its potential for developing embodied knowing (Cheeseman 2016). In this way, learning confidence in the dance technique class might ensue for all participants from feeling comfort(able) in one's own capacity to progress because of, not despite of, making mistakes. In this regard, the

dance technique studio can be felt to be a safe enough location within which learners might not need to eradicate mistakes.

> There's no pressure on having to be perfect, I guess, but there's the idea of being there to learn and that it's OK to make mistakes. I think that creates a much more safe environment […] if things were uncomfortable you allowed us to feel that […] It made me want to do better almost because the environment created an atmosphere where I wanted to do as well as I could.
>
> Amy

> I think you have to be vulnerable. Because you're learning something new and something you haven't done before. And trying things you can't do or are new. Or experimenting, exploring and pushing the boundaries […] there is a risk involved that you don't end up where you thought your expectation might be or where you'd hoped to be.
>
> Victoria

> You're lacking a lot of confidence sometimes. That's something that's quite common in our age group, I guess. You just need reassurance sometimes […] I feel like I've had the reassurance here and there, that's enough.
>
> William

> It feels really good for me to have this, Ok, I can make mistakes its fine, it's not a problem, but sometimes I see myself getting a little bit lazy on that […] you have to take what you did and do it better.
>
> Ana

The possibility to move beyond mistakes is a feature of a learning environment where students feel confident to take risks (Howard et al. 2018). Approaching learning with confidence is something that the teacher can enable by being aware of learning vulnerabilities and actively encouraging taking risks. I have come to appreciate that for some learners being 'given permission' to make mistakes, go wrong and worry less about what the teacher thinks of them is particularly liberatory. The participants described this above as being allowed to feel uncomfortable things (Amy), take risks involved with pushing

boundaries (Victoria) and sometimes needing reassurance (William). By removing the expectation of perfection, students can redefine for themselves what it means to learn in the dance technique class and re-evaluate habitual learning beliefs that may be inhibitive of their progress, such as needing to 'get it right' straight away. While I advocate explorative approaches to learning in order to reduce anxiety and limit stress in the studio, it can also be necessary to be explicit that this does not mean that the pursuit of precision stops there. It may seem self-evident that making mistakes is useful in as much as it can facilitate embodied knowing, through learning how to not make the same mistake in the future. However, a pedagogical approach that welcomes mistake making should not be confused with less rigorous standards or lower expectations of the learner. As with Anna's acknowledgement above, that she can see herself getting a little bit lazy because of the permissiveness of mistakes in our learning environment. Therefore, the expectation of the learner is not that they *should* get something 'right' straight away but that they *might* improve upon what they do through practice. Thus, the possibility to learn effectively requires confidence to try, the possibility to fail and the intention to improve. In enabling learning environments, therefore, mistakes are expected, embraced and mobilised for their learning potential.

> In your class, I think it's nicer because we're all in the same thing. Like in a safe bubble […] It's like you're dancing with us and you're not teaching us to dance which I think makes us more comfortable.
>
> Gabriel

Warburton (2004) emphasizes that the dance class should be an environment in which the 'dancers feel physically prepared to attempt difficult movements and emotionally safe to take intellectual and creative risks' (93). For the student, this has to do with more than confidence in *what* they are doing but can also involve confidence in the learning environment as a secure location from which to learn un-cautiously (Anderson and Carta-falsa 2002, 137). While inhibiting the hazard of complacency, the dance technique teacher can cultivate a safe learning environment that facilitates risk-taking toward embodied knowing. At the same time though, learning propositions that go beyond the learners

'comfort zone' can be disruptive particularly if the student experiences feeling helpless, inadequate or negatively judged (Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry and Osbourne 1996). Being comfort(able) in the dance technique class can be understood as the possibility to confidently tackle that which is, as yet, bodily unknown. As with all processes that involve risk, the learner remains vulnerable. It is for this reason that in the dance technique class care needs to not only be demonstrated by the teacher in an ongoing capacity, but also that the studio environment can be cultivated to become a safe space within which mistake making is not exposed as failure. I shall expand of the conception of feeling safe in the following chapter that deals with feeling safe enough while learning among others.

Comfort(able) learning in the dance technique class can be characterized as when learners are able to build confidence to explore movement materials in an enabling learning environment established through easy relationships with the teacher. Through care as a foundational value of an ethical approach to teaching, dance technique learning can be a process that is responsive to learners as human beings. As such being comfort(able) has been shown to develop reciprocity and trust that leads to learning confidence in dance technique through the positive positioning of question asking, risk taking and mistake making. The comfort(able) experience of learning, as has been discussed, does not avoid discomfort, but rather works to make it possible for each participant to successfully engage with that which is challenging.

Being comfort(able) in the contemporary dance technique class is underpinned by an empowering pedagogical approach that cares for the individual student, redefines the power hierarchy between student and teacher, and invests in the learner's project. However, through the nuance of the participants comments, it has become clear that this approach can be met with resistance, be experienced as discomfort, and may also work to disempower. What this suggests is that the realisation of the emancipatory aims of transformative learning is complex and predicated on how trusting relationships continue to evolve through challenges and resolution. Responsive actions of the teacher that acknowledge mistakes non-defensively, can model an ongoing care ethic in the dance technique studio as it is lived. For the teacher, being adaptable to students needs in consideration of the impacts of doing so, can be important in working against the perpetuation of power inequities that arise in the studio. Relational imperatives that

encourage voice indicate the teacher's priorities and signal what, or rather who, is important. These ways of working need not diminish learning outcomes. Rigorous thoroughness can be sustained when learners successfully go beyond discomforting experiences of not-yet-knowing. Throughout this chapter the possibility for developing a learning practice imbued with personal interest and agency has been suggested as an outcome of comfort(able) learning. This builds from considerations of learning as exploration in the dance technique class as discussed in the preceding chapter. In the following chapter I expand the consideration of learning dance technique as relational through discussion of the influence of peers. I will expound the affordances of collective learning highlighting entanglement of shared practice and the potential to model through dance technique pedagogy, ways of learning and living well among others.

CHAPTER 8

Collective learning and the influence of peers

This chapter explores learning collectively in the dance technique class by focusing on the influence of peers. The relational dimension of learning in the dance technique class as discussed in the proceeding chapter is progressed by considering the learning process as shared and learners as interdependent. Understanding of dialogical approaches to learning in the dance technique class develops to critically reflect upon the ways in which learners might draw from each other as part of an evolving embodied exchange with peers. This is furthered though the unfolding discussion as embodied acts of recognition wherein learners recognise the contribution of others and appreciate their own accountability to the common project.

The chapter is divided in two halves; to begin with shared learning is explored as mutual support, peer dialogue and feeling safe enough. Through this the dance technique class is defined as learning with peers rather than alongside them. While previously, hooks' engaged pedagogy has been explored through the conceptions of stimulating learning and teacher as catalyst, here I turn to consider her emphasis on the contribution of all learners to enable collective effort. This will be used to explore the experience of teaching strategies among learners such as reciprocal peer feedback and attentive peer observation. In the second half of the chapter, the complexity of peer influence is discussed further as entanglements of recognition and dissonance. This is framed through another conception of social anthropologist, Tim Ingold (2011a), the meshwork. Previously, in chapter six, his approach to materials and the development of precision enabled a reconsideration of learning exploratively. His conception of the meshwork is employed here, to think through the complexity of social interaction and the entanglement of learners in the studio.

Through collective learning, I argue, encounters with diversity and dissonance among peers can exponentially expand learning affordances and be mobilised to inhibit exclusionary forces of shared endeavour. Consequently, the dance technique class can be (re)purposed with modelling responsible citizenship by enacting democratic values and enabling processes through which peers learn to live well with others.

Shared learning

In the dance technique class, collective effort may be enabled through dialogical processes where learners are encouraged to increasingly develop their contribution to an integrated whole; the common project. According to hooks (1994), students engaged in collective effort 'act responsibly together to create a learning environment' (152). Learning through acting responsibly together can be developed throughout a learning process as student, teacher and peers become increasingly known to each other as fellow learners. In what follows, participant accounts draw attention to the importance of peer relationships in feeling able to contribute to the shared project of learning together. The ensuing discussion explores this as mutual support, peers dialogue and feeling safe enough and consequently builds an understanding of what collective learning in the dance technique class might be.

Mutual support

> I feel it's more of a social class in the sense that we work really hard but everyone can chip in and say something if they want to and no one's afraid to say something.
>
> William

> I think it's a great environment, though, because you bounce off each other. I find it quite easy with our group. I know who they are, I know how they learn, I know how they can help me. We can help each other and that greatly increases how I do things.
>
> Richard

> The relationship between everybody, this is really important; to dance together, to feel the other.
>
> Gabriella

Learning in the dance technique class is enhanced by means of the contribution of peers in ways that are collaborative such as helping each other, feeling the other and being able to chip in, to use Williams phrase above. Contributing in this way encourages connectedness and interrelatedness among learners derived through sensing, feeling, moving, reflecting

and discussing together. In the studio, contributions by learners can be holistically conceived and while the use of voice will be discussed throughout this chapter it is to be understood in the wider project of reflective practices toward embodied knowing. Attention is drawn to the significance of doing together as a means of connection by Indian classical dance choreographer and scholar Ananya Chatterjea (2011). She states that the shared space of the dance technique studio 'is enlivened through the bodily labor of dancing, where the meaning and significance is in the doing, in the engagement, in the connection we can then create between you and me' (12). The enlivened shared space of the dance technique class, that Chatterjea describes, is collectively realised among the participants through their bodily labour. This resonates with collective effort in as much as the learning in the dance technique class generates connectivity that arises from stimulating experiences of shared learning.

Dialogical processes in the dance technique class can generate an environment wherein exchange among learners is an integral feature of ways of being together in common project. Through activities that enable peer dialogue and reflection, students can share movement experiences, questions, and insights with each other so that they might draw from and synthesise multiple sources and perspectives, thus expanding learning. Consequently, developing a learning environment wherein students act responsibly together in the dance technique class can transform an individual's awareness beyond solely themselves to engagement among others. This disrupts conceptions of dance technique learning as an individualistic pursuit of personal goals in isolation and re-envisions it as an interdependent experience of mutual support and shared advantage. According to hooks (1994) 'education can only be liberatory when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor' (14). In the dance technique class, such inclusive labour shifts the focus for learning approaches from an isolated endeavour to connectivity with each other.

As discussed in chapter two, conventional approaches to dance technique dissuade talk and while learners move together, they may do so formally in lines and small groups facing 'the front' such that exchange is inhibited. Dialogical learning conversely seeks out ways to turn toward the other (Anttila 2004) in order to interact so that learning may be engaged with expansively beyond regurgitation and replication. Therefore, in my teaching, I

encourage dialogue among learners in order to enhance understandings of what we are doing together. This is not to undermine the importance of individual experience and somatic awareness that requires attentiveness to the sensorial, particular and personal, discussed in chapter six. Rather collective effort implicates all learners in enabling the diverse realisation and deepening understanding of embodied experiences through shared processes.

> It's just so nice to go through that process and see what everyone's achieved, the journey we've built together, and it's just felt really supportive all the way through.
>
> Nicholas

Learning processes that are experienced as a journey we build together, to use Nicholas's term, reconceptualise learning in alignment with feminist perspectives to include 'the autonomy and individuality of members who share a sense of relationship and connectedness with each other' (Shrewsbury 1987 11). Connectedness, as part of a shared learning process, requires mutuality based in interdependence and reciprocity (Selznik and Jackson 1996) and in the classroom/studio this creates a communal context for learning (hooks 1994, 159). The conditions through which the participants felt able to assume responsibility for contributing to the learning process concerned supporting each other. Mutual support is both a prerequisite of collective effort and a resulting feature of it, albeit not unproblematically so. One way this was particularly evident in the accounts of the participants was through their readiness to help and support each other.

> I think I'm very open to when somebody comes to me and asks to go over the sequence of specific moments. I really like doing that, but I also ask other people to help me […] I think we should all be self-responsible enough to ask someone if we're not feeling certain about what the material is. I'm very open to doing this; helping people.
>
> Katherina

> For me it's also about involving with the people. That's important for me. I personally don't enjoy doing the class as if I'm alone in the world. I feel it's

> more enjoyable if you can look at the other people and if you can help them or if they can help you. It feels like a communal society in a smaller amount.
>
> Gio

The participants discussed the particular ways in which they experienced supporting each other in the process of shared learning. Help was reciprocal; extended and received among peers in the studio by asking each other questions and being open to being asked. For example, the students might 'go through' movement materials together or approach one another to ask about specific details of the materials, thereby drawing from each other's knowing in the course of the dance technique class (Råman 2009). Consequently, in the learning process, it can be important to ensure sufficient time is afforded for peers to seek help from each other. These mutual process of checking and clarification can enable the development of reciprocity among peers, facilitate learner confidence to contribute and consequently enhance shared understanding. Through his consideration of the pedagogy of voice, education researcher Stewart Ranson (2000) states that, to generate shared understanding learners are required to value peers and create 'the communities in which mutuality and thus the conditions for learning can flourish' (274). The ways in which peer support functioned among participants, while mutual, was diverse and it variously impacted the experience of collective effort.

> If some people were not able to do [a specific movement] I was like come on, come on, you can do it!
>
> Ino

> I can lose it sometimes and [my peers] can come and go; 'yeah, yeah, go, go'. So that's something that helps me. Kind of like, not cheering, but supporting. Being supportive.
>
> Gio

> We're good at helping each other in terms of giving corrections or praising; telling people they were good at that.
>
> Lauren

Along with readiness to support each other, such as going over the sequence together and motivational support as outlined above, learning collectively was evidenced among some of the participants through their investment in the progress of peers' learning. According to research by Johnson and Johnson (2009) in consideration of the widespread use of cooperation in education, shared learning instils values that include 'commitment to one's own and others' success and well-being, commitment to the common good, and the view that facilitating and promoting the success of others is a natural way of life' (372). The participants were able to recognise, appreciate and affirm each other's successes in the learning process. It mattered to them when their fellow learners were doing well. Support for peers extended to an involvement with each other's learning processes. This was described, above, as willing each other on (Ino) and telling people what they were good at (Lauren) as a session unfolds.

As pedagogy scholars Hala Mreiwed et al. (2017) state, learning collectively entails experiencing a community of difference and togetherness 'that is in pursuit of finding commonalities and joint achievements' (52). Through recognising and celebrating peers' progress, the relationships among fellow learners was characterised by care for each other, in some circumstances at least. As stated by Dyer and Löytönen (2012) a prerequisite for an appreciative and socially conscious approach to learning is 'care-based ethical relations towards self and others' (143). In the dance technique class mutual support and appreciation of the fellow learners' achievements can enable learning, albeit they can also have exclusionary impacts in the culture of the studio.

During the research it became apparent that some participants had an agreement to check-in with certain peers whenever they were asked to work with partners in our learning process. These informal agreements between peers were enabling for those participants as they were able to have relative confidence to engage with the activities. They had identified someone with whom they were comfortable to do this. This might be particularly enabling for some peers when set up to focus on shared learning objectives, for example. However, this should not distract from the expansive aims of dialogical approaches. While potentially supportive of the individuals' learning, such closed loops of communication between two students does not necessarily enable collective effort as a whole group

endeavour. Conversely, those who were, for various reasons, feeling on the margins of the group were more circumspect about the impact of working together. This raises questions about the impact of critical feminist approaches in the dance studio. In what ways might learners be encouraged to work inclusively so that friendship groups are not perceived as exclusive cliques, for example? While many of the participants stated that they were open to being asked for help by any of their peers and work collaboratively, having previously established connections with specific peers made this less likely. This is significant because there were some participants who did not feel recognised by their peers but rather discussed feeling isolated and excluded at times. They reflected on how they did not easily find people to work with or feel able to help others. For these participants, the experience of dialogical activities that encouraged working with peers was not necessarily comfort(able), as the comments below attest.

> I do feel a bit segregated sometimes […] So sometimes I just, it's probably my own fault but you know, take myself aside a little bit.
>
> Richard

> At the start of the year I didn't feel able to offer a two-way conversation about what we were doing because I felt like everyone else was better than me basically. I felt very much as if I was playing catch up.
>
> Nicholas

> I tend to like to be on my own. If we're doing partner work or whatever that's fine but […] in general I prefer to work it out for myself.
>
> Jenny

> We go into our comfort groups.
>
> Gabriel

For some learners, peer exchange is not a preferred mode of learning and this may be for various and fluid reasons. However, the aim of critical feminist pedagogy is to enable the

contribution of all learners and the above participants comments trouble how this may be realised in the dance technique class. They describe feeling a bit segregated and taking themselves off to one side (Richard), like everyone else was better and playing catch up (Nicholas) and preferring to work things out for themselves (Jenny). Therefore, if shared learning is to function in ways that diminish the power inequity among peers, within cliques for example, learners who might otherwise be on the margins might become more fully integrated with the group. As a consequence of this, connectivity and belonging can be more fully realised among peers. In turn this reinforces democratic principles of equity, by fostering an inclusive learning environment. This is not to suggest that all peer relationships need to be unproblematically positive or that individuals contribute to learning in the same way. Later, I discuss the complexly challenging yet potentially affirmative experience of dissonance among peers.

Shrewsbury (1987) states that feminist pedagogy reimagines the classroom as 'a community of learners where there is both autonomy of self and mutuality with others' (10). In order to realise both autonomy and mutuality, learning can be strategically set up so that activities enable connection with all participants. For this reason, it can be strategic for the teacher to ensure that learners engage with peers to whom they would not naturally gravitate. This way of approaching shared learning may be encouraged by particular teaching strategies, such as peer feedback, but can eventually become part of ways of learning and being together.

Peer dialogue

> [Peers] have a big impact on my learning. It means a lot when someone says 'you did this really well' […] and it doesn't feel forced. I know Hibiscus does it all the time now because we're quite close as well. She's like 'oh yeah, I really like when you did this moment' and it just uplifts you […] as soon as anyone says something it makes a massive difference. I can't even explain. So, then I try do that to other people as well to see if it would help them.
>
> Louise

> If I saw something that was really good or really improved, I would definitely say it, I think, because that's always helpful to hear.
>
> Jenny

> I did have a few people come up to me and say 'Richard, you've improved so much' which is really great. I've never had that before. I did really feel fantastic about that… Now that someone's told me that I'm good, or that I'm doing it well, I didn't have to worry.
>
> Richard

In the dance technique class, strategically designed dialogical activities such as giving and receiving feedback among peers, can serve not just a generative function of information from diverse perspectives, useful as this can be, but also the opportunity for individual students to reflect widely upon their own learning in ways that are informed by differing embodied standpoints. An example of an activity from the studio in which I encouraged peer feedback is when the learners were tasked with dancing the materials alone while peers observed and made individualised written comments for each other. An entire session might be dedicated to dancing and observing in this way so that the peer feedback could be assimilated directly in the re-doing of the materials. This would generate multi-sourced feedback that enabled the learners to inquire of their technique from different perspectives that encouraged personal reflection and group discussion. At other times, the learners would be tasked with working in diversely mixed small groups to identify key features of the materials between them, often on flipchart paper, and then to set individual objectives from among them. In this way dialogues formed the basis of reflective learning, goal setting and objective-based peer feedback that supported individualised responses to the specificities of the materials (Dryburgh 2018b).

Peer dialogue activities, such as these, were discussed by the research participants in largely positive ways and recognised as contributory to an individual's progress, as the above comments attest. Supportively constructive acknowledgements of each other's progress can serve a unifying and expansive function in the enhancement of learning when made explicitly as part of a dialogical approach to shared feedback among all peers. The participant accounts above evidence the effect of positive affirmation: it just uplifts you (Louise), always helpful to hear (Jenny), I did really feel fantastic about that (Richard). I utilise peer feedback activities in the dance technique class, to enable learners to develop their critical understanding of what they are doing and to develop the possibilities to expand upon this. Pedagogically, the process of observing each other dancing in order to

give feedback to peers can be as informative, if not more so, than being seen and receiving peer feedback. Observation of peers can foster reflective processes in as much as it involves understanding the aims of the movement material well-enough and reflection upon what might be significant to share with peers. As a consequence, in terms of collective effort, it is not so important *what* feedback is given but the *way* in which the feedback giver has attentively engaged, through peer observation, to be able to offer that feedback. As such the dialogical process enacted through reciprocal peer feedback can enhance learning as the stimulation for reflective exploration among learners. Explorative doing of dance technique, discussed in chapter six as agential engagement and somatic attentiveness, might in this way be informed by reflection through collective learning activities such as attentive peer observation and reciprocal peer feedback.

> There's a lot of reflection on the work that we've done, and discussion, which is good […] it's nice to just have some feedback and hearing other people's thoughts on it can trigger maybe more stimulus for the movement.
>
> Hibiscus

> When we we're doing the phrase and we got into pairs and watched each other to give feedback, I was with Syafiqah. She was like you need to loosen your shoulders and maybe let your head go a bit more when you're dancing. And I was like Oh! actually I've never thought about that before. I always thought I had a loose neck. And then I did it with a loose neck and it felt so much better.
>
> Rose

The above participant comments highlight the affordances of peer feedback to trigger stimulus (Hibiscus) and bring awareness to things that have not been thought about before (Rose). This underlines the generative possibilities of peer dialogue, especially in relation to learning through reflection on/in/through bodily experiences, in the dance technique class. However, I would also like to draw attention to the possibility that peer exchange may not always be experienced as straightforwardly affirmative or enabling of learning. This is to make a distinction with mutual support, as discussed earlier. Peer exchange may be critical and not necessarily received by learners with enthusiasm. As we will see dialogical processes need not be restricted to positive affirmations from peers with whom

the learners find easy allegiances. In the following account Davina talks about her experience of receiving peer feedback. Davina's account, below, brings together various edited parts of her interview that, as a strand of reflections, illuminate the complexity of receiving peer feedback as simultaneously constructive and disruptive.

> Loads of people wrote about my hands. It was a bit frustrating because in a way, I prefer having alive hands rather than dead hands. I know that for some type of work we need to be a bit more neutral. Well, I didn't really know what they meant because sometimes it is a habit. I don't feel it so perhaps I need to see it. It was a bit frustrating because they were like 'stop doing these things with your hands'. Which things?
>
> Just [gesture of throwing something aside] I don't care. Just not getting things too personal. And just getting the feedback and agreeing or not with it. I try to agree with it but… I try to see why is it a good feedback or not a good feedback […]
>
> My hands are really something that I love. I was a bit hurt [laughing nervously] by that. I was like, it's my style. Perhaps for certain styles of dance perhaps I need to do less of it, but as it was something open…I think I could bring [sounding less certain] that into the phrase.
>
> Davina

What this account draws attention to is that peer feedback, even when intended to enable learning and set up in a democratic process, may not always be experienced as unproblematic. As discussed in chapter seven, how learning is experienced can be fundamentally influenced by an enabling learning environment. This is relevant to the impact of peer relationships as well as that of student-teacher relationships. The intention of the peer feedback activity, described by Davina above, was to enable group reflection through exploration of movement materials by observing each other and receiving multiple sources of feedback. This, and other such activities, was designed to develop critical reflection of the student's own dancing. In this way, peer feedback can serve as a dialogical feature of reflective practice in the dance technique class. Therefore, despite the disquiet that can be read in Davina's experience of receiving feedback above, it may be seen as both disruptive and constructive due to its leading to further reflection about her use of her hands. According to pedagogy scholars Zembylas and McGlynn (2012), disruptive

experiences can have transformative impacts for individuals as they give rise to emotions that 'play a constitutive role in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities (41). However, Davina's experience illustrates that it can be insufficient to integrate peer dialogue without it being part of a wider reflective approach to learning with supportive peers. I will now turn to consider the relevance and value attributed to peer feedback as a consequence of feeling well known by fellow learners.

Feeling well known

> I feel that [peer feedback] is a lot more valid […] because we know each other as a group […] I watch them every day.
>
> Rose

> If you go with a group you've spent a lot of time with beforehand, you've already developed a care for them. They want you to do well. As a little group it makes us a bit more comfy.
>
> Gabriel

> Fred's correction for me. He was watching me really carefully and was able to give me the correction of freeing up my breath and upper body… That was a really thoughtful correction. Gabriel is good as well… if he sees me doing something he'll say 'In this part open up your chest, this part be careful you don't have your shoulders up'. And I can do that back to him probably, because we're really close.
>
> Lauren

Interaction among peers, enabled through dialogical processes, can reinforce learning as co-constructed and interdependent. Peer dialogue, constructively framed, can be particularly impactful in supporting learning because it is appreciated, for most part, for its congruence and insight. Fellow learners can be well placed to make ongoing judgements about the individual progress of their peers due to the closeness of their relationships. Thus, peer feedback can be understood to have validity and relevance in collective learning in the dance technique class. Viewed in this way, feedback is multi-directional and 'a complex part of an on-going communicative act between individuals involved in learning together' (Dryburgh and Jackson 2016, 142). At Trinity Laban, the relationships that dance

students build with each other can be particularly significant. This is on account of learning alongside the same peers for technique, in most cases, throughout the duration of their programme. This relational experience can develop intimacy and sense of belonging that is reinforced further by the fact that the teachers change while on the whole, fellow learners remain constant. Consequently, peer relationships often become well established and group dynamics can become relatively entrenched. This known-ness among the learners impacts peer interaction in the studio both formally through teacher-led activities and informally as peer interaction.

Critical integrity among learners can be useful for congruent dialogue that is characterised by feeling known by peers (McGregor 2004). As the participants stated above peer feedback is important because its experienced as more valid (Rose) really thoughtful (Lauren) and given by those with whom you've developed a care (Gabriel). Such sense of belonging can enable learners to receive critique from peers unencumbered by fear or insecurity in relation to each other such as concerns about being negatively judged. At the same time, while knowing each other well does not always lead to mutually supportive relationships among peers, it can facilitate honesty, frankness and lack of pretence (Dyer and Löytönen 2012, Leonard 2014, Dryburgh 2018a). As the following participant accounts attest, peer dialogue can be used strategically as part of a learning environment wherein peers have an easy intimacy.

> I know what our group is like and the environment is good and people are willing to help you […] I know who they are and I know how they learn. I know how they can help me learn.
>
> Richard

> We are all like really close and it's kind of a very informal way of reassuring each other. You just go up to someone and say 'Oh! I loved the bit when you did that'… and then that does give you a bit of confidence.
>
> William

Feeling well known by peers can enhance learning in that it can facilitate shared learning through intimate peer interaction that goes beyond superficial praise and encouragement.

In the dance technique class, this can extend among peers to a critical engagement with the affordances of movement exploration. For example, engagement with group reflection, pair work with touch, attentive peer observation, attuning with the other movers, among other features can enable positive experiences with criticality. This arises as a consequence of intimacy of relationship, developed through time, through which learners can recognise the sensitivity, validity and relevance of their exchanges together. The relational characteristics of the dialogical dance technique class can therefore be seen to be dependent upon, as well as generative of, trust among peers. Through this, learners can draw from each other's constructive contribution as the following comments testify.

> It's nice to get a compliment but I also like it when people actually say what they think because I think as we've gone on everyone's comments have got a little bit more constructive […] it's quite nice when your peers do it because I know that I always notice things other people do. That may be good things and things that they need to improve on.
>
> Louise

> I do want to get feedback but I don't mind if it's bad or good. I probably prefer bad feedback to improve on stuff, but at the same time, I'm like egh! I don't want to know that I'm doing it wrong.
>
> Rose

Critical feminist pedagogy aims to establish a collaborative culture 'that will permit personal and collective critical engagement' (McGregor 2004, 102). The above participants comments suggest readiness for constructive feedback from peers, when people say what they actually think (Louise) because it can facilitate understanding of what to improve on. At the same time, though as Rose's comment suggests learners can feel ambivalence about receiving 'bad' feedback. Thus, collective critical engagement can develop through constructive dialogue among trusting peers in the dance technique class. However, it is important to reflect on the complexity of possible impacts of peer exchange on learners. In what follows I discuss what it might mean in the dance technique class for learners to feel safe enough with each other.

Feeling safe enough

> Because we are comfortable with each other we are able to open up and be a bit more vulnerable and say 'I don't know what this is' or to have that sense of not judging […] There's been lots of tasks we've done in partners and observing and giving feedback. Just building up that pattern of behaviour of helping each other out. I think makes a really big difference if you get used to doing that.
>
> Nicholas

> I don't feel like I'm ready all the time. I feel like I want to feel ready, confident with the material, connected […] There's a part of me that would like to be just Yeah! I'm going to do it. I'm going to give it a go. But then there's part of me that doesn't want to seem, again, looking bad or looking a certain way, coming across a certain way […] I don't want to like, try something and then feel really silly about it afterwards.
>
> Jayne

> Even though we're seeing the negative things about [each other's] dancing I wasn't feeling the negative-ness of it.
>
> Ino

> Pushing myself, I have it but there are other people who I feel have it even more […] So, if I'm [working] with someone, I tend to say a lot of; 'Oh! I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry'. And they are people who say you don't have to say sorry; they open you and you feel like you can comfortably go wrong.'
>
> Gio

Feeling like you can comfortably go wrong, as Gio describes it above, concerns feeling safe enough among peers to learn effectively while engaging with that which is challenging. The possibility to make mistakes in the dance technique class, previously discussed in regards to the reconfiguration of the teacher student relationship, is focused here on the context of the peer group. Making mistakes was variously described in the participants comments above as: being able to open up (Nicholas), not wanting to look bad (Jayne), not feeling the negative-ness of it (Ino). While dialogical approaches can be instrumental in diminishing fears of potentially being negatively judged by peers in the dance technique class, these comments indicate more complex feelings about the consequences of peer observation and feedback activities. The possibility to be unconcerned about the judgements of peers in the process of learning is not necessarily easily realised or even pedagogically desirable.

Given the declarative function of movement where each action is made out in space, as described in chapter six, learners can feel exposed and potentially vulnerable in the studio and this can be exacerbated in dance technique classes where peer interaction is prioritised. For example, it can be intimidating for the student to be observed by peers while taking risks and making mistakes with new movement materials. This has the potential to jeopardise collective effort and reinforce self-protective strategies such as self-worth protection, self-handicapping behaviours, and defensive pessimism (Johnson and Johnson 2009, 368). These ways of engaging are inhibitive of collective effort. In the dance technique studio competitive environments can exclude less confident learners in particular, resulting in behaviours such as silence, timidity, avoidance and self-editing.

The exclusionary forces of competition are inhibited in learning environments that acknowledge the affordances of collective effort as they position peers as allies. In the dance technique class this can be instrumental in reducing anxiety about being judged by peers. However, I wish to make a distinction between critical engagement as useful in learning for enhancing discernment and understanding, and being judged negatively by others that can inhibit learning confidence and the possibility to take risks. Peer interaction should, I contend, involve discernment as it concerns identifying features in the explorative learning of others that one might want to emulate, enhance or avoid. Attentive peer observation as it has been described here, is a good example of this. Discernment achieved through criticality can be the foundation of collective effort when it affords deepening discoveries and widening perspectives. Therefore, critical engagement can open up the possibility for students to be vulnerable with each other if a culture of collaboration is established such that learners feel safe enough with each other. Feeling safe enough is particularly important in thinking about how critical feminist pedagogy might be applied in the dance technique class as it can make it possible to realise high levels of technique capability while not promoting negatively competitive agendas among learners. In order to explore further what this might mean in the dance technique class I will consider a critical incident from the research process where learners did not feel safe enough and the inhibiting impact this had on learning.

During the process of learning with the group ‘5A’ we were involved in an event called ‘the sharing’. This event was integrated into the design of the dance technique component

structure and involved two different groups, from the same year, coming together in a single session to show each other materials they have been working on. Usually the sharing, repeated each year, includes each group dancing some previously prepared materials, a dance phrase for example, for the other group to observe and, in some instances, feedback may be given. In my experience, these sharing events can be valuable learning opportunities in that they can reveal to the students that the different groups are involved in dealing with similar movement concepts. This can help to break down any misperceptions about another group doing more important or more complex things which can perpetuate feelings of insecurity and competition among cohorts. In these regards the sharing is aligned with the wider aims of critical feminist pedagogy and can be understood to be bridging divides, generating discussion and sharing experiences among a cohort. However, as will become apparent, there are considerable risks for the learners involved in doing this kind of event.

The sharing is structured such that the streamed ability levels of the two groups involved are often not the same and this means that one group will be a 'higher' level while the other group is a 'lower' level, as designated by the institutional levelling processes. There is potential for a detrimental impact on the students of the lower group in particular, if they do not have a positive experience. It can further generate anxiety and reinforce perceptions of inferiority about their technical abilities as dancers. In the sharing event that I address here, our group 5A, was sharing with group 5C (a higher-level group). The following participant comments highlight the precarity of this experience for learning confidence.

> I think none of us wanted to share with group [5C] because they're meant to be the good ones. We're meant to be the bad ones… We just expected that they would have this kind of attitude that they're better than us… I think that we were… just a little bit reluctant to want to show them anything. We felt that we were not as good and they would be judging us. And it wasn't nice.
>
> Louise

> As soon as people came in, I couldn't find the ground.
>
> Jenny

> When we shared with the other group it wasn't feedback from you, it was feedback from the other people. I felt that I know that I'm not doing it amazingly. That's why I was like, I don't want this feedback. Just common feedback which was a bit ergh! you haven't really watched me.
>
> Rose

As the above comments indicate, some of the learners of 5A, of whom I was the teacher, were apprehensive about sharing with 5C. This was articulated by the participants above as: we felt that they would be judging us (Louise), I couldn't find the ground (Jenny), I don't want this feedback (Rose). Such responses highlight the importance of establishing mutual respect and trust among learners in order that they feel safe enough in the learning environment to be observed without fear of being indifferently judged. It seems evident that such an environment was not established effectively in the instance of the sharing. This contrasts sharply with the experience as so far described by participants, of being observed by peers in the same group where trust had been reinforced. It becomes apparent through this that collective effort, as a feature of shared learning, cannot be assumed, produced quickly or realised superficially. Being observed by others, sharing, in ways that do not result in feelings of exposure and vulnerability require trusting relationships established through care (Dyer and Löytönen 2012). Learning processes where feeling safe enough is not established can subject students to discomfort, feelings of inferiority and undermine confidence. In the following teacher journal account, I reflect on some of the pedagogical concerns I had due to the negative impact of the sharing event and my effort to acknowledge the emotional impact for my group:

> The sharing did not go well. There was something that felt intimidating from the offset. I was aware when we entered their studio there was a sense of not being at ease. While I did what I could as co-teacher of this sharing it felt that rather than the group becoming more comfortable with each other there was a sense of intimidation and dread. This was not dispelled by the dancing and 5A did not dance their best, but this can often be the case when set materials are put under this pressure of being observed.
>
> It was very apparent to me that 5A had not had a good time and that I should address it. At the end of the session, I asked the students to come into a circle together so that we might be together and so that I could ask them how they were. This short time of being in a circle was a critical incident for us

> pedagogically. In this time the students talked about how upset they were with how they had danced, how they felt in relation to the other group and the feedback they had received. In this circle I was aware of the strong feeling of being upset among us all. It was palpable. I invited the group to talk about how they were feeling so that these responses might be shared. At this moment different students started to talk as a group, some cried. This was a powerful exchange and it was painful, but I was aware that something important was happening as a group.
>
> Jamieson, reflective account February 2017

The dialogue among the 5A group that followed the sharing event was emotionally painful for the students and also for me. It did however, allow the learners to hear about each other's sense of vulnerability; validating their own discomforts. I was relieved, as the teacher, that some of the students were able to articulate how the experience had made them feel as it opened up the possibility for congruent collective reflection. As a consequence of the ensuing dialogue the learners were able to recognise, at least in part, the ways in which the feedback from 5C was flawed. In terms of collective effort this critical incident demonstrates that trust among peers is an essential and necessary dimension of the effectiveness of dialogic processes. In addition, it evidences that painful experiences, when couched within restorative collectiveness, can be the means through which pedagogical relationships are forged, learner-esteem restored and shared understanding intensified. Louise made the following reflection in regards to her experience of shared discomfort during this event:

> I always think that everyone is happy with how they're doing and everyone's fine. And then, when everyone opens up you start to realise that most people are a bit insecure about things. In a weird way, it's kind of united us all because we all felt the same.
>
> Louise

Pedagogically, the group discussion at the end of the sharing brought a sense of solidarity and belonging that offered potentially positive ways to go forward for group 5A. This exemplifies collective effort understood through the values of critical pedagogy as 'a solidarity that must be willing to break with the politics of competitiveness' (Darder,

Boltodano and Torres 2003, 21). While uncomfortable, the sharing led to a deepening support among the peers of 5A and reliance upon each other; a further break with the politics of competitiveness in the field of dance technique. Through open dialogue together some of the negative impacts of the exposure of vulnerabilities were transformed, at least in part, by a unifying experience. Empowering strategies allow students to find communion with each other (Shrewsbury 1987) and as has been seen, this may be forged even through shared experiences of feeling precariously safe enough.

Pedagogically, feeling safe enough among peers can enable the possibility to embrace risk, work through challenges and remain with uncertainty. This thinking flows from, and extends beyond, experiences of being comfort(able) in the learning process, as discussed in chapter seven, wherein students might feel safe enough with the teacher to be able to take risks. Being safe enough to take risks among peers can require the sort of environment that has been called 'brave spaces' by pedagogy scholars Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens (2013) in their work with issues of social justice in the classroom. Brave spaces are similar and yet distinct from safe spaces in that they set up ground rules among participants to manage rather than erase challenges that arise particularly through interrelationships. Attempts to remove risks associated with encountering differences of perspectives, suggest Arao and Clemens, can be counterproductive to transformative education because such spaces can reinforce normative structures, assumptions and ways of being. Brave spaces, due to the affordances of engagement with interpersonal challenges, can facilitate transformative shifts in learner perceptions of each other and their collective project. Safe spaces become brave spaces through several shifts in participant intentions. For example, an emphasis on controversy with civility redefines the concept of 'agreeing to disagree' by opening up a potentially generative yet unresolved relationality. Similarly, owning one's intention and impact as a participant reframes the idea of 'not taking things personally' by recognising the consequences of one's contribution.

Brave spaces acknowledge the potential pedagogical affordances of discomforting experiences that incur challenge, risk and uncertainty in educational settings. However, as Lewis Winks (2018) states in his analysis of discomfort and uncertainty in higher education, the concept of brave spaces prompts questions about the ethics of such an approach. Winks proposes that a distinction be made between discomfort as an expectation of education,

which could be oppressive, and discomfort through choice, which could be emancipatory (104). In his promotion of discomfort through choice, Winks integrates student agency as the means by which the learning space might be held together in tension in the classroom process. For example, the possibility for the learners to choose to do a sharing with a higher group rather than it being imposed. This links back to our thinking about agential engagement in chapter six where the concept of student dissent was positively framed as an awakening of voice.

The concept of brave spaces acknowledges difference and works with pluralism. Applied to the dance technique class, brave spaces expand the conception of dissent as contribution and situates the dance studio as a place where difference might be embraced rather than erased. Consequently, the manner with which learners attune, respond and embody movement materials might function to enable diversity. Approached in this way shared learning can be dynamic; a constant revaluation of ourselves and our impacts on the people around us. These ideas will be developed further in discussion of dissonance to follow. I would like to highlight here that through discomfort there can arise, what Melanie Boler (1999) calls critical hope. This is due, she contends, to the resulting shifts in our ways of relating with each other, ourselves and the world around us. It is this critical hope that enables transformative learning whereby one might live resiliently within the tensions of unresolved difference, personal culpability and drives, towards a more socially just world. Through this it remains possible to realise empowerment even through that which is complex and not directly affirming. In the dance technique class, critical hope may arise through pedagogical approaches that afford experiences of interdependency, belonging and solidarity in common project.

Entanglements

Peers influence and are influenced by each other in ways that are collectively entangled. In order to think further about the experience of learning collectively I will now turn to draw from the conception of the meshwork developed by social anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007, 2011a, 2018). He defines social interaction dynamically as a complex entanglement of movement in relation with others that emerges ‘from the interplay of forces that are

conducted along the lines of the meshwork' (2011a, 92). He develops the metaphor of lives being lived along lines in time and space and describes how through our interactions we join with, knot, wrap around and pull away from each other as a tangle of threads. In considering peer relationships in the dance class as an entanglement of interwoven threads, we can appreciate the complexity and interdependency of learning relationships (Mreiwed et al., 2017). Thus, the concept of the meshwork enables me to think through the complexities of collective learning in the dance technique class. It highlights interconnectivity among participants and the tensile potentiality of multiple forces at play in common project. This will be shown to be significant as the discussion in this section unfolds because learning with others in the dance technique class involves both the possibilities of being influenced by peers and the responsibilities of influencing others. As such learning collectively navigates the recognition, dependency, inspiration, accountability and dissonance of entwined processes.

Embodied acts of recognition

> I know that I always notice things that other people do, that maybe good things and things that they need to improve on […] Sometimes I find I watch somebody and I'm like oh! If they just do that a little bit differently that would be so much better. And I feel that's probably what they're doing for me.
>
> Louise

> I was watching Amy very much because she's always really, really light. Which was something I didn't have because I was always using too much energy or force. It helped me, looking at her.
>
> Ino

> A classmate that does really well inspires me to set new goals or underline the goals that I already have. I can, on the other side, also learn from my classmate's 'mistakes'.
>
> 5A Student-led focus group

In her articulation of collective effort, bell hooks (1994) states that to hear each other, in terms of what each person contributes to the learning dialogue, is 'to engage in acts of recognition with one another' (184)**.** In the dance technique class, we can translate this

principle as embodied acts of recognition of which attentive peer observation is an example. Through such ways of acting students can appreciate, recognise and place worth in the contributions of their shared learning. The above participant comments identify the ways in which they have discriminately recognized the affordances of learning among peers: appreciating how movement might be improved (Louise), noticing a movement quality yet to be achieved (Ino) and learning from others mistakes (student-led forum). Thus, considerations of peer dialogue expand from learners giving and receiving feedback through to a more agential seeking-out of inspiration; actively drawing from that which is being explored somatically around them. In this way, embodied acts of recognition in the dance technique class function as the ability to recognise that which is made available through the participation of all learners. Concomitantly, each student might recognise as of significance, their own particular contribution to the learning of the group. Such dual recognition is not selective but can rather collectively include diverse and particular perspectives, experiences and ways of being in the learning encounter.

Weaving together as a collective of diverse learners in the dance technique class can involve 'appreciating learning from each other, respecting different points of views, surfacing and testing assumptions and ideas, and engaging with self and others in a sort of responsive somatic awareness and responsibility' (Dyer and Löytönen 2012, 143). Perceived in this way diverse movement responses, alternative perspectives and range of embodied experiences become enmeshed as part of the collective ongoing project. Through an understanding of this learners might feel able to be heard and contribute by threading themselves through and knotting with the shared process. An immediate example of how learners knot together in the dance technique class is in the way they might inspire each other. Experiencing peers dancing in ways that are inspiring is akin to hearing a persuasive argument in that it is compelling, motivating and propelling. For example, the ways in which one dancer "plays with" the articulation of a movement might stimulate a peer to do the same, not as replication, but as a way of thinking-through-bodily that which has been declared. The participants reflected on the ways in which peers had inspired them and talked about being able to 'take' from them.

> When I watch Marcus […] I'm like; 'Oh my God! He's really amazing'. I love the way that he moves. And there are things that he does that I think I might try moving that way. I think in that sense I see things I like in people and I try to embody that in a little sense maybe.
>
> William

> There are certain people I watch and how, dynamically, they do things. Or how they present themselves. If its stationary but still looks like it's moving, it's so focused in space. OK I'll take their focus, I'll take his dynamic movement, how sharp it may be, how sudden, and then play between the balances of being sudden and being soft […] Take in what someone else has done. Try that next time you do it.
>
> Christopher

> I saw William do something and I was like Wow! I want to try that. So, I tried it and, I don't know but, maybe someone would see me and be like I want to try doing it that way. Everyone contributes like that when you're watching someone dance. You're like; 'Oh! that's really interesting, maybe I could do that'. And then you try it and play with it.
>
> Rose

> I feel that the peers in my class really inspire my dancing. I can observe how they feel the movement and so be inspired by their sensitivity.
>
> 5A Student-led focus group

In the dance technique class, being inspired by and inspiring peers is a collective entanglement. Learning among others in this sense has to do with more than doing the same things alongside each other, it is rather a sensing, feeling and being attuned with fellow learners that supports an open engagement with shared learning processes. The participants described this above as trying to embody things I like (William), taking in and trying what someone else has done (Christopher), trying and playing with things that are interesting (Rose), and being inspired by the sensitivity of others (Student-led focus group). These acts of recognition align with our earlier discussion of somatic attentiveness in chapter six that dealt with the deepening practice of explorative learning. This is extended

here in thinking about the influence of peers as 'multi-stranded, an interweaving of many lines running concurrently' (Ingold 2011a, 221). Therefore, engagement with dialogical activities can cultivate a practice of entanglement wherein learning dance technique becomes a reflectively explorative process through shared movement experiences with the materials.

> You do notice different things in different people and what different people have their strengths or what they are working on personally […] When you're made to watch it with that eye it really helps in the sense that you really do pay attention to what everyone is doing.
>
> William

> I know that I appreciate everyone in the class, I don't know why, but I never imagine people doing that to me. So, it's nice that everyone's looking at you. I know some people who might be really uncomfortable but I quite like it.
>
> Louise

Paying attention to how others engage with the shared movement materials, noticing different things in different people as William says above, may lead to deeper, more critical, understandings of the potential affordances of the materials. Learners might become 'attuned to attend to critical features' (Ingold 2018, 33) of the movement specificities as they are variously embodied by their peers. Thus, embodied learning may be enhanced by observing/sensing/feeling the different ways in which peers resolve transitions, choose dynamics or achieve suspension, for example. The malleability of materials can be experienced through the particularity of their manifestation by peers. Noticing movement subtleties and detailed particularity can become increasingly possible through paying deep and concentrated attention to embodied specificity as it is diversely danced.

Reconceived as embodied acts of recognition, that which becomes apparent through the influence of peers, moves beyond simplistic comparisons between learners. Recognition of each other's contribution might rather transcend the vulnerabilities of being watched objectively by peers (Morris 2012). Consequently, dancing of movement materials in the

dance technique class need not concern external validation achieved through successful performance to peers and teacher. Instead learning can be a process of shared discovering, mutual exploration and finding together. This is what collective effort can mean; that together students might appreciate the enhancement of their learning as it entwines. Therefore, through observation of each other as embodied acts of recognition, peers can expand, provoke, and inspire knowing *with* each other and *for* each other. As dance scholar and pedagogue Anne Morris states 'by incorporating more opportunities for individual and group reflection alongside and in concert with movement activities, [the teacher] can help students better understand themselves and their relatedness to others' (242). Thus, the learner might become increasingly aware of the reciprocity involved in seeing and being seen by peers. The teacher's role can be to enable an environment where seeing and being seen by others can be appreciated for the insights that are afforded for embodied knowing.

Used as an underlying principle in the dance technique class, embodied acts of recognition can foreground particularity wherein students deliberately reveal the explorative process within which they are bodily immersed. This can involve, for example, bringing attention to the experience of dancing among others in space rather than remaining isolated. In learning dance technique, this can generate a greater sense of oneself that enables a somatic awareness of internalised sensation and appreciated connectedness; an outward-ing of embodiment as presence in the world (Csordas 1994, 12). Embodied acts of recognition may also arise in the dance technique studio through dialogical activities such as reciprocal peer feedback and attentive peer observation, discussed previously, that function to identify features of each other's dancing that feeds shared understanding and individualised inquiry. While in another way, knowing with each other can be revealed subtly in partner-work through which touch is a form of listening to the movement of another that impact understanding.

Dance scholars Dyer and Löytönen (2012) state that 'bodily or embodied encounters ultimately shape modes of thinking, interacting and processes of inquiry within a community' (139). Consequently, as an experience of entanglement, learners may understand not only the ways in which they learn from their peers but also the unique and particular ways in which their own dancing of the materials contributes to the collective experience. In the dance technique class, students can affect 'a snowballing' of learning

that has the potential to galvanise shifts in their technical capabilities by expanding awareness, provoking attention, cultivating precision and inspiring alternative propositions. This approach to learning among peers can support the capture and consolidation of embodied experience that might otherwise remain elusive or fleetingly perceived. Collective effort in the dance technique class has an exponential function in that peers are able to shape and reshape their moving/thinking/being together. Such entanglement can work towards inclusion of diversity as a fundamental characteristic of the critical feminist dance class. However, this work is always in the process of becoming and braiding, and sometimes troublingly dissonant features of the dance technique class can be entangled.

Dissonance

The experience of tension among peers in the studio can give rise to frustration with those who did not appear to be similarly invested in the common goals of learning. It has already been discussed that dissent (chapter six) and discomfort (chapter seven) complicate conceptions of empowerment through dialogical approaches. These complexities are expanded here by the conception of dissonance through which I consider the influence of peers where there is disagreement, discord and perceived disinterest in the common project. As we have seen, the conception of the meshwork reframes the experiences of learning collectively in the studio as 'the ground upon which the possibility of interaction is based' (93). However, because the possibility of interaction is not static threads pull apart and tension arises as the lines of participants' forward movements interweave. Consequently, in the dance technique class, the perception of peer disinterest can negatively impact the learning environment and generate ambivalence about how to manage one's own learning in response to such behaviours.

> When those people who don't like [the class] as much get in a mood about it or something and they sit out that doesn't put me off but that's a different atmosphere [...] It can affect the way I'm thinking.
>
> Amy

> I'm really trying to learn everything and I'm really trying to just be open and stuff, which is really hard when other people around you are not as enthusiastic as you are.
>
> Syafiqah

> I find it sometimes challenging if people are reluctant to join in or reluctant to try things. I find that a little bit disheartening. But at the same time there's no need to dwell on that and if they are reluctant that doesn't have to impact on how I move or what I'm doing.
>
> Lauren

The behaviour of some peers, apparently reluctant to join in and not seeming enthusiastic, was experienced by some participants as demoralising and somewhat perplexing. This was discussed above as affecting the way one thinks (Amy), making it really hard to be open (Syafiqah), being a little bit disheartening (Lauren). Interestingly, these disclosures about feelings of frustration were made, on the whole, after prompts by me in the interview to consider whether peers had any negative impacts on their learning. This may indicate that such feelings were not overwhelming or even prevalent. While it might alternatively suggest such experiences were difficult to share with me, the teacher. What does become apparent through these accounts, however, is that encounters of dissonance among peers led the participants to consider how they would respond, what *their* learning engagement behaviour would be and how *they* would 'get on' alongside peers whom they found frustrating. In this way they were confronted, to greater or lesser degree, with the requirement to corroborate their learning approach in the dance technique class and claim the role they intend to play in collective effort; to be purposeful. This would seem to be enaction of non-collaboration, where to collaborate might be negatively perceived as complicity and collusion. This exemplifies the conception of controversy with civility of brave spaces, discussed earlier.

> If they're not into it and they get it wrong it kind of makes me think, it just makes me ponder, OK why are you doing this? […] There're quite a few things where they can't help actually bring it down. Not that it can be up all the time […] but there can be at points in time where they might just do something and it's kind of makes you feel I don't like this or what are they doing that for?

Gabriel

> There are a few who I wonder if they really want to be here because I don't think they're taking it seriously […] And I know I shouldn't let this affect me but it creates a certain atmosphere […] I think I have to just try to ignore that there are certain people who at least don't seem to take it that serious.

Katherina

What it means to contribute to collective effort can feel uncertain, conflicted or controversial for the student when encountering dissonance as part of a learning culture (Boler and Zembylas 2003). In the above two participant comments this tensile state can be sensed in the reflection upon why peers behave in ways that appear to not be into it (Gabriel) or don't seem to take it that seriously (Katherina). This state of tension among peers can be palpable in the studio. As previously stated however, it is not necessarily the teacher's role to shield students from such encounters or even resolve them, but rather to provide the conditions through which they might successfully navigate them. Discomforting learning experiences, such as these, can be transformative in as much as they can lead to positive expansions of perspective, greater agency in the setting and enhanced compassion for others. As such, dissonance among peers can enable learners to develop their sense of responsibility in shared processes and consequently promote the principles of democratic citizenship (Green 1995, 66, Schupp 2018). Through processes in which pedagogical settings are informed by relatedness of interactions we can find valuable ways of living and learning together. As Bannon (2018) posits, learning that engages with cooperative action 'relates to a felt sense of interconnectedness, to be recognised by any one individual and between individuals as they relate in social settings' (77). Therefore, in establishing learning conditions conducive to remaining well amidst peer dissent and collective dissonance the teacher can endeavour to create emotionally respectful and trusting entanglements among diversely responsive participants.

The dance technique class can model and reflect the objectives of a democratic society (Dyer, 2014). Chatterjea (2011) discusses dancing together as 'the specific and unique chemistry of different bodies, different times, and different spaces [that can] suggest to us strategies and tools of action, being-in-the-world, and material hope' (16). In making decisions about how they might proceed as a learner amongst other learners, engaged or not, each student acts as part of the collective and consequently influences others. Bannon

(2018) states that we can find valuable ways of living and learning together through processes in which relatedness of interaction informs the social situations. Thus, the dance technique class model's ways of living among others in a society of diverse perspectives. Being-in-the-world, as student or citizen, involves consideration of what one wants to be part of and the way in which one wants to go about being a part of it. There are inevitable tensions in the experience of dissonance in the dance technique classroom especially when the responsibility for learning does not reside entirely with the teacher. According to dance scholars Dyer and Löytönen (2012) a collaborative community should negotiate dissonance through carefully attending to complex incidents and difference (143). Consequently, learning collectively necessitates a careful attending through which the student assume responsibility for their own learning as well as, to some extent, that of the collective. This is to live and learn through dance together 'in ways we might recognise as having value for our being human' (Bannon 2018, 89). Therefore, if the dance technique studio is to be a location of empowerment and transformation wherein students learn collectively, then it can be necessary for the teacher to encourage participants to generate the learning community they hope for.

Throughout this chapter, learning with peers in the dance technique class has been explored as that which is generated through the contribution of all participants. Peers can have significant, fluid and diverse influences in the way in which shared learning is experienced. Through dialogical approaches individuals may be encouraged to recognise the validity of their own contribution and be afforded opportunities to be heard, seen and felt among their peers. Collective effort therefore concerns the generation of a learning environment that is facilitative of embodied encounters among peers. Trust, respect and mutual support are essential features of reciprocal peer relationships that extend beyond immediate friendship groups in development of learning collectively, in common project and modelling of democratic citizenship. Dialogical activities are impactful due to the depth of being known by the other, the potential for inspiration from diverse perspectives, and the possibility to be recognised. However, this is not unproblematic and dissonance can expansively disrupt learning together.

What has become apparent through this chapter is the complex ways in which shared learning is entangled. Through the lens of critical feminist pedagogy, the affordances of

collective learning can be exponential and transformative. Learning with others, rather than alongside them, dance technique students can build embodied knowing as a shared process through which the common project concerns living and learning well together. Consequently, learners might be enabled to claim their place within that collective, assert their contribution, remain sensitive to the contribution of others and not be dismayed by difference. In the concluding chapter, to follow, I revisit the questions that instigated this research project and consider what contribution is made to new knowledge. While acknowledging the messy and problematic nature of critical feminist pedagogy within the dance technique class, I draw attention to the significance of the various and diverse insights that have become apparent through the process of this exploration from the dance studio.

Chapter 9

Conclusions, confluences and contributions

This study re-envisions dance technique pedagogy by disruptively expanding its transformative potentialities. New ways of thinking about learning dance technique, guided by queer, feminist and critical perspectives, have been developed through the particular experiences of participants that are complex and at times conflicted. The multidimensionality of learning dance technique in a UK conservatoire setting has been critically analysed and thematically discussed as explorative, comfort(able) and collective. These themes are inextricably interwoven and loop through the concomitant dimensions of the learners' engagements with the movement materials, their relationships with the teacher and the influences of their peers. Through this concluding chapter, I lead outward toward understandings of learning dance technique pedagogy as a process of not-unproblematic potentiality and an ongoing, fluidly-attuned relating.

The unfolding research processes

The focus of my research has become increasingly honed through an unfolding inductive process. Exploring experiences of learning dance technique with groups of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Trinity Laban, the thesis is contextually framed within the multifaceted discourses of higher education, conservatoire training and contemporary dance techniques. The lens of critical feminist pedagogy has provided an overarching framework through which to consider participant experiences in relation to the educational objectives, ethical imperatives, and consequential impacts of learning dance technique. Throughout, the research process has been led by the participants, foregrounding their voices, perspectives and attributed meanings. This has rendered a queer and feminist exploration of embodied reflections woven together through layers of meaning, and experiential insights of learning dance technique. In particular, participant experiences have been opened up and critically examined by means of troubling pedagogical claims of empowerment. The contribution made by this research is constituted, in large part, to its

contextual and immersive pedagogical considerations of the dance technique class through the words of the participants, including that of my own as teacher/researcher.

The study delves into the complex issues and unresolved dilemmas arising at the interface of pedagogical approaches, learner expectations and teacher intentions as they are enacted in the dance studio. Consequently, the research navigates unrestful-ness that aims to 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway 2016). This agitated state is both invigorating and exigent for me as researcher and allows me to resist superficial and reductive arguments that suggest universality of experience or formulaic conclusions. Instead, this project develops understanding of dance technique pedagogy by building upon the established and forging dance knowledges of pedagogical practices, scholarship and research. Through these, I assert that pedagogical approaches of dance technique need not be defined by style codification or lineage. In the same way, I have expanded upon the conception of empowerment as an educational aim that can be strategically, diversely and responsively developed. Furthermore, as part of a feminist and queer project, ways of knowing that flow from the site of the dance studio have been reinforcingly acknowledged as subjectively felt, complexly intuitive and responsively fluid.

This practice research project models a process of embodied praxis. The unfolding process occurred in and through the body, my teaching/practiing body and those of the participants, in response to and in assimilation with other bodies, as we explored learning dance technique together. Consequently, this project demonstrates a situated, relational, practice-based pedagogical methodology. In my role as teacher/researcher, thinking about teaching while being in the act of teaching has developed a looped reflection-in-action sensibility that has constantly interrogated and reformed my teaching practice and research approach. Throughout the research process, teaching has informed my thinking, while reflection has reformulated my pedagogical practice in enmeshed ways that have been illuminating, unsuspected, confronting and at times unsettling. The dance studio has been my laboratory where theory has been tested and consequently it is the location from which theory has germinated. Towards this end, critical feminist pedagogy has been put to work, and as teacher/researcher I necessarily employed gut responsiveness led by my embodied knowing and not-knowing in the spontaneity of teaching moments. Therefore, this study evidences the validity of practice research, the credibility of the situated

teacher/researcher and the depth of insight that may arise from layered and unresolved participant experiences.

Theoretical inter-weavings from queer, feminist and critical perspectives have provided a framework through which to explore the arising issues. This has been furthered by means of the integration of social anthropological theory alongside pedagogical theories and dance education research. In this way, it has been possible to highlight the relational and social dimensions of the dance class as a site of activity among a group of people who belong together; coming together in common project. Particularly relevant in this has been the consideration of peer influence on learning in dance technique, explored explicitly in chapter eight. Through this, the study widens previous research in consideration of dance technique practice within a conservatoire setting as a phenomenon not undertaken in isolation, competition or in relation only with the teacher. Moreover, the research furthers perspectives of collective effort aligning learning dance technique with educational imperatives that foster personally-influenced, aesthetically creative and somatically authentic movement capabilities in shared process. This is important because experiences of learning dance technique should, in my opinion, enable expansive, progressive, stimulating environments within which inquiry is ignited, personal transformations are realised and collectiveness is fostered.

A particular feature of the method, with which I have been able to draw attention to the meanings ascribed by the participants, has been through an intense and immersive involvement with their reflective accounts. I posit that the process of methods described in chapter five, extends an innovative way of approaching thematic analysis of the participants lived-experience. In particular, I highlight the use of 'flightpaths' to make connections between the specificities of the participants' diverse articulations of a shared learning process. This method enables a deep engagement with the subtleties of participant accounts and the ability to see from multiple standpoints simultaneously. By personally connecting the incidents and issues in this embodied and empathic way, it is possible to reflect deeply on their divergent and interconnected meanings. The contribution to knowledge that evolves about learning together in/through/with dance technique has credibility in its enmeshment of learner revelations and teacher/researcher reflexivity.

As has been made explicit, the ways in which the discussion of findings have been organised in chapters six, seven and eight should not be misunderstood as suggesting a false distinction regarding the dimensions of learning dance technique. Any implied delineations are rather experienced in the studio as inextricably linked and concomitant. As a confluence of findings these streams of thought are brought together in what follows.

Confluences

Through the ensuing discussion, I navigate the swell of my research findings as they overflow and coalesce. Consequently, I build an integrative consideration of dance technique by drawing out and making connections between my findings that will be discussed in three parts. Firstly, contribution to common project brings together insights of what it means for learners to be active participants. Through this, the implications of shared responsibility are highlighted and further reflection is given to the interdependency of peer relationships. Secondly, voicing bodies expands upon that which is revealed about embodied dialogue in the dance technique class. Thus, issues of deliberateness, declaration and diversity are brought together and in relief with considerations of dissent, discomfort and dissonance. Lastly, disruptive empowerment reflects upon the transformative potentiality of learning dance technique as that which is accumulatively generated among ourselves and oppositional to inequities of learning. Through these confluences critical feminist pedagogy is problematically, yet hopefully, positioned as means to enable empowerment by re-envisioning dance technique pedagogy.

Contribution to common project

Contribution to common project is considered here accumulatively wherein learners are engaged with dance technique as active participants with shared responsibility through interdependent relationships. Active learning, in critical feminist terms, is not necessarily easily achieved and it cannot be assumed that shared responsibility will arise from this approach. While potentially generative of agency, the lived realities of active learning and shared responsibility can be problematic because they disrupt expectations of the authority of the teacher, trajectory of learning and the location of knowledge. For example, the

decentred teacher can be misunderstood as disinterested and acknowledgements of failings by the teacher risks undermining learner confidence. However, despite potential disruption, the reconfiguring of roles in the dance technique class is paramount to enabling contribution to common project. This shift of power opens up the possibility for learners to direct their learning process, take ownership, be reflective about their needs and seek out their own ways of fulfilling them. Successfully supported to do so, learners can increasingly recognise the affordances of assuming responsibility in this way.

Contributing to common project in the dance technique class involves in addition, interdependent relationships. Here I am thinking specifically about the significance of learning as part of a group that gets to know one another well as was the case for the research participants. While conventional approaches to learning dance technique may require individualistic focus and compliant attention, critical feminist pedagogy encourages relationality. Participation is not insular but rather expansive, focused toward that which might be mutually and accumulatively realised. Learners contribute and influence the development of the learning process and by doing so, determine to some extent the learning of others. Similarly, the contribution of peers can influence an individual's learning experience and, in this reciprocity, learners are accountable to each other through embodied acts of recognition. The aims of critical feminist pedagogy are realisable in the dance technique class through processes that extend choices and thereby enable agency, develop confidence to take risks, and foster collective effort expansively. Such ways of being can be manifest in the learner's engagement with movement materials approached as an invitation to explore. However, while stimulating for some, such processes of learning can be unsettling, especially when learners seek reassurances of a linearly-tracked progression. Learning approached as exploration necessitates, otherwise, remaining with an ambiguous evolving and a deepening attunement to embodied knowing as an ever-unfolding practice. Therefore, not-knowing, and yet still seeking, is a feature of the learner's contribution to the common project of embodied knowing.

My research has made evident that the participants were able to contribute to the common project through the enabling affordances of personable interactions with the teacher that served to establish comfort(able) learning environments. However, as has also been made clear, the participants experienced divergent opinions, and feelings of ambivalence, about

the roles of teacher and student regarding responsibility for learning and readiness to assume active participation. Throughout, I have drawn attention to the studio as a relational and co-constructed environment characterised through dialogical exchange, personable interaction and decentred teacher investment. The significance of relationality to enable learner contribution in the dance technique class has been further enlivened by exploring peers influence on/with each other. Learning collectively has been stated to broaden the perspectives through which movement is approached, investigated and embodied. Thus, contribution to the common project is collectively realised in ways that are both multifaceted and interconnected. This positions the dance technique class as a potential location of ethical responsibility in educational terms towards living/learning well among others. As such the conception of contribution to learning evolves beyond an invitation to assume active approaches to learning, as defined through critical pedagogy. It concerns acknowledgement of indebtedness and accountability to those with whom one learns interdependently.

Voicing bodies

As a drawing together of findings, voicing bodies concerns dimensions of embodied dialogue as they may be mobilised in the dance technique class. In one way they include deliberateness, declaration and diverse perspectives while in another they acknowledge dissent, discomfort and dissonance. This multi-dimensionality of voice spans the discussion of themes and draws together the conflictual insights of what it can mean for the learner to have voice in the dance technique class. Having voice concerns declarative dancing and danced perspective through which the learner expresses themselves deliberately in the studio. Through the conception of embodied acts of recognition among peers voiced bodies from within the dance studio are identified as diversely and interdependently expressed.

A further dimension of having voice in the dance technique class is the potentiality of reflection enabled by listening, seeing, and sensing others. This is a reflective dwelling with voice, and as this thesis has argued throughout, learning dance technique is a cultural experience constructed with others that can inspire personal change. Therefore, having voice as part of a collective experience concerns a mutual accountability of listening receptively and reflecting upon that which is bodily perceived, as much as it does with diversity of declaration. As such, learning dance technique can be increasingly imbued with

that which is particularly personal and relevant to the individual participants. In this way, the learner can develop their own voice in concert with that of others as an enmeshed symbiotic process. Thus, voicing bodies can be the means by which learners' practice what they think, find out how they might be deliberate and bold in their danced declaration, and draw from the dancing of others, thereby expanding their danced perspectives. Consequently, having voice can fulfil the aims of critical feminist and queer pedagogies in that the learner is heard, assumptions are re-evaluated, difference is negotiated and working together is realised. In short, it can be the means by which transformation is enacted.

Uneasy conceptions of voicing bodies have also arisen through the discussion of data that at first suggest negative implications of critical feminist pedagogy; dissent, discomfort and dissonance. In many respects these concepts form one strand of the research project that navigates and holds in tension the complexities of opposition. This strand has usefully brought tensile vitality to the experiences of learning in the dance technique class, approached through critical feminist pedagogy, as non-passivity. It has been stated that an enabling pedagogy encourages the contribution of all participants and reinforces learning as a process of mutuality. However, such learning processes are not necessarily easy assumed or realised without struggle. As was discussed in chapter six, dissent reframes resistance from learners as engagement that is not necessarily acquiescent. The learner who is encouraged to have voice, may choose to dissent, and while this evidences empowerment in the learning context, it can also be problematic for all participants. Another uneasy facet of having/enabling voice, discomfort, was discussed in chapter seven as a counterpoint to the conceptualisation of learning dance technique as comfort(able). Discomfort is not necessarily to be avoided or assuaged as it can be the means by which we are moved on from locations of stuck-ness, confinement or unstimulating comfort. Similarly troubling, dissonance was discussed in chapter eight as problematic encounters with difference. Learning with peers can be expansively pluralistic and this dynamic vitality in the dance technique class can be a means of practising uneasy yet resilient relating, modelling citizenship.

Voicing bodies in the dance technique class realise processes of learning that are uneasy, unsettling and unresolved. This can be a means of vitality in the dance technique studio

both in terms of being essential and enlivening; essential for moving on as a learner, and enlivening in providing the stimulation to do so. As a consequence, transformation occurs through the arising shifts in perception afforded by voicing bodies in the dance technique class, through assuming one's potency amidst the tensile vitality of learning among others with whom one is collectively entangled.

Disruptive empowerment

In this final drawing together of my findings, I highlight that which has been argued through the thesis about empowerment and the transformative potentiality of the dance technique class. I expound that which is accumulatively generated among ourselves and disruptive of inequities of learning. This concerns redistributing power in order to reconstruct privilege, the potential of dance technique as an emanating practice and the queering of normative structures and limiting strictures. As has been evidenced throughout, the aim of critical feminist pedagogy to empower the learner is a troubled conception and in the dance technique class its meanings can be various, fluid and conflicting.

Empowerment can be realised through the redistribution of power as it functions as energy and potency in the studio. I contend that the process of learning in the dance technique class should not perpetuate the continued privileges of some learners at the expense of others. In order to realise greater equity among peers and work toward social justice, as critical feminist perspectives advocate, the teacher can encourage circumstances wherein learning is fairer, social situations are respectful of difference and excluding marginalisation is countered. However, the intention to redistribute power in the dance technique class in more equitable ways can be challenging for various reasons. As discussed, peers can enjoy working within closed friendship groups and pre-agreed partnerships can support learning while simultaneously inhibiting collective effort. Similarly, peer feedback can be received in ways that are not constructive and the encouragement to contribute can feel exclusionary and imposed. In light of these unintended consequences, the potentiality of critical feminist pedagogy to empower learners is not-unproblematic. While transformation through education may necessitate some involvement with discomforting disruption, empowerment arises only from the realisation of successful outcomes in holistic terms of such experiences. Crucially, these outcomes may not be realised through the immediate learning context and consequently may not be witnessed by the teacher.

An important consideration of empowerment for learning dance technique is in the way in which progress is conceived with respect to particularity and diversity. In chapter two, an argument was constructed for dance technique as an emanating practice through which the learner might hone that which their body can do in response to various stylistically defined specificities. This conception has the potential to empower learners, as it positively frames ability and does not restrict the development of technique along a singularly defined trajectory that reinforces negative competitiveness and deficit thinking. Furthermore, in terms of critical feminist pedagogy, the aim of empowerment serves as an activist intention to enable all and not to exclude or further marginalise some learners. This aim counters normative ways of learning dance technique at the highest levels, as represented by conservatoire training, that can privilege some learners at the expense of others. Queering such normative standards, this thesis has developed an understanding of learning environments, co-created by all participants, that crucially acknowledges each student as an integral and valued member of the learning community. Thus, the political and ethical claims of this research advocate dance technique pedagogies of non-normative, non-standardisation, non-compliance, and non-authoritarianism. My research further supports the view that dance training within a conservatoire setting can be approached in ways that foster development of students as individual persons, not bodies as blunt instruments, while enhancing bodily capabilities. Empowerment, through perspectives of feminist and queer alliance, is enacted by disrupting inequities of power and re-envisioning society in more inclusive ways. Thus envisioned, learning dance technique is both a means to realise exceptional technique and more qualitative lives that redefine the parameters of social norms, inside and outside of the studio.

The pedagogical aim to enact greater social justice in/through/beyond the dance technique class can require sensitivity to specific contextual challenges and a continual working-through of the complexities of pedagogical relationships. This is an imprecise human relating and requires, at its most fundamental level, a recognition of the learner as an individual agent and fellow human being. In the dance technique class, enacting critical feminist values is knotty and hence approaches to learning with transformational aims necessitate vivid attunement and activist zeal by the teacher alongside learners in the studio. Therefore, it remains necessary to continue to struggle in the attempt to ensure

that, on balance, the efforts toward empowerment outweigh mistakes, misconceptions and missed opportunities.

The social justice agenda of critical feminist and queer perspectives, as it has been developed through this thesis, proposes creation of environments wherein it feels possible to remain with uncertainty and ambiguity, and to recognise these states as generative, expansive and facilitative of personal agency. Advocacy can arise from such environments such that in learning contexts, those who would ordinarily be marginalised do not continue to encounter the same oppressive forces. Therefore, dance training might further align with the transformative aims of critical feminist pedagogy in a wider sense by reorienting the dance futures of today's learners. For example, the dance artists of the future might expect to be treated with greater respect, build collective processes of working and share practices with others in ways that are characterised by social justice. Arguably dance has always been an advocate of such practices and in this way pedagogical approaches imbued with disruptive empowerment might align and further embolden such activism.

Greater equity is possible in learning environments characterised by, among other things, developing voice, making choices, sharing perspectives, recognising difference, and realising common project. While not-unproblematic, such pedagogical approaches have the potential to generate the conditions through which dance artists of the future conceive of, and construct, what dance will become and their place within it. Therefore, disruptive empowerment works to redress the balance of learning outcomes through processes that function as more just. The hopefulness of this aim is that the dance artists of the future re-envision dance in similarly expansive and progressive ways.

Concluding thoughts

Dance technique, as an area of embodied learning, is not in service of other realms of dance such as choreography or repertory, but instead is a critical realisation of dance practice in itself. This constitutes a rejection, on its own terms, of technique as mechanical; a mere acquisition of skills through obedient processes of replication, repetition and regurgitation. Learning together in/through/with dance technique has been shown to manifest in numerous pedagogical principles that include encouraging the contribution of all learners,

acknowledging diversity of responsiveness, and fostering collective effort. It recognises diversity and pluralism through development of trust and respect which supports confidence to take risks. By acknowledging learning as a state of vulnerability, learners can remain with ambiguity while seeking achievable challenges that support aspiration, maintain rigour, and build movement curiosity. By starting from the personal, honing precision, and championing the individuality of embodied knowing, learners may attune through the somatic. Furthermore, through pedagogical strategies such as attentive peer observation, dance technique can be a practice of exercising power democratically, working against exclusionary competition and challenging normative structures. These features are not exhaustive but rather indicative of the principles underpinning learning dance technique afforded through the values enshrined in critical feminist pedagogy. They are dynamic entities that can responsively morph through the circumstances of the teaching moment/context.

Contributing to knowledges of dance pedagogy with regards to the values that underpin ethical educational aims of transformation this research advocates care for the learner as a fellow human being and fostering a sense of inter-relational belonging. Approaches to learning dance technique that respect the individual while cultivating the collective, as they have been explored, are important because they extend possibilities for enhanced learning for *all* students. They develop conceptions of what a dancer can be, how we might belong or go-along together and model democratic ideals that may be put to work in wider situations. Consequently, the research extends understanding of how to practice learning and living well with each other.

For me, as a teacher of dance technique, I am mindful of the potential of my teaching to impact students in diverse ways beyond those which I witness in the studio. I am thoughtful about the powerful and yet limited ways in which I might influence learners during their programmes at Trinity Laban and their development as young people. I assume a duty and moral responsibility to ensure that I do not perpetuate pedagogical practices that are potentially harmful to well-being and physical capability. Furthermore, I am hopeful to encourage assured ways of living/moving in the world. This study has been motivated by the belief that education has the power to liberate, transform and empower, and while this project has revealed each of these conceptions to be problematic in the ways in which they

are experienced in the dance studio, I remain convinced of the importance of pedagogies to reconfigure entrenched assumptions about technique training that oppress and disempower dancers and undermine the potency of dancing.

Learning dance technique is located through this thesis as an embodied modelling of possibilities of critical feminist pedagogy. The aspiration that learning might transform an individual's understanding of who they are and how they might shape their world with assurance is an imperative of liberatory education. In seeking to realise such aims through dance technique pedagogy, the dance studio can be a vital place for curious particularity and collective entanglement that extends beyond the boundaries of more limited/fixed educational encounters. Learning dance technique can become a way of learning and being among others that shapes how we live, dance and make our world together.

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Appendix 1

4D Participant Information Sheet (Forum)

Dear Student,

I would like you to be involved in Forum (a small group discussion) for my research project.

About the Research

I am undertaking research into learning in Contemporary dance technique in Higher Education. I am a PhD candidate at Middlesex University. I am asking you (and others) to be a participant in my research to gain understanding from your perspective about learning in Contemporary dance technique. This research involves me collecting forum and interview data and eventually writing a thesis.

Importantly I will be inviting you to be as frank as possible. As such I want to reassure that you may express any positive or negative views without impact on our relationship as student and teacher. As both researcher and teacher I will ensure that your participation in this research does not affect your tutor support. Additionally, all Trinity Laban quality assurance policies will be fully employed.

(Please see overleaf for details of data management.)

About the Forum

The Forum will last about 60 minutes. It is a small group discussion about learning in Contemporary dance technique. You will be with your class peers (between 5 and 8 in total). A meeting would be arranged at a time and place that is convenient to you all. I will ask the group to talk about their experiences of being as student. I will make notes during the forum and video record the session. I will play 'low-key' role but may add questions or ask you to expand. I will use the things you say to further my thinking and may include anonymous quotes by you (and others) in the final thesis and/or other research outputs (journal papers, conference presentations etc.)

Forum Rules

The following rules will apply to the Forum:

- The opinions and values of each person will be respected
- All things discussed in the Forum will remain confidential (please see below)
- Only one person will speak at a time
- You are free to leave at any stage.

Please sign below if you are happy to participate in my research by being involved in a Forum. I will then make arrangements with you by your preferred form of communication. You are free to decline this invitation it without consequence.

I hope you feel able to support my studies in this way.

Thank you,

Jamieson Dryburgh

PhD candidate Middlesex University

Management of data

The following criteria aim to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of your data. The conditions of withdrawing your permission for the use of your data are also outlined below.

Confidentiality

- Your identity will be treated confidentially.
- No one else will have access to your data (who you are or what you have said).
- The recordings and my notes from the forum will be stored securely at all times.
- After the final thesis is submitted (estimated 2019) your data would be kept securely by Middlesex University and myself for a further five years (for verification purposes) and then destroyed.

Anonymity

- Anything referenced in the research from the forum will be anonymous.
- Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym.
- All identifying details will be removed.
- If specific details make it difficult to maintain your anonymity (i.e. issues from your personal story, involvement in other projects etc.) then additional permissions will be sought before this can be used.

Withdrawing

- You participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at all times.
- If you withdraw your data will be destroyed immediately.
- I will make my thesis available to you prior to the submission date if you would like to read it.
- At this stage you may still withdraw your permission to use your data.

I have read the above and I agree to be interviewed by Jamieson Dryburgh.

Signed…… Date…….

I would like to be contacted in the following way……

Deadline for expression of interest to be involved: …….

Appendix 2

4D Informed Consent (Forum)

Please tick the following statements to indicate your consent and then sign at the bottom of the form.

I agree to be a participant in this research by being involved in a forum about my experience as a learner of Contemporary dance technique.	
I agree for the forum to be video recorded.	
I give permission for my data (issues, ideas, views discussed during the interview) to be used for the purposes of this research.	
I agree to the details of confidentiality as set out below: • My identity will be treated confidentially by the researcher and those involved. • I will treat the issues discussed by others in the forum with confidence. • No one else will have access to my data (who you are or what you have said). • The recordings and notes from the forum will be stored securely at all times. • After the final thesis is submitted (estimated 2019) my data would be kept securely by Jamieson Dryburgh and Middlesex University for a further five years (for verification purposes) and then destroyed.	
I agree to the details of anonymity as set out below: • Anything referenced in the research from the forum will be anonymous. • My name would be replaced with a pseudonym. • All identifying details would be removed. • If specific details make it difficult to maintain my anonymity (i.e. issues from your personal story, involvement in other projects etc) then additional permissions would be sought before this can be used.	
I agree to the details of withdrawing permission as set out below: • I am free at all times to withdraw from the research. • If I withdraw my data will be destroyed immediately. • The researcher will make the thesis available to me prior to the submission date if I would like to read it. • At this stage I may still withdraw my permission to use my data.	
I know that I can withdraw my consent at any time by contacting Jamieson Dryburgh (jd991@live.mdx.ac.uk)	
The researcher has informed me that being involved as a participant in this research will not affect my tutor support or my assessment (if applicable).	
I would like to have access to the draft thesis before it is submitted. (Please indicate preferred form of communication)	

Signed……. date……..

Printed name……

PhD Research by Jamieson Dryburgh

You are a participating in the Research of Jamison Dryburgh by being involved in a Forum

About the Research

I am undertaking research into learning in Contemporary dance technique in Higher Education. I am a PhD candidate at Middlesex University. I am asking you (and others) to be a participant in my research to gain understanding from your perspective about learning in Contemporary dance technique. This research involves me collecting forum and interview data and eventually writing a thesis.

Importantly I will be inviting you to be as frank as possible. As such I want to reassure that you may express any positive or negative views without impact on our relationship as student and teacher. As both researcher and teacher I will ensure that your participation in this research does not affect your tutor support. Additionally, all Trinity Laban quality assurance policies will be fully employed.

About the Forum

The Forum will last about 60 minutes. It is a small group discussion around talking points to do with Contemporary dance Technique. You would be with your class peers (between 5 and 8 in total). A meeting would be arranged at a time and place that is convenient to you. I would ask the group to talk about their experiences and views about the experience of being. I would make notes during the forum and video record the session. I will play 'low-key' role but may add questions or ask you to expand. I would use the things you say to further his thinking and may include anonymous quotes by you in the final thesis and/or other research outputs (journal papers, conference presentations etc.)

Forum Rules

The following rules will apply to the Forum:

- The opinions and values of each person will be respected
- All things discussed in the Forum will remain confidential (please see over leaf)
- Only one person will speak at a time
- You are free to leave the space at any stage
- If you wish to discuss things in further detail with me following the Forum I will be happy to do so.

Informed Consent

Please complete the form overleaf to indicate that you are aware of and agree to the conditions of being involved as a participant in this research. Thank you,

Jamieson Dryburgh

PhD candidate Middlesex University

Appendix 3

6/7A Participant Information Sheet

Dear Student,I would like you to be involved in my research project.

About the Research

I am undertaking research into learning in Contemporary Dance technique in Higher Education. I am a PhD candidate at Middlesex University (first year). I am asking you to be a participant in my research so that I may gain understanding of the learning process from your perspective as a student.

This research involves me collecting data to analyse and eventually I will write a thesis. Some of these ideas will be presented in journal paper publications or presented at conferences. Your participation with this research will not affect, in any way, your tutor support (from me as your teacher) or assessment. I would like to gather data in the following ways:

Observational Videos

I will video each class as a record of what went on. A small camera will be set up at the beginning of the class and left to run undisturbed. This will be largely used for my own observation purposes but may be used in discussions with supervisors and peers and may be shown in presentations. You have the following options with respect to the videos being made during class time:

(Please tick one option)

I consent to the videos being made and my image may be shown	
I consent to the videos being made but my image may **not** be shown	
I do **not** consent to the videos being made	

Learning Reflections

During each class you will be involved in a written 'learning reflection' activity. This is integral to the learning process. I would like to use these in my research to understand how the learning process is developing. You have the following options with respect to the learning reflections:

(Please tick one option)

I consent to you having and using my learning reflection data	
I consent to you copying and using my learning reflection data	
I do consent to you copying and **not** using my learning reflection data	
I do **not** consent to you having and using my learning reflection data	

Interviews

Through the process of our learning together I would like to conduct interviews with as many of you as I can. This interview will be structured around questions designed by me. They will be videoed and the data will be used for my research. If you consent to be interviewed, a mutually convenient time will be scheduled for it to take place. The interview will last 45 minutes.

(Please tick one option)

I consent to being interviewed	
I do not consent to being interviewed	

6/7A Participant Information Sheet (cont.)

Management of data

The following criteria aim to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of your data. It also sets out the conditions of withdrawing your permission to use your data.

Confidentiality

- Your identity will be treated confidentially.
- No one else will have access to your data (who you are or what you have said).
- The data will be stored securely at all times.
- After the final thesis is submitted (estimated 2019) your data would be kept securely by myself and Middlesex University for a further five years (for verification purposes) and then destroyed.

Anonymity in Thesis

- Anything referenced from the data will be anonymous.
- Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym.
- All identifying details will be removed.
- If specific details make it difficult to maintain your anonymity (i.e. issues from your personal story, involvement in other projects etc.) then additional permissions will be sought before this can be used.

Withdrawing

- Yourf participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at all times.
- If you withdraw your data will be destroyed immediately.
- You may withdraw up to three months after the end of our learning together.

Due Procedure

- Your relationship with the teacher/researcher will not be affected by being involved/not being involved in this research
- The teacher/researcher will follow all usual and appropriate procedures with regard to his duties as your teacher
- All assessment grades will be second marked and follow the usual Quality Assurance procedures

Complaints

- If you have any concerns or complaints about the research process you can email Sue Akroyd (Head of Post Graduate Studies) s.akroyd@trinitylaban.ac.uk

Please sign below to indicate that you are happy to participate in my research by being involved in the ways you have indicated overleaf and that you understand the ways in which your data will be managed. You are free to decline this invitation without consequence. Thank you,

Jamieson Dryburgh *PhD candidate Middlesex University*

I have read the above and I agree/ do not agree (delete as appropriate) to be involved in this research .

Signed…… Date……

Name (printed)……..

Appendix 4

6/7A Informed Consent (Interview)

Please tick the following statements to indicate your consent and then sign at the bottom of the form.

I agree to be a participant in this research by being interviewed by Jamieson Dryburgh about my experience as a learner of Contemporary dance technique.	
I agree for the interview to be video recorded.	
I give permission for my data (issues, ideas, views discussed during the interview) to be used for the purposes of this research.	
I agree to the details of confidentiality as set out below: • My identity will be treated confidentially. • No one else will have access to my data (who you are or what you have said). • The recordings and notes from the interview will be stored securely at all times. • After the final thesis is submitted (estimated 2019) my data would be kept securely by Jamieson Dryburgh and Middlesex University for a further five years (for verification purposes) and then destroyed	
I agree to the details of anonymity as set out below: • Anything referenced in the research from the interview will be anonymous. • My name would be replaced with a pseudonym. • All identifying details would be removed. • If specific details make it difficult to maintain my anonymity (i.e. issues from your personal story, involvement in other projects etc.) then additional permissions would be sought before this can be used.	
I agree to the details of withdrawing permission as set out below: • I am free at all times to withdraw from the research. • If I withdraw my data will be destroyed immediately. • The researcher will make the thesis available to me prior to the submission date if I would like to read it. • At this stage I may still withdraw my permission to use my data.	
I know that I can withdraw my consent at any time by contacting Jamieson Dryburgh (jd991@live.mdx.ac.uk)	
I know that being involved as a participant in this research will not affect my tutor support or my assessment (if applicable).	
I would like to have access to the draft thesis before it is submitted. (Please indicate preferred form of communication)	

Signed……. date……..

Printed name……

PhD Research by Jamieson Dryburgh

You are a participating in the Research of Jamison Dryburgh

About the Research

I am undertaking research into learning in Contemporary dance technique in Higher Education. I am a PhD candidate at Middlesex University. I am asking you (and others) to be a participant in my research to gain understanding from your perspective about learning in Contemporary dance technique. This research involves me collecting forum and interview data and eventually writing a thesis.

Importantly I will be inviting you to be as frank as possible. As such I want to reassure that you may express any positive or negative views without impact on our relationship as student and teacher. As both researcher and teacher I will ensure that your participation in this research does not affect your tutor support. Additionally, all Trinity Laban quality assurance policies will be fully employed.

About the Interview

The interview would last about 45 minutes. We would meet, one to one, at a time and place that is convenient to you. I would ask you a series of questions about your experience of being a student of Contemporary dance technique. I would make notes during the interview and video record the session. I would use the things you say to further my thinking and may include anonymous quotes by you in my final thesis and/or other research outputs (journal papers, conference presentations etc.)

Informed Consent

Please complete the form overleaf to indicate that you are aware of and agree to the conditions of being involved as a participant in this research.

Thank you,

Jamieson Dryburgh

PhD candidate Middlesex University

Appendix 5

6/7Aa Interview Questions (May 2016)

1. Describe what we have been doing together.
2. Tell me about an experience in class that was significant for you.
3. What do you want from technique class?
4. How do you interact with your peers in the class?
5. What gets in the way of your learning?
6. What is the purpose of technique class?

Additional questions

7. How has your approach to CDT changes (if at all)?
8. How do you feel in CDT? Why?
9. How would you define student centred learning?

Appendix 6

5A Participant Information and Permission Sheet

Dear Student,

I would like you to be involved in my research project and give me permission to use your data from the Student Group Feedback Session.

About the Research

I am undertaking research into learning in Contemporary dance technique in Higher Education. I am a PhD candidate at Middlesex University (second year). I am asking you to be a participant in my research so that I may gain understanding of the learning process from your perspective as a student.

This research involves me collecting data to analyze and eventually I will write a thesis. Some of these ideas will be presented in journal paper publications or presented at conferences. Your participation with this research will not affect, in any way, your tutor support (from me as your teacher).

Initially, I would like to find out about what you think in the following way:

Student Group Feedback Session

You are invited to a Feedback Session.
Thursday 20th at 12:00 and Friday 21st October at 1:45
This session will last up to 90 minutes in Seminar Room A

In small groups (3-4) people you will answer a series of set questions. You will discuss each question together and then write individual answers on a form. These forms will be anonymous and posted in to a box in the space.

The teacher will introduce the session and outline the task for clarity. He will then leave the space during the discussion and writing. The teacher will return to the space at a designated time so that he may respond to any issues that came up during the session.

You will be able to leave the session whenever you choose.

Permission

I need your permission to use the things you write about (the data)

At the beginning of the session I will ask you to complete a 'permission form'. I will also ask you for permission to film some of our classes, use reflective materials generated during our classes and to invite external guests to observe our learning practice.

At the end of our learning component (February) I will invite some of you to an interview.

Please see opposite for details of how the data will be used.

Management of data

The following criteria aim to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of your data. It also sets out the conditions of withdrawing your permission to use your data.

Confidentiality

- Your identity will be treated confidentially.
- No one else will have access to your data.
- The data will be stored securely at all times.
- After the final thesis is submitted (estimated 2019) your data would be kept securely by myself and Middlesex University for a further five years (for verification purposes) and then destroyed.

Anonymity in Thesis

- Anything referenced from the data will be anonymous.
- All names will be replaced with a pseudonym.
- All identifying details will be removed.
- If specific details make it difficult to maintain your anonymity (i.e. issues from your personal story, involvement in other projects etc.) then additional permissions will be sought before this can be used.

Withdrawing

- You participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at all times.
- If you withdraw your data will be destroyed immediately.
- You may withdraw up to three months after the end of our learning together.

Due Procedure

- Your relationship with the teacher/researcher will not be affected by being involved/not being involved in this research
- The teacher/researcher will follow all usual and appropriate procedures with regard to his duties as your teacher

Concerns

- If you have any concerns about the research process you should email Louise Jackson (head of learning enhancement) l.jackson@trinitylaban.ac.uk

I have read and understand the above information about the research I am participating in. I give Jamie permission to use my data as part of his research.

Signed…… Date……

Print name……

Appendix 7

Feedback Session instructions and questions

Instructions:

- Sit in groups of 3-4 people
- Start when the teacher has left the space
- Open one envelop
- Read the question together
- Discuss your ideas in your small group
- Then write your thoughts on your feedback sheet
- Write in the numbered space corresponding to the question
- Write about one paragraph
- Then when the members of your group are ready choose the next envelop and repeat the process

Other information

The questions can be answered in any order

Spend about 10 minutes for each question

There are 6 questions

You do not have to answer them all.

Feel free to use names of students, teachers, faculty etc. as all names will be given pseudonyms by Jamie

When you have finished please put your feedback sheet in the box provided.

After one hour, Jamie will return to the space to answer any questions or respond to your ideas if this is useful to you.

This process is designed to allow each student's comments to remain anonymous.

You may leave at any time.

Questions

1. What do you want from Contemporary dance technique class and how might this best be achieved?
2. In Contemporary dance technique class what sort of choices do you have? Can you tell me about your experience of these?
3. What is your experience of the process of learning set material (particularly the 'big' dance sequence at the end of class) in Contemporary dance technique? How could this be enhanced?
4. What is your understanding of the reasons why the teacher sets material (particularly the 'big' dance sequence at the end of class) in Contemporary dance technique?
5. In the Contemporary dance technique class what impact do your peers have on your learning and what impact do you have on theirs?
6. How do you approach your relationship with the Contemporary dance technique teacher?

Appendix 8

5A Participant Information sheet (Interview)

Dear 5A Student,

I would like to interview you for my research.

About the Interview

I will be conducting interviews with students between Wed 25th January and 10th February (before half term). These will be scheduled at your convenience. Interviews can be arranged via email (j.dryburgh@trinitylaban.ac.uk) or face to face with Jamie.

The Interview would follow a semi-structured format. The teacher (Jamie) would ask you a series of questions to which you would be able to talk openly about your thoughts. The questions willl focus on your experience of learning in Contemporary dance technique classes with the teacher (Jamie).

The interview would last about one hour and be conducted in the Laban building (in tutor room 4 unless stated otherwise). The interview would be recorded. You would be able to leave the interview whenever you choose.

Your participation in an interview would be on a voluntary basis. Your comments would be treated as confidential and anonymized when used (please see overleaf for further details).

About the Research

I am undertaking research into learning in Contemporary dance technique in Higher Education. I am a PhD candidate at Middlesex University (second year). I am asking you to be a participant in my research so that I may gain understanding of the learning process from your perspective as a student.

This research involves me collecting data to analyze and eventually I will write a thesis. Some of these ideas will be presented in journal paper publications or presented at conferences. Your participation with this research will not affect, in any way, your tutor support (from me as your teacher).

Your comments would be used in my research to discuss the student experience and may involve quotes from you.

Management of data

The following criteria aim to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of your data. It also sets out the conditions of withdrawing your permission to use your data.

Confidentiality

- Your identity will be treated confidentially.
- No one else will have access to your data.
- The data will be stored securely at all times.
- After the final thesis is submitted (estimated 2019) your data would be kept securely by myself and Middlesex University for a further five years (for verification purposes) and then destroyed.

Anonymity in Thesis

- Anything referenced from the data will be anonymous.
- All names will be replaced with a pseudonym.
- All identifying details will be removed.
- If specific details make it difficult to maintain your anonymity (i.e. issues from your personal story, involvement in other projects etc.) then additional permissions will be sought before this can be used.

Withdrawing

- Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at all times.
- If you withdraw your data will be destroyed immediately.
- You may withdraw up to three months after the end of our learning together.

Due Procedure

- Your relationship with the teacher/researcher will not be affected by being involved/not being involved in this research
- The teacher/researcher will follow all usual and appropriate procedures with regard to his duties as your teacher
- Institutional ethical approval has been granted for this research

Concerns

- If you have any concerns about the research process you should email Louise Jackson (head of learning enhancement) l.jackson@trinitylaban.ac.uk

Appendix 9

5A Participant Consent Form (Interview)

Dear 5A Student,

Thank you for participating in my research by being interviewed.

Please complete this consent form allowing me to use the data from the interview and from class. This data may be used in the PhD thesis, conference presentation(s) and/or academic journal publications.

Please tick

I have received and read the participant information sheet	
I understand how the data will be managed	
I give consent for my data to be used anonymously in the research	
I give permission for materials from class (i.e. flipchart, photographs and video) to be used anonymously in the research	

When your data is quoted a different name will be used. This is called a pseudonym. You can choose what this name will be.

First name only

The pseudonym I would like to be used is:	

In the research it is useful to be able to say a something (briefly) about who you are in order to give the data some context. Please fill out the following personal data if you are happy to do so.

Age	
Country of origin	
Experience of dance before being a student at TL?	
Anything else about you that is important to be included	

I give my permission for Jamieson Dryburgh to use my data as described above.

Signature…… date……

Name (printed)……

Appendix 10

5A Interview Questions

All questions pertain to the experience of learning Contemporary Dance Technique in 5A with Jamie as teacher.

1. How would you describe what we have been doing together?
2. In what ways is CDT important to you?
3. How would you describe the role of the teacher/student relationship in our classes?
4. What power to choose and contribute do you have?
5. What impact do your peers have on your learning? What impact do you have on theirs?
6. Tell me about the process of learning with Set Materials (the longer dance sequence at the end of the class).
7. What does it mean to have done 'a good job' with Set material?
8. How do you feel when you feel it is working for you?
9. How do you think being part of the research process has affected your learning?
10. Are there any questions you would like to be asked?