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**“Yes, I am stupid...”:
Dancers’ experiences of pedagogy and self-esteem in Singapore**

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Abstract

Despite increasing recognition of the benefits to dance learning, teaching practices within dance education can be problematic. This study investigates dance teaching practices in relation to the self-esteem of students. Driving this inquiry is the motivating question: How can teaching practices within dance education diminish students' self-esteem?

Using a narrative inquiry method within a qualitative research approach, this study applied multiple theories – Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychological theories, notably the *hierarchy of needs* (1943) and *The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity* (1942), Mark Leary's *sociometer theory* (1999), and *critical dance pedagogy*, along with other *humanistic educational theories*, to clarify the understanding of the role of dance education, to challenge the dominant assumption that dance is always benevolent, and to examine the impact of dance teaching practices on students' self-esteem.

Through the collection and analysis of seven student participants' dance learning experiences, it is revealed that three particular dance teaching practices can have a negative impact on students' self-esteem. Employing chosen anecdotes, students' experiences of teachers' non-rationalised, aggressive and humiliating actions directed at them, along with their corresponding feelings of insecurity (as a response to unsatisfied esteem needs) are discussed and presented thematically.

This research approach is taken to initiate critical reflection and purposeful dialogue within the dance, and particularly, the dance education community. It hopes to spur purposeful discussions on the importance of dance education to examine intentional and unintentional teaching practices that impact students' self-esteem. Finally, it aims to serve as an instigation in proposing for a range of possible future research directions that concerned dance researchers could consider pursuing.

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“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”
(1 Corinthians 13:7-8a)

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1 Introduction

This was when I was performing an arabesque in a ballet class...

As my favourite ballet teacher walked past me, she started snickering while pointing to the fat that 'squeezed out' between my ample bottom and fleshy back. Prior to this, I really enjoyed how she paid attention to details when she was teaching us. But right at that moment when my classmates turned their focus on me to find out what she was laughing at, I felt so ashamed of myself. After class, I wondered why she had to do that...

Entering tertiary dance education at 19 years old, as a rather plump and relatively 'old' student with little experience of intensive dance training, I was confused by the experience described above. I simply accepted all of my teachers' actions, which often left me feeling rather confused, helpless and frustrated. As my role shifted from a dance student to becoming a dance educator, and now as a dance researcher, this and other similar memories followed suit, and never quite faded away. Finding myself still struggling to comprehend what actually happened to me in these situations, I entered into research rather expectantly – slightly nervous but also quite ready to investigate these *feelings* that had developed in me. What are these feelings, why do I still feel them, and how do they affect me then and now.

Five years after leaving school in Singapore, I was invited to dance with a small ballet company in Greensboro. I turned down the job even before my mind could begin processing what was offered to me. I scorned the idea, disbelieving the possibility that I could ever become a ballerina. Since then, I have pondered in my heart what could have been had I taken up this position in a ballet company. I felt confronted to think about why I denied myself the opportunity to try. In time, I slowly and painfully came to realise that I have *esteemed* myself to not ever be able to be a ballerina. I believed in my teacher's opinion that I was fat. I interpreted her slight to imply that I could never become a professional ballerina simply because I did not possess the 'ballet body'.

1.1 Research question and aims

As I 're-live' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) this story and journey through similar dance learning experiences in Singapore, I became curious to know if other dancers felt the same way about their dance learning experiences. With the aim to identify and clarify *feelings of insecurity* that developed in dance students as a result of dance teachers' actions, my driving question was formed:

How do teaching practices in dance education diminish self-esteem of students?

Self-esteem can be understood to act as a mechanism in informing an individual of their responses to others' expressed opinions of themselves (Leary, 1999). This perspective of self-esteem proposes that others' interactions with a person will affect their self-esteem, which in turn will cause them to develop consequent responses accordingly. These responses can be manifest in various forms, including *feelings*, thoughts and behaviours. Though many groups of people and factors can influence students' self-esteem, this research question propels me towards an intentional situation of the study within the realm of dance education. From this point of reference, I was able to draw up parameters that focused my investigation on how *teachers' teaching practices* could have an impact on students' self-esteem.

As I set myself to begin this study on dance education's impact on students' self-esteem, a sub-question emerged:

Why should education be concerned with students' self-esteem?

An inquiry of this sub-question led me to explore theories concerning the humanistic need to learn and grow. Considering the human's motivation to learn and grow as an innate need to become all that they could be (Maslow, 1968/1999), an educational discourse could be the nurturing of self-agency in students to grow towards their intrinsic tendencies (Dewey, 1902; Dewey & Bentley, 1949).

Identifying this as one of education's many aims, I continue to question: How does self-esteem affect a person's agency to learn and grow?

Exploring this first sub-question would explain why the study places particular attention on education to nurture students' self-esteem. Once this sub-question is clarified, a second sub-question follows:

How does dance education foster or diminish self-esteem?

In investigating existing dance teaching practices that might build up or tear down students' self-esteem, I do not seek to one-sidedly condemn dance education or even dance teachers to cause low

self-esteem of students. Rather, this research seeks to initiate purposeful discussions on the importance of dance education to examine intentional and unintentional teaching practices that impact students' self-esteem. This aim will serve the study in presenting a range of possible future research directions that other dance researchers could consider pursuing.

Third sub-question:

How do we identify students' diminished self-esteem?

“The particular desires that pass through our consciousness dozens of times a day are not in themselves so important as what they stand for, where they lead, what they ultimately mean upon deeper analysis” (Maslow, 1987, p. 5). By studying the symptoms (Maslow, 1942) student participants displayed as responses to teaching practices, I seek to clarify what these signs point to (are the esteem needs of students satisfied?), what further impact this condition might have (short- and long-term impacts on students), and what these signs mean (are these signs motivation in response to a deprived esteem need?) through the processes of this study.

Maslow often describes people as healthy or sick people (1987). He also posits that sick people come together to create a sick culture. An exploration of the generated questions above would lead us to critically reflect on “taken-for-granted assumptions about [dance] teaching” (Kerr-Berry, Clemente, & Risner, 2008, p. 95) that could potentially continue to perpetuate a sick dance culture. As a dance student, my dance learning experiences left me feeling lesser about myself (refer to chapter 4, section 4.3, Humiliation). As a dance educator, I observed many dance students who displayed symptoms of a sick person. I cannot deny or dismiss these dance teaching/learning experiences, and therefore hope for this study to challenge other dance educators to critically reflect on their teaching practices for the aim to build up the self-esteem of students.

1.2 Research rationale and significance

This study investigates stories of student participants from their tertiary dance education learning experiences in Singapore. My strong sense of motivation to return to this particular space was because I could personally relate to these issues, as my dance learning experiences in this context left me with deep feelings of insecurity. Later, becoming a dance educator in this context further drove the urgency in me to examine teaching practices that could leave students feeling insecure about themselves. Having said that, a review of literature on dance education reflected similar teaching practices in differing dance learning contexts that could potentially impact students' self-esteem in comparable ways (Chapter 3, Literature Review). Also, recognising that the world has become more globalised

(Shapiro, 2008) and both teachers and students are likely to move beyond their geographical, and thus, sociocultural locations, this study decides to identify dance, or more specifically dance education, as its culture and context.

Dance has been presented through many research studies to bring about tangible benefits to people (Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001; Marx, 2019; Richards & Gardner, 2019; Rose, 1994; Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019; Schwender, Spengler, Oedl, & Mess, 2018). These studies have often limited their research scopes to examine, firstly, dance genres that are facilitated with a student-directed approach (creative movement dance, improvisation, group choreographic classes), and secondly, contexts where dance participants are learning and performing dances in community/non-professional settings. Dance educators facilitating the former group of dance genres intentionally give autonomy to students over the processes and eventual product. However, in many other dance teaching/learning settings, students are expected to train to become technical dancers (Barr, 2009; Kim, 2013; Monroe, 2011) through the ‘imposed ideal’ (Barr, 2009, p. 33). Termed as the authoritarian and traditional (Western, but arguably any dance form that has an unyielding ‘imposed ideal’, to be expounded upon in section 3.7) dance teaching approaches, literature has widely concluded that many issues arise within such teaching/learning environments (Fortin 1995; Gray 1989; Green, 1999, 2002-03; Kimmerle & Côté-Laurence, 2003; Lakes, 2005; Lord, Chayer, & Girard, 1995). Some of these researchers dive specifically into looking at how dance students develop negative perceptions of their body image, which commonly resulted in various eating disorders (Ackard, Henderson, & Wonderlich, 2004; Bettel, Bettel, Neumärker, & Neumärker, 2001; Friesen, Rozenek, Clippinger, Gunter, Russo, & Sklar, 2011; Green, 2001; Pollatou, Bakali, Theodorakis, & Goudas, 2010; Ravaldi et al., 2003). Others discuss how dance students become docile through such training (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Green, 2002, 2002-03; Stinson, 1998/2016).

A search using the keywords, dance and self-esteem, gathered a few related research articles. Bettel et al. (2001) refine on the existing research on body disturbances of female adolescent ballet dancers to examine its connection to low self-esteem. Subsequently, Downs, James and Cowan (2006) expand their research to widely explore possible connections of self-esteem with many concepts such as self-objectification, body shame, body control, body and relationship satisfaction, etc. However, there is little evidence to show any research specifically accomplished with the agenda to investigate the impacts of dance teaching practices on students’ self-esteem. Furthermore, in spite of its vibrant dance scene (Foster-Sproull, 2017), little dance research has been carried out in the Singaporean context (Chua, 2016, 2018). By involving dance students from Singapore as my research participants, this study presents a rare platform for the voices of Singaporean dancers to be heard in the larger dance community. In short, this study seeks to bridge the articulated gap to explain dance teaching practices

and the impact on self-esteem of students, allowing for the minority voices to be heard through its processes.

1.3 Research overview

Following the current introduction chapter, the second chapter lays out and discusses the research methods applied to this study. The chapter includes an overview of research aims and methods; identification of the researcher's position and the ethical issues inherent to this insider position; elaboration of data and analysis methods; and finally concludes with the limitations of the study. It places particular focus on bringing the reader through the researcher's rationales in selecting: a narrative inquiry method within the qualitative research approach for its philosophical framework; and critical dance pedagogy, Maslow's humanistic psychology, and Leary's sociometer theory as chosen theoretical frameworks.

The third chapter reviews current literature written, based on key words and concepts identified within this study, including: education, dance education, self-esteem, and feelings of insecurity. It explores relevant theories pertaining to the above key words and concepts: Leary's sociometer theory, Maslow's works on human motivation, and critical dance pedagogy. It concludes by situating the study within dance education in existing academia and setting itself up to discuss findings in the following chapter.

Chapter four demonstrates the analysis of collected data through previous research processes and presents findings according to the study's aims. Maslow's *The Psychological Dynamics of Security-Insecurity* (1942) is applied as the lens to identifying and comprehending students' arisen feelings of insecurity developed as a result of diminished self-esteem. Collected stories from the seven participants were presented in a cause and effect manner, which serves to highlight the connections between three categories of unveiled teaching practices (non-rationalisation, anger and humiliation) and the consequent responses of students respectively.

Finally, chapter five concludes the study by providing an outline of the study's key findings, and future research suggestions that could carry the study further in multiple directions.

2 Methodology

This chapter discusses the research methods applied to this study. The first section provides an overview of the research aims and methods, as well as the philosophical and theoretical approaches employed within a narrative inquiry methodological framework. In the second section, I identify my position as both a researcher and an insider within this study, and consider the ethical issues that inherently follow such a position. The third section presents the in-depth semi-structured interview as the chosen method for data collection and explains this process accordingly. The fourth section expounds on the data analysis processes, particularly highlighting the theories selected to guide the research direction. Finally, my critical reflection of the chosen methods is laid out in consideration of this study's limitations and potentialities.

2.1 Overview of study: Research aims and methods

A qualitative research approach has been chosen to uncover and investigate students' arisen feelings, thoughts and behaviours (Robson & Foster, 1989) of diminished self-esteem resulting from their dance learning experiences. Since a narrative inquiry method aligns with the qualitative research approach in "focus[ing] on the way people make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live" (Holloway & Galvin, 2016, p. 3), it is adopted for the "meanings people bring" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3) to surface. Through the application of a narrative inquiry method in collecting, analysing and presenting the data, three categories of teachers' actions that diminished students' self-esteem are unveiled. The three categories are: the teachers' non-rationalisation, anger, and humiliation that they had directed at the students in demanding for compliance. While sharing their learning experiences during the interviews, students also revealed feelings of insecurity that developed. In seeking to comprehend these complex feelings, thoughts and responses, Maslow's *The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity* (1942) was selected for its extensive list of descriptors that helped guide me in recognising the symptoms of diminished self-esteem of students.

2.1.1 Philosophical framework: Narrative Inquiry within qualitative research

Qualitative processes allow for multiple perspectives (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010), shaped by all the subjects within the research (in this study, referring to the researcher and interviewees, to be elaborated in section 2.2), to inform potential findings and guide its direction (Malhotra, 2004; Proctor, 2000). A qualitative research allows for the personal and individual's perspective to take on meanings even when they do not align with the mainstream understandings that are more widely recognized in the world it exists within (Kvale, 1994). On the contrary, a quantitative research method rejects the

validity of data collected on a personal scale (Johnson & Duberley, 2000; Wagner, 2007) and limits results to only reflect those that fit into generalized categories (Green, 2014). In conclusion, a qualitative research philosophy values the growth of knowledge through the contributions from even a very small sample size, down to a person (Riessman, 1993). As such, this study invests its resources to deeply engage with seven participants' experiences of dance education, valuing them for the rich meanings that they bring.

Narrative inquiry allows for stories, which might be constructed as an inaccurate version of students' experiences (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009), to "evoke in the reader's mind a vicarious experience that *reduces* certainty about the matters in which the dimensions of the 'outside' world are regarded" (Barone, 2001, p. 738). This method is consistent with my research aim to disrupt the normality and widely accepted beliefs, values, and hence, practices that exist within dance, and particularly in the realm of dance education, by evoking a deeper sense of empathy for the students' predicaments. As such, a narrative inquiry within the qualitative research paradigm is selected to investigate meanings of students' responses as direct impacts of teachers' dance teaching practices.

2.1.2 Theoretical framework: Critical pedagogy in dance education

Although data collected from the seven participants consists solely of their Western concert dance (Lakes, 2005; Murphy, 2011) learning experiences within the Singapore tertiary dance education setting – the study does not limit its discussions and findings to that specific context so as to expose overlooked teaching/learning experiences in the wider dance community (Anttila, 2003, 2004; Marques, 1995, 1998). With an agenda to heighten awareness to students' experiences of their diminished self-esteem, students' stories, valued for a heuristic purpose, are presented to exemplify similar experiences in dance education beyond the specific context (Barone, 2001).

Encouraging narrative inquirers to begin by enquiring of themselves their own experiences in similar contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I began to reflect on my learning experiences in the Singapore tertiary dance education system and its impacts on my life. In this process, I came to realise that students' (my classmates and myself) experiences were often overlooked. For this reason, I went back to Singapore, approaching the seven participants with the hope of unearthing forgotten hurts that had been buried, both in their lives, as well as mine. As critical dance pedagogy fits the above agenda in challenging existing dominant meanings within dance education (Green, 2007), i.e., teachers having absolute authority over students, imposing unyielding standards on students, and that dance education always nurtures self-esteem of students (all three key concepts to be challenged in my study), critical dance pedagogy became the fundamental driving principle of the study.

2.2 Position of researcher and ethical considerations

In highlighting the shifts of the narrative process towards a method suitable for an educational inquiry, Barrett and Stauffer (2009) propose for researchers to:

... move beyond the simple ‘telling’ of stories. Rather, they [Clandinin, 2006] suggest that narrative inquirers are engaged in the ‘living’ with and through stories in the research context, in order to work towards an understanding of the varying and complex meanings and interpretations all participants bring to their experiences (p. 11).

Barrett and Stauffer’s emphasis on being vicariously engaged informs me that as a narrative inquirer, I am to deeply involve myself with the participants and the related stories, almost as if I myself were going through those experiences. Through this process, a narrative inquiry method allows for our stories to interweave together, constructing new meanings out of a collective pool of experiences and knowledge.

As I attempt to relive these experiences alongside participants, I realise that my position as a researcher resembles that of a ‘story-liver’, a term coined by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) for the narrative inquirer. As a ‘story-liver’, it is impossible to remove myself from this research. By applying myself to the narrative inquiry methods, I have, by default, chosen to become an insider. Also, Kanuha (2000) defines being an insider within a research as being a member of a community, where the researcher “shares an identity, language, and (common professional) experiential base with” (Asselin, 2003, p. 100) interviewees. By means of both explanations, my position as an insider is a natural one for me to adopt. Although I did not resist it, it is important for me to be consciously aware of my tendencies as both an insider and as the researcher in this study, as it could greatly influence my interpretation and presentation of the study’s gleanings. In the rest of section 2.2, I will therefore explore how and why I adopted an insider position, concerns I had, and hence, the precautions I took in order to stay curious and open about possible meanings that could emerge.

2.2.1 Background

A summary of my background in the dance teaching/learning environment will enable me to clarify why and how I consider myself an insider in this research. My dance education varies from learning ballet at a community studio at an amateur level, to pre-professional dance education at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), to enhancing my professional teaching capability at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), and finally, to my shift in becoming a dance studies researcher at the University of Auckland (UoA). My dance teaching experiences include the years during and between these periods of studies. I taught in Singapore, USA, and New Zealand, teaching a variety of dance forms – ballet, modern, contemporary, ethnic dances, creative movement, tambourine dance – to

students from different sociocultural backgrounds, ranging from three-year-olds to the elderly, of different dance proficiencies, in different dance settings. Through these endeavours, I experience role changes that continuously shift my attention to reflect critically on dance education from various perspectives. In this process, I discovered my intrinsic tendency to relate behaviours that students (my students, classmates and myself) exhibit in classes, to the teaching practices implemented. This drove me further to pursue alternative understandings, which can emerge through new ways of knowing (Eisner, 1990).

2.2.2 Position of researcher

In laying out my background, I recognise that I can relate both to students' learning and teachers' teaching experiences in the dance classroom. However, in order to give a realistic and convincing presentation of students' diminished self-esteem as a direct result of teaching practices, I sought out students as participants, aiming to allow their voices to stir and "facilitate reflection about, and even *change in* prevailing teaching practices" (Barone, 2001, p. 736). For this primary reason, I decided to put myself in the shoes of the students (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015) as I embarked on this research journey.

Green (1999) challenges the notion of the traditional role of the dance educator/researcher to be "stand[ing] outside of the experience" (Adler, 1993, p. 160). Adler (1993) further suggests to accept that the process of:

... coming to know can involve the researcher in the exploration of their experiences as a teacher and as a person... Teaching and conducting research should be seen, not as conflicting, or even different, but in fact, as part of the same whole (p. 160).

Inferring from this, the researcher position can be more complex than as traditionally defined. In consideration of my background and research aims, I assumed my position in this study to be that of a student as well as a researcher. However, in such research, there are ethical issues that inherently ensue.

2.2.3 Ethical Considerations

Taking on a dual role in this study challenged me to be self-reflective in two ways, as posited by Adler (1993). The first is to "continually seek outliers and discrepant cases [and the other is to] explore assumptions to question one's own established beliefs" (Green, 1999, p. 85). Considering both suggestions, I came up with a few practical precautions to undertake during the research process.

As I can assume from my hurtful memories that there exist specific violent teaching practices, I preemptively drafted out my interview questions in advance so as to avoid asking direct questions that specifically looked for certain teaching practices. Instead, I begin by asking generic questions such as, “could you recall a teacher that left a deep impression on you? What was one incident you remembered vividly?”. In doing so, I acknowledged my assumption and took precautions to make sure that the interview conversations could take on different courses and be less forced into a predetermined direction (Bloor & Wood, 2011). In addition, I have also included in my concluding thoughts a discrepancy case of a teacher, who appears to be practising critical pedagogy in the dance education context.

In this study, I involved five professional dancers and two fresh dance graduates. For the reason that the potential participants might feel coerced to join my study, I made sure to inform them of the research aim, its possible impact, the involvement expected from them, as well as their autonomous abilities to accept or reject the invitation to be part of my study. In addition, in considering the participants’ need to feel at ease in sharing their personal experiences, I also made clear that their identities would not be known to anyone except for myself. For this reason, I designated pseudonyms for each participant. I was grateful when seven out of the ten dancers I invited came back to me, expressing their interest to be involved. Whether it was with the intention to reflect on their own pedagogy (now as teachers), or to reveal their negative learning experiences as they continued to wrestle with feelings of hurt, the participants were aware that their involvement might bring about a change in their dance community. All participants chose to receive a summary of the study’s findings and most even requested for me to send a copy of the finished thesis so they could read it.

Since I am familiar with the Singapore dance community, and it being described as an intimate community (Foster-Sproull, 2017), this entails a potential advantage for the research process. Knowing that I am able to relate to their experiences, participants might feel more comfortable when they converse with me. Consequently, there were also familiar stories participants related to me that I had previously similarly experienced myself or heard before from being in this context. For these stories, I had to utilise the perspective of the chosen theories to help me look at them once again with ‘fresh eyes’. It likens to an experience where as a researcher, I step back from being an insider (putting away all my assumptions), purposefully putting on a different ‘filter’ to see if new meanings might emerge (to be expounded upon in section 2.4). As Martin (2008) states:

Rather than allowing personal perspectives and history to become a hindrance in the research and analysis, facing, acknowledging and incorporating these aspects into the research can enhance the depth and meaning of interpretations, by adding another ‘layer’ to the research (p. 12).

2.3 Data collection methods

Qualitative research interview is defined by Kvale (1983) as “an interview whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the lifeworld of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1994, p. 149). This definition resonates with the intention to dig for new meanings through the recalling and telling of stories through descriptive language. For this reason, the qualitative research process and in particular, the in-depth semi-structured interview carried out in person, was chosen to collect data.

Kvale (1994) urges researchers employing a qualitative interview approach to be methodologically stringent about the processes of data collection. As such, below are my processes of collecting data, conducted as vigorously as I could within the study’s limitations, which will be expanded upon in section 2.5 of this chapter.

An in-depth interview, driven by a discovery-oriented method, is composed of open-ended guiding questions, which facilitates the interviewee to consider feelings, inner experiences and unique perspectives in a specific context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For the purpose of harvesting descriptive stories, I prepared my guiding questions in advance and focused on the way they were worded. These guiding questions aimed to draw out stories from participants’ experiences and to “evoke in the reader’s mind a vicarious experience” (Barone, 2001, p. 738) that is able to draw empathy from readers. I also tried not to include questions that would ask for direct opinions on the specific arts institutions they learned at or the teachers they learned from, for two reasons. The first reason was to be considerate of personal concerns that they might have, which may hinder their willingness to immerse deeply in the recollection and retelling process. The second reason was driven by the intentional deliberation to not restrict the study’s relevance to dance education at the two Singapore tertiary arts institutions, but rather to represent teaching/learning experiences in the wider context of dance education.

A semi-structured interview emphasises that the interviewees be given opportunities to answer questions from their own frames of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; White, 1991). In seeking to create a ‘bridge’ between my interviewees and myself so they feel comfortable to “imaginatively share (their) world” (Bloor & Wood, 2011, p. 105), I encouraged them to engage in conversation with me rather than sticking to answering the questions prepared in advance (Bloor & Wood, 2011). In this way, the flexibility of a semi-structured interview encourages both the participants and I to clarify understandings when we felt uncertain of our communications. It also allowed for related themes to emerge as the participants wrestled with impactful events that had long been stored away in their

memories. Recognising that participants might find it difficult to dive right into their memories to retrieve these experiences during the interviewing process, I made myself available via email, phone (texts and calls), and in person (during the period I was in Singapore) to clarify any questions they might have concerning the research aims. In doing so, I sought to help them in advance to be more ready to share openly, with a mutual understanding that the data collected could potentially contribute to transforming the circumstances within their teaching/learning community. I also planned for interviews to last for an hour-and-a-half long to allow interviewees to feel free to share connected experiences, even if they did not answer the proposed questions at first glance.

All interviews in this research were carried out in person between each participant and I. Though I had to invest my own resources to fly back to Singapore, I thought this is very important, as the face-to-face interviews would allow participants' body language, facial expressions, and any other surrounding factors that might affect our communication (non-verbal interactions) to be observed and recorded (Kawamura, 2011). In consideration of a suitable circumstance and environment for the interviews (Clandinin et al., 2006), I arranged for them to be conducted in a quiet, private space, where interviewees could feel at ease in expressing themselves freely. Since the interviews were recorded, I also communicated to the interviewees beforehand, their rights to ask for the device to be turned off at any point during the session, without having to give a reason for asking to do so. Finally, I intentionally omitted the practice of taking notes during the interview as it might cause the interviewee to steer their sharing towards what he/she thought I was looking out for.

With the intention of valuing the voices of interviewees, I made the necessary preparations to approach them face-to-face and to engage them in "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 2002, p. 38). Through these conversations where they spoke about the impactful dance teaching practices they remembered, valuable data was collected and later analysed. The following section thus explains the methods applied to analyse collected data, and how the three major themes mentioned earlier, emerged through this process.

2.4 Data analysis

In spite of setting out with a specific direction to investigate the teaching practices of dance education and its impacts on students, I approached this aim with a rather open mind. As such, when I sieved through the data collected, I found myself in need of a more concrete theoretical frame that could inform me of potential themes that were embedded within the rich data. The following discussion will lay out my considerations, and final rationalisation in adopting the theoretical framework for this study and continue with a detailing of the practical aspects of my data analysis process where I transcribed,

selected and presented final findings of the study.

2.4.1 Theoretical framework

My first recourse was to seek out Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000) as his writing sought to address education specifically. When taking on a Freirean perspective, I was able to identify an education system highly dependent on a 'banking system', where teachers 'fill' students with fixed teaching content, oppressing students' abilities to transform their world. While this theory seemed fitting in exposing teachers' demanding attitude of complete compliance from students, it does not help to tease out the subtleties of the detailed feelings and thoughts that students communicated. However, for its humanistic view on education, various key concepts that Freire articulated are used in the literature review. First, he explains the concept of the empowered beings, and how they have self-agency in their learning (trait of students with healthy self-esteem) due to their belief that they are able to act on and transform their world. Secondly, it emphasises that to fix content to be taught is to leave no room for students to rationalise personal meanings in learning (again, affecting self-agency and self-esteem). Thirdly, it proposes for educators to engage students in dialogue so as to nurture students' critical consciousness that could help them navigate through others' opinions of themselves to achieve a relatively more stable trait self-esteem. Finally, it also propels the study to examine the power relationship between the teacher and a student that exists in the dance classroom. This led me to explore a possible Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Michel Foucault's works have been used by dance researchers that I found relevant to my studies (Green, 2002; Martin, 2008). Through these writings, the Foucauldian approach has demonstrated its capacity to persuade our dance community to reflect on existing teacher-student power relationship, which produces docile bodies, intentionally, or otherwise. In applying this framework, I came to a similar conclusion that although the theory exposes teachers' perpetuation of certain normative beliefs and behaviours, e.g., the mind-body split in dance students through exerting absolute authority over them, it does not explain the wide array of feelings students expressed they felt learning under authoritarian teachers. Slowly becoming apparent through this process was the complex *feelings* students recurringly expressed that they felt when their teachers did not rationalise their learning, acted aggressively toward or publicly humiliated them.

After gathering students' feelings, which resulted from these three specific teaching practices, I continued to employ a "process of inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorizing" (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015, p. 160) that helped me identify another key concept for this study (Kvalve, 1996), and that is: self-esteem. Maslow was then sought out for his theories that could help me clarify students' feelings of insecurity which developed from these teaching practices; while Leary was selected for his

fitting explanation of self-esteem as a gauge to explain why students responded to teaching practices that diminished their self-esteem. Through the above elaborated process, these two theorists' works were therefore decided upon to make up the overarching theoretical framework that underpins this study.

2.4.1.1 Maslow

In this study, Maslow's lifelong works within the field of humanistic psychology inform and guide my perspective, approach and methods in various ways. Firstly, I drew from Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explain *esteem needs* in the bigger picture of a human's holistic needs. Secondly, his evolved concept on human's *motivations* (to act in certain ways) in correspondence to one's pursuit of their deficiency and growth needs (Maslow, 1943, 1968/1999) further reinforced the significance to investigate responses that might have resulted from students' diminished self-esteem. Although Maslow did not attempt to apply his theories specifically to education, his concept on *self-actualisation* shaped the study's view to understand growth as a lifelong learning journey, and education as a space, where students discovered their identities and realised the innate potential embedded within them. In order to practically translate Maslow's theories to the study's context of education, Ruth Cox's (1987) expansions on his theories in *Motivation and Personality* (Maslow, 1987) was borrowed for its invaluable insights. Finally, *The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity* (Maslow, 1942) was applied at the stages of data analysis and discussion writing to identify symptoms that student participants displayed due to their diminished self-esteem.

2.4.1.2 Leary

Since self-esteem emerges as the key concept of the study, Leary's sociometer theory (1999) was added to supplement Maslow's writings on esteem needs for its capacity to enrich the study on multiple levels. Essentially, the sociometer theory clarifies the study's use of the term, self-esteem, and in so doing, provides a common understanding for both the reader and myself to effectively consider the unveiled issues. Recognising that this key term in the study is "a vaguely perceived area rather than a sharply defined concept" (Maslow, 1968/1999, p. 30), a qualitative approach does not seek to limit but to expand on the commonly accepted knowledge of self-esteem in the following ways. Firstly, it explains why self-esteem should be understood in relation to others, and specifically in this context, why and how teachers' interactions with students in a social (educational) setting have an effect on their self-esteem. Secondly, it explains why students respond to their impacted self-esteem the way they do. This gives rationale for this research to record, explore and interpret these "versions of events" (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, p. 7) through a narrative inquiry method (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009;

Coles, 1989) to establish a connection between teaching practices and students' feelings of diminished self-esteem.

2.4.2 Transcribing and selection processes

Ritchie and Spencer (2002) encouraged researchers to listen repeatedly for a systemic process of "sifting, charting and sorting material according to key issues and themes" (p. 310). Since entire interview sessions were audio-recorded on my phone device and later completely transcribed by myself, I was able to listen and read participants' disclosures multiple times. As I did so, I paid attention to different details on each listening and reading. This helped me clarify my understanding of participants' possible intentions. For example, on my first listening of an interview, I would attempt to immerse myself in the participant's 'world' by envisioning myself in the space where their stories happened. Picking out on the non-verbal aspects of their communication (Kawamura, 2011) enabled me to relate to their emotions. Through listening to and reading the interviews multiple times, I was able to "follow up on leads and hunches" (Kvalve, 1996, p. 161) that pertained to my research interests.

Riessman and Speedy (2007) suggest for the researcher within a narrative inquiry to analyse not just the data but "how the facts got assembled *that way*" (p. 429). When I was analysing the stories shared with me by the participants, I considered their positions (as I have considered mine as a researcher and a student), and perceptions of their situations (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Clandinin et al. (2006) claim that according to the role an interviewee perceives he or she is responsible in taking on, it will result in their tendency to tell 'dominant stories' that might be well-received by those in the same situation. Exploring the participants' positions with this understanding, I came to a few realisations.

All seven participants involved in this study have successfully graduated from their tertiary dance education, ranging from the freshly graduated (half a year) to participants who graduated over 12 years ago. For those who have moved on to take on roles such as dance educators, choreographers, and other roles that require them to direct dancers, they might see themselves more as teachers than as students. Taking myself as an example, when I assume my role as a teacher, I realised that I tended to take the side of teachers, coming up with reasons to justify their teaching practices.

Knowing that this was a possibility, I intentionally omitted any story provided by participants when they told of stories of themselves removed from the student's perspective. Although I did so intentionally, it was not to dismiss teachers' voices in dance education, rather it was to emphasise students' oppressed voices in dance education.

Identifying themselves with dance students, who are currently still oppressed in the dance classroom, I realise that the stories that participants provided are considered ‘dominant’ amongst other dance students. Participants hardly reflected on their own behaviour, effort and performance in class, but mainly saw their situation in a black and white manner, i.e., the teacher is the bad person, and that they are the victims. This is not to dismiss students’ experiences (as that would completely dispel the research aims), rather it propels further research to look into the matter from the teacher’s perspective (to be further elaborated on in chapter 5). Though deemed as ‘dominant stories’ among many dance students, these stories are hardly heard and discussed among dance educators. This indicates a need to reveal these stories which are often overlooked within the dance community. As such, interviewees’ words are quoted generously, intentionally retaining the details within the “context and meanings of events and scenes that are relevant to those involved in them” (Emerson, 1983, p. 24).

Since student participants’ stories are so widely known amongst other dance students, students might very well *normalise* teachers’ behaviours (Green, 2002). This is presented in my analysis and discussion chapter, e.g., when teachers were angry and acted violently in dance classes, students often believe that it is a normal and acceptable behaviour in dance teaching. Therefore, the way they presented the aggression of teachers sometimes seemed abnormally ‘normal’, which is concerning, warning me to analyse critically the process in which they came to normalise such practices. Additionally, the two fresh graduates’ depictions of their experiences also act as outliers, which I reference to in comparison with what was expressed by participants who have left their learning environment for a longer time. Since they have yet tried to rationalise teachers’ actions, their stories are often presented very vividly. On the other hand, they might also be rather incoherent in presenting these stories. To tackle this issue, I had to listen to the recorded interviews multiple times, pausing as often as I needed to in order to pay special attention to the phrasing of their words, including the pauses they took in between, the repeated stories or comments that they made throughout the interviews, or any other hints that might reveal to me the state of their consciousness.

An additional responsibility I found myself taking on in the process of transcription is the interpretation and tidying up of the Singlish language spoken by most interviewees. Singlish, also known as the Singapore Colloquial English (DeCosta, 2016), “is characterized by its own phonological, semantic, and lexico-grammatical features” (p. 59). Due to Singlish not adhering to the standard English’s rules and formality, a direct quote from a Singlish speaker in this thesis might not be understood by readers from other countries. Spoken Singlish also often includes other languages, such as Mandarin (Chinese), Malay and Tamil (India), or other dialects. When these foreign words are included, it is made almost impossible for pure English speakers to understand what is said. Since I am a Singaporean and use Singlish fluently on a daily basis, I had to translate Mandarin words, and

any occasional Singlish words spoken that otherwise do not exist in the English language. I also had to rearrange or tidy up the phrasing of sentences so that they are presented coherently to readers.

Since the narrative inquiry method seeks to examine lived experiences through the “minds seeking to give it its meanings” (Bruner, 2002, p. 27), the focus of investigation therefore shifted from one that sought to present a singular truth to one that intentionally seeks to provide a platform for multiple meanings to surface. With the aim to present emerged meanings coherently and systematically, I first selected Maslow and Leary’s theories in guiding me towards identifying the keyword (feelings), concept (self-esteem), and themes that emerged through rigorous analysis of the data; then I examined participants’ situations to inform me of the appropriate stories to share within the teacher’s community and beyond.

2.5 Limitations

This study was carried out in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Dance Studies at the University of Auckland. Due to the scope and nature of this research, there were limitations during the process, which will be elaborated below.

The biggest factor that limited the scope of this study is the constraint of time. As this thesis is expected to be fully completed by the end of one year, I could only schedule a month’s time to conduct all my interviews in Singapore. Also, since I flew back to Auckland right after to continue with my research process, I was unable to return to the interviewees in person to gain any further clarification and additional information. As mentioned, the keyword, concept and themes only became clearer later on in the data analysis stage of my research process. Therefore, though it has emerged that it is appropriate for this research to fit in the wider dance education community, I did not manage to squeeze in more interviews with dance students from varying backgrounds as I had to proceed with the final writing and presentation of this thesis. Furthermore, despite my hunch (from analysing participants’ interviews) to seek clarification on teachers’ motivations in practising the uncovered destructive (of students’ self-esteem) behaviours, I was unable to follow this lead due to the lack of time to repeat the interviewing and data collection process.

With more time, I could also choose to present more findings that emerged through the data analysis process. For example, though an additional theme – teachers’ lack of concern for students – appear through the data collection and analysis process, I could not include it in my final thesis in consideration of the limited time and word count I have to adhere to. In addition, I could choose to collect my data using a case study method, where I would be a participant-observer at the teacher’s

classroom over an extended period of time, i.e., ten sessions (Snook & Buck, 2017). This would allow for me to combine two different data collection methods – observation and in-depth semi-structured interview, which could potentially alter my contributions in constructing collective meanings (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

3 Literature Review

The following literature review is designed around the driving question of this research study: *How do teaching practices in dance education diminish self-esteem of students?* It attempts to unpack the articulated sub-questions (refer to chapter 1, Introduction), and is presented as an exploration of literature to address these with the aim to situate the research study more tangibly. Section one begins by challenging the notion that dance education is always benevolent to students, and thus setting into motion the rest of this literature review's investigation. The second and third sections explore two key terms of the study: education and self-esteem respectively. The fourth section ties teaching practices to students' self-esteem, while the fifth section enters into the specifics of how teaching practices could diminish students' self-esteem. The sixth and seventh sections hone in on dance education in laying out the evidences of dance teaching practices as promoting or diminishing self-esteem of students. Section eight continues to examine the existing value and belief system in the dance education culture that could impact students' self-esteem, leading to section nine's exploration of possible transference to the Singaporean context. Finally, this chapter concludes by presenting some questions generated from the above processes in an attempt to rationalise the study's motivation in proposing for its specific investigation.

3.1 Is dance education always benevolent?

Involvement in dance has increasingly been discussed to bring about a wide array of benefits to people of diverse ages, from adolescents to the elderly. Some commonly presented benefits of dance interventions are: participating in dance as a medium of creative expression (Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019), which can bring about feelings of exhilaration (Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001); involvement in dance to draw one's focus away from other concerns and anxieties (Richards & Gardner, 2019); and dancing cooperatively in a community of people in bringing about transformation in individuals to treat others more humanely (Marx, 2019, p. 397).

A more precise review of existing studies pertaining to dance intervention and its impact on participants' self-esteem reveals that most studies (Backe & Graefe, 2004; Blackman, Hunter, Hilyer, & Harrison, 1988; Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2013; Connolly, Quin, & Redding, 2011; Jago et al., 2015) have been embarked upon with a quantitative methodological approach. Additionally, such research has not yielded consistent findings and are lacking in clarity of the teaching content and pedagogy "to enable reproducibility of the interventions as well as transparency of the interpretation of the reported results" (Schwender et al., 2018, p. 22).

To draw a brief conclusion, dance intervention can bring benefits to participants. However, it is not fully known through research whether dance intervention can have a positive effect on participants' self-esteem, and what or how dance was taught in studies where self-esteem of participant was increased or decreased correspondingly. With the aim to bring some clarity to these areas of uncertainty, this study looks at existing teaching practices within the realm of dance education, investigating how dance pedagogy could increase or diminish students' self-esteem by examining the responses of students to particular teaching methods.

3.2 Why should education be concerned about student's self-esteem?

Recognising that it is impossible to generate a deep discussion if all theories on education are to be included in this master thesis, Maslow's humanistic psychological theories, with the support of other relevant educational concepts, will first be employed to understand the possible aims and role of education with respect to fostering students' self-esteem.

3.2.1 Maslow: Humanistic view on education

In a rare instance where Maslow directly commented on education, he says, “[o]ne of the goals of education should be to teach that life is precious” (1971, p. 144). To infer, it is important for teachers to believe that each student is invaluable as a human being, as such a belief will in turn influence their teaching performance, which directly feedback to students (Shue & Beck, 2001) that they are precious beings. Thus, it emerges that for education to teach that life is precious, the teacher has first to believe that it is so; consequently allowing for this belief to affect their teaching practices. Demirdag (2014) affirms that due to teachers' belief that each student is a precious human being, they will in turn value and respect students. The proposition for education, and thus, educators to view the student as “an integrated, organized whole” (Maslow, 1987, p. 3) – a unique subject and not simply an object to be taken apart to be discussed and understood, thus sets itself as the overarching approach in the following discussions.

Since Maslow's humanistic psychology does not apply itself to education specifically, Cox's (1987) attempts at harvesting relevant applications of his writings to education are invaluable to the study. Cox (1987) begins by emphasising on “Maslow's vision of the potential for individual well-being and a synergistic society” (p. 245). Taking on Maslow's attitude would mean to perceive education, as the institutionalised organisation that plays an integral part in modern society, for its purpose to serve the overall well-being of an individual for the *good* of humanity and society. According to Maslow (1968/1999), “[t]he ‘good human being’ can be defined only against some criterion of humanness.

[...], and ‘good’ human beings, the ‘good specimens,’ are *very human*” (p. 188). In Maslow’s term, a *good* human or a *good* society, therefore, simply denotes a healthy functioning human or society. In connecting education to guide a person towards fulfilling their humanness, Maslow reveals that “[i]f I think of the great educational experiences in my life, the ones that taught me the most, then it would be those that taught me what kind of a person I was... [...] the experiences that drew me out, strengthened me, made me taller and stronger, more fully human” (1968a, p. 57). The statement emphasises on education to nurture a human being according to their potential, as encapsulated by the following statement, “education should be learning about personal growth, what to grow toward, what to choose, and what to reject” (Cox, 1987, p. 255). In other words, education should be dependent and catered to the individual, as only in that sense, a student can become truly and fully *very human*.

When discussing about the *goodness* of a human being, Maslow (1968/1999) contends that there is “an essential biological nature, which is to some degree ‘natural’, intrinsic, given, and in a certain limited sense, unchangeable, or, at least, unchanging” (p. 5). By this assumption, he puts forth a similar argument with Dewey (1902) that education should direct each student according to their observed “energies, which are already in operation” (p. 21). This is to mean that every individual is unique and that teachers should always make an effort to interact with each student differently according to their given intrinsic nature. According to Demirdag (2014), teachers who provides for a humanistic and learner-directed environment are more aware of the differing needs of each student. Hence, there is a need for teachers to recognise that to set the same learning goals, with fixed unalterable content, whilst using limited traditional teaching methods (Macedo [2000] describes such teachers as often going about “lecturing without student input or discussion” [p. 19]), is not considerate of the students as unique human beings. Maslow (1987) laments, “‘the learning of the heart’ has been neglected” (p. 172). He argues that often with education, the concern is with the results, such as grades, certificates, which he posits are *means* and not *ends* of themselves. For Maslow, the *end* for a person’s education, and in the larger context, growth, is in *self-actualisation*. It is in fulfilling the human potential, unique to each individual’s inner interest, that is education’s ultimate purpose (Maslow, 1968/1999).

By honing in to Maslow’s humanistic psychology and applying it as relevant to education, this section thus concludes that educators should view each student’s life as precious, valuing every one of them for their uniqueness, while directing them according to each of their intrinsic tendencies for the sake of becoming fully human. With the belief that the individual student, along with their *needs*, should be perceived as an integrated whole (1987), the following section will explore possible understandings of students’ *esteem needs* with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943).

3.2.2 Maslow: Hierarchy of needs

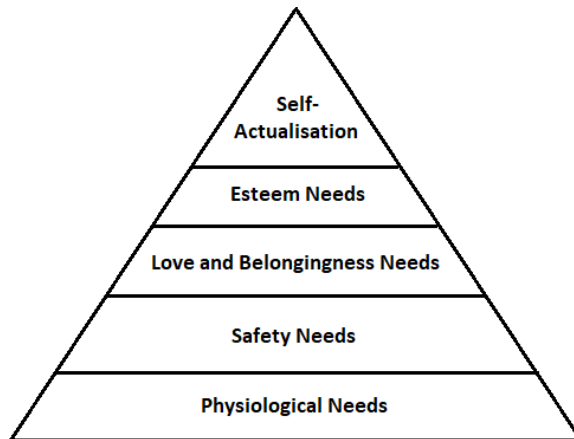


Figure 3.1 Maslow’s initial five-tier hierarchy of needs

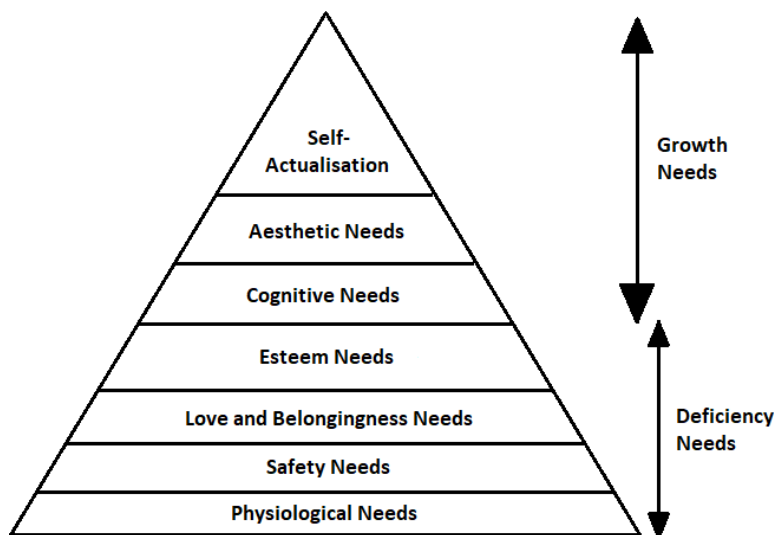


Figure 3.2 Maslow’s revised hierarchy of needs: Deficiency and growth needs

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943) was initially represented as a five-tier pyramid, suggesting that only when a lower need is satisfied will motivation for a higher need appear. For this reason, esteem needs, as one of the five needs will appear and disappear quite steadily over a period of time as lower needs are satisfied and/or when esteem needs are fulfilled respectively. However, as this idea became more problematic in its actual transference to functionality in reality, Maslow (1968/1999, 1987) revised his theory in a few major ways. Of relevance to the study are two of these adjustments and its implications as follows.

Maslow’s clarification that a need does not have to “be satisfied 100 percent before the next need emerges” (Maslow, 1987, p. 27) replaces the understanding that a need is independent from another with a new insight that students’ needs are more tightly interwoven than previously perceived.

Regardless of the need deprived, “the whole individual is motivated rather than just a part” (Maslow, 1987, p. 3). This means that when students are deprived of their esteem needs, they will react to pursue satisfaction of this need, as a deprivation of any need will impact their whole being and cannot simply be dismissed. This is not to say that motivation (and resulting feelings and behaviours) cannot be studied, but rather to acknowledge the complexities that accompany discussions of the human needs. It also urges teachers to consider esteem needs as real and vital to the student’s wellbeing, and that one need should not be elevated above another. Neglect of esteem needs not only results in the dampening of self-esteem; it will also have an impact on the whole person.

His second adjustment to divide the evolving list of needs into two umbrella categories – *deficiency* and *growth* needs, now places esteem needs under deficiency needs (McLeod, 2018; Domenico & Fournier, 2017). Firstly, in consideration of esteem needs as a deficiency need, teachers must recognise its importance and should not neglect to satisfy students’ esteem needs for the sake of fulfilling other needs, e.g., training technical dancers to secure job opportunities that could potentially provide for their physiological needs. Secondly, since deficiency needs generally come before growth needs for most human beings, i.e., psychological needs are fundamentally pressing needs by its nature, an unsatisfied deficiency need will likely become a hindrance for the person who wishes to pursue their growth needs. Therefore, to deny a student of their esteem (deficiency) needs will be to make it difficult for them to feel ready to pursue their growth needs towards fulfilling their human potential.

A review of education’s aims and role in relation to esteem needs of students thus ties the two together, i.e., in order to fulfil a student’s full potential, teachers have to be concerned about their esteem needs. Questions generated from the discussion of this statement are: How does education communicate to students that they are unique individuals? How does education demand of students to suppress their innate tendencies? How does education consider needs of students as an integral whole rather than elevate and thus favour the pursuit of one need over another? Though these are all related questions when considering the holistic needs of a student, this study’s focus is in examining the relationship between education and the esteem needs of students. It proposes for future research to explore the complexity of the relationships between different needs of students, and their relationship with education. However, at this juncture, it chooses to hone into asking a significant question for the above articulated aim: How are students’ esteem needs cared for or disregarded in dance education? In order to answer this question, the following section will first attempt to explore the concept of self-esteem, and how education affects self-esteem of students.

3.3 How can education affect self-esteem?

Implicit in the above discussion is the belief that education can have an impact on students' self-esteem. With the aim to comprehend how self-esteem could be impacted through education, the following section will continue with the exploration of meanings surrounding self-esteem, including what is self-esteem, how is self-esteem affected, who affects self-esteem, what are some signs of an affected self-esteem?

3.3.1 Self-esteem: Sociometer theory

While reviewing the psychological literature on self-esteem, numerous definitions emerged. For the aim to better comprehend how teachers' teaching methods affect students' perceptions of self-esteem, Leary's sociometer theory (1999) is chosen for its relevance to explain what self-esteem represents, how it is affected by the relational nature between teachers and students, and finally how it results in direct responses (feelings, reflections and thoughts) from students.

3.3.2 Self-esteem: Subjective evaluation of relationships

Self-esteem (or dominance-feeling) as explained by Maslow (1942a), "is an evaluation of the self" (p. 260). Maslow (1942a) continues to stress that:

... it is an expression of social position with respect to another person, and is always relative to this other person. A person is in dominance-status with respect to another when he feels stronger, more adequate, superior or dominates this other person either overtly in behavior or implicitly in feeling (p. 260).

Aligning with Maslow's definition of self-esteem is Leary's sociometer theory (1999). Sociometer theory posits that "self-esteem is essentially a psychological meter, or a gauge that monitors the quality of people's relationships with others" (Leary, 1999, p. 33). This definition puts focus on the psychological study of the *constructed* perception of self (Baumeister, 1991; Schwender et al., 2018) in relation to others. To elaborate, how an individual gauges the nature of a relationship between themselves and another human being is constructed out of their *subjective* perception in a very specific circumstantial situation (Maslow, 1968/1999). Hence, sociometer theory offers its first viewpoint of relevance to the study: that self-esteem is built upon the constructed evaluations of the quality of relationships with others.

3.3.3 Self-esteem: The teacher-student relationship

Though there are some dance teaching/learning environments where students are allowed to interact with one another, not all teachers would allow students to do so. However, in all dance teaching/learning environments, students will definitely have to interact with their teachers. What is termed by Maslow (1987) as the ‘geographical environment’ will therefore be plainly understood by students as the setting of a dance classroom, where the teacher teaches and they learn. In this environment, a student’s self-esteem in relation to the dance teacher will be affected by their interpretations (Maslow, 1942) of any social interactions between themselves and the teacher. In the common case of the students, who regard their teacher to be the gatekeeper of knowledge (McCarthy-Brown, 2009), they would look to the teacher to inform them through any ‘social interactions’ (largely teaching practices) of the content to be learned as well as feedback to know what is to be perceived as ‘correct’ or ‘wrong’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’ performances (McCarthy-Brown, 2009). Within an environment where the student perceives the need to be validated by their teacher, this becomes a unique ‘psychological environment’, where the student perceives that their needs for acceptance and belongingness to the dance community (and thus, self-esteem) could be met (Maslow, 1987) by teachers. Stinson (1990/2016) affirms this in her portrayal of teachers as “interpreters of the dance world and gatekeepers to opportunity and self-esteem” (p. 215). Considering that “[p]sychologically there is no such thing as a barrier; there is only a barrier for a particular person who is trying to get something that he or she wants” (Maslow, 1987, p. 10), the teachers’ actions can therefore be interpreted as a ‘barrier’ if they deny the student of the desired affirmation in order to gain esteem as a dancer. At the same time, it is also important for teachers to recognise their abilities to meet students’ esteem needs, and therefore, critically consider their teaching pedagogies.

A notable objective of the sociometer theory is its explanation of a constantly fluctuating self-esteem. While *trait self-esteem* stays relatively stable since it is the “resting state of the sociometer in the absence of incoming information relevant to relational evaluation” (Leary, p. 34), the *state self-esteem* fluctuates continually as long as there is relational input detected by the person. To illustrate with an example, when a student experiences an angry teacher screaming at him, the teacher’s screaming becomes a relational input. If he interprets the teacher’s screaming as an indication of the teacher’s low valuation of their relationship, his subjective opinion will result in a lowered state self-esteem. In the same way, if a teacher praises the student and he perceives this act to signify his teacher’s high valuation of their relationship, then the student’s self-esteem will be raised. By way of explanation, this example demonstrates that as long as the students remain in the classroom, whereby they daily experience social interactions with teachers, their self-esteem will be impacted upon. This understanding of a constantly fluctuating state self-esteem supports the study’s underlying assumption,

that in the same way self-esteem can be lowered due to teachers' portrayal of devaluation of their relationships with students, self-esteem can also be raised if teaching practices transform to display acceptance of students.

3.3.4 Self-esteem: Interpersonal responses

Differentiating sociometer theory from other theories on self-esteem is its ability to explain why and how others' opinions and actions matter in the evaluation of self. Leary's emphasis on social interactions between human beings shifts the focus from a sole deliberation of the *intrapersonal*, to also include the consideration of an *interpersonal* aspect of the self. Baumeister (2010) elaborates that sociometer theory acknowledges that "having a favorable opinion of yourself may have relatively little benefit, [rather] being accepted by others is highly important, and indeed belonging to social groups is central to the biological strategies by which human beings survive and reproduce [Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Baumeister, 2005]" (p. 133). A distinct idea sociometer theory proposes for psychologists (as well as the critical persons) is therefore to understand self-esteem as a *tool* to explain human social behaviour, rather than an *end* in itself that could bring about various benefits or good qualities (since this approach reaps inconsistent results [Baumeister, 2010]).

Baumeister (2010) points out that when we view self-esteem as Leary (1999) proposes – a psychological meter, many issues within the study of self-esteem could be resolved. For instance, an issue that emerged through research is that despite high self-esteem as proven to contribute to one 'feeling good' about themselves (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003), an overt pursuit of high self-esteem can also lead to "reduce learning, empathy, and prosocial behavior" (Baumeister, 2010, p. 133). This result is consistent with Maslow's definition of self-esteem that when a person presumes dominance-status over another person, "he feels stronger, more adequate, superior or dominates this other person either overtly in behavior or implicitly in feeling" (Maslow, 1942a, p. 260). Although sociometer theory does not discount the positive implications that come with a healthy self-esteem, its attention is given to examining the *function* self-esteem serves in order to comprehend "the underlying interpersonal processes and the importance of social acceptance to human wellbeing" (Leary, 1999, p. 35). To put in Leary's (1999) terms, the human behaviours (when interacting with others) are responses striving to *minimise rejection* from others. Sociometer theory hence offers its second valuable viewpoint: that students' behaviours are direct manifestations of their effort at finding acceptance (or minimising rejection) from teachers. This insight thus supports the study of students' responses to teachers' actions in order to seek a deeper understanding of how the subjective persons feel their self-esteem are impacted.

Applying Leary's sociometer and Maslow's hierarchy of needs reveals that there are signs (behaviours or developed feelings) that indicate whether a person experiences high or low self-esteem. For example, if a student is praised today, he perceives a high relational evaluation which enhances self-esteem, and leads to him feeling confident of his dancing abilities. However, when his esteem needs are not met in the following day, i.e., when teachers ignore him, he may very well begin to display signs of low self-esteem. According to Leary (1999), these signs are responses of his self-esteem acting as a gauge; and according to Maslow (1942a), these signs are his attempts to satisfy his esteem needs. While sociometer theory is effective in explaining why the study is aimed at investigating teachers' actions as having an impact on students' self-esteem, it lacks details in illustrating these signs of high or low self-esteem, which is imperative to our study of students' feelings, thoughts and responses. In contrast, Maslow's *The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity* (1942) presents a more thorough list of descriptors that characterises a secure and insecure person according to their perceived level of satisfaction to their needs being met. For this reason, the theory is chosen in analysing developed feelings and behaviours as responses to an affected self-esteem.

3.3.5 Self-esteem: The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity

The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity (Maslow, 1942) is "a classification of specific security and insecurity feelings" (p. 334). According to Maslow, a secure or insecure person will act securely or insecurely respectively in everything he or she does. As such, Maslow's descriptors of the secure and insecure person serve as an indicator to identify through communicated feelings, and observable behaviours, whether a person is secure or insecure. In his explanation of the connection between self-esteem and a person's feelings of security or insecurity, Maslow (1942) states, "[s]elf-esteem and insecurity, although they are separable variables, tend to correlate with each other. Any attack on security tends also to be an attack on self-esteem" (p. 338). To relate to the study's context, a student who feels their self-esteem attacked by their teacher will feel insecure. This is to say, a person who has lowered self-esteem will act insecurely (expressing compulsive submissiveness and ingratiating attitudes [Maslow, 1942]); while a person who has raised self-esteem will act securely, and these feelings and behaviours are identifiable to a large extent with the provided descriptors.

In his attempt to describe observable symptoms of secure and insecure people, Maslow (1942) cautions against the examination of people in a "black and white fashion as if they were completely different" (p. 333). He writes that developing symptoms according to his descriptors of an insecure person does not imply that the person is completely and fully insecure. He offers instead to perceive human beings with different 'areas of insecurity'. For example, a dancer who feels insecure in dance

class might only feel insecure as a dancer; he or she might feel much more secure in another activity and is able to demonstrate confidence when he or she is giving a speech for example, orating without hesitation and gusto, etc. Although this explanation makes sense on a case by case basis, it does not seem to fit in with the humanistic and holistic approach as it isolates aspects of a person, separating an invaluable area of their life from their *being*. According to Bhatt and Bahadur (2018), self-esteem “affects how you think, act or relate to other people” (p. 413). Baumeister (2010) also cautions against the neglect of the scope of self-esteem’s influence and impact on a person. Maslow (1942), later in the same writing recognises this viewpoint and adds, “[a]s he becomes more insecure in one department of life, in one area, we may expect the automatic tendency toward insecurity in all departments of life” (p. 339). A consideration of these statements does not lead to a conclusion, rather, it draws out more questions to consider. A question of relevance to the study will be: Are impacts on students’ self- esteems restrained – apparent and appearing only in the dance classrooms; or are they unrestrained – having far reaching effects on the whole self?

3.3.6 Self-esteem: The dancing body

In the context of dance, it is important to recognise the physical body as an integral part of a human being (Baumeister, 1991). Bhatt and Bahadur (2018) identify both the “somatic and emotional states” (p. 411) as two driving factors that will affect one’s evaluation of self. To emphasise the mind-body connection, they state that “[i]n activities that involve strength and stamina, people judge their fatigue, aches and pains as signs of physical debility” (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018, p. 411). In other words, when the physical body is not perceived as being in an optimal condition or a comfortable state, an individual’s evaluation of self is adversely affected. To put in the relevant context, when dance teachers hold onto the belief that dance training is *solely* the training of the body (and not education of the human person) and any action that is done on the student’s body is separate from what is done to their person, then this flawed thinking can lead to teaching practices that are dismissive and ignorant of the students’ self-esteem. To reiterate, dance training, as a highly physical activity, needs to be conscious about actions done to students’ bodies, as the states of their physical conditions will affect their perceptions of self-esteem.

An examination of the study’s keyword, self-esteem, with Leary’s sociometer theory (1999) reveals the connection between teachers’ actions and students’ self-esteem. Responses and reactions to impacted self-esteem of students can also be observed and identified through Maslow’s *The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity* (1942). Additionally, in the context of dance, it is also important to note that teachers’ actions performed on students’ bodies can affect their self-esteem.

3.4 How do teaching practices raise self-esteem?

Having established that students' self-esteem is essentially knitted to the subjective evaluations of their relationships with teachers, the following section will explore possible values and beliefs that could affect teachers' teaching philosophies, approaches and practices, which build up individual student's self-esteem.

3.4.1 Student: Self-agency

The emphasis on nurturing human beings, who in the process of education discover their identities (Maslow, 1968/1999) and grow towards their intrinsic tendencies (Dewey, 1902, 1949), points towards a need for critical reflection on whether existing teaching pedagogies enable or inhibit students in making personal choices that affect the articulated endeavour. Taking on Maslow's humanistic psychological stance would lead to the "[r]ecognition of the human potential to grow, to be self-determining, and to exercise choice and responsibility" (Maslow, 1987, p. 248). Dance classes, therefore, must be seen as locations where students make choices, rejecting or growing towards particular tendencies that they deem true to their identities. This would mean that students must feel permitted and empowered in choosing to accept or reject values that are directed at them, and this would include both the content for learning, as well as others' evaluation of themselves. Section 3.3.3 previously presented students' self-esteem as tied inseparable to teachers' actions. However, an uncritical application of this proposition might lead to teachers perceiving students as *fully dependent* on their actions in seeking to fulfil their esteem needs. This thought of fostering highly dependent beings is problematic. With the above explanation on education to foster self-agency that allows for students to exercise their choices for themselves, the researcher wishes to suggest that such an environment will have the capacity to transform a student's unstable *state self-esteem* to a much more enduring *trait self-esteem*.

3.4.2 Student: Empowerment

Extending the concept of self-agency, students who feel enabled to make their own decisions are in actuality, students who are empowered beings (Freire, 1970/2000). Within the educational realm, the belief for education to nurture students who are mainly concerned with becoming fully humans stems from the fundamental conviction that only empowered (critically conscious [Freire, 1970/2000]) beings are able to impact the political (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970/2000), cultural and social systems (hooks, 1994; Salazar, 2013) they live in. Empowered beings therefore can be seen as persons who believe in their capacities to transform their world (Freire, 1970/2000). For this reason, a person with

low or disturbed self-esteem, who do not feel “useful and necessary in the world” (Maslow, 1987, p. 21), cannot be an empowered being. A question that dance educators could reflect critically upon therefore is: How often does dance students feel useful and necessary in dance classes? Contemplation of this question leads to the following discussion of the question: What are some teaching practices that might cause students to feel useful and necessary in the classes?

3.4.3 Student: Self-discovery

Learning does not simply equate to the mere “acquisition of data and facts, but the holistic reintegration of the individual, continually producing changes in self-image, feeling, behavior, and relationship to the environment” (Maslow, 1987, p. 253). Positively, effective learning that involves the whole being can transform a person to gain an improved perception of their relationship to others, to related events, and ultimately for themselves. Demirdag (2014) posits that teachers who create stress-free learning environments give space for students to fail without affecting self-esteem. In other words, teachers must allow for students to try and sometimes fail in their journeys towards discovering about themselves without having to bear any consequent judgment and damage to their self-esteem.

Maslow’s (1987) concept on *affective education* “stresses the non-intellectual side of learning: the side having to do with emotions, feelings, interests, values, and character” (p. 254). To draw out the essence of this statement requires one to first understand and acknowledge that students are unique beings, whose identities are informed by their intrinsic characters and life experiences. Inferably, the belief in this statement calls for teachers to guide students in the process of self-discovery. Illustrating a similar process of facilitating students’ self-discovery through education to become critically awoken to their consciousness, Freire’s (1970/2000) suggestion is for educators to engage students in dialogues. Critical pedagogists, who advocate for a Freirean approach to education, often end up examining the power relationship between teachers and students – whether teachers enable or impede students to enter into these dialogues (hooks, 1994; Kerr-Berry, Clemente, & Risner, 2008). If critical and reflective dialogues were to happen, teachers will have to accept that “[a]ll of life is education and everybody is a teacher and everybody is forever a pupil” (quoting Maslow in Lowry, 1979, p. 816). In this way, teachers share authority with students, allowing for and valuing uncertainties (questioning of assumptions and curiosities) in a shared journey of ‘selves-discovery’ (meaning to suggest that the journey is undertaken together by both students *and* teachers) (hooks, 1994; Kerr-Berry, Clemente, & Risner, 2008). To summarise, teachers who value *affective education*, communicate their valuing of students’ inputs through dialogues. When students are able to co-construct on knowledge with teachers (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Freire, 1970/2000; Shue & Beck, 2001), they feel a sense of empowerment. This feeling that they are useful and necessary to their world consequently enhances their self-esteem, positively impacting on their beliefs in themselves to learn and grow

towards fulfilling their potentialities.

3.5 How do teaching practices diminish self-esteem?

From a critical pedagogical standpoint, “[e]ducation is never neutral, but rather a complex series of asymmetrical power relationships that are frequently hidden and unexamined” (Kerr-Berry, Clemente, & Risner, 2008, p. 95). The above section demonstrates a pedagogical belief that leads to teachers sharing power with students in the teaching/learning environment. The following discussions will inversely examine pedagogical approaches that elevate teachers and oppresses students in the classroom, and the implications of consequent practices on the self-esteem of students.

3.5.1 Teacher: Demand for compliance

When a teacher forces students to be filled with set content (Freire, 1970/2000) that is not rationalised for them in making any sense to their intrinsic inclinations, the students are not learning, as they are unable to contextualise and construct meaning out of their situations (Piaget, 1972; Shapiro, 2011). This is comparable to pedagogical practices that emphasise students’ abilities to demonstrate an acquisition of content through regurgitation of what was taught (Freire, 1970/2000; Kerr-Berry, Clemente, & Risner, 2008; Salazar, 2013). Such practices have been discovered to “promote reductionistic, decontextualized, and fragmented curriculum [Bahruth, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Rodriguez & Smith, 2011]” (Salazar, 2013, p. 124). Prolonged exposure to such situations ultimately communicates the message to students that they are not useful and necessary in their world; and that they are unable to affect any changes in their world. Overtime, students, with their self-esteem undermined, might very well oppress their own intrinsic motivations, exchanging them for teachers’ expectations (Salazar, 2013). This phenomenon of training docile dancers will be expanded upon in section 3.7.2 in the context of dance education. Nevertheless, the apparent resulting impact is the impossibility for each student to fulfil their *own* human potential (if they take on another person’s [teacher’s] learning goals as their own); and a more subtle effect is a loss of self-agency to learn both in and outside of the classroom (as they do not esteem themselves as capable to take responsibility of their own learning). In losing one’s self-agency in learning and growing, students’ self-esteem become highly reliant on teachers’ evaluations. This happens because students come to accept that their own opinions do not matter, as such they are likely to depend on teachers’ feedback in their self-evaluations. This has an adverse effect on a precarious and unstable state self-esteem that can continue to disturb the perception of self-worth.

3.5.2 Teacher: Public aggression and humiliation

Having established previously that state self-esteem is “strongly affected by the events that have implications for the degree to which one is valued and accepted by other people [Leary, Haupt, Strausser, & Chokel, 1998; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995]” (Leary, 1999, p. 34), Leary (1999) further explains that “events that are known (or potentially known) by other people have much greater effects on self-esteem than events that are known only by the individual him or herself” (p. 34). In other words, if teachers’ interactions with students are kept in private, the impact on their self-esteem is to a lesser degree, and conversely, if teachers’ interactions are made known to the rest of the classmates or other teachers, then the impact on students’ self-esteem will be greater. Humiliation from teachers is contended by Burton (2014) as a *public* event. In the same way, anger is described as “teachers project[ing] a confrontational stance” (George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992, p. 192) that most often than not, are made public to others. Due to its very nature, teachers’ humiliating and aggressive actions are hardly committed in private and have a great impact on students’ self-esteem. Recapping on Leary’s illustration on sociometer as a mechanism to regulate human behaviours, when students perceive through teachers’ humiliation and anger that they are rejected and do not belong to a community that they are situated within, their self-esteem will be lowered, and insecure responses will result.

3.6 What are some evidences that dance teaching practices promote self-esteem?

For a while now, dance researchers (Fortin, 1993; Kerr-Berry, Clemente, & Risner, 2008; McCarthy-Brown, 2009; Risner & Stinson, 2010; Shue & Beck, 2001; Warburton, 2003, 2008) have advocated for dance educators to critically reflect on the existing dance paradigm (dance teaching beliefs, values, curriculums, methods) for dance education to continually be made relevant with current times (Risner, 2010). Through investigation of education that nurtures a *good* human being with a healthy self-esteem, critical pedagogy that focuses on learner-directed teaching approaches emerge as effective for this purpose. Such learner-directed approaches “emphasize beginning ‘where students are’ and moving forward with what students unearth about what they want to know, to learn” (Kerr-Berry, Clemente, & Risner, 2008, p. 96). This approach promotes dancers with “an understanding of the self, others, and the larger world for the possibility of change” (Shapiro, 1998, p. 15). This hopeful and positive claim of dance education on self-esteem will be reviewed through literature that was briefly presented in the beginning of this chapter.

Firstly, Rowe, McMicken, and Newth (2019) suggest that participation in dance can lead people to make personal discoveries. According to Richards and Gardners (2019), dance acts as an effective

“medium for exploring and asserting [people’s] own worlds and identities” (p. 471). This is partly due to the expressive capacity of the “poetics of dance” (Richards & Gardner, 2019, p. 471) in reflecting life realistically (Rose, 1994). In these ‘interactive spaces’ (Marx, 2019), where individuals could “express something of what ‘real life’ feels like as they have experienced it” (Richards & Gardner, 2019, p. 471), individuals get to “practice ‘becoming fully human’” (Marx, 2019, p. 397). Arguably, when individuals engage in self-discovery through dance experiences regularly, these reflective journeys provide the space for them to form critical (not judgmental but conscious [Freire, 1970/2000]) opinions of themselves in their world. This gives less authority to others (opinions or behaviours) in affecting the self-esteem and thus, fosters a relatively more stable self-esteem.

Secondly, dance is argued to not only help people in gaining more stable and likely positive self-esteem (Richards & Gardner, 2019), it also gives “the sense that they are viewed positively in the eyes or through the gaze of others in the society – their teachers, passers-by, the audience” (Richards & Gardner, 2019, p. 471). In this way, self-esteem is raised as evidenced by the collation of several studies’ results of dance interventions on various aspects of self (Schwender et al., 2018). In their report, Schwender et al. (2018) present dance interventions in positively advancing adolescent participants’ “body-related perceptions, self-trust, self-esteem, self-expression, and the perception of dance-abilities”, and strengthens adult participants’ “self-expression, self-efficacy, self/body awareness, self-development, and self-confidence” (p. 1).

Finally, in exploring how dance “fulfill[s] motivational needs across a holistic spectrum – physical, social, emotional, cognitive and aesthetic”, the involvement in dance is discovered to aid people to begin “developing confidence that their dance work is valued – by each other and by the local community” (Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019, p. 541). This feeling of validation brings about a feeling of belongingness (to a community of people [Richards & Gardner, 2019]), nurtured through “supported exploration of collective identity” that bring people to “unit[e] in diversity” (Marx, 2019, p. 397). Though her research context is specifically of post-conflict societies, Marx (2019) puts forth strongly the argument that “dance education can contribute meaningfully to contemporary strategies aimed at bridging divides, promoting social cohesion, and enhancing quality of life” (p. 397). In our context, when each student’s performance in dance class is valued and they feel accepted and belonging to a supportive community, esteem needs are met (Maslow, 1987).

3.7 What are some evidences that dance teaching practices diminish self-esteem?

Though these are hopeful findings that support dance intervention's care to foster healthy self-esteem of dance participants, none of these studies highlights the teaching practices that actually happened between the dance participants and their teachers/facilitators. A conscious examination of these literature also reveals that the dance genres that participants were performing often allow for learner-directed teaching approaches, such as creative movement, improvisation, group-based choreographic experiences done in a recreational and community-based setting. However, in many other dance teaching/learning settings, students are expected to train in becoming 'technical' dancers (Barr, 2009; Kim, 2013; Monroe, 2011) through the 'imposed ideal' (Barr, 2009, p. 33). These teachers exert complete authority over students, passing onto students fixed aesthetics and content through traditional methods that do not necessarily make students feel appreciated for who they are.

Termed as the authoritarian and (Western) traditional dance teaching approaches, literature has widely concluded that many issues arose within such teaching/learning environment (refer to section 1.2). Below, we will explore the traditional and authoritarian dance teaching paradigm, specifically examining its impact on students' self-esteem.

3.7.1 Traditional teaching methods

Traditional dance teaching methods as expounded by Stinson (1998/2016) are ways:

... to acculturate the young, to socialize them into the larger community and thus perpetuate it [...] traditional technique class is the primary kind of dance class taken by students, and is ordinarily the only kind of class that is referred to as a 'dance class'(p. 34).

According to Stinson, most people refer to dance class as a class where dance *technique* is taught to students. In these classes, *predetermined* aesthetic, and thereby content, and almost always *predetermined* methods of teaching and learning are employed and enforced by teachers on students according to pre-existing standards. By way of explanation, any class where teachers demand compliance of students for the sake of perpetuating predetermined aesthetics and content of a particular dance technique generally takes on a traditional teaching approach that often than not, recognise only the teacher as the "source of knowledge" (Stinson, 1998/2016, p. 34). Examples of commonly referred to traditional dance classes are the Western concert dance techniques (Lakes, 2005; Murphy, 2011): ballet, modern, post-modern and contemporary dances, which will be examined for possible impacts on students' self-esteem.

3.7.2 Authoritarian dance teacher: Demand for compliance

Critical dance pedagogist, Green (2007) encourages her readers to scrutinise “how the body is socially habituated through dance training and education” (p. 1122). She calls for dance educators to critically investigate the existence of power play (social relationships) within dance training, particularly the examination of existing power structure between teachers and students in the dance classroom.

Through the understanding of existing power structure, teachers and students alike are informed of the roles that they are playing in the dance classroom. This belief directly informs them of ‘appropriate’ behaviours they are to exhibit in the teaching/learning environment.

Within the Western concert dance training systems, a very specific power relationship between the teacher and their students is commonly established (Foster, 1997; Stinson, 2004). This is one where teachers often exert complete authority over students (Barr & Oliver, 2016; Green, 2002-03; Lakes, 2005; Shue & Beck, 2001; Stinson, 1998/2016). This relationship is illustrated as the teacher having the ‘authoritative voice’ (Shue & Beck, 2001) over docile students (Green, 2002):

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986) discuss how many students – particularly women – are socialized to accept the authority and dominance of the authoritative voice, and thus learn to distrust their own critical voices and devalue their intrinsic abilities to think and contribute to their own learning. As Stinson (1998) relates, this process, which squelches students’ excitement and discovery, is the overriding norm in dance education. ‘The teacher’s voice is expected to be the only one heard, except in the case of a well-focused question. The teacher tells and shows the students what to do and, in some classes, how to do it’ [p. 27] (p. 132).

Green (2002), grounding her study in the discourse of Foucault (1979), stresses that socialisation (referred to previously as social interactions) can be intended by teachers to bring about submissiveness from students. In this environment, the teacher perceives and therefore, insists that only their voice should be heard (Stinson, 1998/2016). Stinson’s (1998/2016) statement both asserts, and then provides for a possible answer to how a teacher might suppress the student’s whole being. According to her, the authoritarian teacher “tells and shows the students what to do and, in some classes, how to do it” (Stinson, 1998, p. 27). In telling and showing what students should do, the teachers determine content without students’ input. In limiting the method by which students arrive at a goal, the teachers neglect to explain any rationalisation for individual student’s learning. In other words, students are discouraged to participate in any other way than to comply submissively according to teachers’ demands and methods. “Traditional dance pedagogy, with its emphasis on silent conformity” (Stinson, 1998/2016, p. 35) therefore ignores all aspects of the human person (except arguably the external *representation* of the body). Persistent occurrences ultimately condition students to distrust their opinions, destroying their self-esteem, forcing them to take on teachers’ expectations as their own.

In the context of dance, the insistence on fixed content and methods of delivery not only solidifies teacher's power over students, it also results in harmful dance practices that continue to disturb students' self-esteem. In spite of dance receiving recognition through Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory (1983) as a domain of knowledge (Warburton, 2003), teachers often ignore students' capacities to think and to construct knowledge and meaning in, and through dance learning. Somatics research writers, Behnke (1990-1991) and Johnson (1992) describe this as a disregard for valuable information that are processed through the senses of the body. Take for instance a dance student, who noticed that she gains more stability when she limits her turned-out to suit the natural range of motion in her hips, is told to go beyond this limit to achieve a look that reflects a hundred-eighty degrees turned-out at the feet, she is forced to dismiss her body sensations. If the teacher persists to demand for compliance from her, she might fail or she might get physically injured, both resulting in the damaging of her self-esteem.

3.7.3 A possible counter-point: Somatic Movement Dance Education

Emerged therefore is the proposal for a somatically supplemented technique class (Stinson, 2016), that could possibly return authority to students for their learning through the tuning in to their own bodily intelligences (Weber, 2019). Describing “[s]omatics [as] an umbrella term for the field of mind-body integration practices [Eddy, 1992]” (Weber, 2019, p. 307), Weber posits that SMDE (Somatic Movement Dance Education):

... strengthen[s] high-order cognitive processes of attention and perception, while reinforcing individual autonomy, internal authority, and agency – all of which are central to cognitive choice-making processes. Benefits of SMDE are holistic: physical, mental, affective, social, aesthetic, spiritual (p. 320).

Through this statement, Weber (2019) proposes for dance educators to integrate somatics in dance classes for the reason that somatics by nature is effective in involving the holistic being in learning. Integrated within this practice is the facilitation of self-discovery. This is made possible through the emphasis for the inner self to direct and to make decisions, and an additional focus on the self to connect with their bodily experience (Fortin, Vieira, & Tremblay, 2009; Williamson, 2009). When students feel that their whole self is engaged and valued, their self-esteem is raised.

3.8 How does dance education culture impact self-esteem?

Despite the increasing reports on somatic practices in positively impacting on dancers' agency and well-being (Bond, 2014; Brodie & Lobel, 2004; Dyer, 2009; Eddy, 2009; Fraleigh, 2004; Sheets-Johnstone, 2013; Weber, 2009, 2019), its implementation in actual dance classrooms is slow (Barr, 2009). In like manner, other suggestions in moving dance education strategies to “promote

meaning, agency, and student interest in learning” (Dyer, 2009, p. 109), i.e., Rudolf Laban’s (1948) proposal for educators in facilitating dancers’ improvisation and creative expression, have often been reported to meet with resistance (Dyer, 2009; Lakes, 2005). The following section investigates traditional dance education culture, and the resulting impact this culture has on the students’ self-esteem.

3.8.1 Traditional dance education culture: Perceptions of the ‘mythical ideal’, ‘beastly’, and ‘machine-like’ dancing body

“Deeply embedded in many dance education cultures is the notion that the dancer’s body is an object of visual pleasure consumed by a critical audience” (Shue & Beck, p. 135). Emerged through this statement are two issues regarding the dancing body. Firstly, there is an ideal dancing body (Barr & Oliver, 2016; Green, 1999, 2002, 2002-03). Secondly, the body is objectified. According to Stinson (1998/2016), “dance aesthetic demands a long, thin body” (p. 36). This is confirmed in numerous research writings (Feltman & Szymanski, 2018; Ferrari, Silva, Martins, Fidelix, & Petroski, 2013; Kluck, 2010; Park, 2017; Swami & Harris, 2012) especially for ballet, and increasingly in other genres of dances. Referred to by Green (1999) as the ‘mythical ideal body’, Shue and Beck (2001) argues that the perpetuation of this ‘mythical ideal body’ “contributes greatly to a pervasive and potentially harmful discourse” (p. 136), in which the body is perceived as “an enemy to be overcome or an object to be judged” (Stinson, 1998/2016, p. 36). When teachers and students alike accept that there is an ideal body to be achieved, their “constant focus on an externalized view of the body [...] objectifies the dancer’s body and requires students to strive to achieve a specific ‘look’ while being ‘corrected’ so that the students perform ‘proper’ dance technique” (Green, 1999, p. 81). Note Green’s (1999) purposeful employment of the numerous single quotation marks, implying that specific insider’s (dancers’) meanings are to be contended. A possible point of contention will be: Why is there a specific ‘look’ or supposed ‘proper’ technique that everyone has to adhere to? An extension to this point will be: What happens to students who cannot fit into this ‘look’? Deliberation of this point thus leads us to the second issue Green (1999) raises, and that is the objectification of the body.

Moore (1987) through her exploration of body metaphors offers a glimpse to teachers’ possible beliefs, and hence, actions, which could result in the objectification of students’ bodies. Dance educators, who view the body as “lazy and dumb like a *beast*, while the mind is active and smart” (Moore, 1987, p. 32, italics intended by researcher), and those who regard the body as a ‘*machine*’, separate and demean the dancing body from the human person, bringing about a few ‘morbid’ (Maslow, 1942) consequences.

3.8.2 Traditional dance education culture: Negative impact on self-esteem

Firstly, pain can be ignored (Martin, 2008). For the sake of training ‘technical’ students, teachers, who objectify students’ dancing bodies, feel confident in physically manipulating students’ bodies. Since they are unaware of the intimate connection of the mind and body to one another and to the larger self, they are often ready to use aggression and humiliation, amongst other confrontational actions, in conveying their feedback to students (Green, 2002-03; Lakes, 2005). While physical manipulation harms the students’ physical body, aggression and humiliation damages the students psychologically. Ultimately, both physical and psychological harm diminishes students’ self-esteem.

Secondly, negative body perception can develop (Kim, 2007; Kim & Park, 2007; Kim, Park, Joo, & Park, 2015), and eating disorders can result (Friesen et al., 2011; Park, Lim, & Lee, 2014; Ravaldi et al., 2003). To restate, what is done to the physical body cannot be ignored when examining a wholesome human being’s self-esteem (refer to section 3.3.6). When a student’s body is seen only as a ‘tool’ (Kim et al., 2015), which requires “adjustment and tuning up [to become] a precision machine” (Moore, 1987, p. 34), the being is ignored and thus, self-esteem suffers.

Thirdly, comparing one’s body to an exalted standard also promotes an environment of competition among students. Burnidge (2012) posits:

In dance class, students often compete against one another, judging themselves and being judged by others on their ability to conform to external models of physical and technical perfection at the expense of internal connections and the cultivation of true embodied movement (p. 44).

Burnidge’s (2012) reference to the competition among dance students in the above context is not healthy for a few reasons. As discussed, an overt focus to shape the body into becoming a predetermined ideal objectifies the body and ignores the being. In such competitions, the measure in which students are judging themselves with does not consider each of their intrinsic potentialities. If each student is to follow their intrinsic motivation to grow, there cannot be *one* standard for *all*. To phrase alternatively, there is unlikely to be any competition between oneself and others, who are seeking different outcomes of actualisation. On the other hand, if competitions of such nature continue, these experiences might solidify a false belief that there is a standard, resulting in many of the discussed issues above. Additionally, students might also see the ultimate “goal [as an] individual achievement – being on top – with little emphasis on community and caring [Gilligan 1982]” (Stinson, 1998/2016, p. 36), which breeds competitions that strain relationships, affecting self-esteem, and results in students feeling very lonely in their learning journeys.

Having explored the traditional dance education culture and its negative impact on students' self-esteem, this study identifies Singapore as a location where traditional dance education culture potentially exist. For this reason, the employment of Singapore as a case study will be investigated to facilitate relatable discussions in the following section.

3.9 Singapore

With the implementation of policies in preparation for a relevant education in the twenty-first century, arts and dance are gradually integrated into the core curriculum for all Singapore public schools (Keun & Fry, 2013; Leong & Tan, 2014). The Singapore government recognises and places dance education at the core of its school curriculum in developing students' *Lifeskills* (Keun & Fry, 2013; MOE, 2012). Mandated dance education, under Physical Education syllabus for all primary, secondary and pre-university institutions, emphasises on "provid[ing] a holistic education through nurturing students physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially" (Keun & Fry, 2013, p. 114). Of particular interest to this study, is the objective of dance to "develop in each student the ability to demonstrate positive self-esteem through body awareness and control" (Keun & Fry, 2013, p. 114). Despite an apparent recognition of dance education's benefits on students' wellbeing, specifically the nurturing of positive self-esteem in students, it is crucial to note that the objective mentioned above is in fact an actuality, a declarative objective from the Physical Education syllabus, and not exclusive to dance. The understanding of self-esteem in this case, is therefore limited to its aspect tied to the wellbeing (increased body awareness and control) of the physical body alone. This prioritisation of fitness (McNeill, Horton, & Sproule, 2003) to affect self-esteem thus reveals the limited understanding of how dance education can affect self-esteem.

In this environment, Chua (2016) observes that dance is marginalised. She observes that dance is commonly taught to produce performances. According to Snook and Buck (2017), dance in such an environment is not taught to allow the construction of personal meanings, or the discovery of self through creating and responding "emotionally to dance as well as to apply dance knowledge, aesthetics and critical judgement" (Keun & Fry, 2013, p. 114). As discussed in section 3.7, traditional dance pedagogy gives power to the authoritarian teacher to force content upon students. Students lack opportunity to create and respond to their intrinsic tendencies, which can be detrimental to their self-esteem. This is evidenced by McNeill, Lim, Wang, Tan, and MacPhail's (2009) study where Singaporean dance teachers rationalised that their dance teaching training "does not enable them to become effective in developing the aesthetic awareness or personal meaning of their students" (Keun & Fry, 2013, p. 115). To summarise, in this environment, it is likely that a traditional dance education culture exists. In addition, dance teachers also feel unconfident about their own teaching practices,

recognising that their dance teaching is not facilitating students in constructing personal meanings. As such, existing dance teaching practices could diminish students' self-esteem, despite the government's hopeful agenda for dance to nurture the positive self-esteem of students.

Although these studies omit the discussion of tertiary dance education in Singapore, it might be possible to deduce that a similar dance education culture exists. Also, dance researchers (Gilbert, 1992; Lakes, 2005; Lavender, 1996; Morris, 2003; Shapiro, 1998; Smith-Autard, 2002; Stinson, 1997, 1998/2016) have criticised pedagogical practice of tertiary dance education to be "narrow" (Sööt & Leijen, 2012, p. 448). Their critique is with the teachers' (and consequently, students') obsession with mastering only a few prescribed dance styles, and that existing "pedagogical practice[s] [are] not concerned with students' subjective experiences in dance" (Sööt & Leijen, 2012, p. 448-449). These critiques echo the discussions thus far, that when dance teachers force students through various teaching methods to adhere to standards that are not meaningful and relevant for themselves, students feel obliged to accept potentially destructive mindsets, which could lead to the development of various unhealthy practices that damage their self-esteem, vice versa. Consistent among this dance research is the advocacy for dance educators to recognise and support the individuality of their dance students through a learner-centred dance teaching approach. However, they also acknowledge a potential challenge that could await hopeful dance educators in this specific teaching context: "[H]ow [can dance educators] find a balance between child-centred teaching and creativity and teaching dance technical skills [Jobbins, 2006]" (Sööt & Leijen, 2012, p. 449)?

Dyer (2009) states, "[t]he harm is not in the repetitive performance of codified movement itself but rather in the teaching framework it is presented within and the purposes of learning it" (p. 120-121). When the teaching framework proposed to students is one that is unyielding to their intrinsic motivations to grow, and teaching practices outrightly dehumanises and disempowers them, harm is done to their self-esteem. However, it could also be possible that dance educators have shifted their pedagogy to a learner-directed one (Sööt & Leijen, 2012) where autonomy is given to students to affect their learning experiences according to their intrinsic tendencies, with regards to their bodily intelligences. Therefore, generated questions are: Are dance educators creating stress-free environments where students feel safe to discover about themselves? Do dance educators empower students to act on their own world? Or are dance educators ignoring and suppressing students, which leads to them feeling unappreciated and useless in their world?

3.10 Conclusion

A review of relevant literature thus situates the study of dance teaching practices that affect students' self-esteem within the traditional and authoritarian dance education culture, where teachers exert absolute power over students by demanding compliance through passed-on content and methods. Though dance studies have criticised traditional and authoritarian teaching methods in dance education as destructive, there is a lack of specific study that goes into details of teachers' actual actions in the classroom that affect students' self-esteem. This study offers to fill this gap in finding out, through student participants' learning experiences, teachers' actions, and how these caused them to feel insecure about themselves in the learning environment and beyond. As such, all participants are chosen from the context of Singapore, and all of them have undergone professional training in the explored environment. Crucial driving questions are: Are esteem needs of students satisfied? How do students feel about experienced teaching methods directed at them?

“The end product of growth teaches us much about the processes of growth” (Maslow, 1968/1999, p. 31). In the same way, the development of insecure feelings, resulting from a damaged self-esteem, teaches us much about the process of dance education. For this reason, the following chapter will continue to analyse students' experiences of teachers' actions, their direct responses (immediate actions and behaviours towards teachers), and their eventual responses (feelings and thoughts at the time of interview) to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between teachers' teaching practices and students' self-esteem in the process of dance education.

4 Analysis and Discussion

From a review of the literature there emerged a candidacy of possible teaching actions within the dance classrooms that thwart students' self-esteems through means that neglect, dismiss or oppress students' "desire[s] for strength, achievement, adequacy, mastery and competence, confidence in the face of the world, and independence and freedom [...] reputation or prestige [...] recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation" (Maslow, 1987, p. 21). Not having their esteem needs satisfied, students develop "feelings of inferiority, of weakness, and of helplessness" (Maslow, 1987, p. 21). As a consequence of lowered self-esteem, students are discouraged in their learning (Domenico & Fournier, 2017; Maslow, 1943) and can sometimes form "compensatory or neurotic trends" (Maslow, 1987, p. 21). With the understanding that unsatisfied esteem needs will bring about feelings and trends that are termed by Maslow (1942) as symptoms of the insecure person, this chapter from hereon will interchangeably refer to students' reported feelings of disturbed self-esteem as feelings of insecurity.

This chapter presents the collected interviewees' anecdotal accounts in three main categories: demand for compliance with non-rationalisation, anger, and humiliation. Within each category, students' testimonies are then subdivided into two distinct sections – the first section lays out students' experiences of teachers' actions; and the second section lends the chosen theoretical framework, Maslow's *The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity* (1942), in seeking to comprehend the impacts of illustrated teaching actions on students respectively. With a focus to examine teaching approaches through students' perspectives, the aim is to investigate, and possibly establish the relationship between particular teaching methods and students' feelings of insecurity that arise from their damaged self-esteem. In so doing, the researcher thus inquires of dance educators to consider students' feelings of insecurity as consequences of how they teach.

4.1 Non-rationalisation

Literature reveals that often in dance, there are fixed aesthetics (differing in different cultures and dance forms) that dancers deem important to adhere to (Foster, 1997; Moore, 1987; Pollatou et al., 2010). Due to its rich heritage – long history and systematic codification of vocabulary and training systems (Butterworth, 2012), ballet has a very definite aesthetic that is passed down from generation to generation by dance masters (Lakes, 2014). Since participants related many anecdotes of their learning experiences in ballet, it makes sense to note at this juncture that the long-standing aesthetic in ballet is the "long, thin body" (Stinson, 1998/2016, p. 36), and arguably, the newly evolved aesthetic is the "toned and muscular ideal" on top of a thin body (Green, 2002, p. 113). In highlighting this obsession with dance training to shape students' bodies to attain the ideal, along with other bodily facilities, e.g.,

huge range of motion, the researcher hopes to better facilitate readers in the following discussions on teachers' demand for compliance from students to attain fixed standards that are not rationalised for them.

Shue and Beck (2001) posit:

... [e]ducators' performances of their pedagogical philosophies are important communicative actions that have deep implications, not only for how students learn and *value* learning, but also for how students come to view, know, and act in the world throughout their lives (p. 126).

This section firstly traces out students' recollections of teachers' demands for compliance without rationalisation, followed by an investigation on how students develop feelings of insecurity through coming to "view, know, and act" (Shue & Beck, 2001, p. 126) in their world.

4.1.1 Teacher's action: Active (verbal) and passive (non-verbal) communication

Firmly believing that they have absolute control over their students, authoritarian teachers would explicitly make known to students their assessment of them. In the anecdote below, Eton recalled several ballet teachers, who with their firm beliefs of the ballet aesthetics, pointed out certain parts of Eton's body as needing adjustments:

They always tell me, "your ribs is too out, your neck is too out, your shoulders are too forward". For me, when I try to stand straight, my ribs come out. When I try to fix my ribs in, then my neck comes out or my shoulders rotate inwards. So then, a lot of teachers have been saying to me, "you just need to push your ribs in, and turn out your shoulders". But I tell them that I cannot breathe. I feel like my lungs cannot expand and then I can't make my ribs move. It makes me turn blue [laughed]. Then they say, "yes, then you breathe very small" [...] "Don't [breathe to your maximum capacity], just push it in, and then just breathe to the maximum without moving your ribs, and then you just exhale".

Despite the changes of stylistic preferences over its course in history, ballet was designed and continues to evolve with the aim to impress spectators with its external form (Au, 2002). This emphasis on the external form of what the body should look like from the outsider's gaze gives permission to the teachers in authority to correct students' bodies accordingly (Green, 2002-03). With Eton's experiences in learning ballet, he remembered that the teachers did not hesitate to tell him how he should 'fix' his body parts – either by pushing his ribs in or turning his shoulders out. When Eton felt he was not able to realise these instructions through his body, he related these bodily struggles to his teachers. Despite acknowledging his feelings of discomfort, the teachers continued to persist in dictating ways for him to suppress his body's natural mechanisms in order to achieve the appropriate 'look'. Since this explanation did not help Eton to remove the unreasonable element in his teacher's request, he snickered at the notion and was left with no other way of rationalising his teacher's attempts.

In the above example, the teachers first assessed and gave Eton a verdict on his body according to their judgment. They subsequently told Eton what to do with the intention of having him ‘fix’ his body according to their standards. Finally, they demanded compliance from him even though Eton clearly stated that he could not connect with the suggested approach. Throughout the process, although verbal exchanges were present, it is difficult to ascertain whether authentic communication took place due to the complexities in consideration within communication (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968). Contrary, yet similar to his experiences with the teachers mentioned above, Eton proceeded to describe a teacher who, with his lack of verbal feedback to Eton, made him feel “very forgotten” (Eton). Although non-verbal, and thereby a less direct means of communication could be disregarded more easily than explicit means of non-rationalisation from teachers, students could gain a similar message anyway (Lakes, 2005):

But a lot of time in a class with this other teacher, I feel very forgotten [...] a lot of times I just fumbled, and it’s the same thing. No words are being spoken of, no corrections, “you just have to get it”.

According to Eton, when he fumbled and struggled at executing the movements given, “no words [we]re being spoken” by the teacher. In other words, this teacher simply ignored Eton. Not receiving any help from his teacher while being acutely aware of the uncompromising standards he had to adhere to, Eton concluded that the teacher was expecting him to “just get it” on his own.

4.1.2 Teacher’s action: Physical manipulation

The teachers’ attitude of obstinate insistence on what Eton should strive to achieve with his body exposed their pedagogical philosophy: that the delivery of a fixed content is more important than the treatment of students as human beings (Lakes, 2005). Some teachers simply dismiss students as non-humans, while others come to embrace the notion of the Cartesian dualism perspective – that the body should be perceived and treated as a lesser entity to the mind. Demeaning the body to mean nothing more than a mechanical object, teachers become confident and comfortable in physically manipulating a student’s body for the sake of attaining set content. This is evidenced by Claire as she recalled:

It’s just that my back was quite stiff [...] so he wanted to stretch me more. So, he put my arms back, I was in fifth position, he pulled it all the way back. I told him I can’t breathe, but he still went all the way back.

Claire’s anecdote revealed the teacher’s readiness to physically manipulate her body when he felt “he wanted to stretch [Claire] more”. He was comfortable with the act of manipulation and appeared to be quite familiar with the procedure to stretch a student’s back. According to Claire, “he tortures”. When Claire expressed concerns about her own safety when she could not breathe, the teacher ignored her feedback and continued to pull her further. At this juncture, Claire fainted temporarily. When she

woke up, she remembered:

He wasn't beside me. He didn't say anything but asked me to walk to the side and sit there after I woke up. And he continued conducting class.

Whilst listening to Claire, I felt deeply concerned for her. The scenario that she painted was a bleak one, where as a student, she had no autonomy of her own, “[y]ou feel like a robot, like Nazi” (Claire). With these strong images, she expressed her feelings of obligation towards her teacher's actions, with no rationalisation whatsoever:

He didn't say anything, he just kept pulling. He does say, “relax”, but to a point where [how am I going to?]. . . I don't know, it's just crazy! Other people he also just stretch, stretch and stretch them. He'll also do it to them as well. But for his methods, he has to go to the extreme.

The series of actions taken by the teacher, from physically manipulating Claire's body to prompting her to move from the dance space to the side of the classroom after she gained consciousness from fainting, were demanding and irrational for Claire in two ways. Firstly, though he was stretching Claire “to the extreme”, he told her to “relax”. His words demonstrated a lack of rationale because there was no way Claire could relax when the stretch prevented her from breathing. Due to this, Claire exclaimed that the situation was “just crazy”, indicating that to her, her teacher's action and words were simply illogical. Secondly, after she regained her consciousness from fainting temporarily, the teacher just casually asked her to move herself to the side, implicitly communicating the message that his method was justified and nothing (even Claire's collapsed body) should prevent the training (class) from going on. This demand for complete authority over students' bodies continued to be evidenced through the teacher's persistence in stretching Claire's classmates.

Claire's observation below hints at the teacher's unreflective practice:

I think he took it as a joke because I think to him, that's pretty normal [for people to black out]. [...] And I think he hasn't realised it, because I think he has been doing it for a while, he's been doing it for years.

Noticing that the teacher was not alarmed by her condition, Claire deduced that the teacher must have normalised such occurrences as he was *unaware* of the severity of his actions. According to her, the teacher has been practising this teaching method “for years”. Mills (1997) proposed that “[i]n dance, as in other fields, most people are inclined to maintain or reinforce existing images because people tend to perceive information in a way that is consistent with their values” (p. 141). This suggests that this specific teacher's action of physically manipulating students' bodies without any rationalisation will continue to be employed, as a result of an unreflective teaching practice, since it is both familiar to him (from his own teaching and learning experiences), and also consistent with his unwavering belief that demands should be complied with regardless of a student's condition. It is therefore not surprising when Eton shared that his teachers often employed physical touch with words that contained no

relatable meaning to him, as they attempted to shape his body according to their demands:

At that time, I think constantly I was feeling very like my arm is in the wrong place, but visually, the teachers would say, “it’s correct, this is correct”. A lot of times, because my muscles are not developed yet, so there are a lot of fine muscle fibres at the back that I didn’t understand what they were talking about, I couldn’t feel it, and they just kept poking my back. “There, this one, this one”. Then I just kind of try to move, but because all of the small muscles are not grown, so I can’t feel. The more I can’t feel, the more I don’t know where they are poking and I’m trying to ‘kiap’ [squeeze] the part that they poke. But it’s futile.

In the same way the teacher was comfortable in using physical means to stretch Claire’s body, Eton shared that his teachers often “poke[d]” various parts of his body in an attempt to shape it according to their assessments of his body through the outer gaze. When Eton demonstrated his inability to comprehend their instructions with this method, the teachers did not make any noticeable effort in guiding Eton to understand how he could “find meaning in [his] dance experience” so that he was empowered to “own [his] own bod[y]” (Green, 2002-03, p. 100).

Informing the body through physical touch is not an inhumane approach in itself. Teachers who apply the somatic movement dance education approaches would use a combination of touch and words to guide students through an internalised journey in gaining deeper awareness of their bodies. However, just receiving physical touch with no comprehensive guidance to rationalise bodily sensations may result in students gaining very little from the experience. A well-intended method could possibly fail to serve its purpose if students cannot make sense and meaning out of why the teachers are physically manipulating their bodies. Besides, the type of touch the teacher uses on a student’s body is also crucial in informing the student of their intention. In Eton’s case, he described that the teachers, poked him, and “kept poking” his back. The persistent “poking” action suggests that the teachers were using touch to shape Eton’s body in a somewhat forceful and impatient manner. He distinctly felt that this was a futile experience.

4.1.3 Teacher’s action: Repetition

A common thread with teachers’ actions – whether by means of words or the lack of words used, or through physical handling of students’ bodies – was that there was arguably a lack of any critical and reflective dialogue happening between them and the students. Though there were some words exchanged, Eton mostly remembered his teachers asserting their standards without attempting to rationalise their demands in relation to his circumstances:

“You just need to keep doing it”. I think that will be the most often and shortest sentence that I hear throughout. No [I don’t question], because it’s a full-stop. “YOU [pause] JUST [pause] need to keep doing it”. It really means to stop asking, stop trying to look for an alternative, stop trying to work your way around it. Just keep doing it. [So] I stop thinking already, and I stop questioning already... So it’s like, “oh okay”. Maybe dance is like this. Or maybe dance training is like this.

Critical pedagogists, who advocate for a human-centred approach to education, agree for teachers to engage students in meaningful dialogue in order for education to serve its purpose in empowering the humans (Burnidge, 2012; Freire, 1970/2000). Freire (1970/2000) argues that when the student begins to reflect on his situation (as a manifestation of these dialogues), he will then be “challenged by it to act upon it” (p. 109). Instead of entering into dialogue with Eton to aid him in rationalising his situation and how he could act upon it, the teachers employed repetition as another tool, which deterred him from thinking about and questioning his learning experiences, but forced him to accept that “dance training is like this”.

The teacher’s words, “[y]ou just need to keep doing it," essentially reflects a “‘Just Do It’ model” (Burnidge, 2012, p. 40) that commonly plays out within many dance technique classrooms. In spite of the neutrality of the nature of words used, his teachers’ commanding tones left Eton with very little room to interpret the learning method differently. He was certain that his teachers wanted him to repeat the movements till he nailed them perfectly:

So, there was one incident while doing the left side halfway, I slipped and fell. Then he [the teacher] stopped the music, and he asked me, “What are you doing?”. So I was like, “Oh sorry, I fell”. And he said, “Not acceptable. Okay, you just do again”. He was so pissed that I fell, so he just played the music on a loop, and it was just me doing the left side until the class ended. I think I had another 15 or 20 more minutes in class. And I was just doing the left side again, and again, and again, and again [...] But you know, at the end of that class, he’s like, “好了 [okay], 谢谢 [thanks], bye bye”. Just done.

After Eton fell, an extremely brief *exchange of words* happened between Eton and the teacher. This ‘conversation’ essentially accounted for the teacher’s demand of Eton to explain why he fell, followed by Eton’s genuine answer that he slipped, and was finally brought to a closure by the teacher stating that falling was unacceptable in his class. I have intentionally described this encounter as an *exchange of words*, and not an empowering dialogue, as defined by Freire, because the teacher hardly gave Eton an opportunity to explore and explain his situation before abruptly ending the conversation with a condemnation of Eton’s ‘mistake’.

Having stated without rationalisation that Eton had done something unacceptable in *his* opinion, the teacher became very angry at him, making him repeat the combination as a form of punishment. Eton later disclosed that his teacher did not allow him to stop even for a moment to reflect on each of his attempts while repeating. Instead he simply said, “do again” nonchalantly every single time after Eton had done it. Without articulation, it is puzzling (which Eton also expressed) as to how the teacher expected Eton to improve with repetition. Regardless of the teacher’s intention in making Eton repeat, the reckless employment of this tool could potentially have brought about physical harm upon Eton, and borders on being abusive in its effects.

Through analysing student interviewees' experiences of their teachers' non-rationalisation in demanding for compliance from them, an oppressive and abusive environment was exposed. Within this teaching/learning environment, both content (what) and method (how) were determined by teachers without any attempt at rationalising students' learning experiences from their viewpoints. The rejection of the value of students' inputs, thus, caused them to feel unaccepted by teachers and the dance community. With their self-esteem damaged, students developed feelings of helplessness and discontentment, which will be illustrated below with the support of student participants' testimonies.

4.1.4 Student's feelings: Helplessness

In analysing students' feelings of helplessness as a result of teachers' non-rationalisation, Maslow's second and third descriptors of individuals who display an 'insecurity syndrome' will well serve as a lens for a comprehensive understanding of students' feelings of insecurity. Quoting Maslow (1942), the second descriptor portrays an individual with insecurity symptoms as having, "[f]eelings of isolation, ostracism, aloneness or being out of it, feelings of 'uniqueness'"; while the third descriptor illustrates a person with a "[p]erception of the world and life as dangerous, threatening, dark, hostile or challenging [...]" (p. 334). It is also pertinent to recognise at this juncture that both the insistence on delivery of a fixed content and its unintelligible methods have distinct effects on how students develop feelings of helplessness and discontentment. In the following discussion, I will first attempt to rationalise how an insistence on *what* students should attain caused feelings of helplessness; then I will expose how the non-rationalisation of *how* to attain these goals effects a sense of discontentment of learning and of self.

Claire's pointed observation of her teacher's use of repetition without rationalisation reveals the teacher's valuing of technique classes to shape students in becoming *what* he "envisions":

If he doesn't say anything else that is beneficial, he makes you do it over, over, over and over again, until you become that person he envisions... He likes a certain way of doing it, he likes a certain style, he likes a certain vision that he wants to achieve, and by all means, he will achieve it. "Do it again", that's all he says... That's the thing, they don't tell you. You have to work on your own. Just, "do, do, do, do!", but there's never any conversation about it...

A rather distressing piece of information that surfaced from the teacher's non-beneficial or even lack of verbal guidance with the use of repetition, is that Claire clearly observed that there was "a certain way of doing it", and "by all means" the teacher would make sure she achieved that. This meant that there was only *one* "vision" that the teacher would like for *all* the students to become, and he was unconcerned about how his students felt, as long as this "vision" was realised. It is highly plausible that the teacher's unrealistic belief for everyone to come to embrace and become this one "vision" conclusively created a highly challenging world that Claire came to perceive.

In Eton's desperate attempt to adhere to the similarly challenging "vision" that his teacher insisted upon, Eton thought out loud:

So what, I'm just understanding... Okay, strange guy with no flexibility comes into a tertiary dance level with no background in ballet just needs to get it. Okay, with all its surrealism in place, I'll just get it, but I never did lah. That's my conclusion that I'll never get it.

Since Eton's teachers chose to be enforcers instead of facilitators in allowing for Eton to co-construct on his personal learning goals, they imposed standards that he had to attain and ignored his struggles. Feeling abandoned in this journey, Eton felt that he stuck out in the wrong way, referring to himself as the "strange guy". In Maslow's term, he felt feelings of aloneness. Forced to navigate through this challenging and lonely journey himself, Eton felt a sense of helplessness, condemning himself to "never get it".

Feeling helpless in a challenging (standards) and hostile (teachers) world, Eton fumbled about, trying earnestly with the tools (*how*) he felt he was left alone with to navigate his learning. He explained:

After I was being told that, I was very sincere about really trying. So then the next few ballet lessons, I was really observing. Why doesn't anybody else has the same ribs as me? It's a deformity or what is it? [...] I feel like I was a square trying to be stuffed into a circle, it really felt like that...

Feeling like "a square trying to be stuffed into a circle" essentially meant Eton felt distinctly different from his classmates. And this feeling came about because his teachers tried to "stuff" him or forced him to comply to demands without giving him any rationale as to *how* to do so. Knowing clearly that his ribs needed to look like everyone else's but unable to rationalise how to do so led Eton to blaming first his ribs, calling it a "deformity", and subsequently more and more of his body parts, till he ended up blaming his whole self, "why me?" (Eton).

When teachers directed Eton to "breathe small" so as to keep his ribs in, they are in fact compelling him to ignore his bodily messages. Dance researchers, who advocate for the incorporation of somatic principles in dance teaching, have long argued that somatically associated pedagogic practices could potentially "facilitate students' process of becoming an expert of their own bodies and lives by interrogating and analysing their own experiences" (Fortin, 1998, p. 65). Contrary to this conviction, Eton's teachers demanded for compliance due to a comparison of his body with an unyielding "vision" from an outside gaze. Since he was told that visually, he looked 'correct' in spite of him "feeling very like [his] arm [wa]s in the wrong place", he learned to neglect his bodily message and negate the "holistic wisdom" (Burnidge, 2012, p. 40) that he possessed as a dancer. As a result, Eton was left without both external (teachers' rationalisation) and internal (bodily intelligence) guidance, which led him to feel even more so helpless.

4.1.5 Student's feelings: Discontentment

Maslow's third descriptor continues phenomenally to depict how feelings of insecurity are experienced by an individual as being in "a jungle in which every man's hand is against every other's, in which one eats or is eaten" (1942, p. 334). From the anecdotes of student interviewees, the idea that they felt they were being "eaten" is put forth in considering how teachers' non-rationalisation left them feeling helpless: isolation and 'uniqueness' in a challenging and hostile world, self-blame from perceiving that they fall short of expectations, and disempowerment from having bodily intelligence taken away from them. Prolonged exposure to such a teaching/learning environment eventually led to students feeling discontentment with their learning experiences:

But on the other hand, it was like..., why can't this teacher articulate what could be the best for me? Or can you guide me so that I work towards that goal even though I might not reach the goal... [that] I know what I'm working towards, rather than just very clear clean answers like, "nope, nope, no".

As Eton reflected on his teacher's non-rationalisation of *how* he could achieve the goal that was presented to him, he gradually exhibited signs of bewilderment and frustration. Bewilderment at *how* his teacher chose not to, or was unable to, articulate his instructions in more tangible ways, and frustrated at the complete but once again, inarticulate rejection he encountered every single time he made his queries to his teacher. It appears Eton was discontented with the specific teacher's teaching method, explaining that the reason for his feelings of helplessness and discontentment would not have been conceived if the teacher could better articulate to him *how* he could begin to "work towards that goal". In other words, because the instructions towards a set goal was not catered to his needs, Eton found no way to relate to the specific teaching/learning method, which left him feeling very dissatisfied and discontented with his learning situation. This unsatisfactory learning situation thus hindered him from achieving competency, which caused his self-esteem to dip.

In the way he commented on one specific teacher's teaching method, Eton progressed to critically reflect on the larger training system he was situated in.

Through my days at School X, I was always thinking, this is not what I signed up for. I've always loved dance before I joined School X, and then the drilling or the conformity of what dance needs to be, in order for people to look at you like a dancer [...] When I came into School X, it was an eye-opener of what dance was. And I soon felt it was like a circus because you just trained quite mindlessly to me. I remembered feeling like they are able to take away the enjoyment in dance. I don't know...

Eton demonstrated, in Freire's terms, that he had begun to awaken to his critical consciousness through his reflective interpretation of the various learning occurrences within his training system. He recognised that the existing training system depended on drilling content to discipline students, who

would conform to the teachers' beliefs of how a dancer should look. He was acutely aware that the standard was 'unchangeable', regardless of his effort to find alternatives that were more relevant for him. He veraciously painted a picture comparing his memory of his learning conditions to that of training in the circus – one that is quite mindless to him. It was left unclarified as to whether Eton was referring to the circus's way of training animals or human beings. In either case, circuses are known for a long time to tolerate cruel training behaviours "to make him [generically referring to young boys, or girls] learn" (The Lancet, 1888). Whether Eton was likening his experiences to that of a circus animal or a young child, he was suggesting a correlation between the two training systems. He revealed intentionally or otherwise, a 'downright' cruel training system (The Lancet, 1888), whereby the process is justified by its ends. Within such culture, rationalisation is not deemed as important, while abuse and oppression are tolerated for the sake of conformity. Facing this 'reality' heightened Eton's sense of helplessness and desperation. Perceiving no way to transform his 'reality', he became discontented with the whole training system, exclaiming that his teachers had robbed him of his "enjoyment in dance" (Eton).

Evidently, teachers' irrational demand for compliance from students could affect how students perceive their world and their learning within it. It could also have "deep implications" on how students come to "act in the world throughout their lives" (Shue & Beck, 2001, p. 126). Below, we will continue to analyse Claire's account in exposing the longer-lasting impacts that affect how students "act in the world" (Shue & Beck, 2001, p. 126) due to emerging feelings of discontentment.

Thus far, we have discussed a 'reality' enforced by the teachers and accepted by the students as 'unchanging'. It is, however, not so in reality. Maslow (1968/1999) believes that a self-actualised human being "experiences the world totally for what it is" (McLeod, 2018, p. 6). By employing non-rationalised teaching methods that demanded complete compliance from students, teachers were fundamentally performing a teaching philosophy that believed and, therefore, treated students as "objects that must be filled by the teacher" (Salazar, 2013, p. 130). In this environment, the students were forced to take on a fixed 'reality' that they could not act upon and transform. If we define *the reality* as one that can be sculpted continuously by empowered individuals, then the term should never be represented by one fixed 'reality'. This so-called 'reality' is, therefore, false in actual fact because it does not value and account for students' capacity to co-construct knowledge (Freire, 1970/2000). With this concept in mind, we will examine Claire's account, as it illustrates how forcing imposed goals, along with a false 'reality', resulted in feelings of insecurity that could potentially have longer-lasting impact on students' lives. Three distinctive effects are identified and laid out, all tying back to the root of the feelings of insecurity: discontentment.

Being denied an experience where she would be able to rationalise her goals and processes, Claire first took on her teachers' goals for herself, but ultimately became tired and discontented:

Each of them has their own styles, and they want me to look like them [... Therefore] back then, I wanted to be like everybody. Ya, one to everybody. It got to a point when I think it's too much for myself. Why am I spending at least 9 am to 11 pm for them, everyday, Monday to Sunday... many of my friends stopped coming for classes, just because they don't want to be forced to do things as they are told.

According to Cammarota and Romero (2006), teachers who force their 'reality' and goals on students "constantly tell them [students] what to do, what to learn, what to think, seldom seeking their input, suggestions, comments, feedback, or thoughts about their education" (p. 19), and this "promotes passivity, acceptance, and submissiveness" (Salazar, 2013, p. 130). Having been told by each of her teachers to "look like them", Claire accepted this as her 'reality', taking upon herself the obligation to work "at least 9am to 11pm" to fulfil these aims. A teacher-centred environment, thus, birthed its effect on Claire in becoming a submissive student. This is consistent with Maslow's commentary that when feelings of insecurity develop, the insecure person "may become dependent and submissive so that he will challenge no one" (1942, p. 337). However, after prolonged periods of time trying to be everyone else but herself, she decided that this quest was just "too much for [her]". That is to say that she felt feelings of discontentment since she did not have any personal rationalisation for why she was spending so much of her time and effort on being someone else.

In spite of feeling discontented, Claire did not indicate that she physically left the learning environment. Rather, we can infer from her expression that since she had enough of trying to live for others, she might have mentally noted to herself to abandon this goal, but all the while doing so quietly. Even if she did give up on the goal, since she still chose to attend classes, she may not have been able to leave that situation (teachers' 'reality') altogether. The second outcome, hence, is represented by Claire's decision to readjust her mental state. Perhaps she was able to partially leave the 'psychological environment', but she was not fully able to leave the 'geographical environment' (Maslow, 1987). Freeing herself off the mentality that she had to use all of her resources to serve the purpose of others, she partly escaped the constraints of this 'reality' that kept her in the cycle of dependence and submissiveness. However, deciding to stay in the physical teaching/learning environment also meant that she was not able to completely escape from the situations that could happen to her. For this reason, she felt as trapped as Eton in this uncompromising 'reality'. As Eton described it, they felt they just had to "get through it" (Eton).

The third outcome of students training under irrational and demanding teachers, is finally represented by the response of Claire's classmates, who quit. This could mean that they stopped attending certain teacher's technique class, or all technique classes. In both cases, their actions would have short- to

long-term implications on their learning and performance. It could also mean that they stopped attending school, or/and even quit pursuing dance as a profession completely. In the latter scenario, the impact on students would obviously be long-lasting. Maslow (1942) states that, another response of an insecure person to his insecurities might be the withdrawal from the corresponding environment “so that he will no longer be hurt” (p. 337). Therefore, it is pertinent to note that all three illustrated decisions that students made could be tied back to their motivation in seeking to satisfy their esteem needs, as Maslow has explained. When denied their esteem needs, students ultimately developed feelings of discontentment, which could potentially have long-lasting impacts on their lives.

4.1.6 Conclusion

Operating within a master-apprentice model (Butterworth, 2012; Hecht, 2014), teachers are treated as the all-knowing gurus (Lakes, 2014) while students defer to and accept teachers’ authority over them (Smith, 1998). With fixed aesthetics to be fulfilled by teachers in authority, teachers become unyielding in demanding compliance from students. Dance researchers define this as a leading trait of the authoritarian teaching style (Butterworth, 2012; Lakes, 2005, 2014). We observe that this teaching approach encourages teachers to demand compliance from students without the need for rationalisation through active and passive verbal communications, physical manipulation, and repetition. As students came to perceive their world as hostile, challenging and lonely, they developed feelings of helplessness and discontentment, which consequently brought about short to longer-lasting impacts. These impacts included feelings of condemnation, self-blame, disempowerment (evolving from feelings of helplessness); dissatisfaction with learning situation and training system, and partial and/or full signs of withdrawal from dance (evolving from feelings of discontentment).

This chapter started out with the analysis and discussion of teachers’ demand for compliance with non-rationalisation, since this particular approach has been found out to result in developing two major feelings of insecurity – feelings of helplessness and discontentment. Although on the one hand, students might quit, as Claire’s classmates did (as a means of escape), most students, including Claire, stayed on in hopes of getting through with the dance training (Eton). The latter, who stayed in this environment, continued to face recurring abusive teaching situations, which left them feeling even more helpless. This feeling of helplessness, hence, characterises most of the student interviewees, as they went on to reveal their teachers’ angry and humiliating approaches towards them.

4.2 Anger

Anderson and Bushman (2002) put forth, “aggression is human tragedy unsurpassed” (p. 28). Under this category, teachers’ display of anger would be regarded as episodes of teachers’ outburst at students, uncontained and unsurpassed. In spite of the possibility that teachers could have purposefully adopted anger as a teaching tool, due to the scope of this research, the researcher will refrain as much as possible from making statements regarding the teachers’ motivations. This is not to simplify the teachers’ motivations. In contrary, it is to acknowledge the complexities that accompany this topic, suggesting and leaving it for future research to delve deeper into. To begin with the analysis and discussion of this category, we will first explore teachers’ actions as manifestations of anger. Then, we will explore the relationship between these actions to students developing “feelings of tension and strain and conflict” (Maslow, 1942, p. 334), which further incurred various consequences of tension, such as signs of nervousness, psychosomatic disturbances, emotional instability, uncertainty, etc.

4.2.1 Teacher’s action: Anger in tone

Body language has the ability to express emotions, and conversely, people also receive messages from others’ body language (Tomkins, 1963). In other words, body language, including a person’s tone of voice (Stack, 2001), touch (Hertenstein, Holmes, McCullough, & Keltner, 2009), facial expressions (Ekman & Friesen, 1971; Izard, 1971), and other forms of expression, have the capacity to communicate messages that their words may omit. Just as the teachers directed their anger towards student participants through these means, the student participants themselves communicated their thoughts by expressing their emotions during the interviews. Participants often neglected to put into words the teacher’s tone of voice and body language when they recounted their stories. This is natural in a social conversation, as people rarely portray their own experiences as a storyteller, or an author, would in a novel. However, through observing their selection of words, voices, facial and body languages, as they rehashed these stories, rich details emerged.

Whilst retelling some of the teachers’ angry ways, students’ expressions hinted at their experiences of teachers’ heightened emotions, namely frustration. Shaw’s eyes dilated and hand movements grew bigger as he shook his head, indicating a sign of indignation at his teacher’s outburst of anger directed at others in the class. Vera stared into space, taking long pauses in between, as if summoning into her head the day when an incident happened to her in class, giving off a sense of despair (gloom) over her situation. Claire, noticeably became very nervous, stuttering her words, and repeating certain phrases over and over again, while regularly stating that she was unsure if she made sense to me. Two obvious verbal clues that hinted to a teacher using an angry tone, are the use of the words, “screamed”, and in

the other instance, “whining”:

He spent all his time screaming at us, saying, “turn out”, “leg higher”, “be square”, “squeeze the butt” [...] then he’ll come adjust our bodies. He’ll keep saying it. He seldom [changed his words] (Vera).

His tone [...] has emotions when he is angry, but it feels like whining (James).

In the above example, Vera’s anecdote highlighted her teacher’s angry tone while unveiling two additional actions teachers employ when directing anger at students. The first being the choice of their language, and the second being the physical manipulation of students’ bodies.

Anger in tone explicitly suggests, verbal language communicated in an angry tone. In Vera’s experience, since the teacher’s comments hardly changed, his angry tone became the main message. In other instances, teachers’ words could get more meaning across to the students than just that of the teacher simply being angry. Some comments that student interviewees recalled were:

你是屎 [you are a piece of shit]!
A pig moves better than you...
I’m teaching here, then don’t come here to dance!
You’re not good enough to even dance!
Should you even consider dancing?
You don’t dance lah, why you come here to dance?

Recognising that multiple meanings may surface through deeper analysis of the words teachers used, this direction will be expounded upon in the next section, 4.3 Humiliation. This section of the analysis, however, identifies anger as the existing undertone of teacher’s behaviours, and attempts to unpack the complexities that accompany this emotion.

4.2.2 Teacher’s action: Anger through physical violence

Advancing within the assumption they were indeed experiencing anger as they directed their emotions at students, teachers are likely to display “[a]ctions intended to harm another [...] that] has its evolutionary origins in animal fighting” (Archer, 2006). This argument hints at the instinctive human nature to express anger by actions that result in harming another, as Paige recalled:

I do remember an incident when a chair was thrown. I remember it because I avoided the chair. No, he threw it in my direction, it was my instinct to avoid it, but it wasn’t aimed at me.

Employing dancers’ anecdotes on authoritarian teachers’ inappropriate teaching approaches, Lakes (2005) unveiled that teachers “get personal in extreme ways” (p. 6). One of these stories was narrated by dance critic Deborah Jowitt’s memory of her teacher Anna Sokolow. Jowitt described a situation where Sokolow yelled while demanding compliance from her class in rehearsal, and then “hurled the chair at [them]” after they “couldn’t get it right” (quoting Jowitt in Lakes, 2005, p. 6). This strikingly

similar story presses us to investigate if such violence, was and is, still a widely practiced approach to tertiary dance teaching. Psychologists Schutter and Harmon-Jones (2013) state, “[a]ggression may be viewed as the behavioural expression of anger that is aimed at eliminating an unwanted situation to establish a desired state of affairs [Stein and Levine, 1989]” (p. 2481). Are teachers unconsciously (instinctive nature to harm in anger); or subconsciously (passed-on traditional methods); or consciously (choosing to be aggressive as a tool to eliminate unwanted behaviour of students) throwing chairs at students? Nevertheless, this is a highly dangerous action.

From Paige’s recollection, the teacher did not intend to throw the chair at her. Whoever or wherever he was aiming the chair at, he missed. This suggests that the teacher was genuinely angry and was, hence, unable to control his anger, resulting in the chair being thrown in the wrong direction. Instinctively, Paige avoided the chair and the potential consequent danger. What if she did not manage to dodge the chair and it hit her? This may be an appropriate time once again to call for policy makers and deans, to re-examine the existing policies, and to bring teachers to account for their actions (whether intentional or otherwise).

4.2.3 Teacher’s action: Anger with mood

A more complicated emotional state of teachers that is evidenced to conceive anger, which leads to aggression, is the effect of mood. When such occurrences happened, the teachers’ actions were identical to those examined above. As testified by Vera, teachers could become angry when they entered into periods of bad moods. Vera said of her teacher, “[i]f he is in a bad mood, he’ll just call you a ‘fat ass’. He’ll say, ‘so fat!’ and he’ll just walk away”.

Mood can be referred to either in a ‘broader’ or ‘narrower’ sense, as theorised by Ben-Ze’ev (2000). According to Vera’s illustration, the teacher’s mood seemed to fall under the ‘narrower’ sense in that “it indicates an intense and pervasive frame of feelings which is not frequent” (p. 86). This definition aids us in understanding the experience of moods in two ways. Firstly, a person who becomes moody experiences acute feelings that engulf them. This meant that Vera’s teacher was immersed in a state of mind so intense that it led him to lashing out his emotions at Vera without restraint. Secondly, since such moods are “not frequent”, they come and go, and their occurrences are unpredictable. Psychological literature more commonly refers to mood within this definition as an emotional disorder. Claire observed what could be described as an emotional disorder at work in her teacher as she reflected:

He always changes... on some days, he's in a very good mood with you, but when he doesn't get his answer for a while... he always jokes around, but to the point where the jokes become a really serious joke. He'll just scream at you! He'll just scream! Like if you say something wrong, he'll just scream at you, and you might not know if he's in a good or bad mood!

According to Claire's account, her teacher experienced moods aligned with the definition above. Firstly, the intensity of his feelings, resulting from either good or bad moods, compelled him to joke around or scream at Claire respectively. Secondly, his moods were unpredictable as evidenced by Claire's words, "you might not know if he's in a good or bad mood". According to Claire, when he (sometimes) came "in a very good mood", he joked around. In her opinion, it was when she could not provide a satisfactory answer for the teacher's angry tone, that she concluded that the teacher has been triggered by his mood and subsequently became angry at her. Her reasoning seems logical until subjected to our understanding of the complexities of moods, and as such we are less able to attribute such behaviour to an obvious cause, and therefore, effect.

Ben-Ze'ev (2000) points out a subtle but important difference between the two terms, 'moods' and 'feelings'. There is "some degree of intentionality [that] exists in moods which is absent from feelings" (p. 87). This helps us understand that teachers who joked around or became angry at students could have been intentional in their display of their moods. These actions were not purely reactionary and instinctive. Ben-Ze'ev (2000) continues to explain that moods are caused by longer-lasting issues that stem from an individual's life, rather than with "the more specific events generating emotions" (p. 88). In other words, teachers' display of mood in anger has very little, or nothing, to do with what happened in the classroom, i.e., what students did. This explanation thus demonstrates that Claire could have been inaccurate in her evaluation of the situation. It was not her action (unsatisfactory answer) that caused her teacher's anger, but it might have been the teacher's agency to act aggressively towards her.

Not only do the display of these moods have very little to do with the student's actions, additionally, the ways they manifest are just as difficult to predict and follow as their occurrences. Since "moods do not have a particular facial expression, at least none that is universal" (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000, p. 88), it is difficult for students to read teachers' expressions to gain any reliable information as to what mood they are in. For this reason, Claire was evidently unable to predict what moods her teacher was in, when these manifestations of moods might occur, and what kind of behaviours might occur.

In summary, a teacher's mood is unpredictable both in its occurrence and its manifestations (depending on where one is situated at each moment within the spectrum of good to bad moods). Being in different moods does not determine a teacher's action towards students. As demonstrated, it could have been a purposeful act of intention that Claire's teacher lashed out at her in anger.

Regardless of their motivating forces – instinctive harmful aggression, passed-on teaching methods, intentional teaching tool, negative mood – the teacher’s manifestations of anger remained largely unaltered. These actions can manifest as angry tone (curt words) and physical aggression, as discussed above. However, it is worth noticing the complexities in considering how teachers’ moods have an impact on students. Students, having to deal with moody teachers and their angry episodes, might be predisposed to develop certain feelings of insecurity or mechanisms to cope if these confusing situations occur persistently. Below, we continue to explore students’ responses and the short and long-lasting effects teachers’ expression of anger have on them.

4.2.4 Student’s feelings: Compulsive submissiveness

Maslow (1968/1999) observes that:

... [when] the child, faced with a difficult choice between his own delight experiences and the experience of approval from others, must generally choose approval from others, and then handle his delight by repression or letting it die, or not noticing it or controlling it by willpower (p. 60).

In extending this proposition, when students are put in the position to choose between earning the approval of teachers or the pursuit of their own intrinsic learning tendencies, they will choose to submit to the teacher, whom they perceive to be able to fulfil their esteem needs. In this process, students give up their own thoughts and other growth needs, taking up an attitude of compulsive submissiveness. A prominent example of an individual who exhibited compulsive submission amongst the participants is Vera. Vera almost always responded to all her teachers’ demands by simply agreeing and obliging, without questioning them. Some telling responses I noted from her were mainly versions of “orh, okay lah” (“lah” signifying a sense of resignation and helplessness), “I don’t know”, or “I never asked”.

A probable reason for Vera’s compulsive submissiveness could be that when she realised that her teacher’s screaming words (refer to 4.2.1) remained notably unchanging, she gradually and eventually learned to shut out these words, assuming that these words could not take on different meanings (as examined in the previous category, 4.1 non-rationalisation). Vera’s consequent statement affirmed this inference, as she said, “all the things he gave were very surface comments” (Vera), implying that there was no need for her to dig deeper into gaining more meaning. In support, Shue and Beck (2001) caution educators of their ‘performances’, as their anger can easily be understood by students as a message in itself. When students noticed that teachers are often very angry, feelings of strain (Maslow, 1942) develop. For Vera, this feeling of strain compelled her to stop searching for alternative meanings when her teacher’s words were presented in an aggressive manner. Although Vera revealed that often times, she felt confused by her teachers’ actions or words, she insisted that she would never ask her

teachers for clarification:

“你是真笨， 还是装笨 [are you actually stupid or are you pretending to be stupid]?” I got a shock of my life! AT THAT AGE, someone scolds you like that, and ... I was 25, 26, or 27? I don't mind scolding; I was just taken aback by his exact words. At that moment, I really think I am so stupid. I really think that. I can't count music.

As demonstrated, Vera compulsively submitted to her teacher's opinion that she was stupid.

4.2.5 Student's feelings: Escape trend

At a single glance, it would seem illogical for Vera to accept her teacher's comment, that she is stupid, simply from his substantiation of her not being able to count a piece of music. In the prevalently authoritarian dance classrooms (Lakes, 2005), teachers feel entitled to bully students, and students accept teachers' bullying, as evident in Vera's compulsive submissive behaviour. Inappropriate behaviour, such as the use of vulgarities in the classrooms, become permissive. Eton explained:

It's very typical for teachers to speak in their own way and their language. Like some teachers curse a lot in class. So that you know that it's an expression. For me, it's okay.

He does say vulgarities, which to me is pretty normal if he gets really pissed off (Claire).

Since aggression is commonly directed at them, student interviewees normalise this phenomenon by rationalising to themselves that there was a reason why the teachers behaved as such. For example, in the episode where the teacher threw a chair in Paige's direction, she rationalised that the teacher must have been very frustrated at the teaching environment. Opposed to Jowitt feeling “the shock in the pit of my stomach” (quoting Jowitt in Lakes, 2005, p. 6), Paige seemed unfazed in the least as she related the experience matter of factly. Her composed demeanour hinted at her familiarity with the particular situation. Another student interviewee, James, recalled another of such incident:

I remember one episode, because I couldn't remember my steps. So, I tend to have this habit of closing my eyes to focus. So the teacher was very angry with me and threw a chair for closing my eyes while doing ballet barre... Ya, just don't close your eyes.

Due to the frequent outbursts of aggression and violence of teachers on students, James habituated a compulsive submissive attitude. Instead of questioning his teacher's violent action, he quickly interpreted the teacher's aggression as a means to 'correct' his behaviour, hence reaching the conclusion, “ya, just don't close your eyes”.

Further examination of Vera's default response that, “I never asked”, along with James's response in the above situation discloses students' feelings of helplessness against the hostility they experienced from teachers. Since they felt the hostility of teachers would continue and they had no control over this environment, the interviewees altered their behaviour to appease teachers – never asking questions and

just acting accordingly. As opposed to the secure students, who esteem themselves to be capable of making an effort towards changing their situation (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018), James and Vera, with their damaged self-esteems, chose to avoid rather than confront teachers and situations. In time, this repeated practice to be compulsively submissive towards teachers ultimately acts as a coping mechanism, forming a familiar escape trend from teachers' aggression and towards acceptance.

4.2.6 Student's feelings: Morbid self-examination

When student interviewees grow familiar with their escape trends, they no longer question teachers' anger directed at them. All student interviewees, apart from one, exhibited morbid self-examination, as they judged themselves harshly, i.e., sometimes condemning themselves to never be able to become a professional ballet dancer (James), and other times, blaming themselves for not having been born with certain bodily facilities (Eton). Freire (1970/2000) poses that it is most difficult for humans who are trapped in a reality forced upon them to begin to critically reflect on this assumed 'world'. Although Eton demonstrated in his interview that he was a reflective person, his critical thoughts did not lead him to realising an alternate way of coping with these situations:

If let's say, my hand was not straight enough, not even like I got the wrong movement right, but like my hand is not straight enough, then he'll ask like, "are you really that stupid? You cannot feel that your arm is not straight?" Of course, I would have no answers lah. He will say like, "这个地方, 那的 arm 是直的 [Your arm should be straight at this point] okay. 你是笨的吗 [Are you stupid]? 你感觉不到吗 [Can you not feel it]?" [laughed after imitating the teacher]. I was like, "是的, 我是笨的 [Yes, I am stupid]".

Between describing his teacher's angry words and his own response to them, he laughed. His laughter, however, could be more accurately understood as a snort. On a partially conscious level, Eton could be aware that his teacher was behaving unprofessionally and even unnecessarily destructive towards him. Yet, when he was pressured through an interrogative-like circumstance to admit to the teacher's claim, he felt powerless to resist the accusation. He finally conceded to his circumstance, saying, "[y]es, I am stupid".

It emerged from the interviews that some students, after leaving the school environment, began to reflect on their beliefs regarding dance, finding ways to act upon and transform their worlds (Freire, 1970/2000). Paige and Eton, for example, began to critically reflect on the art of pedagogy as they became teachers, and eventually, explained that they now have very different approaches to teaching. Nevertheless, most student interviewees, including Paige, revealed that they still held onto certain negative beliefs due to the way these experiences made them feel about themselves.

4.2.7 Student's feelings: Disturbances of the self-esteem

Having so often deferred to her way of coping with her teacher's anger, Vera got used to not having her questions answered. When probed to explain probable meanings her teachers might have in different situations, she often expressed that she did not know back then, and at present, she still did not have an answer. In other words, when she was unable to make sense of the teacher's actions, she escaped to being submissive, unreflective and unquestioning. According to Maslow (1968/1999), Vera's behaviours can be explained as her attempts to defend against rejection, means that she resorted to in order to save her threatened self-esteem. However, since these escape trends only serve to minimise rejection, but not liberate her (psychologically and physically) from this stressful environment, Vera initial feelings gradually grew into chronic feelings of insecurity, disturbing her self-esteem.

These disturbances of the self-esteem are illustrated more vividly in Claire's account:

I shut out. When he's talking to me... to the point where my hands are shaking, I have cold feet, cold palms, and I can't look him in the eye. It just became a fear. I just blank out, like I just blank out. I can't think... Ya, most of us are not there as well, we are just robots... It gets to a point we all feel like we are locked up, we can't say much, we are stuck in a cage for three years. Even people who have graduated already, still feel the same. It's the fear that is building up in his class. So many people have panic attacks as well... We are just doing what we are supposed to do, in school doing ballet... I don't know, for him, you just have to be prepared no matter what. You have to have an amour, a shield...

Disturbances of self-esteem as illustrated by Maslow (1942) include feelings discussed above, such as compulsive submissiveness, feelings of inferiority, of weakness and of helplessness. This list, however, is not exhaustive, nor does it portray an individual's real sense of insecurity as personally as he or she truly feels it. Claire's openness and sincerity in sharing her memories, thoughts and feelings during the interview was heartfelt.

Claire's description unveiled a sense of an undeniable threat she felt in the teacher's class, especially when he talked to her. She described that her "hands are shaking, [she has] cold feet, cold palms, [that she] can't look him in the eye... [and she has] panic attacks" (Claire). She experienced these fearful feelings toward the teacher so realistically that when the teacher talked to her, she completely shut out his words, and likely her surroundings. As Erick Hawkins, creator and teacher of the Hawkins technique, prudently puts it, students will "shrivel up and brace (themselves) because they have to protect their own self-esteem and can't pay attention to what you have to say to them" (quoting Hawkins in Hays, 1986, p. 44). Claire later explained that these 'conversations' usually played out to resemble an interrogation session between herself and the angry teacher, similar to what Eton experienced. In these highly tensed questioning moments with her teacher, Claire was always told that

she was “wrong”. Under such circumstances where the outcomes were so absolute, Claire began to develop a pessimistic outlook of herself and the whole learning environment. She compared the studio to a cage, and the class as a time when she and her classmates were locked up unwillingly, with no permission to do as she willed. As Maslow (1942) explains, a person who developed such feelings tended to “strive for, and hunger for safety and security” (p. 335), and they could do this by constructing an escape trend as discussed above. In Claire’s case, she prepared and defended herself by putting up an “armour” or a “shield”.

Creating and constructing a means to escape in order to cope with adverse situations when teachers get angry at them is simply a mechanism that reveals students’ feelings of insecurity in the classroom. As Maslow contends, an individual who feels insecure and therefore displays signs of insecurity within one context might not feel insecure in another area. Claire, however, disclosed that her teacher’s angry actions had long-lasting impact on her and her classmates when she said, “[e]ven people who have graduated already, [they] still feel the same”. This means that even outside of the context and environment, Claire continued to feel disturbances to her self-esteem. Her statement demonstrates the negative capability of teacher’s anger on students’ self-esteem, within and beyond the dance classroom.

4.2.8 Conclusion

Through analysing narrations of student interviewees’ experiences when their teachers directed anger at them, we discovered three different manifestations of teachers’ anger – in their tone (as words), through physical violence, and lastly as precarious mood swings. We also found out that students could develop overlapping feelings of insecurity accordingly. However, the four main static descriptors which Maslow provided, largely fit their responses, and these are: exhibiting compulsive submissive behaviours, falling back to distinct escape trends that might not be healthy in the long run, showing signs of self-condemnation, and finally, developing disturbances of the self-esteem. These feelings of insecurity can have short and limited, or long and wider reaching, impacts on the participants, both within and beyond the context of learning in the tertiary dance technique classroom.

4.3 Humiliation

As defined by *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (2016), humiliation is the “removal of a person’s dignity [supported by Dillon, 1997; Gilbert, 1997; Margalit, 1996] or self-respect [supported by Statman, 2000]”. As Statman (2000) words it, humiliation causes an “injury to the dignity of its victims” (p. 523). Burton (2014) concurred that persons who are humiliated are to be recognised as “victims” because “humiliation is something that is brought upon us by others”. He continues to explain that in order for someone to humiliate another, one needs to “assert power over” another. In the dance classroom, teachers who assert power over students humiliate them by “convey[ing] a message of subordination, rejection or exclusion” (Statman, 2000, p. 531). These descriptors of the message of humiliation correspond directly with Maslow’s (1942a) illustration of the complexes of a disturbed self-esteem – “compulsive submissiveness [...], feelings of rejection [...], [and] feelings of isolation, ostracism, aloneness” (p. 334-335). In brief, when teachers humiliate students, the inherent message of rejection disturbs their self-esteem. As a result, students “not only *feel* humiliation as a matter of psychological fact, but have a sound *reason* to feel so and [their] emotional response is rational” (Statman, 2000, p. 531).

Expanding on the point that humiliation cannot happen without a person “knowing it and furthermore, without her accepting it” (Statman, 2000, p. 532), when a student is humiliated by their teacher, he or she both experiences “a loss in her self-respect” (Statman, 2000, p. 532), and at the same time, is able to pinpoint the teacher as the one who causes this humiliating experience. Put simply, not only is there a clear abuser and victim in humiliating circumstances, the victim is also aware of who their abuser is. Through examining the interviews with student participants, it is apparent that many of them felt feelings of insecurity, that could be traced back to Maslow’s descriptions of the disturbed self-esteem, when teachers humiliated them. Below we will attempt to unpack the means by which teachers humiliate students, and how students are impacted as a result.

4.3.1 Teacher’s action: Outright Humiliation

Burton (2014) posits, “humiliation is the *public* failure of one’s status claims [emphasis in italics intended]”. *Public* is, thus, the decisive factor in whether an individual would experience humiliation or otherwise. A person’s status claims are simply statements they believe of themselves, e.g., Richie’s belief that he has the potential to successfully graduate from the tertiary dance programme. If a teacher explains to Richie privately that he is not achieving according to the requirements of the dance programme, he would experience a painful self-realisation (Burton, 2014) of his previously assumed belief, but not necessarily experience humiliation. However, if the teacher decides to make this

announcement in front of the whole class, Richie would then feel humiliated. Therefore, in analysing teachers' humiliating actions, it is important to remember that these incidents occurred in public, in the presence of others.

In addition to understanding that humiliation is committed by teachers in the public, Klein (1991) further probes into the experiences of various modes of humiliation, including, "some form of ridicule, scorn, contempt, or other degrading treatment at the hands of others" (p. 94). In discussing the first mode of humiliation, it is helpful to bring back to mind the humiliating words teachers outrightly directed at students when they were angry (section 4.2.1).

"A strong reason for feeling humiliated exists when the humiliating behaviour is explicitly intended to degrade its victim" (Statman, 2000, p. 535). By its very nature, Paige pinpointed her feelings of humiliation to teachers' comments because:

... those are degrading comments that can come across as personal. [When teachers commented that] "他们长得像猪 [They look like pigs]", that's not helpful. But you know that the point is being brought across, almost comparing you to a pig. It's not helpful, it's not constructive definitely.

Upon closer examination of the nature of words used, three subcategories surfaced, and these are: comments that compare students to objects; comments that belittle the student's dancing ability; and comments that are akin to the former, but are presented as rhetorical questioning of the student's dancing ability.

The first subcategory includes comments that compared students to an animal or object:

你是屎 [you are a piece of shit]!
A pig moves better than you...

The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (2016) continues to define humiliation as "the shaming of a person and in extreme cases the debasement of a person to a point where they become an object of disgust". A pig has different connotations to people of different cultures. For example, to me, as a Chinese, and in Chinese culture, pigs are seen as gluttonous and lazy, because they eat everything. To my Malay friends, pigs are impure or unclean according to their Islamic religion beliefs. In a teaching/learning environment where there are both Chinese and Malay students in a class, to call someone out as a pig is explicitly degrading. In other words, when teachers humiliate a student by comparing them to an animal or an object of disdain, the student is made to "become an object of disgust"; being called "a piece of shit", contains, for obvious reasons, a similar negative connotation.

Extending on two of his previous arguments, Burton (2014) claims that “[t]o humiliate someone is to assert power over him by denying and destroying his status claim”. When his teacher felt a right to destroy Richie’s confidence in his own dancing ability, he was, in reality, asserting power over Richie. As is evident in the teacher’s comment, “I’m teaching here, then don’t come here to dance!”. The teacher was first placing himself in the centre of the teaching/learning environment, then claiming and exerting his authority over Richie by denying him of his claim to his right to learn in the space. In line with our previous inquiry, that teachers’ angry actions could be an intended tool to train students, teacher’s contemptuous words directed at students could be seen as “a common form of punishment, abuse, and oppression” (Burton, 2014). In the same way, the third subcategory that follows similarly becomes a tool that teachers used to either punish, abuse or oppress students with:

Should you even consider dancing?
You don’t dance lah, why you come here to dance?

The only difference is that instead of explicitly pointing out to the students that they are bad at dancing, i.e., “You’re not good enough to even dance!”, the teacher *suggests* that the student is not good at what he does, and therefore should reconsider his decision to dance. This doubting strategy conveys the teacher’s scornful intention towards the students nonetheless, as it is directed *personally* to students *publicly* in front of the class. However, it is also more subtle in its delivery.

4.3.2 Teacher’s action: Hidden message

Burton (2014) states, “[h]umiliation need not involve an act of violence or coercion. A person can readily be humiliated through more passive means”. Paige recalled a peculiar memory of a teacher communicating the following words to her in the presence of all her classmates:

So at that time it was during ballet class in my final year. So I remember the teacher came to me, held my hands and told me, “I wish I could do ballet for you” [...] He just came up to me and said that, and he started class. [I think he is trying to say to me] that my ballet is very poor. No [I didn’t clarify with him], because the intention was clear.

When asked to describe a most impressionable encounter with a teacher at school, Paige without any hesitation, told me this story. She also added that she “could quite confidently share with [me] that those were the exact words he [the teacher] used”.

Analysing the teacher’s words with Klein’s interpretation that humiliation is to “put down” and “exclude and ma[k]e less” (1991, p. 97) of someone, it is apparent, even at first glance, that the teacher, by asserting power over Paige, was putting her down. As with all humiliation, Paige was acutely aware of her teacher’s intention to convey to her that her “ballet is very poor”. His words made less of Paige’s ability to do ballet and fostered towards Paige a false sense of her necessary

dependence on his abilities (teaching or otherwise). It also excluded her from the rest of her classmates, causing her to believe that she was so bad at ballet that she needed the teacher to do it for her instead. Her teacher's intent to humiliate was unmistakable, however, the action that accompanied his words was even more so humiliating. He held Paige's hands, as if to suggest that he had a close relationship with her – one of care and concern. Yet, he spoke condemning words that destroyed her self-esteem. Analysing this situation with the understanding of Leary's sociometer theory (1999) brings light to this process of humiliation. First, the teacher forces a false sense of relationship onto Paige with himself, establishing him as an important person in affecting Paige's subjective evaluation of her self-esteem. With that power to influence her self-esteem, he then moved onto hurting it with subtle, but nonetheless, plain words that put her dancing ability down. Paige's experience of a sarcastic method of humiliation by her teacher "cuts deeper, [...] is traumatic and often hushed up" (Burton, 2014). Feeling "hushed up" by her teacher's action, Paige quietly accepted the humiliation.

4.3.3 Teacher's action: Physical demonstration

Students participants also felt "hushed up" in other humiliating situations. Eton described a humiliating technique his teacher used on him when the teacher performed parodies of Eton's genuine attempts at executing particular movements in class:

Say for example, I am trying to perform a contraction. Maybe I went down too far, and he will make a very small joke out of it. "Okay, I want you to do this, and not THIS [acting exaggeratingly]". Then everybody starts laughing. Then it's a direct target on me... It's that sense of: Are they laughing at us, or just me? There's so much insecurities, and you're dealing with your body.

When the teacher physically demonstrated a satirical version of Eton's execution of a Graham contraction, he blew out of proportion Eton's demonstration, and in the meantime diverted the whole class's attention to scrutinising his 'mistake'. This created a visceral experience that threatened Eton's dignity in the presence of his unwitting, participating classmates. Although Eton deduced a possibility that his classmates might be laughing purely at the teacher's exaggerated performance, he was not hopeful, and did not find the teacher's representation of himself funny. According to Burton (2014), unlike embarrassment, humiliation cannot "be sublimed into a humorous anecdote" even with time. This explains why Paige and Eton both remembered their humiliating experiences with their teachers so vividly, and also continues to explain how these particular experiences impacted student participants for a long time.

"In his best-seller *The Bonfire of the Vanities* [1987] Tom Wolfe vividly portrays the excruciating experience of public humiliation in which one is totally open to invasion of the self by the outside world" (Klein, 1991, p. 98). Eton, having felt the intense "excruciating experience of public

humiliation” eventually developed insecurities of his dancing body. Burton (2014), as with Wolfe (1987), identified that humiliation is existential. In humiliating moments, student interviewees felt that the self – the full humanity and not just the cognitive aspects – was penetrated by the people present. This “invasion of the self by the outside world” ultimately led them to developing short- and long- termed feelings of insecurity.

4.3.4 Student’s feelings: Feelings of helplessness that lead to self-condemnation

As discussed, when Paige was confronted by her teacher’s humiliating action and words, she quickly hushed up. Her response can be comprehended more directly by Burton’s (2014) explanation that persons who are humiliated, “are usually left stunned and speechless, and, more than that, voiceless”. Not only did Paige felt “voiceless” and helpless in her situation, she condemned herself to “never [be] strong in” ballet:

I think on reflection, I know that ballet is a subject that I have never been strong in... and I think even now, I do see that ballet is an important form of bodily engagement, to train as part of the physical training. However, for me, it’s still a weakness. It’s still an area that I don’t see that I’m strong in, even today I do [feel more stress doing ballet], even now, I do.

Burton (2014) asserts that it is in the nature of humiliation to “undermine the victim’s ability to defend himself against his aggressor”. Since Paige felt helpless against her teacher’s evaluation of her, she condemned herself to perceiving ballet as a “weakness” that she still has now, twelve years after she last experienced this humiliation.

Claire’s experience with her teacher on the other hand, was not a one-off episode, but a prolonged exposure to the same form of humiliation that came with intense questioning as a disguise of an invasion of her self. Her thoughts on these experiences with her teacher bring to light how, and why, a sense of helplessness develops, which in both accounts, metamorphosed into self-condemnation:

Sometimes when he conducts classes, he does not do simple things. He is a very complicated guy, and if you don’t keep up, he’ll question you for five to ten minutes. Then you’ll be like nervously sweating. He’ll stop class [to do so]. It’s always wrong for me. My friends will try to help us out sometimes, but to a point where no one wants to speak because it’s always wrong.

When the teacher stopped class halfway to question her about her inability to “keep up” with the rest of the class, he was in fact drawing negative attention onto Claire, causing her to feel isolated. From Claire’s description, the teacher was not so much interested in guiding her with questions that act as a scaffold to learn, but rather was doing so to humiliate her. This is evidenced by his rejection of all the answers that Claire and her classmates gave when he targeted her as his victim of humiliation. Since she soon realised that she was always “wrong” despite whatever answer she provided to the teacher, she developed heightened nerves which blocked her from speaking altogether. As she gradually

became voiceless, she also became helpless. She finally ceased any attempt to answer her teacher's confronting questions, condemning herself to never be able to "provide what he thinks is right" (Claire).

4.3.5 Student's feelings: Feelings of uncertainty that lead to morbid self-examination

In the same way that Claire felt condemned trying to perform according to her teacher's expectation, Vera's learning experiences ingrained in her standards that compelled her towards morbid self-examination:

You know, he [the teacher] likes to say about my "thunder thighs" as usual. Then he'll say, "From far, your leg looks very nice. From near, your leg cannot be seen". I was like "okay". I also don't know what he meant, but he likes to say this to me. Then I'll just keep quiet and I'll just do lor [sign of resignation]. It's because I knew I have this fat leg issue all along, so I was like "orh, hmm", because I know I have what. Compare your leg figure with the rest of my classmates; mine was the 'thunder thighs'. I told them mine was called the '大象腿' [elephant legs].

In this anecdote, Vera conceded that she "knew [she] had this fat leg issue all along". From her narrative, three avenues of teachers' humiliation stood out to have caused her to conceive this negative perception of her legs. The first way was through her teacher's repeated humiliating words to her that she had "thunder thighs". Another was a more subtle form of humiliation, disguised as both a compliment and an insult together. The third avenue was through a comparison of herself to others (against an external ideal, as discussed in section 3.8.2) in the class.

Recognising that there exist ideal body types within the Western concert dance forms, Vera's perception of a dancing body might not be solely influenced by her teacher's imposing standards. However, her teacher's constant reminder of her having "thunder thighs" simply perpetuated this specific aesthetic, not giving her the space to perceive her body differently. The teacher's pressure, through humiliation, for Vera to shape her legs towards the sought after 'standard', gradually paved the way toward her morbid self-examining tendencies.

Similar to Paige's story of her teacher's passive means of humiliation, Vera also suffered humiliation from her teacher in a more subtle manner. In Vera's case, however, the teacher took an approach comparable to the feedback sandwich method (Cantillon & Sargeant, 2008; Dohrenwend, 2002). A feedback sandwich basically sandwiches the negative (or constructive) comment in between two positive comments (Schartel, 2012). It is used by teachers to provide effective feedback for students (Docheff, 1990). Although it is commonly perceived in a positive light for providing corrective feedback in a constructive manner (Schartel, 2012), Vera's teacher distorted this technique to create a destructive effect instead. In an authentic sandwich feedback, both complimentary and corrective

feedback should be made tangible to students. The teacher's comments to Vera, however, was intangible in comprehension and execution, leaving her feeling uncertain.

Vera knew she received a 'compliment' followed by a 'corrective' feedback. However, she completely did not understand the teacher's intention for this feedback as a whole. When probed further to elaborate on what she took away from this feedback, Vera said, "I was thinking when he says my legs look nice from far, is it because I have hyperextension [in my knees]?" Nevertheless, shortly after this contemplation, she admitted that, "I also don't know, because I never asked him" (Vera). This mentality set her up to be extra critical of herself, concluding that the comment that followed must have referred to her as having thighs larger than her classmates.

In agreement with the previous discussion on self-esteem (section 3.3), Statman (2000) posits:

... as a result of a long evolutionary process, our self-respect depends crucially on the respect or disrespect shown to us by others [...] It is a plain fact about human beings that their sense of personal worth is shaped, to a large extent, by what other human beings think about them and the treatment they receive (p. 535).

If Vera were to experience these humiliating episodes on a regular basis, she would gradually lose respect for herself. This loss of self-respect is blatantly displayed when Vera, in her own words, "told them [classmates] mine was called the '大象腿' [elephant legs]". With a damaged sense of self, Vera became morbid when she examined herself. Consequently, this behaviour came around to cause her more feelings of insecurity, as demonstrated above when she compared herself to her classmates. Once again, this evolved into a vicious cycle that became hard for her to break out from.

4.3.6 Student's feelings: Feelings of rejection that lead to self-blame

With humiliation, a sense of rejection is commonly felt. As he illustrated his teacher's humiliating approach when he "jigg[ed]" his thigh, instructing him to engage the respective muscles, Eton exposed his feelings of rejection, which finally grew into self-blame, and in Maslow's term, "shame feelings" (1942, p. 335):

I remember this teacher keeps putting his fingers underneath the gluteus muscle and he's always doing this [jiggling the flesh with his fingers] to my thigh, and he's like, "are you using it?" I am like, "yes, I'm squeezing it". Then he's just like, "then why am I able to do this?". So he's just like [jiggling]. So I asked, "how do I make this tighter or strengthen this?". "Just squeeze", "but I'm squeezing", "then you're not squeezing hard enough", and I'm like, [long sigh]. I just feel like... the conversation ended there, because he was done jiggling. There were a lot of things my body couldn't do that they [teachers] expect my body could. I think one part of me felt that there was a lot of self-blame because it was like, "why can't I do this, why can't I feel this, why can't I build muscles, why am I so skinny, why is my neck like that, why am I born with my ribs like that", there was a lot of "why me, why me, why me?"

As discussed, humiliation is existential. Since it hurt Eton's self – not just cognitively but deeper as a human being, he was not able to process the whole incident with self-confidence. Feeling that his efforts (both when he physically exerted himself and when he posed the teacher a question) were brushed off quickly and thus, rejected, Eton started to despair in his predicament. In his interview, Eton revealed that due to his pessimistic outlook of the situation, he often questioned himself, and his decision to pursue dance at the tertiary stage, on multiple levels.

On one level, because “[t]here were a lot of things [his] body couldn't do that they expect [his] body could”, he felt a sense of ‘uniqueness’ (Maslow, 1942), that is rightly described as self-blame. Convinced that he could not have done anything to comply with the demands placed on him, he turned to compare himself with others, who seemed not to have the same problems that he had with meeting these demands. This unhelpful practice soon conceived feelings of shame, where he felt his body must be “deformed” (Eton). As he exclaimed, “why can't I do this?”, Eton was essentially extending this shame, beyond the perception of his body, to his identity as a dancer.

In the incident where his teacher humiliated him by exaggerating his ‘mistake’ to the class, Eton expressed:

It didn't help me, because I already came in questioning myself, “why am I trying to fit into a mould”? I didn't know why I still don't know why. Is this really what if you want to be a dancer on a very serious level, then you need to be prepared to fit into a mould? Or you need to prepare yourself and you need to push yourself to fit into a mould?

His contemplations, thus, reflect another level of questioning – and that is a questioning of his decision. As he continued to be humiliated by his teachers' actions and words, Eton remained in this state of compulsive introspectiveness. Having to endure multiple rounds of such questioning, being challenged in one area after another, his self-esteem slowly fell apart. Ultimately, Eton bitterly state, I “kind of resigned to that fate. [Since I] don't have the strength to fight it, so [I] just let it happen”.

4.3.7 Conclusion

Klein (1991) states, “When you're humiliated, you become less than those who exclude you, often as if in their eyes you do not exist at all” (p. 97). This statement aptly encompasses the complexities that emerged from Paige, Claire, Vera and Eton's responses to their teachers' humiliation. When teachers choose to publicly humiliate students through outright, passive or physically demeaning actions and words, students are forced to see themselves as “less than” the teachers, and even their classmates. As a result of their wounded self-esteem, they become self-blaming, compulsively examining themselves morbidly, ultimately condemning themselves to the violence done to them, accepting humiliation as an inevitable part of their dance education.

5 Conclusion

By employing Maslow's *The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity* (1942) to investigate feelings expressed by student participants, this study has identified that dancers' self-esteem is diminished as an impact of three categories of dance teaching practices: teachers' non-rationalisation, anger, and humiliation.

With the application of a relatively new theory to explain the mechanism of how self-esteem operates in students to cause responses to teachers' actions, this study advances Leary's sociometer theory (1999) into the field of Dance Studies.

Through a narrative inquiry method, this study presents stories of seven student participants from Singapore. Although it does not seek specifically to delimit discussions and findings to the Singaporean context, the study has provided a rare platform for the minority voices to be heard in the wider dance education community.

Intentionally keeping the research direction open for the most part of its initial stages has allowed relevant theories to open up potentials embedded within the collected data. Though this process proved to be challenging in many ways, it has enabled me to investigate teaching practices not from the perspective of the person who acted (teachers), but from the multiple points of view of the ones who suffered (students). In this way, authentic findings to the narrative inquiry approach have been captured and will be presented in the following section.

5.1 Research findings

Following the logic that emerged through a review of literature, attention is brought to the concept of self-agency in discussing self-esteem of students. Students who have relatively stable and healthy trait self-esteem possess self-agency to act for themselves in two ways while learning dance. The first is the ability to continue directing themselves to learn according to their intrinsic tendencies even after they leave the formal teaching/learning environment. The second is to have a belief in themselves to decide what to accept and reject in their learning experiences, including presented content, method, and even feedback from teachers. Through an analysis of the data, all student participants were discovered to feel disempowered to act with self-agency when reacting to their teachers' non-rationalisation, anger, and humiliation.

In analysing student interviewees' dance learning experiences with teachers who demand compliance from them, an oppressive and abusive teaching/learning environment is exposed. Within this environment, both content (what) and method (how) were determined by teachers without any attempt at rationalising students' learning experiences from their viewpoints. The exposed ways by which teachers demand compliance without rationalisation are active and passive verbal communications, physical manipulation, and repetition. As students come to perceive their world as hostile, challenging and lonely, they developed feelings of helplessness and discontentment, which consequently brought about short- to longer-lasting impacts on students. These impacts are feelings of condemnation, self-blame, disempowerment (evolving from feelings of helplessness); dissatisfaction with the learning situation and training system, and partial and full signs of withdrawal from dance (evolving from feelings of discontentment).

Through analysing student interviewees' narration of their experiences with their teachers directing anger at them, we found three different manifestations of teachers' anger – in their tones (as words), through physical violence, and lastly as precarious mood swings. We also found out that students could develop overlapping feelings of insecurity accordingly. However, the four main static descriptors Maslow provided, largely fit their responses and these are: exhibiting compulsive submissive behaviours, falling back to distinct escape trends that might not be healthy in the long run, showing signs of self-condemnation, and finally, developing disturbances of the self-esteem. These feelings of insecurity can have a short and limited, or a long and wider reaching, impacts on the participants, both within and beyond the dance classroom.

The word humiliation stems from the root word “‘humous’, referring to earth. The image is one of having your face forced to the ground. To use a common expression, when you are humiliated, you are made to ‘eat dirt’” (Klein, 1991, p. 97). When teachers choose to publicly humiliate students through outrightly, passively or physically demeaning actions and words, students are forced to see themselves as “less than” the teachers, and even their classmates. As a result of their wounded self-esteem, they become self-blaming, compulsively examining themselves morbidly, ultimately condemning themselves to the violence done to them, accepting humiliation as an inevitable part of their dance education.

5.2 Suggestions on application of study and for future research directions

In applying sociometer theory to dance education, this qualitative research study could possibly clarify a missing detail that related studies have omitted in the past. With the explanation of self-esteem as a response to others' actions, this study establishes the connection between teaching practices to students' self-esteem. Though there is no lack of existing dance research that lays claims on the detrimental effects dance education can have on students, e.g. Green's (2002) assertion that the traditional and authoritarian pedagogical approaches train docile bodies that lead to a whole set of problems, this study could potentially add another layer of understanding to the complex issues in this research area. A proposal to investigate students' self-esteem offers the following perspective: non-learner-directed dance teaching practices *can diminish students' self-esteem*, motivating them to react in insecure ways. Rather than replacing existing knowledge, I suggest, with the support of the findings of this study, an exploration of a potential crucial link that is often missing from these discussions, in order to generate a deeper comprehension of related matters.

Whether students possess stable trait self-esteem or not, their state self-esteem is inevitably tied to their subjective interpretations of teachers' actions toward them. Having revealed students' feelings of insecurity, dance educators need to recognise that their teaching practices matter in building students' self-esteem. As Ben-Ze'ev (2000) puts it, feelings cannot be intended upon by the person, i.e., a person does not feel happiness upon intention, he experiences feelings of happiness because an external factor caused him to. In the same way, dance educators cannot deny their responsibility in causing students' feelings of insecurity. As a fellow dance educator, I propose that we begin to critically reflect on our pedagogy. Some questions we can ask ourselves are: Do any of the described methods resemble what I do in class (in any varying degree)? Do my students display any of the identified symptoms of insecurity? By asking ourselves the first question, we can prevent ourselves from (further) impacting our students' self-esteem in negative ways. We can also hope by attempting to end the cycle of disempowerment in our lifetimes, that in the long run, the dance culture could transform to no longer resemble a community of sick but of healthy people (Maslow, 1987). By developing sensitivity towards illustrated feelings of insecurity, we can learn to identify students who might have unmet esteem needs. If we continue on this train of thought, a hopeful resolution will be: How can I transform my current pedagogy to build the self-esteem of students?

If educators wish to nurture 'strength' in secure students with high self-esteem (Maslow, 1942a), who can "fight in the case of failure" (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018, p. 409) rather than dwelling on self-doubts in these situations (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018), then pertinent pedagogy must be implemented. This research did not aim to, and does not seek, to propose solutions or pertinent dance pedagogy for

building up students' self-esteem. However, it acknowledges the importance of having this particular research direction, and therefore suggests that further research explores possible pertinent teaching practices that could nurture healthy self-esteem in students.

A prominent distinction that stood out from the interviews of male participants to female participants is that they expressed their dissatisfaction of their learning experiences more readily. While James criticised and wished for his teachers to invest more time into understanding for themselves, and delivering through more effective teaching methods “what they are trying to teach” (James); Eton laments that dance training “[took] away the enjoyment in dance”, and that he “just have to get through it” (Eton). Belenky et al. (1986) propose that since male students usually enter into dance training later in life (after they have gained their own voice), they usually perceive dance training differently from female students. Stinson (1998/2016) suggests, “[t]o a young man, dance training may seem comparable to military training in that the necessary obedience is a rite of passage but not a permanent state” (p. 35). Analysing the two male dance interviewees' statements, thus, indicates that they could possibly be impacted by the teaching practices and their diminished self-esteem rather differently from the female dancers in the long run. Capturing a hint of difference through this study suggests other potential differences between male and female dance students in how their noted responses might bring about “reactions to the reactions, and reactions to the reactions to the reactions, and so on” (Maslow, 1942, p. 336). Therefore, a future research area of interest might be an investigation on possible differing reactionary responses of male and female dance students (and any practical impacts these responses have), who have suffered diminished self-esteem in earlier dance training experiences.

Although this study purposefully sets out to capture students' voices in the dance teaching/learning environment, it did not intend to dismiss teachers' experiences. During the interviews with students, participants often offered their thoughts on why their teachers behaved in the ways observed. Though these comments might not be accurate in presenting the ‘truth’ of teachers' motivations, they allow for constructed meanings from multiple perspectives to prevail. Below, chosen anecdotes will be presented along with recommendations pertaining to the respective issues that emerged.

In the earlier analysis and discussion chapter, there are hints that teachers, whose first language is not English, might struggle with the mandatory use of the language and, therefore, could become frustrated at students while trying to express themselves (as they either express themselves in Mandarin, or in Singlish). In situations where her teacher explained himself in Mandarin, Paige expressed that she could “make my own English translation or understanding”, however she also admitted that “I feel there is no perfect translation” (Paige). With globalisation, the dance classroom is becoming increasingly diversified. The issues that accompany an insistence on a fixed medium of

instruction for a diverse classroom (both teachers and students) in a teaching/learning environment is relevant beyond the Singaporean context. A recommendation for future research can head in this direction to seek out challenges of communication between teachers and students in a diverse dance classroom.

“The teachers I met, I think they articulate better in physical demonstration, than verbal articulation and description” (Paige). In recommending developments for 21st century relevant dance programmes, Risner (2010) urges for curriculum to be designed with the intention to equip students for future teaching roles. Paige’s statement above reflects a common scenario of the ‘artist versus educator’ binaries (Kerr-Berry, 2007; Risner, 2007, 2010), where the teachers are trained as dance students themselves to perform dance technically, but were not concerned in their training to teach effectively. One particular recurring reference of the teachers was to mistake unengaged muscles to fat and vice versa, which can be rather disturbing to know. It appears that some teachers might have very inaccurate anatomical knowledge, which are uncritically passed on to students, i.e. Vera’s teacher telling her that “hard fats [...] just cannot be lost no matter what you do”. Other remarks made by various other interviewees also suggest that pedagogical training is lacking amongst these dance educators. These are presented as follows.

According to James, his teachers “probably just had three years of mix match modern dance techniques training”, and therefore, have not thought about what they are teaching. When comparing an effective teacher with another teacher, whose tone was always “monotonous”, James said, “it doesn’t help engage my body”. Sabrina on the other hand interpreted her teacher’s attempt to physically manipulate her body as a sign of “tough love thing that I don’t get”. Claire further clarifies this mentality in a commonly heard phrase, “for him, it’s ‘no pain no gain’. So he believes in that small saying [...] I think that’s how he’s been brought up by his teachers, back in the days. So I think he carried that with him throughout the years”. With traditional teaching approaches, teaching methods are often passed down from one generation to the next (Barr, 2009; Green, 2002-03; Lakes, 2005) without much critical reflection. Gibbons (2007) describes this as the “practice of *inadvertent teaching*; that is, teaching as one was taught without studying and questioning method and content” (p. 5). An analysis of the theme, anger, using the social learning theories (Bandura, 2001; Mischel, 1999; Mischel & Shoda, 1995), reveals that “people acquire aggressive responses the same way they acquire other complex forms of social behavior – either by direct experience or by observing others” (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 31). In other words, teachers (once students) who experienced teaching methods that stemmed from anger, non-rationalisation or humiliation might very well employ similar methods when they become teachers.

From a brief discussion on interviewees' speculations of teachers' motivations, it appears pedagogical training is still lacking in Singapore, and possibly in other dance education settings. This study has presented some practical steps that dance teachers can begin with to critically reflect on their teaching practices. However, the root of the problem might only be addressed if curriculum planners design dance programmes to equip their students with the necessary teaching tools to teach dance effectively. Therefore, I propose recommendations to four separate groups of dance artists in reflection of the above discussion. I will direct my first recommendation to the programme leaders for a consideration to integrate appropriate pedagogical training into their dance programmes, with the aim to prepare students to become future dance educators. My second and third recommendations will be directed to dance educators. Firstly, I would like to emphasise and plead again for dance educators to begin delving or continuing in critical reflexive teaching practices. This will encompass an attitude of life-long learning to become a more humanistic dance educator (hooks, 1994). Secondly, I would like to appeal to dance educators to recognise their influences in communicating teaching practices as they teach, even if they are not attempting to teach (dance) pedagogy. Next, I urge dance students to take responsibility to be intentional in their learning to become the dance teachers whom they wanted for themselves, and for their children, in the future. Finally, I suggest for dance researchers to examine a similar question, *but* from the teachers' perspective (although this will prove to be most tricky as it is rare for teachers to admit to their flaws as that could jeopardise their employment or status). The inquiry of how dance teachers perceive their teaching and students' responses accordingly, might allow for challenges to be voiced and dominant constructed meanings to be confronted.

An investigation on the topic of self-esteem within dance education also inspires further possible research to explore dance teachers' self-esteem: Are dance teachers' self-esteem shaped by their learning and teaching experiences? How might teachers' high or low self-esteem affect their teaching? Again, I acknowledge the dance teachers' possible challenges, and do not seek to ignore their experiences. As fellow human beings, teachers are as susceptible to becoming insecure as students are. They too, might be beings whose esteem needs are not met and therefore, are motivated to find fulfilment of these needs through their teaching, i.e., by exercising full authority over students to achieve superiority feelings that could feed their self-esteem. On the contrary, Maslow (1942a) also presents common dominance-behaviours that are often displayed by people with high dominance-feeling (high self-esteem), which largely resemble teachers' actions such as "bursts of temper, aggressive behavior, insistence on one's rights, free expression of resentment or hostility [...]" (p. 261). Entering into dialogue with dance teachers by asking these questions therefore could provide for insightful understanding of how self-esteem can affect dance teaching.

5.3 Concluding thoughts

When asked by her teacher, “Is there any purpose for your coming to school today?”, Claire replied, “I have no purpose [...] to be honest, I was just like a robot going to school”. This study brought forth three existing dance teaching practices – non-rationalisation, anger, and humiliation – that diminished students’ self-esteem. Having to withstand such destructive actions from the teachers, Claire lost both her self-esteem and agency for her own learning. As a dance student, I feel concerned for her as a friend. As a dance educator, I feel responsibility for her, as well as for my students whom I will meet in the future.

Claire later expressed, “I hated it when he brings me to that spot. He makes people cry”. Despite our efforts to restore our students’ self-esteem, the result might not be immediately apparent. Often the oppressed (students) will resist transformation as a defence mechanism (Freire, 1970/2000) that has formed through a “sheer familiarity [that] gives a certain feeling of safety” (Maslow, 1942, p. 342). Despite it being a possibly disheartening journey that is painted in the bleak picture above, as dance educators, we have to take heart. Journeying through this research experience reinforces once again, my deep sense of responsibility as a dance educator. This responsibility does not weigh me down, instead it propels me forwards, igniting a renewed passion in me to discover what I care about (dance education), who I care for (dance students), as well as my identity and role in all of this.

In closing, I would like to present these words by Sue Stinson, my beloved teacher who placed in me a passion to teach with love and patience, whose life reflects a humble attitude of service to her students:

Even if our pedagogy does not lead to changes in the world, however, reflecting on it does change those doing the reflecting [...] My goal, however, is not to persuade my students or others to teach as I do, but for each of us to engage in ongoing reflection about what we believe and why, and about the consequences of the choices we make as persons and as educators (Stinson, 1998/2016, p. 49).

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