An Auto-ethnographic Analysis of Power in a Behavior Analytic Informed Approach to Teaching Dance to Children

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Abstract

Behavior analysis is a scientific discipline that utilizes evidence-based teaching strategies to facilitate improvement in behavior, such as, the proficiency of a dance movement. The application of behavior analysis by dance educators has led to promising outcomes for dancers. However, it is important to critically analyze this emerging approach to dance education to understand the underlying implications. This auto-ethnographic research drew on a Foucauldian analysis of power in the behavior analytic informed teaching practices described by a recreational dance instructor. Elements of disciplinary power were embedded within this behavior analytic approach to dance education and productively managed the bodies of the child dancers across time, space, and movement. Dancers attaining performance outcomes was the focus of this pedagogy, which may have minimized the opportunity to recognize variation among the interests and needs of the children as dancers. Suggestions for dance educators to consider adopting in their teaching practices are discussed.

Keywords: auto-ethnography; behavior analysis; Foucault; dance; children

Résumé

L'analyse du comportement est une discipline scientifique qui utilise des stratégies d'enseignement basées sur des données probantes pour améliorer des comportements tels que des mouvements de danse. L'utilisation de cette discipline par des éducateurs a produit de bons résultats pour les danseurs. Cependant il est important d'analyser cette discipline en enseignement de la danse pour mieux comprendre les implications parfois moins évidentes. Cette recherche auto-ethnographique, orientée par une analyse du pouvoir foucauldienne, a produit une description des stratégies d'enseignement d'un enseignant en danse récréative. Des éléments du pouvoir disciplinaire sont intégrés à cette analyse du comportement et permettent de gérer effectivement les corps des enfants dans le temps, l'espace et les mouvements. Cette pédagogie se centre sur les performances des danseurs parfois en minimisant une centration sur les intérêts et besoins des danseurs. Des suggestions sont offertes aux enseignants de danse.

Mots-clés : auto-ethnographie; analyse du comportement; Foucault; danse; enfant

Introduction

From my dance experience, I understand that the most basic form of 'proper attire and hair' for a dance student in a conventional dance studio in Southern Ontario is a leotard and a pair of tights with hair in a fashion that is secured off the face. While certain forms of dance may allow for more variation from these requirements, how these policies are enforced is typically at the discretion of the individual dance instructor. As a former dancer, I accepted these policies to avoid experiencing any embarrassing consequences, such as inquiries from the dance instructor about my 'inappropriate' appearance. Later as a dance instructor, I adopted the position that proper attire and hair were fundamental for dance education and enforced these rigid expectations with my own dance students. One afternoon while taking attendance, I asked a dancer why her hair was not in a ponytail as it should be for class. With tears beginning to well in her eyes, she quietly responded that her mother was not available today to help her with her hair for class. Immediately I recognized that my intrusive inquiry had not only caused the student's anguish but served no real purpose, since I never intended on requiring her to leave class to adjust how she had styled her hair for dance. Attempting to rectify the situation, I extended my sincere apology and reassurance to my student. Following this experience, I became acutely aware that my teaching practices could profoundly impact dancers. As a result, I began to question what I had once assumed were seemingly benign teaching practices and wondered what I could be producing and reproducing by embracing these practices. A desire to understand the underlying implications entangled within my teaching practices fueled this critical self-reflection.

In Canada, dance is a common recreational activity among children and youth (Sports Canada, 2016). Participating in a dance program can offer children an opportunity to experience an engaging recreational activity and a supportive social environment (Murcia & Kreutz, 2012). As a dance instructor, I understand that my role and my teaching practices can have a significant impact on the experiences of children participating in my dance classes (Chua, 2014; Green, 2010; Papaefstathiou et al., 2012; Smith, 1998; Van Rossum, 2004). Dance pedagogy may affect dancers' motivation in the dance class and can lead to children terminating their dance education (Rogoski, 1997; Walker et al., 2010; 2012), thus losing the physical and psychosocial benefits of dance, which can include improvements in their physical and mental health (Alpert, 2011; Quin et al., 2007).

Despite a clear agreement in the dance literature regarding the importance of quality dance training that fosters a positive learning environment for children, there is a wide array of teaching strategies within the field of dance education (Kerr-Berry, 2007). These differences in dance training strategies may be the result of varying educational backgrounds and theoretical frameworks that inform dance instructors' pedagogical approaches (Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). Some dance instructors receive formal training in dance pedagogy, while others (including myself) draw on knowledge from their respective academic disciplines and/or their past dance experiences to provide dance instruction (Anderson et al., 2013). While dance research has indicated that training methods that are responsive to children's needs are most effective, many dance instructors in a studio context still employ a teaching style that can be aversive to dancers as it overemphasizes corrective feedback (Lake 2005; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010; Rowe & Xiong, 2020). This pedagogical discrepancy provides a strong rationale for me to employ theoretically informed critical reflexivity to understand the implications of my teaching and to encourage others to do the same (Freire, 1987).

As a studio-based dance instructor and a graduate student, I found that my post-secondary training in behavior analysis was applicable to dance education. Behavior analysis is a discipline that utilizes evidence-based teaching strategies to facilitate improvement in behavior (Baer et al., 1968; 1988). For example, Quinn and colleagues (2015) utilized TAGTeach™, a behavior analytic informed teaching package, to increase the fluency of three dance movements (a leap, turn, and kick) of four jazz dancers in North America, by providing each dancer with immediate acoustical feedback when the dance skill was performed as expected. This teaching strategy emphasized positive feedback by highlighting what was performed well and was also evaluated favorably by the dancers. The effectiveness and acceptability of providing acoustical feedback in the context of dance instruction was replicated by Quinn and colleagues (2017) and later extended to teach foundational dance skills to children with developmental disabilities by Carrion and colleagues (2019). Other successful behavior analytic informed teaching methods specific to dance include: the use of descriptive vocal instruction, modeling, and feedback in a behavioral coaching package (Fitterling & Ayllon, 1983), publicly posted graphical feedback (Quinn et al., 2017), video self-instructions (Giambrone & Miltenberger, 2020) and video modeling with and without video feedback (Quinn et al., 2019) to highlight the performance of recreational and competitive dancers.

Despite the emerging utility and acceptability of the above-mentioned behavior analytic informed teaching strategies, other dance instructors working in a studio context may not be aware of these specific teaching strategies, or how their current practices may reflect behavioral principles and procedures. Furthermore, the limited research that has evaluated behavioral strategies to enhance and increase the satisfaction of dancers has been exclusively disseminated in behavioral-specific outlets, highlighting a missed opportunity to engage in knowledge translation with the wider dance community (Schenk & Miltenberger, 2019), given the usefulness of this approach.

As the application of behavior analysis to dance education is both promising and still emerging, there is a dearth of research that has focused on analyzing the underlying implications of these behavior analytic teaching strategies. At the same time, many dance scholars have applied Foucault's (1979) understanding of power to more deeply understand dance pedagogy (e.g., Berg, 2015; Clark & Markula, 2017; Green 2003; Irving & Giles, 2011; Zinga et al., 2019). By applying Foucault's concepts to dance education, scholars attend to power relations to situate teaching practices within the larger sociocultural context. While this previous work has contributed to our knowledge, a behavior analytic informed perspective on dance education has not yet been considered in relation to Foucauldian analysis. This paper aims to contribute to dance pedagogy literature by describing a behavior analytic informed approach to dance education and drawing on a Foucauldian analysis to reflect on the underlying power relations embedded within this approach. More specifically, this paper describes a behavior analytic pedagogical approach through the firsthand perspective of a dance instructor and interrogates how these teaching practices produce and re-produce certain relations of power. The paper concludes with some suggestions for dance instructors to both draw on behavior analysis and to deepen their critical analysis by reflecting on the reproduction of certain power relations in their pedagogy.

Theoretical Frameworks

My reflection is theoretically supported by a multidisciplinary perspective that combines the philosophy of *behaviorism* (Skinner, 1961; 1974) with Foucault's (1979) work on *disciplinary power*. Each of these theoretical frameworks provides valuable insight for dance educators, but together these theoretical orientations extend our knowledge beyond disciplinary boundaries. As this combination has never been explored (to our knowledge), this research has the potential to generate novel information for dance educators to consider in the spirit of identifying the best possible approach to dance education.

My pedagogical approach and the focus in this analysis is first conceptually grounded in *Radical Behaviorism*, which is distinct from traditional psychology from which it emerged by discussing behavior (including overt and covert actions) in relation to environmental variables (Skinner, 1961; 1974) That is, a stimulus in the environment will set the occasion for a behavior to occur and the associated consequence of the behavior will impact the future likelihood of that behavior. For example, a dance instructor's direction (a stimulus) serves to cue the dancer's performance (behavior) and the feedback provided to the dancer (consequence) will change how the dancer performs that behavior in the future. As a behavior analyst, I recognize that there are explanations for behavior that extend beyond linear environmental contingencies but use this description to provide a clear method for discussion. With that said, there is debate regarding the practice of behavior analysis. Behavior analysis has been regarded by some as a rigid intervention approach that seeks to normalize behaviors. Others counter that current behavior analytic practitioners instead support the service user to select target behaviors that are meaningful to them and thus collaboratively develop a dynamic and individualized plan of action (Leaf et al., 2022). More specifically, my teaching strategies are an application of this conceptualization to produce meaningful behavior change, which is referred to as applied behavior analysis (ABA; Cooper et al., 2020). Behavioral assessment is a key feature in the practice of ABA, which includes an initial evaluation and ongoing performance monitoring. The practice of ABA should always begin with assessment to understand the target for intervention and determine the function (or variables affecting) that behavior. In the context of dance education, this could include assessing a dancer's repertoire using formal measurement systems to determine the range of skills able to be performed and the proficiency of the skills. If a dancer is unable to perform a skill, it may also include exploring possible reasons for this. Given that *behavioral* and *analytic* are tenets of ABA, assessment should also include a form of ongoing measurement of the target behavior to monitor the dancer's progress (Baer et al., 1968; 1988). Through this ongoing performance monitoring, dance instructors can determine when the dancer has achieved the skill or when teaching methods may need to be modified because the dancer continues to have difficulty with the skill. Overall, behavioral assessment can be a very useful tool for dance instructors to employ to develop a teaching approach that is individualized for the dancer.

I also draw on Foucault's (1979) work on *disciplinary power, surveillance,* and the creation of *docile bodies* to understand and explore my behavior analytic informed approach to dance education. Foucault was initially interested in exploring multiple forms of modern power, which included but was not limited to contexts such as prisons, hospitals, and schools. Likely due to the high degree of similarity between the intended objectives of these contexts, Foucault's work has also been applicable to dance studios (e.g., Clark & Markula, 2017; Green, 2003; Zinga et al., 2019). Foucault maintained that power is not a fixed possession in which an individual either does or does not 'have' power, but instead that everyone participates in the circulation of power

relations. While Foucault's position does not consider power as a tool used to oppress or dominate, he does assert that some power relations are asymmetrical, meaning some individuals have a greater capacity to exercise power than others. While I may be able to exercise certain forms of power more easily than my dance students, power relations are fluid and can change over time. A behavior analytic perspective would also agree that power is flexible and bi-directional, in that while I can influence my dance students' behavior, my dance students' can influence my behavior, too. That said, I also recognize that power does not circulate evenly between myself and my dance students, in that as the dance instructor, I maintain authority.

I use Foucault's (1979) work regarding *disciplinary power*, which targets how the human body is managed through the organization of time, space, and movement to interrogate the power relations embedded within my behavior analytic informed dance pedagogy. Foucault maintained that the body both shapes, and is shaped by, power relations. Therefore, the body should not be mistaken as passive within dance education. *Surveillance* is another Foucauldian concept relevant to this critical self-reflection. Foucauldian dance scholars have argued that mirrors are key components for surveillance in the dance studio (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010; Green, 2003; Kleiner, 2009). More recently, dance studios have intensified surveillance practices by incorporating video cameras in the classroom that project a live feed to television monitors for studio visitors to observe. As suggested by Kleiner (2009), the constant monitoring of dance instructors and dancers through these mechanisms can be linked to Foucault's (1979) focus on the panopticon, in which the teaching materials instill a sense of visibility and exposure to govern and promote efficiencies. These teaching components are connected to constant surveillance that seeks to create *docile bodies*, where the individual learns to self-regulate their behavior by self-surveillance. Furthermore, these processes produce dancer subjectivities, in that the dance students come to understand what it means to be a dancer (Clark & Markula, 2017; Zinga, 2019). Overall, Foucault recognizes that these forms of disciplinary power can be more difficult to detect than overt forms of coercive power, especially as they can produce certain ways of thinking and being. My critical reflection seeks to understand the complexities of power in my approach to dance education that is informed by my behavior analytic training.

Methodology

Design

I selected a qualitative research approach to interrogate power relations in my teaching practices because it allows space for my subjectivity and acknowledges my influence on the research (Adams et al., 2015). More specifically, I use an auto-ethnographic research methodology, an approach to research and writing that enables me to understand a cultural practice by describing and critically analyzing my personal experiences (Adams et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2011). Auto-ethnography involves reflecting deeply on aspects of one's own life to explore "the interplay of introspective, personally engaged selves and cultural beliefs, practices, systems and experiences" (Adams et al., 2015). Auto-ethnography was thus a valuable tool to learn about and through myself by linking my personal perspectives and experiences to broader cultural patterns and reflecting on these perspectives and experiences through theory. It also allows the reader to share in my journey and subsequently gain insights from my story. My desire to locate my practices and understand the impact of my role as a dance instructor more fully, deeply, and meaningfully emerged after experiencing some dissonance between what my teaching practices were producing and reproducing (as described in my opening passage). Auto-ethnography thus allows me to

negotiate and re-negotiate the cultural meaning of my experiences through reflection on them, and it also provides an opportunity for other dance instructors to compare their experiences with my own.

Researcher Positionality

As my experiences are the focus of this research, it is imperative that my positionality is asserted clearly. I am a white, female living in Southern Ontario, Canada. I have been involved in dance in some capacity since my childhood, first as a student and then later as an instructor. As a dance student, I took classes in a variety of competitive level dance forms including, jazz, tap, ballet, pointe, and lyrical. In 2004, I began teaching recreational jazz classes to children at the same studio that I attended as a student. I continued to teach and take some adult level dance classes for several years, until 'retiring' from dance to focus on my post-secondary education.

After completing my Master of Arts with a specialization in ABA, I re-assumed the role of a dance instructor at my childhood dance studio. Given that my MA coursework focused on the application of behavior change, I naturally recognized the relevance of these procedures to the dance context and began incorporating strategies informed by this perspective while teaching dance to children. I recognized the utility of ABA and pursued professional certification as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). My professional certification as a BCBA should not be mistaken for proven expertise in behavior analysis but rather indicates the ability to enter practice, in which I have an obligation to continuously develop my skills to remain in compliance with professional and ethical responsibilities (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020), and I believe that critical self-reflection is required to achieve professional growth.

Setting Details

The dance studio I teach at has offered classes across a variety of dance forms (i.e., jazz, tap, ballet, pointe, lyrical, hip hop, musical theatre, and acrobatics) at both a recreational and competitive level since 1979. While the dance studio is in a small suburban town in Southern Ontario, it is the largest studio in the area with over 450 students, 20 instructors, and two locations. Both artistic staff and dance students are primarily white females from middle class families. There is a wide range of experience among the artistic staff, in that a few have formal training and certification to teach dance, while others (including myself) have only received informal training within the studio.

Data Collection and Analysis

My field notes were taken across 10 weeks before the pandemic, after a one-hour recreational jazz dance class. I usually remained 15 minutes after the dance classes to complete brief field notes of my experiences. These recordings of my observations were largely descriptive, as I attempted to notice details about the activities that occurred within the studio space (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Most field notes were written in a small notebook after classes, however, some keywords regarding my teaching practices were typed on my iPhone™ during classes for more detailed reflection after class.

During my initial analysis of my recordings, I reviewed my teaching practices through a behavior analytic lens, in that I purposefully connected how the strategies I used in the dance studio highlight ABA-based strategies. Next, my attention shifted more explicitly to reviewing details of the power embedded in my teaching practices, defined as 'notable occurrences' in the field (Markula & Silk, 2011). This analysis of my field notes was guided by Foucault's (1979)

understandings of disciplinary power. That is, while deeply reflecting on my teaching experiences, I was attuned to how my teaching practices, including the studio policies I enforced, and the materials I used managed students' bodies through the organization of time, space, and movement (Clark & Markula, 2017). To conclude my analysis, I noted similarities and differences across the Foucauldian and behavior analytic interpretations represented in my reflection, which could allow me to locate and reconcile what I have learned through these observations.

Description and Analysis

Stepping Back into the Studio

At the beginning of this research, I sat nervously in my car in the parking lot waiting to enter my childhood dance studio for the first time in over 10 years. As I reviewed the class outline that I prepared the night before, dance students of all ages were filing into a single door located at the side of the building. I took a few moments to soak in the slamming of car doors, the laughter of children, and the reunited greetings between friends. I took a couple of deep breaths and reminded myself that I'd done this hundreds of times, before finally stepping out of my car and approaching that single door with my dance shoes in one hand and my music filled iPhone™ in the other. As I passed through the entrance, I was welcomed by the studio owner/artistic director. As my general introduction, she referenced a board outlining class schedules, showed me what studio I would be teaching in this year, and explained that there have already been inquiries from students and parents about the new jazz teacher, 'Miss Sarah'. She then explained that 'Miss Sarah' was a former student and teacher that had returned to the studio. With excitement in her voice, she said 'how nice it is to have you home' and continued reminding me of my obligation to re-iterate studio policies to my students (e.g., must wear proper dance attire and have hair secured off the face) and then handed me my 'uniform', a black t-shirt with the studio logo adorned on the back and the words 'artistic staff' in bold block letters on the right sleeve. Without hesitation, I pulled the t-shirt on over my head and stepped back into Dance Studio A.

Dance Studio A was a large room with floor-to-ceiling mirrors along all but one wall, which instead had three rectangular one-way observation windows. Outside the classroom, on the other side of the observation windows were long benches for visitors to sit, should they choose to watch the class. Not as obvious as the observation windows but still present was a digital video camera mounted in the center of one wall to livestream into another observation area that was down the hall from the dance studio. In one corner of the dance studio, there was a single foldable chair, next to an auxiliary cord to connect an iPod/iPhone™ to the sound system. I automatically approached this area, sat down on the chair, connected my iPhone™, and welcomed my new students.

A Behavior Analytic Informed Dance Class

Within a few weeks, I felt a sense of comfort entering Dance Studio A. As per the request of the owner/artistic director, I began each 1-hour class by recording attendance. With full class attendance, I was responsible for teaching 16 experienced (though experience ranged from one year to several years), white female dance students, between the ages of 8 and 12. Embracing an individualized approach to learning, I considered these details to ensure that the dance instruction I provided was sensitive to each dancer's needs. For example, I ensured that the dance curriculum was appropriate to the age, background, and experience of the dancers. I was astutely aware of the observation windows and live video feed projecting to areas that were always full of onlookers,

which instilled a sense of responsibility to quickly capture my students' attention. As a result, I would get my dancers moving with a high energy warm-up exercise only minutes after class started.

While the focus of this auto-ethnographic research is to interrogate the power relations within my teaching practices in relation to their impact on my dancers, I must acknowledge the omnipresence of these observation methods and their impact on my behavior, as I recognize that my behavior also influences my dancers. In other words, the potential to receive criticism from onlookers was motivating and led to me starting class efficiently to avoid embarrassment. From a behavioral perspective, these observation methods and their associated productivity could be understood through an avoidance (or negative reinforcement) paradigm by which the occurrence of a response circumvents an aversive stimulus leading to an increase in the future occurrence of that response in similar conditions (Pierce & Cheney, 2013). In other words, I have learned that by quickly starting the class (a response) I avoid the embarrassment I would feel from onlookers' critical comments (a stimulus). The presence of the observation windows and video system served as a cue for me to engage in this behavior (Pierce & Cheney, 2013). From a more Foucauldian perspective, similar to Kliener's (2009) findings, I felt the scrutiny embedded in the live video feed and observation windows as panoptic mechanisms promoting self-discipline.

I always positioned myself at the front of the room, facing the mirrors, so I was able to observe my students. The dancers would independently organize themselves around the room in a pattern that maximized both my view of them and their view of me. Due to my behavior analytic background, I immediately recognized that it is likely that the dancers' past learning experiences taught them to respond this way. There are several behavioral explanations for this response pattern, but I will offer one possibility. In past dance classes when the dancers positioned themselves in the classroom in a particular way, their behavior was likely positively reinforced. As a result, the dancers would continue to demonstrate this behavior in subsequent classes. The term positive reinforcement is used to describe the increase in the future frequency of a behavior, following the immediate presentation of a stimulus (Cooper et al., 2020). To clarify, a change in the environment could include a smile from the dance instructor, an optimized view in the mirror, or a social interaction with a peer. What serves as a positive reinforcer will depend on the individual, but reinforcement occurs even without the individual's knowledge, and is confirmed by the pattern of behavior.

Before introducing stretching exercises (e.g., splits), a component of class that my students had said they do not enjoy, I purposefully implemented a high-probability (high-p) request sequence. As per Mace and Belfiore (1990), this antecedent strategy involves presenting a series of easy tasks with a known history of learner follow through (termed as high-p requests) in quick succession and acknowledging the learner's effort in completing these tasks, before introducing a low-probability task, a target request associated with resistance. This procedure has been described as a positive method to effectively address escape-maintained behavior (i.e., behavior that is engaged in to remove a demand; Cooper et al., 2020). By proactively deciding to have my students practice some basic dance skills (high-p requests) and emphasizing their performance of these skills through social praise statements, my students always made a reasonable effort to complete the stretching exercises (the low-p request).

After the warm-up and stretching exercises were complete, I led the dancers through a series of center and across-the-floor exercises that I had strategically selected as I considered the skills embedded within these exercises to be foundational movements for choreography that I would present later in the class. In behavioral programming, it is common to use this approach

when introducing new skills to minimize the likelihood that the learner will make errors and experience negative emotional responses, such as anxiety or frustration (Cooper et al., 2020). As we moved through the exercises, I frequently checked in with myself, to determine if I had utilized performance- and competency-based training methods that I knew were effective, as a result of my previous research experiences (Davis et al., 2019).

As I taught new dance skills, I employed behavioral skills training (BST), a performance- and competency-based teaching method that is comprised for four elements: (a) instructions, (b) modelling, (c), rehearsal, and (d) feedback (Parsons et al., 2012). During BST, the learner actively demonstrates the skill and continues practicing the skill until the learner can competently demonstrate the skill (i.e., meets a pre-determined performance criterion). I recognize that this teaching package may be evident in traditional dance pedagogy but wanted to acknowledge that there also is a large body of behavioral literature behind these practices, too.

Aligned with this training package, I would begin teaching new skills by verbally describing and physically demonstrating how to correctly perform the dance skill. Based on Striefel's (1974) recommendation that a 'model' is more likely to be successful if the individual modelling the skill is similar (age, sex, etc.) to the individual who is expected to perform the skill, on occasion I asked experienced dancers, who were able to perform the skill correctly, to model the skill for their classmates. After instructions and modelling were provided, I ensured that the dancers had an opportunity to practice the dance skills. Following this rehearsal, I always provided my students with feedback on their performance. Despite my awareness of various forms of effective feedback presented in the behavioral literature (e.g., utilizing acoustical markers, graphical displays of performance; e.g., Quinn et al., 2015; Quinn et al., 2017), vocal verbal feedback was my primary method of delivering feedback. The lack of more varied feedback forms was likely a result of my deeper familiarity with this vocal verbal method, the low associated response effort, and its effectiveness for the dancers. None-the-less, it is important to consider adopting more varied forms of feedback discussed in the behavior analytic literature to promote better experiences for dancers.

The initial aim in my feedback was to recognize something that the dancer(s) had done well to highlight what should be continued. If applicable, I would then provide some gentle corrections (e.g., 'Next time, try straightening your supporting leg') to assist in improving future performance. Overall, however I focused on providing positive feedback for what was performed correctly, as opposed to using corrective feedback which emphasizes what the dancer needs to correct because I understand that a dense 'schedule for reinforcement' (i.e., reinforcer is provided following each demonstration of the target skill or component of the skill) is advised for skill development (Martin & Pear, 2019). The experience I try to foster for my dance students by providing this form of feedback does not reflect what I experienced as a dancer but reflects what I would have appreciated. Throughout my competitive dance training, my dance instructors were always pushing me to improve by focusing solely on corrective feedback. This is not surprising, as dance instructors have reported feeling that corrective feedback for incorrect performance is more effective than highlighting what a dancer has done correctly in teaching dance skills (Lakes, 2005). Based on my experiences that focused on corrective feedback, I am cautious about this approach.

In the final steps of my BST approach, I continued to provide practice opportunities and feedback, until the dancers were able to demonstrate the skill competently. Competency was defined as a precise technical performance of the target skill. An essential element of BST is monitoring performance over time. One method that can be used to monitor performance across

classes includes taking data on the dancer's performance and graphically representing this data (e.g., Quinn et al., 2017). By doing so, it would allow the dance instructor to determine the rate of acquisition by interpreting the graphically displayed data (Cooper et al., 2020). Visual analysis of direct observation data is a common practice in ABA that may provide dance instructors with a novel strategy to monitor dancer progress and to determine if their teaching strategies need to be adjusted. This is a skill set I would like to draw upon in the future to support dancers and to evaluate my teaching.

The dancers quickly learned most skills through repeated practice opportunities; however, occasionally a dancer would continue to have difficulty with a skill. As previously mentioned, a fundamental element of behavior analysis is assessing behavior, which includes identifying what an individual is expected to do, what an individual is already able to do, and what teaching procedures can lead to an individual meeting these expectations (Noell et al., 2014). Using my knowledge of behavior analytic assessment, I would review the complexity of the dance skill and if possible, I would break down the skill in smaller or simpler teachable units for the dancer, which is also referred to as 'task analyzing' in the behavioral literature (Cooper et al., 2020). I would also determine if there were components of the skill that the dancer was struggling with, and if so, I would develop an individualized prompting strategy (e.g., visual aids, physical guidance) to support the dancer performing this skill element, while also recognizing that I needed to fade the prompts over time to allow for independence. A critical component in utilizing a prompting procedure is planning how to appropriately fade the prompts, which is another area of expertise for behavior analysts that should be shared with the dance community.

I concluded each class by teaching a combination of steps specifically choreographed to selected music. I always tried to incorporate music that was preferred by my students, as I was aware of the behavioral literature that suggests teaching strategies that incorporate student preference are more likely to be associated with positive outcomes (Reid & Green, 2005). I recognized that presenting a long sequence of movements right away may be overwhelming for the students and I wanted to ensure continued engagement, so I only presented a short sequence of movements. Once my students were able to perform this sequence I would add on new components and continue this process until the full combination had been learned. From a behavioral perspective, this traditional teaching approach is referred to as 'demand fading' by which the expectations are gradually increased based on performance (Martin & Pear, 2019). Linking a series of shorter sequences to develop a routine is also reflective of a behavioral chaining teaching method, which is used to develop complex repertoires of skills by linking single behaviors together into a larger behavioral chain (Noell et al., 2014).

Before dismissing the class, I would film the dancers performing the choreography as a group and allowed the dancers to review their performance. I incorporated video self-monitoring/feedback (i.e., dancer watches their performance from a video recording as a form of self-correction; e.g., Quinn et al., 2019) to provide my dancers with another form of feedback. Throughout the entire class, I tried to maintain a positive atmosphere by encouraging dancers and embedding opportunities for students to choose class elements (e.g., music selection, choreography style). Despite my intention to provide quality dance training using these evidence-based behaviorally informed teaching methods, due to the critical moment described in my introduction regarding enforcing hair policies, I recognized that I needed to reflect on what these practices were producing and re-producing.

Creating Docile Bodies and Dancer Subjectivities

One way that disciplinary power operates is through the use and organization of an enclosed, partitioned, functional, and ranked space (Foucault, 1979). My pedagogical space, Dance Studio A is an enclosed space in that after the dancers enter the studio the door remains closed. By promoting this enclosure, I freed my dancers from any unnecessary outside distractions, allowing them to focus on their dancing. I also eliminated distractions within the classroom in other ways. For example, I might assign a dancer to a particular group to minimize off-task behavior (e.g., socializing). Both the setting and my teaching practices emphasized an enclosed disciplinary space with an aim of preventing any behavior that I deemed unproductive in developing a dancer. While an enclosed pedagogical space may be beneficial for some dancers, enclosing the studio space may not be an appropriate strategy for every dancer in my class.

Although Dance Studio A is a large, open space designed for movement, consistent with reports from other dance instructors, I required my students to perform certain exercises in partitioned areas in the studio (Clark & Markula, 2017; Green, 2003). For example, during across-the-floor exercises my students had to wait along the edge of the classroom for their turn, and then travel in pairs, in a formation that is parallel to the mirrors at the front of the room. As per Foucault (1979), the enclosing and partitioning of space enables surveillance. Stipulating where and how my students were to complete exercises enabled me to more easily observe my students and to provide specific feedback and individualized support. In other words, these surveillance methods increase the functionality of the studio space, highlighting a positive aspect of power relations in the dance studio. Dancers were also able to negotiate power through partitioning space. Recall, that my students independently organized themselves in a pattern around the room. While this formation provided me with an optimal view of my students, my students also chose to organize themselves this way to optimize their view of me. This is also an example of conforming to our previous understandings of how to behave in dance spaces, while under surveillance, including producing the distinct roles of dancer and dance teacher.

Through some of my teaching practices, I had inadvertently created a ranked system among my students based on competency. By following best practice guidelines for effective modelling, I paired dancers in such a way that would allow a dancer who could competently perform the target movement to serve as an example for the dancer who was still learning the skill. A ranking system can be a means to discipline a body. Such a tactic may encourage optimal performance, but within very specific parameters and dancers may also problematically derive their individual value as a dancer from their position on this hierarchy (Foucault, 1979).

My title "Miss Sarah" and uniform t-shirt marked by my 'artistic staff' label are other examples of rank in dance studio, in that they distinguish me as the instructor and an authority in the space. The title "Miss" is often common practice in my dance studio (irrespective of marital status or age) to instill a sense of respect for the female dance instructors. While I have never specified that my students need to address me as "Miss Sarah", they do so likely because they are conforming to our expectations of them as dancers, and I am reproducing this subjectivity and our hierarchy by not questioning the use of this title. Given that I was the only adult in the enclosed space, it would be a natural conclusion that I was the instructor responsible for the class and therefore, these distinguishing mechanisms are likely unnecessary to facilitate the dance class. However, eliminating these mechanisms will likely not result in a different circulation of power, as the underlying component of the hierarchical structure in the setting is based on societal expectations link to age.

A second aspect of disciplinary power involves the control of time (Foucault, 1979). In many studios timing is an essential element in dance education, as movements in practice exercises and choreography are set to specific timing in the music. Throughout each class, I would always provide my students with the specific counts associated with movements in my choreography. In doing so, I am exercising power by detailing how time should be spent and how dancing should be done in relation to time. This organization and presentation of time is commonly a common, pivotal component in much dance training as it ensures students can perform with precision and unison, but in this particular studio context, this rigid expectation speaks to a broader Western cultural environment that emphasizes a "clock time," type of productivity based on governance through time and shared timing (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012). Similarly, through sequencing activities, I can also efficiently supervise the dancers and ensure a productive use of time to teach new combinations and skills in the short period of a class. My teaching strategies also highlight time efficiency by immediately presenting a simple but high energy warm up and quickly transitioning into a more difficult series of stretching exercise to ensure that my students were adequately prepared and wasted none of the very limited time we had together in the classroom. While timing allowed for optimal amount of recreational programming, it minimized the dancers' opportunity to use class time to engage in creative dance elements outside of the dance studio's curriculum and aimed to produce a kind of subject that is task-oriented and time focused. Dance platforms outside of the dance studio context may allow students to more freely explore their creativity.

The objective of time efficiency closely aligns with caregivers' motivation for enrolling their children in dance. Many caregivers in the dance studio have said that they value the "discipline" embedded within dance education, linking it to many skills that can be used by children in their adult lives. As an educator, I'm left grappling with this view of children as "human becomings" that require skill building vs. honoring children as "human beings" in the now (James & Prout, 1998) but also the question of what children are expected to become. What becomes possible when children have the opportunity to freely explore the art of dance? To what extent does such a tactic, shift established power relations? And what might be lost in terms of preparing children to flourish in a Southern Ontario studio dance world and broader Western culture that favours disciplined subjects (Brock et al, 2019)?

Managing the body through movement is the final operational component of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1979). I structured my class in a prescribed fashion, in that I arranged exercises so that movements were presented in successive segments. I also taught choreography using a demand fading technique discussed above. These approaches follow a linear plan that does not accommodate bodies that may stray from the defined plan. When my students were not able to perform a skill to the outlined standard, I would modify my teaching approach by breaking down the skill further, which may be successful, but conceptually only develops a more precise linear plan since the final performance objective remains unchanged. This precise organization of movement may be viewed as constraining in that any deviation from this expectation is inadvertently deemed unsatisfactory and in need of correction; however, this disciplinary technique can also develop skills (Foucault, 1979) which in turn foster students' ability to perform more complex skills that would not be possible without mastery of foundational elements. In this way, I am building an accumulation of skills in a context that focuses on acquiring a specific set of skills as an outcome. There is an underlying assumption in the dance studio context that most dancers participate to learn new dance skills. It would be advisable for dance teachers to consider dancers' motivations when developing curriculum and determining how to evaluate or if

evaluation is necessary. Overall, the management of the body through movement may be an essential element to achieve progress in dance education that emphasizes producing the acquisition of skills, but it can also be seen as rigidly producing compliant bodies.

While not reflecting specifically on behavior analytic teaching strategies, studio policies regarding appropriate attire and grooming, as well as teaching materials, such as mirrors, observation windows and video monitoring systems, also played an important role in my overall pedagogical approach. Foucauldian dance scholars have argued that dance uniforms and modes of classroom observations are modern examples of panoptic mechanisms that create docile bodies through constant surveillance. The omnipresence of surveillance fostered by these panoptic mechanisms in the dance studio seemed to lead the dancers (and myself) to internalize expectations and engage in self-regulation (Berg, 2015; Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010; Green, 2003; Kleiner, 2009; Zinga et al., 2019). Ultimately, these disciplinary techniques train and enable the body to perform automatically and unthinkingly (Green, 2003; Kliener, 2009).

While the focus of my analysis has been on understanding the implications of my pedagogical choices for my dancers, I recognize that disciplinary power relations have impacted my behavior as a dance instructor, too. A Foucauldian perspective suggests that power is always present in the studio space through interactions and practices, which have ultimately produced my understanding of what it means to teach dance. My pedagogical choices have produced certain hierarchical power relations but have also been produced within them. My previous interactions in the dance studio, studio policies, etc. have shaped my pedagogical approach in the same way that the application of power embedded in my teaching practices has implications for my dance students. When explained in this way, a behavior analytic perspective may have a similar viewpoint, recognizing environmental variables that influence my behavior, but there are some significant underlying distinctions between behaviorism and a Foucauldian orientation, including behaviorism being more focused on understanding and shaping behavior, or what people do, while a Foucauldian orientation seeks to look more deeply and critically at the production of our subjectivities, meaning who we are and what we think about ourselves, offering potential critique of my behavior analytic informed approach to dance education.

Concluding Remarks

It has now been two years since I embarked on my auto-ethnographic journey, and I remain appreciative to have taken the opportunity to critically reflect on my teaching practices and the related power relations within them. I have attempted to change some of my teaching practices in the dance studio. For example, I will not comment on a student's adherence to the hair and attire policies in dance classes. The critical moment that I described in my introductory statement demonstrates the negative implications of these comments, which contradicts with my responsibility as a dance instructor to create a space for dancers. In the same spirit, I have tried to embrace dancers' voices and support them as they exercise their agency. Central to this action has been to provide dancers with choice (e.g., to complete an exercise independently or with a partner of their choosing, develop their own creative poses, decide what dance skill they would like to practice). The act of providing dancers with more opportunities to decide for themselves has allowed me to re-distribute the power that circulates between dancer and dance instructor during classes. I also believe that this has had a positive effect on the dancers, as they have appeared eager to participate in the creation of their experience in class.

As I leaned into providing dancers with choice, I also began to allow for more flexibility in the class structure, such as, not policing every behavior that may be considered unproductive or problematic by an observer (e.g., socializing with a peer, yelling in enthusiasm) and varying the format of activities in class (e.g., practicing of steps in a game of freeze dance). While such changes were met with approval from dancers, the studio owner received complaints from caregivers about the "lack of structure and discipline" in my dance class and requested that I adopt a stricter stance in the dance studio to ensure that the caregivers are satisfied. The studio owner also now periodically observes my classes to ensure that I am maintaining this directive, reminding me that I am also teaching within a specific cultural context and under disciplinary observation. Ultimately, I share these experiences with the reader not to discourage you from reflecting on and taking action to change your practices as may be necessary but so you may be prepared for the potential challenges.

Through this auto-ethnographic journey, I was able to deeply explore and analyze power embedded within my behavior analytic approach to dance education. I have learned about myself and my teaching practices in a way that would not have been possible without this journey. By sharing the negotiation and renegotiation of the meaning of my experiences, I trust that my journey may also provide important insight for the dance community. Adopting a Foucauldian understanding of power, I recognize that power is not in my or my student's possession but is continuously present in the dance studio through interactions and practices. I also understand that my teaching practices will always produce and re-produce certain hierarchical power relations. Moving forward, I hope to disrupt some of conventional power relations that exist in my dance studio, but I remain convinced that there is also value to a behavior analytic informed dance pedagogy, and link this to the production of accomplished dancers.

First, it is important for dance instructors to be aware of power relations that their pedagogical practices may be producing or reproducing, and their effects. Engaging in reflexivity through auto-ethnography, as demonstrated by this critical self-reflection, is one method that dance instructors could employ to move towards awareness. Second, I suggest that critical reflexivity regarding teaching practices is an iterative process, such that dance instructors must remain vigilant about asymmetrical power relations and the promotion of hierarchical structures through ongoing reflection, especially since this research has shown that such structures can be both problematic and also good at enhancing the skills of dancers. I conclude my auto-ethnographical journey by extending a call to action for other dance educators to critically reflect on the power relations in their dance pedagogy.

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