

The Politics of Personal Pedagogy

Examining Teacher Identities

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Abstract

These short essays address the political nature of teaching dance in higher education from various perspectives. Issues of identity, authority, power, expectation, and assumption are addressed within the context of the teacher-student paradigm. From personal perspectives, each author examines the ways in which who they are affects what and how they teach, how they perceive their students, and how students perceive them. Four topics include: the politics of gender in dance pedagogy (Risner); the politics of a Christian educator in the academy (Clemente); the politics of race in the classroom (Hubbard); and, the politics of teacher and student identity in a post-feminist era (Kerr-Berry).

This panel was originally presented at the 10th Annual Meeting of the National Dance Education Organization at Towson University, June 2008. Panelists were interested in how politics affects our teaching. Through several discussions, the central topic shifted from the “what” of teaching to the “who,” arriving at how teacher identity affects the teacher-student paradigm. For the purposes of this panel, the politics of personal pedagogy are defined by the ways in which teacher identities interface with power, authority, expectations, roles, and assumptions in relation to students, or the relational power of politics in teaching.

The panel presentation and discussion generated significant response. Many conference participants encouraged the panelists to publish their papers in the journal, in order for all NDEO members to be brought into this important conversation of pedagogy politics. Karen Hubbard’s panel remarks

entitled, “Race Messages/Race Matters,” are not included here, as she chose to focus her energies on her forthcoming journal article on jazz dance teaching. Therefore, this article brings together three of the four short papers.

The Politics of Gender in Dance Pedagogy

Doug Risner, Ph.D.

Abstract

Dance education researchers interested in pedagogy have drawn considerable energy from the area of social foundations in education, especially in terms of schooling and its impact on gender identity. Borrowing from feminist thought, critical theory, gender studies, critical pedagogy, and most recently, men’s studies, dance pedagogy literature has begun to articulate the ways in which socially embedded assumptions about gender and dominant structural power relations produce unjust educational and socio-cultural outcomes. Because traditional dance pedagogy schools for obedience and emphasizes silent conformity in which dancers reproduce what they receive, rather than critique, question, or create it, some approaches for confronting gender bias and inequity in dance teaching and curriculum have been identified. Key to these strategies is a committed effort to position the social construction of gender as a conscious variable in all aspects of dance pedagogy, as well as the validation and affirmation of individual differences in gender and culture. However, further pedagogical considerations in dance are necessary in terms of gendered teaching and gender asymmetries inherent in the dance population’s teachers and learners.

Introduction

The young women in my dance pedagogy course bring considerable experience in modern, ballet, and jazz technique and are equally skilled as young performers. These students likely represent a good cross section of our students in their third year of an undergraduate dance program. We begin this pedagogy course by looking at students' experience of teaching in their own training and dance education.

While highly skilled in technique and performance, these young women have not, for the most part, been exposed to or benefited from, reflective practice in their own learning. Nor have many been exposed to ideas from critical and feminist pedagogies. Illuminating dominant ideas about teaching and learning styles, their links to gender, and the ways in which power and authority play out in the dance studio are central to this class. This pedagogy course seeks to address these gaps and to cultivate the reflective, questioning abilities of these young women. The concerns I share in this brief time focus on the "why" of this political void in young women's dance education and how we might address issues of gendered teaching practice.

As a teacher in a highly politicized world, I self-identify as a male feminist struggling to balance my privilege as a white, male academic with the marginalization I experience as a gay male within a marginalized field like dance, one further marginalized in dance education. Within my department, I am fairly certain that the privilege I hold likely outweighs the marginalization I experience in terms of my sexual orientation and my discipline. But beyond, I suppose my identity shapes a good deal of my personal pedagogy, which includes facilitating students' understanding of themselves, as well as others in a diverse world, their potential reflective skills, and their ability to question taken-for-granted assumptions—about dance, about teaching, and about the world generally.

Gender and Dance Pedagogy

On the first day of my dance pedagogy class, students are asked to introduce each other in a "pair and share" format. They are given 15 minutes to learn as much as possible about each other in terms of their education and dance training, and then to introduce one another to the class. This activity provides an important baseline context for use throughout the semester, as we encounter readings and discussions about teaching, pedagogy, learning, expectations, and authority.

Their introductions of each other often include memories of their favorite teachers, with comments like she "cared about me," "pushed me," "I always knew that I could go to her," and most prevalent—

"she was tough, but I needed it." These memories provide an important context of caring and support on one hand, and toughness and strict discipline on the other. With this exercise and throughout the course, students often relate their lack of previous questioning or reflection about their own educations. Students often preface their remarks with, "I've never thought about this before...." This questioning results from many readings, in- and out-of-class activities, discussions and field observations, all of which emerge from a critical, feminist perspective.

Briefly, critical pedagogy is an approach to teaching that seeks to help students question and challenge domination by exposing taken-for-granted assumptions and practices that limit, marginalize, and disenfranchise human agency and freedom. Education is never neutral, but rather a complex series of asymmetrical power relationships that are frequently hidden and unexamined.

Feminist pedagogy expanded this perspective in the 1980s and 1990s by looking more closely at taken-for-granted assumptions about gender in teaching and learning. Because traditional dance pedagogy schools for obedience and emphasizes conformity in which dancers reproduce what they receive, rather than critique, question, or create it, critical feminist pedagogy in dance has, and continues to, receive considerable attention. Key to these strategies is positioning gender as a conscious variable in all aspects of dance education, as well as the validation and affirmation of individual differences in gender, ethnicity, and culture.

From a critical feminist perspective then, I attempt to model examples of connected teaching, shared authority, informed "failure," valuing uncertainty, and committed self-reflection to action. However, many students enter dance in post-secondary education without the appropriate tools for questioning their own experiences or the pedagogies they have experienced. Their taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching remind me that all of us bring considerable histories to teaching others, which, if not carefully analyzed, may reproduce much of what it is we actually seek to change, especially in terms of gendered teaching.

Gendered Teaching

By gendered teaching, I am referencing the ways in which teaching and learning have been traditionally couched in ways that conform to masculine ways of teaching and learning. Gendered teaching often means pedagogies embedded in the traditional "banking method" in which the student is viewed as an empty vessel to be filled by the teacher's expert deposits of information, stored until a later date for impeccable regurgitation or performance. Many

students come to us and, to my pedagogy class, highly skilled in the banking method. Because my course includes few lectures and never exams or lengthy term papers, some students struggle with the emphasis on communal learning, understanding through dialogue, personal responsibility, and critical reflection.

At the same time, these young women are quick to identify professors who teach from this dominant banking method. As Beth, one of my students, shrieked during our unit on Paolo Freire and critical pedagogy, “that’s Professor Wilson! No one ever says a word in his class.” Even from such realizations, maneuvering students’ own learning and engagement to the critical feminist classroom and studio is a longer, more difficult journey. Finding ways for students to move from an awareness of gendered teaching to actual critical practice forms a significant portion of the politics of pedagogy. Let me briefly share three significant power shifts that occur.

First, there is a shift to *Student-Directed Approaches* which emphasize beginning “where students are” and moving forward with what students unearth about what they want to know, to learn, in conversation with the teacher’s prerogatives for content to be covered. The key here is balancing student input and direction with faculty guidance in a dialogical approach.

Second, is a shift to *Learning from Shared Experience*, that is that all knowledge is socially constructed. To really know something is to know it in relation to others—others’ perspectives, experiences, thinking, context, and histories. Therefore, there is a turn to connected teaching and knowing,¹ rather than separate, distanced, solitary, and independent thinking.²

The third power shift validates *Imperfection and Risk Taking*. As bell hooks advocates, teachers must take the first risk³ by showing their lack of knowledge, their incomplete understanding of the world, the ways in which they struggle, and most importantly, that asking questions is not only acceptable, but also valid and valuable in allowing students to see teachers as people who are human, vulnerable, and not “always right.” Validating imperfection and valuing ambiguity significantly contradict the “doubting model,” which instills an enduring sense in students’ that their ideas and experiences are inferior.

These power shifts between teacher and student require significant reframing of the traditional classroom and studio. Students and instructor must continually re-evaluate their educational traditions, assumptions, and roles. Time does not permit further description, but I will highlight two important considerations.

First, research indicates that students, especially women, are keenly aware of the “shutdown” they

experience in the “doubting model” within traditional banking methods of teaching. Second, with student freedom, as critical pedagogy emphasizes,⁴ also comes students’ responsibility for their own learning, a kind of learning that is not independent or in isolation from others.

As I tell my pedagogy students, we will learn what we learn from, and with, one another. There is no other real learning that will take place in this course. Still, the leap to committing themselves to their own and to their peers’ learning is not an easy jump.

Gender Asymmetries in Dance Education

Let me close from my perspective and identity as a male feminist dance educator. All of us confront the feminization of dance generally, and more specifically in our own locales as we face challenges associated with being marginalized, undervalued, and trivialized as a discipline. We know that young women come to us from a culture that continues to place high value on individual achievement, independence, separation, certainty, and emotional detachment—all of which run nearly antithetical to all that defines dance and dance education. The political nature of this struggle for our students is probably one of the most important challenges we confront in dance pedagogy today.

As a male instructor, it is interesting to note student course evaluation research, in which female students give higher ratings to female instructors than to male instructors, while male students’ evaluations do not vary by the instructor’s gender.⁵ Male instructors are perceived to be more knowledgeable, but female instructors are thought to be more sensitive and respectful of student ideas⁶ and more effective in creating an open, participatory environment by using interactive approaches such as group projects and small and large group discussion.⁷ The same research indicates that male instructors are perceived to possess teaching styles that are more dominant and teacher-directed.

These findings show the complexity that is at play when I attempt to contemplate how my identity affects how I teach; and second, how my students perceive me. Gender theorists have alerted us that gender, and more recently masculinity, is a shifting, non-fixed, social construction that either conforms or resists dominant notions of what it means to be a man. In terms of students’ perceptions, I grapple with the ways in which these female students make sense of this seeming dichotomy—a man who teaches like a woman? To what extent do their expectations of me as a male professor shade their perceptions, even as I attempt to teach in participatory and student-directed ways?

As liberating as our courses may seem, the poli-

tics of sharing power remains an important part of future discussions about identity, power, learning, and expectations in teaching.

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Am I Christian Enough? The Challenge of Teaching in a Faith-Based Setting

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Abstract

Assumptions about belief systems and one's personal faith practice can lead to misunderstanding, confusion, and even hostility in the classroom. Within the Christian university, the problem can be intensified as students expect a professor to profess faith in ways that are familiar to their upbringing. The discussion addresses challenges that arise in the faith-based setting in relation to course content, student advising, and artistic processes and products.

Introduction

As a professor at Eastern University, a liberal arts college of 2,000 undergraduate students in St. Davids, Pennsylvania, I must sign a doctrinal statement, designed and upheld by the Board of Trustees. In essence, it is a "we believe" statement professing Christianity, which faculty endorse. At the present time, all full-time, affiliate, and part-time faculty must sign the document at the time of hire and renew their signatures each year of their employment. Faculty also are required to respond to

the doctrinal statement in writing, an exercise that allows for individual perspectives to be outlined.

On the flip side of this are students who have chosen to come to a Christian college, largely due to their upbringing in a church and often as a result of parents' wishes to have their children educated within a Christian environment. With this reality come certain assumptions that often clash with the liberal arts academic environment. Such assumptions involve a narrow definition of Christianity that does not embrace a wide variety of denominational differences or progressive movements within Christianity as practiced in contemporary times.

I identify myself within a liberal framework of Christianity, claiming the progressive movement in Christianity that includes spiritual vitality, intellectual integrity, transgression of gender boundaries, vitality without superiority, and justice and ecology (see *A New Spiritual Home: Progressive Christianity at the Grass Roots*, by Hal Taussig¹). This identification shapes the content I teach and the ways in which I maneuver through the Christian university setting, relating to colleagues and students on both similar and dissimilar paths.

Course Content

Eastern's liberal arts curriculum has at its core an integration of faith, reason, and justice within each of the curricular areas. Departments are expected to consider these three concepts in building their mission statements and student learning goals. As part of our 49 credit Bachelor of Arts in Dance, I teach two courses that lend themselves to the integration of faith with the discipline of dance—Liturgical Dance History and Practice and Sacred Dance. The Liturgical Dance History course traces the evolution of dance in the Western church and compares that to dance as spirituality in traditions beyond the West. Sacred Dance is a workshop-seminar course that helps students to investigate theological themes in dance making and performance. What I find as the professor of these courses is that students come to class expecting a different experience than the one I help to shape with their input. Particularly, in the Liturgical Dance History course, students often are surprised to find that liturgical dance in the church or sacred dances performed by cultures other than their own have existed *and thrived* outside of the framework of the contemporary worship service. I often have heard students speak of "reclaiming the arts for God." My response is that God never lost the arts—dance has been at the core of religious expression throughout all of human kind. Here, my progressive Christianity often hits fundamentalist Christianity head-on in that I think that it is "not a spiritual loss for Christians willing to have mutual respect for other religions."²

A related, yet different problem occurs in the process oriented Sacred Dance course. Students come to this course expecting that I will choreograph dances to hymns or to contemporary Christian music. When I start to work with theological themes, they are suspect of my motives. They ask why I do not make really technical dances to the latest Christian music. They become confused or angry when I ask them, for instance, to demonstrate through movement the weight of a dilemma that haunts them in their faith journey. Also, when I work without words, or even when I use abstract poetry instead of scripture, they assume that I am asking them to give up the WORD, which stands at the center of the Christian faith tradition. "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17). Without the words—the important words of the faith—what we are doing is incomplete from their point of view. To be fair, many of my students are deeply moved by this new way of working. But many refuse to move beyond the literal interpretation of their favorite Christian songs in their dances.³

Mentoring Students in the Creative Process and Product

When I first came to Eastern, I would more often than not "go with the flow" of my students' faith practices and try not to make waves. In other words, I spoke their language and usually acquiesced to their need for a limited, tightly defined version of Christianity. As I evolved in my own faith practice and found like-minded colleagues within the college environment and in my church community, I began to challenge students' assumptions regarding the integration of faith and dance and the practice of dance within a faith community. Several anecdotes emerge that demonstrate this evolutionary process. I will share two that are representative of my struggle as a professor and mentor.

1. In the early 1990s I had between 35 and 40 students in my Sacred Dance course. Though at the time we only met 2 hours a week, students would criticize me for not opening each class session with "devotions." At first, I would valiantly attempt to provide them with devotions—scripture reading and prayers. Sometimes I would put the devotional practice on hold in order to maximize the two hour meeting time. When students protested, I then turned over the "devotions" section to them, allowing them to sign-up on a weekly basis to lead devotions. This practice turned into longer sessions and often took up time from the choreographic process of the course. Eventually, connecting to what I believe was the creative, spiritual source in the room, I told students that our entire class period was to be treated as a devotion—that from the minute they walked in the door, our time together would be spirit filled

and an offering, of sorts. To this day, I still work from that premise.

2. Throughout my 18 years at Eastern, I often would take my students to perform at area churches and especially to my own church, which embraced the arts as a way of spiritual expression, integrating dance into the theological message of the worship service. In recent years, I have, for the most part, ended the practice of visiting my own church, since the progressive language (Our Father and Mother, who art in heaven...) and open-minded atmosphere ("rejection of homophobia and the affirmation of equal rights across lines of gender and sexual orientation"⁴) have threatened many of my students' belief systems. Though I have been encouraged by our acting Dean to continue to take my students to such environments (telling them to act in a Christian way), it often has not been worth the effort. The disturbing part of this for me is that my identity as a Christian clashes with their understanding of what it is to be a Christian. On the other hand, several of my students have come to my church, have been inspired by what they experience, and have ended up joining the church upon their graduation.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, when I work with students to go beyond the literal interpretation of religious themes, they often resist. For those who are open enough to try a new way, the dance making becomes a way toward transformation. Often, students who come in as freshman, dancing in a pantomimic way to familiar songs, end up finding a new voice that enriches both their faith and their dances. It is this type of transformative work that gives me hope, that keeps me in the environment. Often people ask me how I can teach in a faith-based setting—the heaviness of the doctrinal statement, the combative nature of fundamentalist students, the daily battle to maintain my own Christian identity. My response, on a good day, is to say that I am drawn to religious discourse within the academy, I am challenged by the problem of integrating faith into the creative process (can they really be separate, after all?) and I am encouraged by students who come along beside me on the faith journey. It is, after all, for the sake of their learning and their lives that we are there.

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Female Dancing Bodies in a Post-Feminist Era: Burn Your Brassiere Meets the “Push-up Bra”

Julie Kerr-Berry, Ed.D.

Abstract

Any historical memory that female dance students may have about feminism continues to dim in the 21st Century. Oftentimes, their female professors are direct “descendants” of the feminist movement. This memory “gap” between professor and students can cause friction in the classroom or studio. The professor inherits students from a post-feminist society that affects how the student perceives and presents her dancing body, challenging instructor assumptions about who they are and who she is. The professor is challenged by the present “Girls Gone Wild” video era, which some young women view as self-empowering. When student dancers are simultaneously members of dance teams and contemporary dance companies, have these young women “sold out,” or can they be both “sex kitten” and modern dancer? The potential for disconnection occurs between professor and student because the former fought hard to develop a society that did not regard women as sex objects, while a consumer driven society, symbolized by the “push-up bra,” inundates the latter. If postmodern dance is about change, ambiguity, and diversity, can the professor uphold her feminist ideals and keep pace pedagogically with her students without alienating them and denying herself?

Introduction

Dance and feminism are closely linked in the female body’s representation and commodification. The feminist movement was founded, in part, on the emancipation of this body, as was contemporary dance. At the turn of the last century, some of the first feminists were pioneering modern dancers whose quest was to redefine the body as a vehicle of artistic expression. Despite the feminist movement, as the last century waned, the dancing female body became overly sexualized, fueled by, among other factors, consumerism.

Many of my students simultaneously perform as dance artists in our program and as “sex kittens” on the university’s dance team, previously, in the middle-high school setting. Frankly, I think these young women are confusing sexual emancipation with sexual exploitation. I am a 50-year-old, second-generation feminist; my students are 18- to 21-year-old female dance majors who have a limited, tainted, or no knowledge of feminism in the 21st

Century. Many do not know that they are part of a legacy that impacts their lives as young women on a daily basis. Deborah Siegel states, in her 2007 book, *Sisterhood Interrupted: From Radical Women to “Girls Gone Wild,”* that “Younger women run from the word ‘feminist’ without quite knowing why, or what the word has stood for.”¹

However, I also am troubled by my tendency to judge them because of their participation on dance teams. Who am I to judge? Could I be missing something? Is this gap in my understanding affecting how I teach these young women? Exploring these questions forms the basis of this paper.

A Socio-Historical Snapshot

We continue to mend the Cartesian dualism that separated the body and mind. What permeates this gapping divide is a hypersexualized female body.² Kirsten Simonson, in her 2002 editorial, *The Body as Battlefield*, states: “The theoretical separation of mind from body dates back to Cartesian thought, and it is now a well-known story that *this separation has historically been sexualized*. The female body has been a metaphor for the corporeal pole of this dualism, representing nature, emotionality, irrationality and sensuality” (emphasis mine).³ Additionally, Western religious rigidity also took its toll on perceptions of the body, and ultimately, the dancing body.

Currently, the female body’s heightened sexual representation is used to sell a variety of goods, services, and products. The media has played a major role by both propagating and reflecting the highly sexualized state of the female body, for example, in the *Girls Gone Wild* videos or the hit television series *Sex in the City*. Dance teams, dance lines, cheerleading, and some private studio recitals are examples of this practice in dance.

When women removed and burned their brassieres, their actions symbolized their defiance to no longer conform, and literally not be “molded” into a shape that fulfilled male expectations of desirability. With the women’s rights movement came new sexual freedom; and I would argue, new responsibilities as “new owners” of their bodies. However, an “owner’s manual” was not included.

In contrast, today’s “push-up bra” symbolizes putting it back on again, pushing up, and exposing one’s “perky” bust line, a marker of youthful breasts as objects. A symbol of a consumer-driven society, the “push-up bra” has helped to create a 21st Century version of the “pin-up” girl. (On a prominent corner in the Uptown area of Minneapolis, Minnesota, an artsy, bohemian district of the metro area, there is large two-story Victoria’s Secret that is being built.)

Susan Faludi, author of the 2007 book, *The Terror*

Dream: Fear and Fantasy in a Post-9/11 America, sums it up this way in an interview with Newsweek columnist, Jennie Yarbrough: “The idea of women as public actors, not just private players, has been replaced by ersatz feminism where you are free to buy whatever push-up bra you want.”⁴ More compelling, Simonson also states:

Subordinate groups are defined by their bodies and the according norms that diminish or degrade them... By imprisoning the “other” in her/his body, privileged groups—notably white, Western bourgeois men—are able to take on the position as “disembodied” subjects...these privileged groups remain the ones who set the moral standards and associated bodily norms that those they judge can never hope to meet.³

Women of color have suffered in two arenas of power, as women, and as African Americans, *doubling* the objectification of their bodies as a result of such oppression and the continued 400-year stripping away of aspects of their identity.

“Splashing about in Separate Pools”

While I am 30 or more years older than my students, I am also my students; I am female and a product of the same patriarchal systems and of a *still* youthful feminist movement when compared to the thousands of years of male domination and oppression. I do not want to regard them as the “other”; we are both the “other.” Siegel describes it this way: “Contemporary feminism is about nothing if not irony...members of a younger generation who think they are rebelling are instead treading well-worn ground and that older women don’t recognize their own progeny. The result is nothing short of tragic: *Instead of making tidal waves together, we splash about in separate pools*” (emphasis added).⁵ I ask, shouldn’t we be “splashing about” in the *same* pool? The young women I teach are on a similar journey as the early feminists—to reclaim their bodies and to explore their power as young women, which includes their own sexuality, on their *own* terms.

However, part of the missing link is for me to expose my students to the history and oppression of women so that they understand that when they perform on the sidelines at basketball or football games they are still, just that, on the “sidelines.” Their bodies are inscribed by a patriarchal power structure to provide entertainment; they are not the ones playing the game for mass audiences, men are. Their “performance” is closely monitored and prescribed at these sports events. As “sex kittens” they are strategically positioned for audience titillation (“eye candy”), while treading on the sacred soil of male sports.

Pedagogically, it gets tricky, as Shapiro describes, in her 1999 book, *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: A Critical Praxis*, regarding new models of the teacher-student paradigm. She states that “Such notions have confronted critical teachers with the difficult recognition of the thin line that separates attempts to ‘free’ students from our complicity in *imposing on them new, perhaps more subtle, forms of domination*” (emphasis added).⁶

I don’t want to silence my students by using well-worn, out dated teaching tactics that use, what Paulo Freire described as the “banking concept.” This teaching method applies to the current state of much dance education in which students learn to silence their own voices and obey authority.⁷ Rather, I must continually present dance in the broadest possible context so that my students do not also become objects of technical and choreographic manipulation, repeating the dominant and repressive paradigm of dance training of so many young women.⁷ Ironically, this mode of training also recapitulates their objectification in a sports arena. Therefore, I must join my students, not alienate them, honoring their voice by helping them find it.

For a better understanding of these issues, I asked three of my current students the following question about their participation on dance teams:

JKB: What can you tell me as a 50-year-old woman who considers herself to be a feminist, to help me better understand why you performed as a member of a dance team? As you know, I have concerns about, and am challenged by, the display of the female body in this arena. However, I also fear that I may be missing something. Help me to fill in the pieces. What am I missing?

This is how they responded:

Student 1: I grew up with (it) and I love the whole performance aspect (smiling, costumes, etc...) because it’s fun to do and to watch. If I didn’t have dance team in my life, along with the studio setting in high school, I wouldn’t be the dancer I am today. Also, I have realized that by taking college classes (dance) that I have completely changed as a dancer (the way I move) compared to my time in high school.

Student 2: As I moved on to college it just made sense for me to keep pursuing my dance team career. From the outside, it may look like dance teams are an excuse for hot girls to wear close-to-nothing and shake their butts for a crowd at basketball games, but these girls are very serious and motivated. The dance team world is incredibly competitive and it is difficult to keep up with the standard of talent that grows

tremendously every year. I am sad to say that there are many teams out there that give dance teams a bad name by *trying* to be sexy and performing purely for entertainment...but from my experience, dance team is a very respectable outlet for women and girls to experience their passion as a group.

Student 3: Well I first started being on dancing teams because that's all I knew. As a child I had danced and was very active in sports. Being in sports I think is where I began to gain my competitive edge and since I loved dancing, competitive dance teams just seemed like a perfect fit. Being on dance team was the one thing that I knew no one (especially my dad) couldn't take away from me. It was that place I could go to take out all of my frustrations of life. Being on a dance team and placing well showed me what hard work and dedication means and I wanted to show others the same.

Their candid responses, along with culling research in feminism and feminist dance pedagogy, lead me to five conclusions regarding my students:

1. As young girls, who matured into young women, many did not have access to any other kind of dance experiences other than dance teams;
2. If they had not had dance team experiences, many would likely not have pursued dance as a major;
3. They lack accurate knowledge of feminism and the feminist movement and its impact on their lives today as women and as dancers, pedagogically paving the way for new dance coursework centered in feminist theory;
4. As my colleague, Doug Risner carefully suggested, those of us in higher education need to examine our dance programs to see if we are developing young women with a strong sense of self worth and confidence as highly skilled dance artists, whose bodies are powerful, athletic, and expressive; and
5. They are confusing sexual emancipation with sexual exploitation, the former was a socio-political movement, the latter, is a marketing movement.

The Politics of Division

In closing, the divisive and polarized nature of current U.S. society wants to undercut feminism by turning this social movement into a "dirty word." This climate is posed to keep women divided by silencing them—by having them not talk to other women, to their husbands, partners, professors, sons, daughters, neighbors, and employers. All of us need to be involved in the *same* conversation so that we do not lose more ground.

I recently saw the movie version of *Sex in the City* that opened this month. I dismissed it as a fantasy, an over-sexed portrayal of moneyed, white, size 4 and below women of privilege with more shoes than they knew what to do with. However, as I reflect on it, the film is emblematic of the politics of division in a post-feminist era. What is going on is just this, and this uncertainty has the potential to shut us up, or open-us-up, as people who want to see *all* women treated with respect and dignity.

Yes, once I "burned my brassiere" in defiance; but now, I wear one for support. There must be a metaphor in there someplace—possibly that we must *support* one another as feminism continues to define and re-shape itself in our students of the 21st Century.

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