



Lessons learnt from dancing the data: performed research of beginning teachers' experiences

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LESSONS LEARNT FROM DANCING THE DATA: PERFORMED RESEARCH OF BEGINNING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

This paper discusses the power of performed research. Such power lies in assisting to research the whole human – thought, action, and emotion. The paper discusses the potential for research through the arts in the development of creativity and imagination, to facilitate social change, and to explore performance as a research process as well as an end result that presents findings. The experiences of Bagley and Cancienne (2001); (2002) guided the creation of the work, and assist to frame this paper.

The dance work discussed in this paper is a recent addition to the performed research work 'The First Time'. The dance work was crafted to bring together the comparable experiences of first year teacher participants, and similarities among the findings of research into their identity. The creation of 'The First Time' was employed as a tool to understand and analyse the data. The dance work was employed to highlight findings regarding beginning teachers' transition to teaching. This paper explores the process of creating and presenting arts-based research to expand the avenues through which the results of research are made available to a relevant audience; of how this method might broaden and complement traditional ways of thinking about and doing educational research.

Introduction

Carl Bagley and Mary Beth Cancienne's joint experiences of Dancing the Data, as outlined in their paper (Bagley & Cancienne, 2001) and book chapter (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002) were the inspiration for the creation of my performed research dance work and also serve to frame this paper. I considered the practical and logistical processes and constraints they raise, as experienced in their creation of performed research through dance. These include: dance as a difficult and challenging textual form; the process of choreographing from the data, whether to include the voice of the researcher, decisions about interpretation and selection of movement vocabulary, selection and application of production aspects (music, costume) and encompassing words as well as movement; the amount of time needed to familiarise with the data and prepare the work; an obligation to the voices of participants, to the art form, to the audience, and to the researcher; practical and logistical constraints – finding an appropriate area; and the practical difficulty of the 'existing culture of the educational academy and its emphasis on the need to formally present papers and establish a published research record based on printed textual forms' (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002, p. 14).



Figure 1 Analysis of data through movement

Dance as a difficult and challenging textual form

The potential for research through the arts lies in the development of creativity and imagination and the potential for the arts to facilitate social change (Ewing, 2010). Performance is a way of human knowing and being – of imagination, aesthetic knowledge, and translation and expression of ideas. While a performance is the creation of an aesthetic object, and is guided by aesthetic features, my approach to performed research promotes the employment of artistic processes as the primary focus. I have framed and ‘read’ the lived experiences of my research participants through the processes and presentation of performed research. Such a study of lived experiences (van Manen, 1990) examines how we come to conceive and understand what has already been experienced; to attribute meaning to what has happened to us (Britzman, 1991, p. 9). I employ performance-based methods to conducting research because I believe the connections between what phenomena are being investigated and how they are investigated need to be congruous. I believe that this can only be achieved if the researcher demonstrates the same ethical approach to creating the aesthetic object as they do to conducting the research.

Performed research falls under the umbrella of arts-based research, which is the careful investigation into dimensions of the social world by the arts-based researcher through a reconfiguration and representation of selected facets of what the research uncovers, with those facets now transformed into aesthetic substance upon their embodiment within an aesthetic form; and the production of disequilibrium within the audience of the work as they vicariously re-experience what has been designed (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 20). Arts-based research can take the form of a variety or combinations of arts, which can include drama and theatre, dance, visual art, film, literature, and music. Barone and Eisner (1997; 2012) have been advocating for arts-based educational research for many years. Barone’s own work on the possibilities of literary nonfiction combined with Eisner’s interests in the role of the arts in the development of cognition have led to an agenda for arts-based research that employs expressive qualities of form to convey meaning (Barone & Eisner, 2012). They contend that educational research that is arts-based is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and the writing.

The *process* is the primary focus of a performed research approach, which is different to research-based performance. Performed research is research guided by aesthetic features. There are a variety of approaches to representing studies similar to mine, defined often as performance or performed ethnography. Early forms of performed research emerged from ethnography (Conquergood, 1985) and anthropology (Turner & Schechner, 1986). Conquergood (1985, p. 2) describes performance ethnographers as those who ‘compliment their participant observation fieldwork by actually performing for different audiences the verbal art they have studied *in situ*’. Performance ethnography has been employed by academic researchers working in a variety of fields looking for an effective way of sharing their research findings with audiences both within and outside the academy (Goldstein, 2012). The strength of performance ethnography can be as a forum for dialogic exchange and an incentive for critical thinking and reflection (Oberg, 2008).



Figure 2
Experiences of support

In representing the experiences of others ethical interpretation is required by both the researcher – in the selection of material, structuring it and creating representations. Performing lived experiences can then provide audiences with a form of engaged discourse (Alexander, 2005) which asks audience members to articulate the shift in their way of thinking and seeing – what they know differently, what they will do differently. Arts-based research approaches generate knowledge that enable an audience to notice what had not been seen before, to understand what had not been understood, to gain a deeper appreciation of complex situations that contribute to the end to which educational research is

committed (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 85).

Performed research creates a dialogue in which performers and audience engage in an equal exchange (Conquergood, 1985; Cozart, Gordon, Gunzenhauser, McKinney, & Petterson, 2003; Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). Mienczakowski's work emerges from his background in both performing arts and education, with the explicit intention to become a public voice with educational potential. My own experiences as a performing artist, dance therapist, dance and drama educator, mentor to beginning teachers, teacher educator and researcher have come together in the creation of my performed research as works with educative potential. The majority of my work as a dance practitioner includes extensive training in a variety of classical and contemporary dance techniques, which provide a deep understanding of the body as an instrument of expression. With this technical experience as a foundation for my choreographic processes, I focus primarily on the manipulation of space, dynamics and choreographic devices such as fragmentation and rearrangement, to express deep felt emotions that can often be difficult to put into words. With a sound background in the performing arts and choreography it is more possible to avoid trivialization of the research and the art form.

As a dance practitioner I don't find dance any more difficult or challenging than any other art form. However, I do feel that some audiences find it difficult and challenging to elicit meaning from a work that is so open to interpretation. As a method of disseminating findings the ambiguous nature of the art form can lead audiences to question the validity and rigor of the research method, and thus the research itself. While this dance work was being created with a specific audience in mind – those interested in education, artistry, performance and scholarly inquiry – the work also needed to be accessible to those unfamiliar with the form, so as not to alienate the audience or do disservice to the method. I have experienced resistance to performed research from members of my faculty who ask 'Is this research?' Naturally I consider it to be; yet I can see how others might disagree, perhaps due to limited performance literacy. Since Bagley and Cancienne's approach to dancing their data, access to a variety of performance mediums through video and Internet has enhanced audience's visual literacy. Increased access has also assisted to popularize art forms previously considered elitist, avant-garde, or inaccessible. A balance in creating an artwork that does justice to both the art form and the research is paramount.

The work

The [dance work](#) under discussion in this paper is a recent addition to my performed research work '[The First Time](#)'. Research data was collected from twelve participants in their first year of teaching, through three individual semi-structured interviews and written communication. Participants were asked to describe their 'firsts' – epiphanic or revelatory moments of identity transformation. The processes of scripting, rehearsing, and performing, were utilized to analyze this data and represent the data to expert audiences. The play and performance form part of my doctorate titled 'Firsts: Performing Ways First Year Teachers Experience Identity Transformation' (Ludecke, 2013). 'The First Time' and the dance work use only the words of the teacher participants, and are performed by teachers. 'The First Time' is a 40 minute non-naturalistic performance in twelve scenes, each scene representing the individual participant's 'first' experiences. The dance work was crafted two years after the premiere performance of 'The First Time' to bring together the comparable experiences of first year teacher participants, and similarities among the findings of my research of their experiences, namely the destabilizing effect of contextual factors on the reflexive transformation of their professional identity. In the creation of both 'The First Time' and the more recent version including the dance work, I privilege the process over the creation of an aesthetic object. The creation of 'The First Time' was a tool for me to understand and analyse my data. The process of creating the dance work was a means of representing my findings. This dance work was choreographed on (in order of appearance) Beaux Glenn and Arna Pletes.

Choreographic process

About the research

The research from which this duet arises was framed within a phenomenographic paradigm. This mode of inquiry seeks to describe, analyse, and understand (Marton, 1981) the qualitatively different experiences beginning teachers undergo in their identity formation and transformation. Phenomenography seeks a description of experiences that highlight notions of identity. Where phenomenology is the study of a phenomenon, phenomenography is the study of how people experience a given phenomenon. The aim of this phenomenographic approach was to develop a collective analysis of individual experiences (Åkerlind, 2005). Phenomenography investigates qualitatively different ways in which people experience something or think about something. Both phenomenographic and phenomenologic approaches share the importance of a description of the meaning of the expressions of lived experience – an intermediate (or mediated) description of the lifeworld as expressed in symbolic form. When description is thus mediated by expression then description seems to contain a stronger element of interpretation (van Manen, 1990, p. 25). Both phenomenographic and phenomenologic approaches share an understanding that each approach to research is 'a poeticising activity' (van Manen, 1984, p. 2). The focus of eliciting responses from individual participants is not primarily to be able to 'report' on how teaching is seen from their particular perspective, but to ask the question of what is the nature of this phenomenon as an essentially human experience. How is this beginning teaching? Is this what it is like to be a beginning teacher? Is this what it means to begin to teach? Is this what the beginning teaching experience is like?

The aim of this phenomenographic approach is to develop a collective analysis of individual experiences (Åkerlind, 2005). In the analysis I identified categories that were stable and generalisable between individual situations even if individuals moved between categories on different occasions. Within a phenomenographic paradigm these set of categories or meanings derived from participants' descriptions to frame the analysis of experiences were not determined in advance, but 'emerged' from the data (Åkerlind, 2012; Marton, 1981; Ornek, 2008). I centred on the similarities among participants' reported experiences in developing this dance work. The intention of the dance work, as a conclusion to 'The First Time', was to bring together and report these similarities, while the main body of the work dealt with the differences.

Key phrases from the participant's interviews were chosen for the dance work to represent similarities regarding the experiences of identity transformation and transition to teaching, particularly in the first year. These key phrases, which were incorporated into the soundtrack, are:

- 'Why are you helping everyone else but me? I'm asking for help and no one will help me'
- 'The biggest impact on my thoughts and life is this bloody contract – and they've got you by the next, got you by the throat'
- 'Not prepared for that unless you're actually physically dumped in there – sink or swim sort of thing – is it going to work? Isn't it? And then you sort of do the reflection'
- 'I still don't feel quite a part of the school yet'
- 'I feel like my body's getting ready to just BLECH!'
- 'BAM! You're a teacher'
- 'OK, metaphor. Tiptoeing – and now I'm doing it, I'm doing the run'.



Figure 3 'I'm asking for help...'

These phrases represent the similarities among participants' experiences. The similarities in the data revealed the need for support; the destabilizing effects of contract employment; the prevalence of survival discourses; the importance of belonging; the physical nature of beginning teaching; the suddenness of the transition to teaching; and the freedom associated with developing their practice and understanding their identity. Similarities among participants were framed around discussions of how survival, hegemonic and liminal discourses, interactions and affiliations, and situated work continually shape beginning teachers professional identity.

Findings represented in the dance work



Figure 4 '...got you by the neck...'

In addition to selected key phrases from the participants' interviews, the broader findings of the main theme of survival shaped the choreography of the dance work. This discourse has been historically formed and structured among and about beginning teachers, particularly in the last thirty years, and has been preserved and maintained through teacher education practice and research, and teaching institutions. From the participants' accounts the process of mentoring seems inadequate. They state it is insufficient to wait until beginning teachers are sinking before providing them with support. Their accounts also point to the way survival discourses are expressed as social norms with regard to beginning teaching in particular, reproduced as cultural capital through the actions of mentors, and in turn shaping the way beginning teachers express a need for assistance either explicitly or through their actions.

Findings including hegemonic discourses that have become so embedded in the culture of the first year teacher as to be widely accepted without question, and liminal discourses of being 'in-between' states that emerged as culturally and discursively formed and structured through vernacular language from the participants themselves were reviewed, and provided the foundation for the dance work. Beginning teachers often develop their own liminal, culturally formed vernacular language to describe their status in relation to becoming a teacher. Within the hegemonic discourse of a 'grad' teacher, beginning teachers, specifically those employed under contract positions, are separated from their more experienced colleagues. The participants in this study often called themselves 'just a grad' or 'only a first-year'. This hegemonic discourse is employed as a form of first year teachers' othering themselves. Gee contends that 'nonelites are "encouraged" to accept the inferior identities elites ascribe to them in talk and interaction ... as if they were the actual achieved identities of these nonelite people, achieved on the basis of their lack of skill, intelligence, morality, or sufficient effort in comparison with the elites' (2000, p. 113). The participants in this study ascribe inferior identities for themselves to distinguish themselves from 'elites' for a variety of purposes. These purposes include subscribing to affinity groups, describing lack of skill or expertise, and expressing an absence of status. Teachers experience a range of liminal moments in 'becoming' a teacher that place the beginning teacher in survival mode. Contrasts between feeling like a 'real' teacher and viewing themselves as 'just a grad' heighten these liminal moments in relation to the contractual nature of beginning teachers' work.

In employing such terms themselves these teachers indicate their status in the social hierarchy within their school, and also their affiliation with other beginning teachers in the wider teaching community. It is uncertain whether the term 'grad' began as a pejorative term and has been adopted in a non-pejorative sense. The teachers in this study use the term in a non-pejorative sense, to define who they are at this moment in time; that they are who they are because of the experiences they have had within their affinity group (Gee, 2000). Pay, and other conditions of teachers' work such as tenure, comprise some of the extra-individual features of practice that shape the discourse concerning beginning teachers' status. Interactions and affiliations between beginning teachers and their more experienced colleagues often begin through either formal or informal mentoring. In many situations the beginning teachers in this study expressed the importance of comprehending the existing socially formed and structured understandings in their new environment in order to develop their context-specific skills and techniques. They did this by seeking signals from their allocated mentors as to how things are done (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). Many of the participants described their initial encounters



Figure 5 'The biggest impact on my thoughts and life...'

with influential colleagues such as mentors

and team leaders as problematic. While some difficulties were due to a reported clash of personalities, many said it was their own attempts to 'fit in' and 'be accepted' that proved the greatest challenge.

Situated work – the contractual nature of beginning teaching – remains of concern to beginning teachers. Participants' language with regard to their understanding of the nature of their work was peppered with terms about salary, contracts, and ongoing positions. They expressed an increased sense of frustration in regards to their contracts, particularly when job advertisements were released in terms two and four of the school years. Many participants were frustrated by the fact that the number of teachers on contracts outweighed the number of ongoing positions offered or advertised at their school. Others discussed broken promises made to them regarding the contractual nature of their employment.

Through survival, liminal and hegemonic discourses the first year teacher is ascribed the status of a survivor. The dance work aims to represent the finding that beginning teachers 'surviving' the contractual nature of teaching are in a lifeboat. It appears that until they gain ongoing tenure they cannot operate beyond being a beginning teacher because they are operating without a base. They are neither sinking nor swimming in this liminal state. They cannot feel like a 'real' teacher until they can operate with certainty.

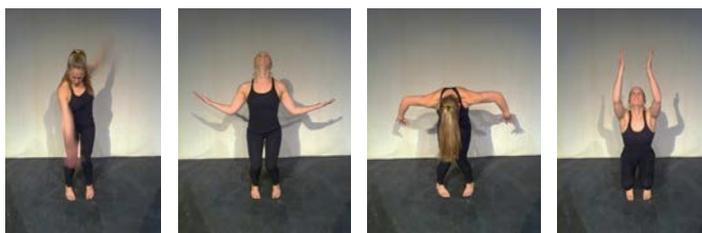


Figure 6 'Not prepared for that unless you're physically dumped in there..'

Interpretation, selection of movement vocabulary and shaping the work

In order to represent the complexities of the findings as outlined above, the salient aspects of the choreographic process were, for me, to create a work that left room for ambiguity, while promoting empathy. Barone and Eisner (1997, p. 75) describe the presence of ambiguity as the careful positioning of blanks or gaps in the 'text', to be filled in by the audience with personal meaning from their own experiences outside what is represented. The promotion of empathy is required in order to produce powerful representations of the perspectives of certain kinds of people for the same kinds of people. Empathic understanding encourages audiences to participate vicariously in another form of life and to reconstruct the subjects' perspective within themselves. In order to consider these ideas when choreographing I drew on my contemporary dance experience in Graham Technique to facilitate the external expression of intense emotion. Martha Graham was a student of Denishawn in the mid-1910s to 1922, a school founded by pioneers of modern dance Ruth St Denis and Ted Shawn. At Denishawn Graham developed her own movement vocabulary, philosophy and later a dance company. Her technique forms a foundation for many contemporary movement vocabularies today. Graham's key concepts that drive my work include the notion that the secret emotional world made visible by a dancer's movement could not always be expressed in words. She wanted her dances to be "felt" rather than "understood", thus expressing primal emotions through stylized bodily movement of great intensity (Freedman, 1998). Graham-based movement vocabulary works effectively to create the presence of ambiguity and the promotion of empathy through working with positive and negative space – in my dance work the negative space signifies the emotions, the positive space signifies the actions and thought of the 'human'.

The process of choreographing the specific movements and phrases began by following Cancienne's method of highlighting action verbs, adjectives and adverbs from the 'Findings' in my research. I pre-prepared some stimulus material of key words highlighted within phrases from the participant's interviews, then workshopped these with Beaux and Arna, beginning first with literal gestures, and then abstracting them into movements and phrases through manipulation of time, shape and dynamics.

Initially we began working without music or the voices of the participants. Once I added the music that had been fragmented and rearranged, which was an integral aspect to the form of the work, Beaux and Arna noticed a deeper connection with the movement vocabulary and expressive intention. This was heightened when we added the voice recordings, and assisted to further shape the form of the work. The use of fragmentation and rearrangement to express the intention of apart and together meant we had to work backwards from choreographing the duet to then separating the phrases for the solos. Beaux and Arna both reported they found it difficult in the initial stages to separate their partnered movements into solo phrases, noticing that this process reflected the difficulties they experienced as beginning teachers themselves in the past. Beaux in particular expressed feeling the isolation participants reported and the awkwardness of attempting to achieve something without the necessary support, in the development of her solo.

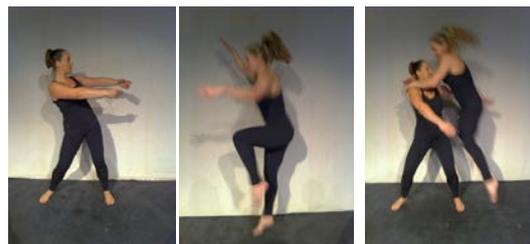


Figure 7 Fragmentation and rearrangement

The personal signature apparent in my performed research serves to celebrate my creative bias. I shaped the 'reality' in accordance with my own particular thesis, or controlling insight, which the work is composed to suggest. The thesis, a pervasive quality in the 'text', serves to structure the various components of the work (Barone & Eisner, 1997), and also serves as a mediator for choosing what to include or exclude from the work, particularly in creating the presence of ambiguity. In 'reading' the performance the audience co-constructs meaning, filling in the gaps with their own knowledge. The performance asks audience members to witness the findings of the research, to consider who and where they are in these stories, and to consider their own relationships with the data.

The connection between my personal creative signature present in the work and the presence of aesthetic form include a stripped back, minimalist look that employs block use of colour, choreographed and abstracted movement, symbolic use of positive and negative space, and manipulation of choreographic devices including repetition, contrast (qualities of movement), polyphony - two or more simultaneous lines of independent movement/voices that were created through fragmentation and rearrangement of the duet to form the beginning solos, and motif. I work in a minimalist manner in order to scrutinize the participants' personal experiences through laying bare the essence of the research. I also work mathematically by representing emergent themes from the data through the manipulation of time – numbers of beats and repetition of patterns and phrases in movement and music. This approach to choreography demonstrates my analytic process of focusing on the immediate rather than the extraneous, in order to encourage the audience to focus on the quintessential, filling in the peripheral through personal experiences.

The technical and production choices I made align with my creative signature. The close-fitting black attire aimed to draw attention to the body, specifically to the positive and negative shapes. The teacher-performers were not portraying 'characters' as such, with the emphasis more on the movement and space between the bodies. The attire also serves to emphasize the sensuality, strength and quality of the movement. Their facial expressions were intended to convey emotion, rather than characterization. The music was specifically selected to enhance the performance and assist to express the intention. The music was fragmented during editing, and rearranged in order to augment the motifs through the solo sections that come together in the duet. The words of the participants in the soundtrack were also projected in the background during the performance, to assist the audience. As the participants' interview recordings took place often in noisy locations, I wanted to clarify the phrases, while retaining the colloquial and spontaneous nature of the spoken words.



Figure 8 'I'm doing the run'

Time

Bagley and Cancienne discovered that creating an improvised dance work at short notice (2001) was not only risky, but also had the potential to trivialize the data. Allowing sufficient time to choreograph and rehearse assisted me to create a work that respected the voices and experiences of the research participants. A period of three months was dedicated to the development, choreography and rehearsal of the dance work. The work is performed by two of the teacher-performers from 'The First Time', who were already familiar with the data. Unlike Cancienne in her choreographed work (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002) who was working with a culturally unfamiliar data set, my teacher-performers' deep familiarization reduced the amount of time they may have required otherwise. Sufficient time for the performers to understand the data is highly recommended for those considering a performed research approach. Cancienne performed herself, which perhaps reduced the amount of time it may have taken to familiarize additional performers with the data. My performers' background as teachers was an important part of their selection for the work, and is discussed in the ethical obligations next.

Ethical obligations

The main ethical consideration for me was that the participants' stories were to be represented in a performance. Denzin (2005, p. 952) describes an ethical and moral stance for the performance ethnographer that transcends traditional ethical models of do no harm, and the maintenance of anonymity. He argues that the researcher needs to be accountable, caring, value individual expressiveness, and have empathy for those studied, thereby focusing also on possibilities when considering ethical approaches to performing the research. Above all it has been my aim to ensure that I, and the teacher-performers, always respect the differences between our own stories and the stories of those we were presenting (Denzin, 2003). After many years of schooling most of us have an idea of what teachers and students look like. There are (often stereotypical) actions and reactions that we recognise as belonging to classrooms, a vocabulary of educational habits that is inscribed in and on the body as the subject lives through certain experiences (Hewson, 2007, p. 3-4). Boal recognized that we have physical traits based on our social and work experiences, a kind of 'muscular alienation' (Boal, 1985, p. 127), a telling way people of a particular profession physically present themselves. Dwyer, following Boal, tested the underlying assumption at work in Forum Theatre, that enactment is worth more than speech, as if bodies 'speak more', and more accurately, than mere words (2004, p. 200).

With these thoughts in mind I considered carefully the implications of employing dancers in the performance. In my previous experience I found actors' and dancers' portrayals, while skilled and engaging, to be deficient in their embodiment, combining physical and cognitive understanding of, and sensitivity to representations of teacher characters and teachers' experiences. As a result I decided against employing actors to portray the teachers' characters in 'The First Time', and instead employed teachers with an understanding of performance. Many of these teacher-performers had combined dance and drama backgrounds, so when it came to developing the dance work the choice of dancers was made far easier. The teacher-performers of the dance work – Beaux and Arna respectively – are both skilled choreographers and dancers. I felt it was imperative that skilled practitioners perform the work in order to fully address my obligations to the art form, audience, research and participants.

Practical and logistical constraints

Having presented 'The First Time' at a number of conferences, I too have experienced the practical difficulty of staging creative works in spaces that perpetuate the existing culture of presenting papers formally in a static manner. At one conference our performance was scheduled in a room with the most enormous lectern fixed firmly in the middle of the performance space! It is a testament to the flexibility of the teacher-performers that, within an hour of arriving, they were able to adapt readily to the space. For the more recent presentation, with the inclusion of the dance work, we were fortunate enough to experience presenting in a theatre. Knowing this at the time of choreographing, I was still aware that the work needed to be performed in other potentially restrictive spaces. This impacted on the selection of movement vocabulary, specifically the amount of locomotive and elevated movements that could be included. We all noted how performing in a theatre intensified the kinesthetic energy. On entering any theatrical space the performers and audience accept the conventions of the theatre more readily than perhaps in alternate spaces. It was expected that this tacit agreement would contribute to a shift in audience responses to what we had experienced in previous spaces. However, there was not much difference reported by audience members who had seen the work performed elsewhere, or by the teacher-performers, beyond the pleasure of having more space. I noted during the dress rehearsal that the teacher-performers seemed to 'lift', which was interesting, as there was no audience. After the performance audience responses were similar to those we have had in the past. These observations cause me to consider whether the space is as important as we might think. That if the performance is flexible enough to be presented in a variety of spaces, and is considered, doing justice to the art form, participants and research, the performance space could be anywhere – though this is still to be 'tested'. Yet, despite this, is the work taken seriously as research?



Figure 7 Practical constraints

Is performed research still considered research?

There is still a dividing perception between schools in universities that constrain the possibilities of cross-disciplinary research. When presenting the premiere of 'The First Time' at my own institution I was informed that the School of Creative Arts theatre space was primarily for creative works. As I belonged to the School of Education I was directed to find an alternate space. While this worked out well for me in the end, it represents the constraints that can steer researchers away from exploring a variety of methods. Many arts-based researchers (Anderson, 2007; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Jaeger, 1997; Sinclair, 2012) have discussed their mode of inquiry as not being taken seriously as real research. It is a shame that such seemingly inconsequential constraints continue to shape the form research is conducted and disseminated. Contemporary pedagogical approaches to teaching have shifted from the teacher as expert and student as a blank slate model to one where teachers encourage a love of learning and strategies for students to make discoveries of their own. Like this pedagogical shift, I see the benefit of 'dancing the data' as one where discussion can be stimulated, and where audiences can be encouraged towards more divergent ways of thinking about research, findings and method. Researchers from a range of traditions of inquiry and artistic practices have brought the aesthetic and performative into their investigations of the social, cultural, and political world; in doing so they highlight the potential for giving voice to the marginalized, the silenced and the personal - those unrepresented by more traditional academic research.

While it is difficult to operate in an environment that privileges a specific form of research, unless we continue to push these boundaries, change will be even slower in coming. For all the difficulties Bagley and Cancienne outline, which I shared, there are a number of positives to creating performed research. The power of my performed research lies in the sustainability of the work. Since the premier performance in 2012 of 'The First Time' the work has continued to evolve from an effective tool for analyzing data into a work that has become more significant than anticipated. 'The First Time' has subsequently been performed at a number of conferences, and the recording of the premiere

performance has been distributed to a number of interested parties who have used it as a stimulus for discussion. The Alberta Teachers' Association – a group of educators in Canada, who meet monthly to discuss educational issues – used 'The First Time' as both point and counterpoint for a discussion of teacher identity formation in Alberta. Working both across their own experiences of teaching firsts, to the firsts of new teachers the Alberta group have worked with and supervised, they considered "what the play said to us".

There is some acknowledgement that audiences can benefit from observation of performed research. 'Acting in the mind' (Jansma & Others, 1997) as a tool has its roots in metacognitive and reflective approaches to learning and can be described as a neural activity that is very similar to the activity accompanying the actual behaviour. Acting in the mind can overwrite previous behaviours, which may have become instinctive reactions to situations. In teacher education this can be especially beneficial in 'reprogramming' teachers to react to teaching situations in ways that may seem counter-intuitive, but have been previously judged to be ineffective. While acting in the mind is a behaviourist approach to forming new neural pathways in response to certain stimuli, it recognizes the importance of active engagement of the audience of an event to assist their reflective practices. This move from the audience's inactive level of participation, for example in traditional theatre or performance as imitation, towards a more interactive or proactive stance, triggers participatory behaviour in the audience, and encouraging the audience member's imagination to flesh out the ideas presented (Pelias & VanOosting, 1987, p. 226).

I have employed scenes from 'The First Time' as provocations in workshops for undergraduates in their final semester of teacher education. These workshops included a combination of viewing, discussing, re-enacting, and re-working the scenes from 'The First Time' based on a Forum Theatre workshop format. The predominant format of a Forum Theatre event is where the spect-actor voices their opinion and enacts change. In this way Forum Theatre in its simplest form can be a valuable and uncomplicated method of providing teachers with the opportunity to create alternate outcomes in response to a situation. These workshops have used the video recordings of the works. These are less powerful than a live performance, though they are more sustainable and accessible. The workshops gave pre-service teachers a chance to experientially explore how they might resolve problematic first year teaching situations. The physicality of the scene work made it possible to consciously access and use their tacit knowledge, and has assisted pre-service teachers to understand identity-making as a fluid and ever-changing practice. Forum Theatre scenarios based on real-life events such as the ones represented in 'The First Time' have an advantage over case study discussions as they present smaller slices of experience, encouraging the consideration of important contextual clues like body language, gesture and emotion that case studies may not be able to portray with detail or nuance. Such scenarios offer the opportunity to actively test hypotheses, and they provide immediate, precise feedback on intuitive decision-making skills (Hewson, 2007, p. 3).

My involvement with performed research is grounded in creating works that 'speak to' their audiences. In order to counter the constraints experienced by researchers it is important to create sustainable and accessible performed research; to look for opportunities of recording and disseminating live performance to broader audiences. Bagley and Cancienne's work has assisted me to pre-empt some of the practical and logistical constraints I could have faced, as well as to provide a strong foundation for the creation of a performed research dance work that meets the ethical obligations to the voices of the participants, the art form, the audience, and myself as a researcher. With a considered approach it is possible for performed research to become an accessible and sustainable methodological practice for researchers.

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