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Bullying: A performance piece addressing emotional and verbal abuse between children

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Bullying: A performance piece addressing emotional and verbal
abuse between children

Performance Title: Cause to Effect

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Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Inspiration	4
Creating the Bully	6
Creating the Victim	7
Blurring the Lines Between the Bully and the Victim	8
The Dancers	8
The Choreography	9
Section 1	9
Section 2	11
Section 3	12
Section 4	13
Section 5	14
The Process	15
Costumes and Hair	16
Taking the Project into Schools	17
Project Outcome	20
Works Cited.....	21

Abstract

Bullying is a perpetual struggle for many children and young people, particularly at school. Many schools work to provide information about bullying and its consequences, however this material is often presented in lecture format. The goal of this project was to address this issue from another perspective and hopefully allow the children to physically see the effects through relatable movement and text. This project consisted of extensive research and a resulting dance performance designed to address bullying in the form of verbal and emotional abuse between children. Meant for grades 3, 4, 5, and 6, the performance was designed to connect emotionally to the students, increase awareness of the situation, and hopefully alter the individual's choices and actions. Working with six dancers, the contemporary dance performance was presented at Spring Creek Elementary in Laramie, Wyoming. The students were asked to participate by identifying the victim in an attempt to create an emotional connection to this character. As a group, they were also asked to consider their options as a bully, victim, and bystander. It was one step towards creating a new dialogue of an old problem. This paper will include information collected during the research phase, explanation of the dance choreography and performance, observed reactions and results, and finally how this project might be further adapted for future performances and alternative venues.

This project was designed to address verbal and emotional bullying between children. The project is multi-faceted, including extensive research, creative process, and a final performance. Meant for grades 3, 4, 5, and 6, the goal of the performance was to connect emotionally to the students, bring awareness to the abuse, and hopefully elicit change. Working with six dancers, I created a contemporary dance performance that could change the way the audience saw a problem.

Inspiration

Two years ago, while studying abroad in London, my search for new art and dance experiences lead me to an unusual performance. I had the opportunity to see a work choreographed by Luca Silverstini, entitled *Border Tales*.¹ It addressed multiculturalism in London, as well as the way one sees and treats the differences in others. This emotionally driven performance resonated with me as a dancer, an artist, and a human. I was forced to question my own actions and experiences, wondering if I had ever treated another with disrespect or prejudice. I left the theatre with an incredible inspiration to create a work with a similar outcome. It was something that went beyond the pretty aesthetic and had a clear intention to elicit change.

Growing up, I experienced bullying first hand as a tall and awkward girl who did not fit in with the ‘popular kids’. Eventually I grew to appreciate the qualities that made me different from those around me, allowing me to look back objectively on the abuse. While I was able to find closure and move on from my experiences, I can still relate to those in a similar situation.

¹ *Border Tales*, Choreographed by Lucas Silverstine, England, London, March 2014.

The very idea of bullying is defined in many different ways, making it difficult to solve the problem.² While physical violence is often addressed more often, verbal and mental abuse is just as prevalent. I have also had experience with verbal and emotional abuse. I understand that it is not seen or recognized as easily. Instead it is passed off as trivial and unimportant, thus I chose this focus as opposed to physical bullying.

Bullying is “commonly defined as a specific form of aggression that is intentional, repeated, and involving a disparity of power between the victim and perpetrators.”³ Yet despite the countless organizations, videos, teaching tools, and other forms of help, bullying is still a problem between children. It has become such a widespread subject in popular culture and the media; it no longer carries the same message.⁴ Research has found, however, that there are “physical and mental adverse health outcomes associated with childhood bullying that are exhibited both during the time the bullying is occurring and into adulthood.”⁵ But little is still known on how to protect children from this abuse.⁶ Instead I believe it is necessary to change the actions of the children, ridding the need for protection in the first place.

Verbal and emotional abuse is usually connected with the social setting, which has proven links to the health of the individual.⁷ Yet these problems are not always addressed within the school systems, as there are few government programs in place. Some states only acknowledge or focus on physical violence, ignoring the consequences of other types of abuse.⁸

² Lori Hoetger, Katherine Hazen, and Eve Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying,” *Journal of Family Violence* 30, 2015, 103-11.

³ Donna Marvicsin, Nicole Boucher, and Megan J. Eagle, “Youth bullying: Implications for primary care providers,” *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners* 9, 2013, 523-7.

⁴ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying”.

⁵ Marvicsin, Boucher, and Eagle, “Youth bullying: Implications for primary care providers”.

⁶ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying”.

⁷ Saleem Razack, “Vulnerable and marginalized children: Who are they and how can we help?” *Pediatrics & Child Health* 14, 2009, 287-9.

⁸ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying”.

Other states have no regulations at all within the school system. In other cases, there is simply nothing the school or the teacher can do to improve the situation.

There are some programs set up to help schools counteract bullying. “Currently, no state specifically requires a school district to institute one of these proven programs.”⁹ This leaves teachers and students to deal with the problem on their own. Statutes also “do not require the policies that schools adopt to be empirically tested or research based”.¹⁰ Some states have chosen to introduce policies to help the situation. States like Colorado have policies, but no laws against bullying.¹¹ Wyoming updated its laws in 2009 with a program designed to help schools and children dealing with this problem.¹²

Within the classroom, there is only so much that a policy or law can do. According to a second grade teacher, the instructor often does not see the act of bullying occur.¹³ She stated, “kids are smart, they know when the teacher is watching”.¹⁴ It makes it difficult for any discipline to be properly used in order to prevent abuse. It can also become hard to know who is telling the truth with two different stories: one child against another.¹⁵ Thus it is important for the kids themselves to understand that their actions have consequences. Their words and actions can severely affect others.

Creating the Bully

Kids that are “high on hyperactivity and impulsiveness are more likely to become bullies”.¹⁶ This includes problems holding still and doing things without thinking.¹⁷ These

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Bully Police: A Watchdog Organization,” BullyPolice.org, 2015, Accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.bullypolice.org/>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Meghan Joder, Interview by author, April 5th, 2015.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying”.

¹⁷ “Kids Health: Hyperactivity,” KidsHealth, 2015, Accessed February 15, 2015, <http://kidshealth.org/>.

children are often misunderstood and not treated properly, causing them to lash out on others. Bullies tend to have a lower IQ, lack empathy, are impulsive, aggressive, antisocial, and cannot understand how their actions hurt others.¹⁸

They also often have problems at home.¹⁹ These family variables contribute to the child's behavior. These problems can include a parent convicted of a crime, domestic violence, history with child protective services, and the parents know less about his or her child's activities. The 'Bully' proved to be a very complex character to understand and create within the work.

I wanted to answer how the bully gets to where they are. What makes them act this way? Often these individual problems are not recognized or treated properly. This leads to misunderstood children who act out with bullying. The progression of the bully became an important part of this project.

Creating the Victim

On the other hand, the victim is often socially weak, shy, and anxious. They are less competent on social norms, submissive, withdrawn, and have fewer high quality friendships.²⁰ Being a part of the racial minority can also increase the chance of victimization.²¹ The victim also has less support from his or her parents, much like the bully.²² Many begin to avoid school in order to hide from the abuse. This is certainly not an option we want for children. Later in life, the victim continues to feel the effects of bullying. It can lead to negative behaviors, self-repeated violence, and a generally unsuccessful life.²³

¹⁸ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, "All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying".

¹⁹ Daniel Cooper, Interview by author, December 26th, 2014.

²⁰ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, "All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying".

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Blurring the Lines Between the Bully and the Victim

The more I learned about the bully and the victim; similarities began to show up between the two roles. While bullies do externalize emotions and the victim internalizes these feelings, these factors can quickly shift as a child evolves.²⁴ One teacher suggested that he almost felt sympathy for the bully as much as the victim.²⁵ He wanted to find a way to help the bully as well as the victim. It created the question of ‘if’ and ‘how’ an individual can shift from the victim to the role of the bully. Both characters usually have effects that follow them into adulthood.²⁶ There is also a crossover in the symptoms the child begins to exhibit.²⁷

The complexity of these characters lead me to explore more than simply one ‘bully’ and one ‘victim’. I wanted to blur the lines between the two characters to show how easily we are all affected by these abuses. Thus almost every dancer plays the role of the ‘victim’ and the ‘bully’ at one point or another during the progression of the piece. The roles switch as relationships progress or change and the children mature. The circumstances affect how each child acts, reacting to the situation in an attempt to simulate how children respond in real life.

The Dancers

Choosing the dancers was an important element of this work. I chose my dancers through previous knowledge rather than using an audition process. The project addressed serious topics, thus I wanted a group that could be serious and truthful, thus a small and tight knit cast was chosen and created. I chose dancers who I believed were mature enough to handle the topic and not make it into a joke. It was also required that the dancers were available February thru the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Daniel Cooper, Interview by author.

²⁶ Marvicsin, Boucher, and Eagle, “Youth bullying: Implications for primary care providers”.

²⁷ Ibid.

middle of the next semester. In order to follow the progression of the piece, from this point on the dancers will be referred to as Dancer One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six.

Through my research, I found that “girls are more often involved in verbal and relational bullying”.²⁸ Boys on the other hand, were more likely to exhibit physical abuse.²⁹ Thus I chose six responsible women to work on this project with me. While the process had its challenges, I am pleased with the group assembled, as they took on the project as if it were their own and danced it beautifully and truthfully.

The Choreography

Section 1:

Once the research was finished and the dancers had committed to the process, it was time to start the choreography. The final work consisted of five sections, following the tale of the victim as the role passed from person to person. It begins lighthearted in order to draw the audience into the story, yet as it evolves, some of the darker aspects of the subject begin to appear. My goal was to appeal to the kindness and compassion that exists in us all.

The first section begins with a single phrase consisting mostly of hand movements. This theme appears several times over the course of the work. Part of this phrase was inspired by a game I used to play when I was young, creating an illusion of play rather than prescribed dancing. I believed this was the best way to capture and connect with the younger audience. This was danced to a soundscape of children playing on a playground in order to truly set the scene.

One dancer enters the scene at a time. They begin to connect and create friendships. Slowly this phrase evolves into larger movement and begins to travel within the space. It

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying”.

progresses from the floor to a mid level, and finally to standing in order to signify a growth of the children. Simultaneously, one child, Dancer One, enters later than the rest and begins the same phrase, yet she does not progress in the same way. Instead she stays at the base level. When the other children notice this, they begin to pick on her for her differences. This employed “the intentional, repetitive harming or injury by one’s peers”, where Dancer One was “unable to avoid or stop the victimization”.³⁰

Each time she is bullied, she is knocked to the ground by an invisible force. The challenge here was to make it clear that this was not a sign of physical abuse. Instead the movement attempted to simulate name-calling, exclusion from the group, and mocking.³¹ Each time Dancer One was victimized, the bullies represented a different form of abuse. Two other dancers, Dancer Two and Three, represented the concept of rumor spreading and the idea of purposely leaving Dancer One out of the activities or interactions. Dancer Four used verbal bullying with spoken aggressions. Dancer Five and Six showed the imbalance of power between the bullies and the victim, based on body type, age, and social circles.³² These two focused on appearances, miming the concept of makeup and clothing to suggest that they may be older. They had the feel of the ‘cool girls’ that are often seen in school, depicting a ‘high and mighty’ attitude. In rehearsal, they were referred to as the ‘gossip girls’. In an interview with a student who encountered bullying in school, it was suggested that the encounters became worse when kids started to care more about looks and appearances.³³

Section One turned out to be the longest. I worked a great deal with dance professors as they came to watch and help with the choreography. While at times it seemed too long, I felt it

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Meghan Joder, Interview by author.

³² Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying”.

³³ Walter Taylor, Interview by author, April 16, 2015.

was an important section in order to set the scene for the next sections. It had the feel of a playground and employed a comedic theme in order to draw the kids into the dance. I used childhood hand games to create dance that incorporated play. It turned out to be incredibly fun for the cast to work with old games that they remembered from school. It helped to give some soul to the dancing. Since the dancers were having fun, the children had fun watching it.

Section 2:

The abuse that progresses during the first section leads to Dancer One's evolution from a victim to a bully in the second section. This is a solo that represents the story of how a makes the transformation from being abused to giving abuse, and how she gets there. Her character is forced to process a great deal of anger and depression that is often associated with children in this type of situation. I employed some of the symptoms that the victim displays in order to blur the lines between the two roles. She showed signs of headaches, stomachaches, anxiety, and depression.³⁴ As her character shifts, she also begins to develop the leadership skills seen in a bully, as she begins to command those around her rather than allowing them to control her.³⁵

Working with Dancer One taught me a great deal about working and helping the dancers that are in a dance. As a choreographer, the movement is only a small part of the production. This was a hard role for her, as she is quiet and shy, yet her character needed to show this deep anger that made her into a bully. It was a hard place for her to reach, but together we were able to find it. I employed videos on how the victim feels. We discussed the intent and the progression of the character at great lengths in order for her to truly understand her part. During one rehearsal, we tried the solo without music, asking her yell at various points during the dance. It really helped Dancer One to invest that extra energy and become immersed into the character.

³⁴ Marvicsin, Boucher, and Eagle, "Youth bullying: Implications for primary care providers".

³⁵ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, "All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying".

From then on, I decided the music was too weak in quality for her to truly feel the anger. I did not want to use a heavier song, as I wanted the emotion to come solely from her, thus I decided to make this part in silence.

I was very pleased with Dancer One's progression as a dancer and an artist during this work. She had great dedication and perseverance that was incredibly helpful. I believe we both learned a great deal from the process.

Section 3:

The third section begins with the re-entrance of Dancer Three. She comes upon Dancer One after she has finished a very intense progression. Immediately Dancer One takes control of the situation, putting Dancer Three into a position of submission. One student who had experienced bullying in school recalled that talking back would sometimes make the abuse worse and it was easier to simply stay quiet and follow.³⁶ Thus Dancer Three is immediately drawn into Dancer One's group. She becomes one who reinforces, giving the bully an audience without getting directly involved.³⁷ It encourages the bully to continue to harm others. Each dancer is slowly drawn into Dancer One's social clique as they re-enter the scene. They begin as bystanders unwilling to stop the abuse.

Dancer One begins the next movement phrase. It is powerful with strong and bold movements. The music also imitates this feeling, with a strong and driving downbeat. This same phrase is repeated and altered in various ways, yet Dancer One remains the leader of the section.

Dancer Five becomes the next victim, representing the imbalance of power when she falls while attempting to complete Dancer One's movement.³⁸ While Dancer Five is shamed for her mistake, the rest of the group simply watches and allows it to happen. They represent the

³⁶ Walter Taylor, Interview by author.

³⁷ "Stop Bullying," StopBullying.gov, 2015, Accessed February 15th, 2015, <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

outsiders; they remain separate but do not reinforce or interfere. Research has shown that peers spend 75% of the time watching abuse happen without helping the victim.³⁹

Dancer Six does not enter the scene until the clique has been fully formed. When the last child enters, she is a representation of the social bullying in which one individual is excluded from the group on purpose. Here, the group becomes assisters. They do not start the bullying but they encourage and occasionally join in.⁴⁰

Only Dancer Two is willing to try to help the outsider. She denounces the bully in order to support the victim. Many children do not want to do this in order to avoid becoming the victim or be eliminated from the social network.⁴¹ If one decides to work against the bully, they often become the new focus of the abuse. This is shown when Dancer Two is deserted by her friends and becomes the new victim.

Section 4:

Dancer Two is left alone onstage, abandoned by her friends and as well as the child she has attempted to help. This part does not use music, but rather is a spoken section. The dancers on the side take turns speaking the lines of a true story of a victim. One student at the University was willing to share their story with me.⁴² When creating the solo, I worked with the words of the story in order to create movement. It needed to be closely linked to the words in order to show the relevance and truth of the story. While the dancing was still abstract and did not mime the words, there were still actions that the children could recognize. For example, when the story speaks of getting chosen last for sports in gym, the dancer acted out a basketball. The word ‘different’ was repeated several times within the story. Each time it was spoken, the dancer

³⁹ “BullyVille: Take the Bull by the horns,” BullyVille, 2015, Accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.bullyville.com/?page>.

⁴⁰ “Stop Bullying,” StopBullying.gov.

⁴¹ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying”.

⁴² Walter Taylor, Interview by author.

contracted as if being hit, showing the significance of the word. The ‘different’ students are usually the targets of this abuse. I think this became one of my favorite parts of the work, as it was truthful to the mission.

I believe this part drew the students into the story the most as well. When performing this section, they all looked incredibly invested into what happened to Dancer Two. When she fell, as a part of the choreography, several kids gasped and rose up on their knees to see better. This section really showed the true affects of bullying. The true story that accompanied it was priceless in its significance, bringing validation to the work.

Section 5:

The final section begins with the entrance of Dancer Three as a friend to help the victim. At this point, she becomes a defender, actively comforting the child suffering from the abuse.⁴³ Research has proven that having a best friend can often decrease an individuals chances of victimization, thus I felt this was an important factor to include in the work.⁴⁴

At first, Dancer Two (the victim) is unable to accept Dancer Three’s help, as her trust has decreased due to the abuse she has encountered. Slowly Dancer Three is able to reassure and comfort her. Slowly her joy returns as this friendship grows. This was the only section that I did not choreograph before rehearsing with the dancers. I wanted to create a truthful and intimate relationship between the two friends, thus we worked on the movement together, slowly adding piece by piece. I found this to be the easiest way to work with partnering, as it is difficult to imagine how two dancers will interact with one another until they are in the room.

When Dancer Two has finally found comfort with Dancer Three, she is drawn back into the symptoms of the bullied when an outsider from offstage laughs at her actions. The work ends

⁴³ “Stop Bullying,” StopBullying.gov.

⁴⁴ Hoetger, Hazen, and Brank, “All in the family: A retrospective study comparing sibling bullying and peer bullying”.

with each dancer slowly entering the scene to help Dancer Two. As each one comes to her side, she is able to stand up taller and move on in her life. Working together the group is able to defeat both the bully and the victim in all of us.

The Process

Throughout the creation of the piece, some sections were cut while others became longer and more developed. The extended rehearsal and research period was extremely beneficial in order to fully develop the narrative and movement vocabulary. In the end I was very pleased with the final product.

Several times I invited my advisor, as well as other faculty members within the dance department, to watch the piece and give feedback for improvement. This process provided additional eyes to see what was being communicated and what still needed work or attention. At one point, it was suggested that I add a costume piece or ribbon with a bright color that follows the victim throughout the dancing. My advisor suggested that kids would respond well to this type of visual. I decided to add a red ribbon that begins with Dancer One and is passed onto each new victim that appears. Not only did this help the audience to follow the story, but it also showed that everyone was affected by the abuse. No one came out of the situation untouched or unaffected.

This idea also helped to create a powerful ending for the piece. Every dancer slowly comes to comfort Dancer Two, giving her the confidence to drop the ribbon rather than passing it onto someone else. In the final moment, the cycle of abuse is broken. Another bully is not created, but instead they are able to move on and leave the symbolic ribbon behind.

Costumes and Hair

I wanted each dancer in pedestrian like clothing that simulated childhood without it being false or overdone. They used dresses, skirts, leggings and tights to create an everyday look that they could still move in. As this was a very low budget project, everyone used their own clothing, shared with one another, and used what I owned as well. We blended muted blues and maroons, as well as blacks and whites that gave it an interesting color scheme and created a cohesive picture. The colors were also important, as the red ribbon needed to be very evident against everyone's clothing.

A few of the dancers wore braids in their hair, as it was required for the choreography. For example, in the first section one of the bullies plays with Dancer One's braids in order to make fun of her appearances. The others had their hair out of their faces, but it was not tight or neat, as they still needed to look like children.

One of the hardest parts about the costumes was finding where to put the red ribbon for each dancer. Some put it in their hair while others tucked it in their dresses or shirts. The ribbon never left the stage, so they could never leave the space and neatly tie it in the correct place. It took a great deal of practice, but in the end the ribbon was never accidentally dropped.

Taking the Project into Schools

I worked with Kathy Kirkaldie, Theatre and Dance Fine Arts Coordinator, to learn the proper procedure of taking a performance into the school system. This long process actually began before any of the choreography. First, as a formality, I wrote a letter of intent to the

superintendent of the Albany County School District in February of 2015. This was sent by email, as well as a call to his secretary to inform him of the coming letter.

Next, I sent this letter to the principals of the elementary schools, along with a call to each school to explain the project, my goals, and the emailed letter. I contacted five different schools in this manner in March of 2015. While some showed interest, I did not hear from any of the principals during the spring. I began to call the schools again in August and September, explaining the project again. Many of the principals had forgotten or lost the letter, so I needed to resend it and re-explain the work. It took several tries, many emails, and many phone calls before I was able to set a date. In the end, Spring Creek Elementary accepted my proposal. We performed the piece for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade on October 27th, 2015. They had just finished a school wide unit on bullying, so it was perfect timing!

While the project originally included 6th grade, some of the Laramie schools only go to 5th grade. One other school was interested in the project coming, however due to timing conflicts we were unable to attend. The other schools did not respond or show interest to my proposal, however I was incredibly pleased to have the opportunity to perform at Spring Creek Elementary.

Before the dancers performed, I spoke to the kids about the project. Together we looked at how to define both a bully and a victim. I also asked them to try to follow the victim throughout the dancing.

The kids loved the performance, even more than I had ever expected! I loved watching their reactions to the dancers. When the music stopped, they all looked concerned, as they had never seen dancing in silence. Many thought it was a mistake. Watching their reactions and their faces, I believe the project worked exactly how it was meant to. They were involved and

interested. I believe many of the students learned something about dance and the affects of bullying.

After the performance, I spoke to the kids again. They were able to identify that the ribbon followed the victims. When asked about their favorite part, many could not decide on one single moment because they enjoyed the entire piece so much! One child liked the end, where all of the dancers helped the victim at the same time in order to conquer bullying and leave the red ribbon behind.

I also spoke to them about what they should do if they see bullying or encounter it in any way. This is where a lot of my research also came in handy. We spoke about helping the victim, making a new friend, telling the bully to stop, and going to a teacher or adult for help.

The counselor of the school, as well as many of the teachers, really loved the work and how it showed the topic of bullying in a different way. Dancing was able to provide a visual account of the abuse in a very special and distinctive way that cannot typically be provided in the classroom. They were all very thankful that we had taken the time to bring the project to them.

Each of the dancers also loved the experience. When performing, one can sense how the audience is reacting. If they are enjoying the piece and are interested in what is happening, it usually feeds the dancing with new energy and life. This is a part of the beauty of dancing and performing, especially in front of kids.

The students of the advanced modern dance class also came to watch the project. It was nice to have the support of my peers there during the performance. I asked them to fill out an evaluation of the performance, asking them if the concepts were clear and what they liked and did not like. It was very interesting to hear their feedback. While much of it was very positive, I appreciated reading where I could improve the project if it is repeated in the future. Many

suggested that the sections in silence were too long. Others found that some sections were slightly too long, losing the attention of the kids.

Limitations and Considerations

This project was accompanied with its rewards as well as its challenges. The basis of the work was to perform in an elementary school setting, yet it proved difficult to connect with the schools in Laramie, WY. Due to scheduling conflicts, testing schedules, and at times a lack of interest from the principals, I was only able to connect with one elementary school. It took a great deal of commitment and determination to connect with schools. In the end I was incredibly happy to take the project to Spring Creek Elementary.

While I was able to find extensive research on bullying and its consequences, in certain cases I was unable to match the information to the dance itself. For example, diversity and differences in race often lead to bullying between children. This became difficult to show in such a small dance department with a limited range of diversity. Thus I tried to display diversity in different ways that the children could understand by using hair, body type, and clothing. I exploited the differences among my dancers to show how a bully might focus on these variances.

The rehearsal process also came with a set of challenges. I worked with a group of students with individual work and class schedules, which were difficult to work with. It took constant communication to match everyone's free time in order to find a time to rehearse. In the end we were only able to rehearse for a single hour on Saturday mornings. As the process continued, some of the dancers did not show the same level of investment as I had originally anticipated, making the rehearsals very difficult. I found that the dancers needed clear

expectations from myself as a director. If they had a definite understanding of what I needed from them, there were fewer complications.

While each factor was difficult to manage, they helped me to learn how to create an outreach based dance performance. In the end I came away with a better understanding of connecting with performance venues, relating research to movement, working with a variety of dancers and personalities, and creating a cohesive performance. I now understand the amount of time it takes to connect with schools, and how much perseverance it requires. When choosing dancers, I need to take their schedules as well as their work ethics into account. In the future, I hope to take what I learned during this project and recreate this work, continuing the relationship between performance and outreach. By simply knowing about the challenges that accompany this kind of project, I will be better prepared for the future.

Project Outcome

This was a long process, beginning in February and finishing at the end of October. I had a wonderful cast of dancers to work with, and incredibly supportive faculty that made the project much easier. I had such an incredible time working on the choreography and taking it into the schools, I developed a love of outreach work. It is a way to spread our art with those who may have never seen dance in their lives. Dance is about performing more than anything else, but not necessarily in a theatre setting. I want to continue to work with taking art out into the community in order to affect change. Isadora Duncan has a wonderful quote that I believe sums up this project perfectly:

“A dancer, if she is great, can give to the people something that they can carry with them forever. They can never forget it, and it has changed them, though they may never know it...”

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