

“Body”: Gender Performativity and Dance as a Performative Art

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LINK FOR VIDEO ESSAY: <https://youtu.be/MMdHlmIxpYI>

In Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, they discuss how gender performativity dictates an individual's actions and identity in society since the repetition of expectations of a person's presenting gender influences how their identity is crafted throughout their lives. Dance is a performative art in which creative self-expression of identity manipulates gender through freeing the body from its established gendered restraints. Dancers demonstrate the permeability of the skin through the transgression of gender limitations amongst all identities despite their expected gender performance. They manipulate their bodies based on the emotions they are trying to express, highlighting how the manifestation of gender performance in the real world is malleable.

In this video project, I showcase how Vancouver dancers choose to present themselves through a stylization of bodily gestures and creative self-expressions. Although the discussion of Vancouver dance cultural trends was not explicitly discussed, the Vancouver dancers chosen help display the permeability and intersectionality of marginalized identities within creative environments. Since dance is a performative art, its manipulation of body and self based on the expression of identity juxtaposes gender performativity through dance's fluidity of self within and between creative spaces. I chose to present these concepts through this medium since the performativity of dance culture and styles

discussed are highly visual concepts that cannot be fully understood unless the audience is exposed to these styles and performances. Illustrating these styles as visual aids to my discussion of dancer's ability to manipulate their gender performance allows audiences to develop their own conclusions about these stylizations of body and self that demonstrate the emotional resonance of dance. Moreover, despite my time restraint, I wanted to showcase a performance to this song that demonstrates how emotion and self-expression may be used to develop ideas surrounding the expectations of self. I contend that my emotional investment and passion towards dance, music, and the performance of self and gender benefited the development of the visual and auditory aids integrated into my discussion. Furthermore, this video essay aids in the discussion of how creative self-expression frees identities within different intersectional and marginalized communities. As mentioned during my discussion, the LGBTQ+ Black-Latinx American community provides explicit examples of a dancer's ability to use dance to free their bodies from their skin, similar to women's use of Femme and hip-hop styles of dance. My choice of doing a non-traditional assignment allowed me to openly discuss the intersectionality and performativity of different dance cultures and communities demonstrated by Vancouver dancers. Through combining gender performativity and dance as a performative art, these Vancouver dancers, including myself, show how dance is a way of expressing experiences to an audience who might see the emotion put into it.

Articulating how closely self, gender, and the body connect to one another and creative self-expression in dance has helped me understand how emotion may be used to express identity the most authentically. As Dr. Kelly Doyle

highlights, the transgressional limitations I uncovered through my analysis of dance expression and gender performativity have revealed connections of societal expectations of gender forced upon all structures that challenge not only gendered issues but humanist ideals and utilitarianism. Through this project, I reveal how emotion and open self-expression highlights how identities are truly fluid. Conceptions of binary oppositions unjustly restrict identity, and dance allows those different identities to flourish in creativity.

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