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ARTICLE

Hands On/Hands Off: Pedagogical Touch in the #MeToo Era

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ABSTRACT

This study explores two key questions: (1) How and why the use of touch—defined here as hands-on physical touch—is effective in teaching voice and Alexander Technique, and (2) How might the use of this powerful pedagogical tool change in light of the #MeToo era? The article first discusses when, how, and why touch is effective in teaching. The article then examines when teachers might choose not to touch and discusses curricular methods that can encourage individual choice in this area. The article argues for practices that ensure no student feels coerced or pressured to comply with assumed directives regarding personal space. The authors argue that clear communication about the specific use of touch in the classroom, rehearsal hall, and in private coaching is imperative if teachers are to create a working environment that respects personal boundaries and individual needs. The article includes the authors' experiences with students in performing arts programs, professional actors, private clientele, and community work. Also included are perspectives from the authors' work with Intimacy Directors International (IDI) and from colleagues. Ultimately, the purpose of this article is to engender further inquiries in this area of research and practice.

KEYWORDS

Me Too; #MeToo; Alexander Technique; pedagogy; touch; voice; speech

Rationale: The Need to Examine and Define Our Use of Touch

Many voice teachers communicate through touch as a matter of course. Andrew Belser, Master Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework, certified Feldenkrais practitioner, and director of the School of Theatre, Film, and Television at Arizona State University, states that he would not be able to teach without hands-on interactions with his students (personal communication, February 13 2019). Charmian Hoare, voice teacher of over 30 years and vocal coach to London's National Theatre, cannot imagine *not* touching as part of her work, and she states that, in general, actors love it and crave hands-on touch as part of their voice work, preparation, and warm-up (personal communication, February 10 2019). Our profession accepts the use of hands-on touch as common practice and teachers often use it intuitively and in the moment.

Most voice teachers *know* that touch is effective in teaching. How do we know? As teachers, we see and hear its results in our students, and many have personally experienced tremendous benefit from the touch of a skillful teacher. In this article, we (the authors) examine this common practice in an effort to more deeply understand our use of it. Why then is it important to explore these questions when we already *know* that it is an effective

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and often powerful teaching tool in our work? The answer is because the current climate demands we do so.

We assert there are many compelling reasons for us, as professionals who use touch in our work, to reexamine, specifically define, and articulate why, when, and how we use it. Not the least of these reasons is the fact that universities are beginning to institute policies to address and control the use of touch in the classroom and rehearsal hall.[1] For example, in some cases teachers are required to ask for permission every time they want to touch a student or performer. Alexander teacher and former chair of the American Society of the Alexander Technique Frances Robertson states that asking repeatedly can trigger a student's defensiveness and raise anxiety (personal communication, May 19 2018). Other teachers have simply said people get annoyed if you continually ask. Dictates from institutional policy makers who may not be practitioners themselves can have a detrimental effect on what we are hoping to achieve in a healthy working environment. Therefore, it will be to our advantage to define our professional policies in ways that benefit rather than impede our work.

Another reason to examine our use of touch and how it might change in light of what is commonly called the #MeToo movement is to protect ourselves in a time when social media can damage reputations and hinder tenure and promotion. A misunderstood touch can wreak havoc on a career or teaching practice. Of course, it is the fear of litigation that moves institutions to devise policies "where tactile interactions are limited and often actively inhibited or even prohibited" (Gallace and Spence 2016, 228) leading to what some refer to as "touch hunger" (Field 2014). Most of us do not want a touch-hungry work environment. However, we should not put our heads in the sand and ignore the risks involved. Rather, we should examine, define, and effectively communicate scientifically supported use of touch in our work.

In the abstract for their study, *Social Touch*, Gallace and Spence state:

> Psychologists and neuroscientists are only now beginning to uncover some of the neurocognitive mechanisms responsible for these important real-world interactions [. . .] We show how this sensory modality often acts as a powerful interface allowing us to interact socially and emotionally with the world around us. The available research also suggests that touch plays an important role in supporting our well-being. (2016, 227)

Perhaps the most compelling reason to delve anew into this powerful interface is compassion for our students and their well-being. An ideal work environment would be free from harassment, from both implicit and overt coercion, and where all participants feel empowered to speak out. Such an environment would allow students to feel they can learn and grow without compromising their autonomy and self-agency. We seek what Beth McGuire of Yale School of Drama and a prominent dialect coach calls "an ensemble of yes" in our classrooms, rehearsals, and studio spaces. She points out that as educators and coaches we must work for that "yes," not assuming that it will happen every time, and recognize that many things affect the dynamic of touching, including gender, age, race and ethnicity, and other issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (personal communication, February 18, June 16 2019).

Methods

This article follows a heuristic research methodology; this research design explores the relationship between the authors' experience, research literature, and the interpolation of

other qualitative methods such as interviews and observations (Moustakas 1990).[2] We have well over 60 years of experience using and receiving hands-on work in educational settings. Experience, however, is not conclusive; rather, it is a starting point for definition and further inquiry. We are most interested in facilitating a conversation among professional colleagues to elucidate and share best practices. Therefore, we interviewed a variety of voices with experience in hands-on work, including voice teachers from New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and London.

We began with the following interview protocol questions:

(1) Do you use hands-on touch in your teaching?
(2) If so, how and when do you use touch as a teaching tool? What benefits do you see in your students as a result?
(3) Has your use of this tool changed in light of the #MeToo movement?

We also interviewed teachers of the Alexander Technique who work in theatre departments in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Tennessee in addition to one who works in an acting studio in Los Angeles. With this group, we used the following interview protocol questions:

(1) Has the #MeToo sensitivity in universities and the general public affected how you use hands-on methods in your teaching? If so, how?
(2) Do you think this sensitivity encourages a phobia of touching and being touched? If so, how do you represent the use and benefits of touch as a teaching tool?
(3) What tools and techniques do you use to ensure the safety and comfort of a student in receiving hands-on instruction? How is it different in private lessons versus group classes?

Our study included a three-hour workshop that we attended at the Syracuse University Department of Drama with Alicia Rodis, founder of Intimacy Directors International (IDI).[3] The work of IDI developed in response to revelations of abuse in the film and entertainment industry where the #MeToo stories have given victims a voice. The professional methods these trained intimacy directors bring to the challenging world of intimate scenes on stage or screen is leading the industry in changing culture and ensuring the comfort and safety of the actors. This workshop and the research and experience from IDI informed our reflective methodology in this study.

We also examined scientific research literature on the neuroscience and the psychology of human touch. The neurophysiology of the touch receptors in the skin called CT afferents is a relatively young area of research; yet it has revealed the importance of a light human-to-human touch for the development and well-being of the social brain.[4] It gives some possible explanations as to why touch is so effective in creating a positive teacher–student bond. We also consulted psychological studies on human touch and well-being, including *Touch* by Tiffany Field, University of Miami School of Medicine, and Jones and Glover (2012) study exploring the potential for therapeutic touch based on the methods of the Alexander Technique.

Inspired by Alicia Rodis' discussion of power in the classroom, we examined research studies on social power; we particularly drew from University of Michigan psychologists,

John R. P. French Jr. and Bertram Raven's original study "The Bases of Social Power" ([1959] 1966, 150–67). French and Raven's theory served as the basis for ongoing examination on the dynamics of social power and much of their terminology is still in use. In addition, we looked at Atul Gawande's book *The Checklist Manifesto* (2010) which is based on his extensive research into protocols, communication, and power structures in surgical operating rooms around the world.

What follows in this article is a presentation of qualitative data and data analysis, which is offered at the same time and presented thematically. This cyclical exploration of different qualitative methods such as interviewing, combined with the authors' reflection on research (such as the IDI workshop and academic literature), is a hallmark of heuristic research inquiry (Moustakas 1990).

Hands-On

Literature Review on the Benefits of Touch

In this section we summarize what we have gleaned from a growing field of research that may directly apply to the pedagogical use of hands-on touch. To date we have not found clinical or quantitative empirical studies that focus directly on the effectiveness of hands-on touch in teaching or in learning a skill. We consider this a gap in the literature and an area for further exploration, which in part prompted this heuristic study.

The current research on touch focuses primarily on the social and psychological benefits of affective touch. We can define affective touch as touch that affects internal sensation, feeling or emotion, and attitude, as opposed to discriminative touch, touch that discriminates between hot or cold, hard or soft, etc. The research on affective touch stems from the discovery of nerve fibers called C-tactile (CT) fibers. CT fibers are found in the hairy skin of the body and have pathways to parts of the brain involved with feeling, sensing, and emotion (McGlone et al. 2007).

We have long been aware that sensory receptors in the skin can play a role in sensing both what is going on inside our body as well as informing us about external stimuli. In his seminal work *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin* anthropologist Ashley Montagu (1971) writes, "In addition to being the largest organ of the body, the various elements comprising the skin have a very large representation in the brain" (6). In addition, he states, "The modalities of space, time, and reality, shape, form, depth, quality, texture, and the like are almost certainly developed in large part on the basis of the infant's tactile experiences" (202). From his work and others since then, we can confidently say that from the beginning we learn through touching and being touched. There is also substantial research on the human need to be touched from infancy on and its importance to socialization, well-being, and—in fact—to survival (Gallace and Spence 2016; Field 2014)

The discovery of the CT fibers and consequent research with affective touch leads to a deeper understanding of how touch informs our internal or proprioceptive sense. In their work, "The Touched Self: Affective Touch and Body Awareness in Health and Disease" Gentsch et al. (2016) state: "We highlighted behavioral and neuroimaging evidence that interpersonal touch—through its affective component—influences and selectively enhances the mental representation of our body" (376). It is this emerging research showing a direct correlation between affective touch and the bodily sense of self,

mental body mapping, and bodily awareness that is most interesting to us. These concepts are essential to our work and therefore we believe afferent touch research has the potential to support what we know intuitively and experientially about the effects of hands-on touch in our teaching practice.

While not yet conclusive, it is not unreasonable to say that when touch is used effectively in the teacher/student experience, it links the internal senses, known as interoception, with the external stimulations, and this deepens the neural associations of the experience, or as Jones and Glover found, touch changes the relationship with the self (2012, 6). It is also clear that throughout a person's life touch is essential for social, emotional, and mental maturation, as well as the sense of well-being (Field 2014). When used in an educational setting, touch can facilitate awareness of the bodily self, and also speaks to the basic human needs for connection and safety.

Practical Benefits of Pedagogical Touch

F. M. Alexander, founder of the Alexander Technique, developed a hands-on teaching method that is renowned today for its effectiveness in bringing ease and freedom to performers. Mr. Alexander was an actor who repeatedly lost his voice. Over time, he recognized that his habitual bodily tensions affecting uprightness and his relationship with gravity were causing his vocal loss. He developed his work in response to this recognition, changed his habits, and regained his voice. He recognized—as do many voice teachers—that habitual tensions affecting skeletal alignment and posture often inhibit the breath, limit resonance and range, and can lead to vocal problems.[5]

There are myriad and varied ways of releasing habitual and unnecessary tension. In our experience the strategic, timely placement of an attentive hand can bring immediate and often dramatic results. The results can be seen and heard and are threefold: the instrument is more resonant, the pitch range is increased, and—perhaps most significant—the person's inner life is revealed, and their presence becomes open and compelling. Alexander's discovery—that release of his own bodily habits could restore him to a harmonious relationship with gravity and free his voice—is followed by his discovery that through hands-on touch he could share that freedom and release with others.

From our experience with hands-on Alexander lessons, from our conversations with both voice teachers and Alexander teachers, as well as from our own practice, we might sum up the benefits of touch in eight main ways:

(1) *To bring awareness in specific ways.* A simple touch can point out an area that is underutilized, such as the back ribs; it can highlight a crucial element in organizing the whole body, such as the top of the head; or it can suggest that an area is holding too much tension, such as the jaw or locked knees.
(2) *To bring attention to the internal channels for learning.* What a student feels and senses in the body is not always accurate. Many people need a learning process to develop a more accurate body sense, e.g., to know what is tight or loose, what is bent or straight, what is tense or relaxed. A student's awareness of the proprioception and kinesthetic sense is heightened through touch.
(3) *To bring awareness to the whole of the student in the moment.* A touch, with its immediacy can focus and concentrate attention on what is happening now.

(4) *To invite ease and the release of unnecessary tension*. The quality of touch can convey to the student the freedom and permission to stop a bit of that extra push. Sometimes a teacher's message is beyond words; touch can carry that message efficiently and effectively.
(5) *To support the student as they leave habits aside and step into new territory*. A gentle touch can reassure or calm an actor struggling with difficult material or stressful rehearsals. The affective benefits of touch can speak to the fears and concerns by saying, you are not alone, we are on this journey together; let us see what happens when you let go. In addition to touch, there are visual, verbal, and interpersonal ways to create safety and trust for students to experiment and step into unfamiliar territory. However, touch is especially effective when those habitual layers of tension stem from nonverbal experiences, e.g., unconsciously mimicking family members or peers in a social group.
(6) *To retrain and redraw the body schema*. The body schema is a set of images, words, emotions and nonverbal concepts that filter the millions of messages coming from the body and help make a representation that is used for movements, actions, behaviors, and postural attitudes. A simple touch can say, "here is the top of your spine" and can challenge the habitual belief that it is somewhere lower.
(7) *To promote more acceptance of self and the capacity for change*. As Carolyn Serota, Alexander teacher at the Juilliard School, explained, "If students can allow themselves to be open to touch for change in the use of self, then they can also allow themselves to be open to and affected by the text, the circumstances, and the other actor. Essentially, they can allow themselves to be affected by their own imagination" (personal communication, March 6 2019).
(8) *To illustrate lesson content*. Through proprioception this gentle touch can convey suggestions for the optimal position of body parts in relation to each other, for example "do less here," "enliven this area," or "let go of this and see what happens here." A touch brings a student's attention to an area almost instantaneously and will highlight the words of the teacher.

Qualities of Touch

Perhaps because we are social creatures and geared to receive and interpret social cues verbally and nonverbally, the quality of a teacher's touch conveys a wealth of nonverbal information. For example, the student will pick up information about the teacher's intention, the teacher's educational purposes, and the teacher's emotional state, as well as the specific message for the moment. Alexander Technique teacher Kim Jessor of New York University says, "My neuromuscular system is talking to the student's neuromuscular system" (personal communication, February 25 2019). The quality of an Alexander teacher's touch can be described as nonjudgmental and supportive with the focus on the autonomy of the student. A student is encouraged to listen to the internal states and recognize unnecessary tension. Both the verbal and hands-on guidance are not there to demand correctness but to suggest a way to disengage the habitual. This process of learning, going from the familiar to the discovery of something new, is facilitated by this quality of touch and verbal guidance.

For both voice and Alexander teachers, when the quality of the teacher's touch is quiet and attentive, both the student and teacher can attune to what is happening as the student

vocalizes and discern any excess tension or effort. This simultaneous awareness facilitates integration of the lesson content. It is here that a teacher's self-knowledge can make a big difference in the effectiveness of a hands-on experience. What are my expectations? What is my endgame? What emotions are alive in me? Am I grounded? Am I breathing?

Alexander teachers and many voice teachers are trained in the use of touch and understand the nuances of this social, nonverbal communication. They pick up skills and techniques intuitively through experience. They develop values about what is fundamental in the qualities, intentions and clarity of the effective and respectful use of touch in teaching.

Hands Off

When We Might Choose to Keep Hands Off

Learning a kinesthetic skill through touch and physical contact is as basic as a baby learning to stand through months and months of touching and interacting physically with a parent. Therefore, unlike the baby—who has a warm and trusting relationship with a parent—adults come to this work with a history. That history will affect a student's receptivity to touch. If there is a history that involves trauma or abuse, touch may stimulate those memories.

Touch in many ways is its own language, both a powerful and complex means of communication. The more we are attuned to this complexity, the more intelligent our decisions about when and how to use touch. There are significant variations among individuals' personal history and culture. There are people who have unspoken "no touch" rules, and people who have spoken cultural rules surrounding touch. People who dislike being touched may have a problem with sensory processing, a history of trauma or abuse, or an underlying mental or physical disorder. Signs of resistance or discomfort are valuable messages in the effective communications between teacher and student.

In the moment, in a particular situation, a teacher may choose not to use touch. There are legitimate reasons why a student may not wish to be touched, including autism, past or present trauma, sexual assault, both chronic and incidental illness, cultural differences, injury, and any number of mental health issues. In addition, any of these issues may well affect the way a student perceives and interprets touch (Field 2019, 128–129). Touch can trigger a negative emotion that a person may not be ready to deal with in that moment. We have no control over how a student might perceive a touch and we simply cannot afford to dismiss student perceptions in the current climate, nor should we dismiss them given the history of abuse in our culture.

So how does one touch without the student feeling that their personal boundaries have been compromised? How does the teacher create a professional relationship through a channel that has so many personal associations?

To Touch or Not to Touch

Considering where to land on the spectrum between requiring students to accept hands-on touch from teachers, and inhibiting teachers in how they use hands-on touch, is a serious question for both teachers and administrators. There are valid arguments at each end of the spectrum. One argument in favor of requiring hands-on work is that it is a vital part of a performing arts curriculum and therefore should be required. Another argument is that

unwillingness to be touched would limit casting opportunities and therefore must be part of professional training. Those in favor of not mandating a hands-on approach argue that if we are sincere in wanting to cultivate a more equitable and inclusive learning environment, then we must actively respect personal boundaries and make it okay to say, "hands off."

Yet, perhaps it is not an either/or question. If we look to IDI as an example, we see their work is predicated on the concept that intimacy on stage and screen can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis in the same way fight choreography is negotiated.

Negotiating Touch

Examples of Negotiating Touch

Case-by-case negotiation around pedagogical touch is happening now more than ever. For example, an Alexander teacher described the elimination of private sessions in favor of semiprivate sessions where one student observes the other's session for half the time and then they switch. A voice teacher began the same practice with tutorial sessions and discovered the student's observations and comments to each other were often insightful and could improve the learning (personal communication, May 28 2019). Thom Miller at Syracuse University has the class close their eyes while asking them to raise a hand if they do not want hands-on interaction (personal communication, June 20 2019). Designated Linklater teacher Jeff Casazza at Purdue University Fort Wayne asks for volunteers when demonstrating pharyngeal massage and only demonstrates in group sessions with willing students. He has always been aware of potential sensitivities around touch but has become even more specific when incorporating that sensitivity into the work. Now he regularly asks students to let him know if they do not want hands-on contact whenever it is utilized in class (personal communication, February 20, June 12 2019).

In classroom exercises involving partner work and student-to-student touch, we have found that many people have preferences and may be comfortable with one person touching them and not with another. Some teachers insist on giving students the right to opt out of these exercises, while others take time to set parameters that will encourage all students to participate fully. When introducing partner work, many teachers stress the shared learning both partners can experience. It is also possible to encourage discussion and suggest using clear, constructive language if one partner does not desire hands-on contact. We have found when beginning students are guided to work with one another, they can be encouraged to develop "listening hands" and an "energetic touch."[6] Andrew Belser of Arizona State University teaches "a lesson called 'safe/not-safe' touch where I have students *only* touch each other with the palm of the hand on the shoulder. That would seem safe enough, yes? But the truth is that touch carries intention with it, always, and we are able to sense that intention particularly if we pay attention to it" (personal communication, February 13 2019).

Tom Pacio at Vassar College says that, as a man, he is very aware of the risk of misunderstanding and the risk of crossing lines that haven't been fully articulated. Consequently, he uses touch sparingly in his classes. He believes this is a positive and necessary change and, "it's certainly better than back in the day, when they could walk by and grab you in any way, and any time they felt like it" (personal communication, March 9 2019).

A young male actor/teacher, close in age to his students, says his use of touch depends on the demographics of his class: if he has both men and women he is careful to use touch

as equally with the men as with the women; if he has only women in the class or rehearsal he simply does not use touch at all (personal communication, February 20 2019). Another voice teacher describes the random "drive-by" touch: she used to randomly in passing touch a tense shoulder or jaw or adjust positions in floor work. In response to #MeToo, she has eliminated her random touch and is more deliberate in choosing when to touch and when to speak. As a result, she finds she must become clearer and more concise with her words (personal communication, May 20 2019).

Jed Diamond, associate professor and head of acting at the University of Tennessee, believes that institutions are in a period of intense change regarding hands-on work with students, and some overreacting to complaints is probably occurring. However, he feels that this is inevitable and in fact, necessary and positive, given the history of under-reacting to all complaints for so very long. Diamond also believes teachers can develop creative solutions designed to improve safety and trust for everyone (personal communication, March 14, June 13 2019).

Power

Creating an environment where students or actors can easily negotiate touch and not feel ostracized, embarrassed, or compelled to discuss their personal lives can be a complex task. #MeToo stories are not just about sexual harassment; they are about abuse of power. Therefore, we find it important to more closely consider the power dynamics inherent in teacher-student relationships.

In their renowned study on social power, psychologists French and Raven define five types of power in social relationships: (1) reward, (2) coercive, (3) legitimate, (4) referent, and (5) expert ([1959] 1966, 156). It is imperative to understand that their study is about the perceptions of the person receiving the power rather than the agent wielding the power. In our case that would be the *student's* perception of the teacher's power, not the teacher's perception of their own power. A university professor has at least four, if not five, of French and Raven's bases of perceived power: (1) *reward power* due to the perceived ability to give good grades, casting recommendations, praise, etc.; (2) *coercive power* in the ability to gain compliance through threat of low marks or failure for falling below a given level of performance; (3) *legitimate power* perceived due to their title, rank, and possibly age; (4) *referent power* if they are charismatic, dynamic, or famous, and students wish to be like them; (5) *expert power* due to the perception that they have specialized knowledge and information desired by the student. As IDI's Alicia Rodis puts it, that is a whole heck of a lot of power. It makes it easy to understand how undergraduate and even graduate students would feel hesitant to speak up or not comply with the teacher's requests.

Even if we look only at legitimate power, in any teaching situation, students/clients may feel obligated to do whatever we ask, thereby subjugating their own sense of autonomy. "Legitimate power of O/P [teacher/student[7]] is here defined as that power which stems from internalized values in P [student] which dictate that O [teacher] has a legitimate right to influence P [student] and that P [student] has an obligation to accept this influence" (French and Raven [1959] 1966, 159). It is the *internalized sense of obligation to comply* that can make it very hard to say no to the teacher. A vocal coach working with a professional company is perceived to have at least legitimate power and while an experienced, established actor may have an easier time negotiating, a less established performer may not negotiate at all.

In the IDI workshop presented to the faculty at Syracuse University Department of Drama, Alicia Rodis gave a commonly-used improvisation exercise where participants standing in a circle say "yes" to another participant wanting to move into their place in the circle, and in turn must ask another to say "yes" to them. After allowing the game to proceed for a few minutes, Rodis added the possibility of saying "no" and the game went on. No one said "no." After another few minutes she added that everyone *had* to say "no" at least once. This caused laughter and some discomfort. Clearly it was not easy even for professors of the same rank to say "no" to each other. Was it difficult to say "no" because we all trust each other, or because we were being polite, or because we were in an environment where you always say "yes" in acting class, or because of some other internalized sense of obligation to comply? In any case, it was difficult to say "no." It was an important lesson for us as teachers. It allowed us to take a thoughtful step toward empathy with our students and to consider the concepts of compliance and consent.

Consent versus Compliance

Two definitions of the word compliance: "the act or process of complying to a desire, demand, proposal, or regimen or to coercion" (Merriam-Webster), and "the state of being too willing to do what other people want you to do" (Cambridge English Dictionary). The word consent has taken on more complexity in our current culture. For example, IDI uses Planned Parenthood's definition that consent comes with the acronym FRIES.[8] In other words, true consent is:

- Freely Given
- Revocable
- Informed
- Enthusiastic
- Specific

Accordingly, without the ability to say "no," consent is not possible. Given the power dynamics of the teacher-student relationship and the history of abuses—i.e., abuses revealed in the #MeToo movement—known to exist in the profession, we are more likely to receive compliance rather than consent. Prior consent, as that given at the beginning of a semester, does not suffice for situational consent, as that granted in the moment. In addition, we can no longer afford to assume we have consent. Assuming increases the possibility that a student will misunderstand a touch and its intention.

Ralph Zito, chair of the Department of Drama at Syracuse University, favors the development of departmental cultures that set a tone of consent, cultures that do not single out touch as the only area where conscious and deliberate consideration of individual autonomy is given (personal communication, May 16 2019).

Protocols for Pedagogical Touch

As teachers, we recognize that we have knowledge and experience our students/clients do not have. Therefore, our power is appropriately exercised over the content of the course, activity of the work, and—in many cases—over assessment of the work. We set a standard of excellence

and professional discipline commensurate with our institution or department's artistic mission. Compliance with such standards is expected and necessary for the integrity of the training.

However, do we have the right to exercise our power on their bodies? How can we make clear where our power ends and their responsibility to themselves begins? How do we create a culture that encourages and promotes choice, freedom, and responsibility—one that has what Zito calls respectful self-advocacy? How do we do all of this without sacrificing the integrity and rigor of our discipline?

These questions are difficult to answer when considering pedagogical touch in the #MeToo era. Developing effective standards and protocols for teaching and coaching with hands-on touch may help us navigate the issues they raise. In his extensive research into reducing risk in hospitals and in surgery, Atul Gawande has shown that using protocol checklists can substantially increase safety. Good checklists, he defines as "precise. They are efficient, to the point, and easy to use even in the most difficult situations. They do not try to spell out everything [...] instead, they provide reminders of only the most critical and important steps" (2010, 116).

Intimacy Directors International (IDI) Standards and Protocols

In their materials IDI defines what they refer to as the "five pillars of standards and protocol." They are:

- Context
- Consent
- Communication
- Choreography
- Closure[9]

These five words represent important principles of the work IDI practices. Distilling those principles into a simple, easy to remember, alliterative list, makes them easily referenced, fun, and accessible when in the moment of an exercise or activity. Teachers could apply the "Five Cs" (as Rodis calls them), to hands-on teaching: *Context* could mean that the rationale or purpose of a specific exercise or learning experience is clearly understood by the student; *Consent* could mean the touch is negotiated with all the qualities of FRIES (freely given, revocable, informed, enthusiastic and specific); *Communication* could mean an ongoing dialogue rather than a once and done statement; *Choreography* could mean there is a clear expectation of where and when hands will be placed; *Closure* could mean a time to ask questions, to reflect and to articulate the experience.

Many teachers may already practice aspects of these IDI protocols. Using specific language like this is a way to implement *explicit* communication regarding the use of pedagogical touch.[10]

Changing the Culture

If we compare the traditional culture of the surgical operating room to the traditional classroom, we find a culture where one person is the expert with extreme power, a culture

where everyone automatically defers to the surgeon or the professor. Gawande's research shows that where the culture encourages a team approach, where people are empowered to take responsibility and are expected to speak and to contribute, outcomes and safety are improved (2010).

Jessica Wolf, an Alexander teacher and professor in the practice of acting at the Yale School of Drama, explains the importance of establishing an open dialogue about the educational process of awareness and change. She begins her classes every year by asking permission to use touch in training and reminds them throughout the semester that permission can be withdrawn. "Touch has a certain communication that helps me guide each actor. We both receive information from their body and breath. Hands-on work is intimate; comfort and permission are of paramount importance" (personal communication, June 6 2019).

Many of the teachers we spoke with now include a syllabus clause or a consent form in their written materials. These and other communications such as website statements, strategic reminders, and proactively facilitating dialogue are a beginning for creating cultural change in our teaching. Including a brief exercise or improvisation that requires everyone to say "no" at least once, as IDI does in their workshops, is another way to balance the power structure in the room.

Ultimately, we are seeking practices that can help "to spread responsibility and the power to question" from one person to the whole room (Gawande 2010, 137). We are seeking a new climate, a climate where all students can feel empowered to make choices, to use their own voices to question, to take responsibility for their own boundaries, and we also seek a climate in which teachers and coaches respect students' choices and boundaries.

Conclusions

The #Me Too movement provides us with an opportunity to participate in cultural change away from past power structures and toward a more inclusive, cooperative, and healthy working and learning environment. A deeper understanding of how our power is perceived by our students can lead us away from the paradigm of the all-powerful teacher and into a paradigm where teachers are authoritative rather than authoritarian. In this new paradigm, the teacher has agency in the curriculum and the student has agency of their bodily self. We can create comprehensive methods of communication around hands-on touch that clarify expectations and increase safety and comfort for both teacher/coaches and student/clients.

We have attempted in our research to show how recent studies in the neurological and social sciences support our experiential and intuitive knowledge of why and how using hands-on physical touch is effective in our teaching. When we are armed with empirical and clinical research, we become more effective participants in developing policy for the use of hands-on touch within our institutions. We can then effectively argue for the value and importance of pedagogical touch and potentially fend off arbitrary regimentation, limitation, or elimination of this powerful and humanizing practice.

Notes

1. From New York University's New Studio on Broadway Student Handbook: "Touching: It is understood that the teaching of theater often requires "hands-on" teaching by the instructor and student partners. All professors and students MUST precede any physical touch for adjustment/

correction/demonstration and/or in the context of scene or acting work rehearsals by asking their student or colleague, "MAY I TOUCH YOU TO CORRECT/DEMONSTRATE or ADJUST?" For more details, see https://tisch.nyu.edu/drama/about/studios/new-studio-on-broadway

2. See Oram (2015) for more information on the use of heuristic research methodology and voice studies.
3. See Intimacy Directors International (IDI) at www.teamidi.org
4. One research group looking into the nature of touch on affective and discriminative cognition is the Somatosensory & Affective Neuroscience Group at Liverpool John Moores University in Liverpool, UK. From the website: "We have a particular interest in a population of low threshold mechanosensitive c-fibres named C-tactile (CT) afferents. Only recently discovered in humans, they respond most strongly to 'gentle stroking touch' and are hypothesised to underpin the rewarding properties of tactile social interactions and to play a critical role in the developing social brain." See https://somaffect.org/about/for further information.
5. While clinical research on the effects of habitual and postural tension on healthy vocal use is ongoing, a number of studies show association between posture/alignment and vocal problems: "Also, muscle tension can both cause dysphonia and be a result of dysphonia as subjects increasingly add muscle effort to try to make their voices work" (Cardoso, Lumini-Oliviera, and Meneses 2019, 124).
6. The term "listening hands" in Alexander teaching refers to the receptivity of the person touching. "Energetic touch" has been used by Catherine Fitzmaurice to describe the exchange of energy experienced in touching.
7. French and Raven ([1959] 1966) use the terms "o" and "p" to refer to the agent of power (o) and the person (p) upon whom the power is exerted. For this article the "o" refers to the teacher, and the "p" refers to the student.
8. The coauthors first heard of the mnemonic F.R.I.E.S. from an IDI workshop, then learned that Planned Parenthood created the term after they conducted a survey in 2015 and concluded that education about consent should begin in middle and high school. For Planned Parenthood's description see: https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sex-and-relationships/sexual-consent. For information about the backstory, see: https://www.bustle.com/articles/178198-planned-parenthood-graphic-uses-fries-to-explain-consent-in-a-way-anyone-can-understand. For the 2015 survey, see https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/1414/6117/4323/Consent_Survey.pdf
9. At IDI's website, the "Five Cs" are further described. See https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/924101_2e8c624bcf394166bc0443c1f35efe1d.pdf
10. Gawande also found that procedural checklists were more likely to be effective when they were modified to fit the usual procedures of individual hospitals (Gawande 2010, 133). Protocols for pedagogical touch could be modified for use in different performing arts programs, with professional actors, with private clientele, and in community work. As Gawande states "just dumping the information does not change anything," the purpose of any protocol checklist is not to give instruction but to "get people talking to one another" (Gawande 2010, 133).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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