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Term Project

When first creating this piece, I did not have a set message or intention behind it. It took me a while to really figure out when I wanted to say through the choreography and I am still discovering new things about it. After really sitting down and listening to the song and the lyrics, I made a connection to mental illnesses, depression to be specific. I was being thrown off by the title of the song, "Paralyzed", because I automatically connected being paralyzed to having a physical impairment. What I realized was is that you can be internally paralyzed as well. I feel this was the breaking point for my choreography and intention of the piece. I also tried to put myself in a mentally disabled person's shoes to try to really understand what they go through in an everyday life. I was hoping to embody some of the emotions and feelings that a disabled person might feel.

Some specific examples of what I felt during the choreography and was trying to portray was trapped, angry, having the feeling of wanting to run away, blocking others out when they were trying to help, suicidal, not being able to move or literally being paralyzed, lonely, lost, weak, silenced or not being heard, and finally having the feeling of acceptance. Having my keyword criminality in mind, I made a few revisions to my choreography and edited in some other shots to relate it more to criminality. I think most of my original work did embody the feeling of criminals and disabled people being seen as criminals. The setting is one aspect that helps to the theme. Being in a confined space and having that feeling of being trapped shows that criminals are

restricted. I also edited in some parts to reference to the texts we have read throughout the semester.

The first text I used was the podcast by Ira Glass and Alan Pean, “My Damn Mind” from This American Life. The podcast is an interview of Alan Pean’s story about being shot in a hospital. Being a disabled person and being diagnosed as manic, Pean thought he would be safe in a hospital. Pean would never think he would be shot, let alone in a hospital. Pean was seen as a threat and a criminal to the hospital. “But what he cannot understand is why police officers were in his room, when he was an ill patient trying to get well” (Glass). I tried to recreate what I envisioned happened to Pean within my video. Going to a hospital on his own to seek help for the delusions he was having led to Pean being a code blue patient. Because Pean was disabled, the hospital labeled him as a criminal.

The second text I related to criminality is *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon. Christopher is believed to be an autistic child, although it is never clearly expressed in the book. He carries certain possessions close to him at all times, including a Swiss army knife. Although Christopher carries it as a self-defense weapon, others see it as a threat. He even said at one point in the book that if his father comes into his room he will cut his finger off with the saw blade. I wanted to recreate this scene by playing Christopher in his room. Being startled he takes out his knife, as did I in the video. If Christopher actually did hurt someone with his knife, he could be labeled as a criminal. But, having the assumption that Christopher is disabled, he does not see himself as threatening.

Another text that related to criminality was “Screening Stereotypes” by Paul K. Longmore. Longmore discusses how the evil character in TV and film are most often given disabilities as a punishment for their evil doings. “Giving disabilities to villainous characters reflects and reinforces, albeit in exaggerated fashion, three common prejudices against handicapped people: disability is a punishment for evil; disabled people are embittered by their “fate”; disabled people resent the non disabled and would, if they could, destroy them” (Longmore). There was no specific part in the video I created that showed consequences being paid, but the entire piece embodies disability as criminality on its own.

Lastly, a research report I found on Equality Human Rights titled “Crime and Disabled People: Measures of Disability-Related Harassment” discusses how disabled people are harassed and seen as victims. What I was trying to show in my video was being arrested and pinned down for committing a crime. The crimes committed were both towards disabled people and committed by disabled people. The report states “The police were more likely to come to know about disability hate crime incidents (52.1 percent) than they were to hear about crime incidents not motivated by identity (38.5 percent). However, the difference between disability hate crime and other types of hate crime was not statistically significant” (Coleman).

I have thought a lot about how disability is seen as criminality and I have also put a lot of thought into how I can show that through dance. I think through Longmore, Coleman, Haddon, and Glass I have embodied what disabled people feel when they are labeled criminals. I also think that the song I used, “Paralyzed” by NF helped tremendously to send my message about mental illnesses through dance.

Works Cited

Coleman, Nick, and Wendy Sykes. "Crime and Disabled People: Measures of Disability-Related Harassment." Equalityhumanrights.com, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2016, Sept. 2016, www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-103-crime-and-disabled-people.pdf.

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