

Chapter 10

TEACHING AND PRACTISING CARE THROUGH SOMATIC PARTNERING

Ilya Vidrin

Throughout my work as a choreographer, researcher and somatic educator, again and again I stumble into how the study of partnering invites and resists specialization. To adequately account for the complexity of dancing together theoretically means engaging in systematic inquiry into concepts such as relation, attention, intentionality, competence, commitment, consent, trust, dependence – the list goes on. Producing a thorough, systematic account is necessarily interdisciplinary, bridging the philosophical and the psychological, the normative and the descriptive, the concrete and the speculative, the formal and the expressive. Elsewhere, I have suggested that the theory and practice of partnering intersect in the moral domain given the possibility of both causing harm and enacting care through shared action (Vidrin 2023; Vidrin 2024).

Dance partnering is often discussed through the lens of tradition: the codified roles, gendered scripts, and formalized repertoires that have accumulated over time. These traditions matter. They provide the shared vocabulary that makes coordinated action possible and lend a recognizable shape to partnering practices. But if we limit our analysis to tradition alone, we risk missing the more immediate, lived dimension of what is happening between dancers in the moment. As a social epistemologist, my concern is with the ways in which knowledge, attunement and shared action emerge through relational practices.

In this chapter, I present a framework for considering dance partnering that aligns with and exemplifies principles of care ethics. This emphasis on care also resonates with queer approaches to partnering, which unsettle normative assignments of roles – who leads, who follows, whose body supports, whose body is supported. Queerness here does not simply mean same-sex or non-heteronormative pairings; it names a more general practice of troubling inherited binaries and opening partnering to new configurations. By decentring fixed roles, queer practices foreground the ways in which care must be continuously renegotiated. Without the guarantee of tradition to dictate relations, partners must rely even more on embodied attention, trust and responsiveness.

What is at stake in dance partnering is not only *what* the tradition prescribes but *how* partners enact care in and through their shared movements. Care here names a responsiveness: the micro-adjustments, anticipations and bodily listening that make the dance possible as a joint accomplishment. Where tradition provides form, care provides texture. It is the lived responsiveness that allows dancers to accommodate each other, to maintain safety, to open space for creativity, and to sustain the integrity of the dance as a shared project rather than a set of individual displays. By exploring the dynamics of care in dance, I aim to uncover how these principles can be effectively embodied in practice.

The following discussion will encompass various dimensions of care in dance, including the negotiation of power and the significance of communication and feedback. Through this exploration, I seek to illuminate the ways in which dance, as a cooperative art form, can serve as a fertile ground for the practical application of care ethics, ultimately enhancing both the personal growth of dancers and the collective experience of the dance community. Practising care through partnering involves establishing a shared vocabulary of ethics and developing ways to assess shared action. This approach emphasizes the importance of communication, ethical considerations and critical assessment in healthcare partnerships.

I delve into how the teaching of partnering not only imparts technical skills but also offers a unique opportunity to cultivate relational awareness and empathy among individuals. I consider the development of shared vocabularies at the intersection of ethics and kinematics and I address challenges and limitations that emerge in this approach, especially the challenge of supporting individual virtuosity in relation to interpersonal dynamics. By discussing these aspects, I aim to provide insights into how dance education can be oriented to not only enhance the physical and artistic capabilities of dancers but also enrich their moral and emotional development. Ultimately, my goal is to contribute to the broader discourse on care ethics within educational practices, proposing that dance, with its focus on bodily awareness and competence, offers valuable lessons in empathy, responsiveness, and mutual respect that are crucial for ethical human interactions. The work emerges from my practice of *Somatic Partnering*, a method based on loopable, generatively constrained and mutually agentic studies that offer a queer site of inquiry beyond the traditional, heteronormative and fixed roles of dancing together.

Care ethics

Care ethics (CE) represents a distinctive approach in the broad field of moral philosophy, focusing on interpersonal relationships and related virtues of care, empathy and compassion as central ethical elements. This contrasts with more traditional ethical frameworks, which often prioritize impartiality and seek universal principles applicable to all situations. Care ethics focuses on specific relationships and contexts, arguing that ethical understanding arises from particular relational experiences. By focusing on relationships, care ethics provides a valuable complement to the sometimes abstract and impersonal nature of

traditional ethical theories, enriching our understanding of a full range of human moral experiences.

Care ethics centres on the significance of care as a fundamental aspect of human life, emphasizing the relational and interdependent nature of human beings. Often credited with pioneering the contemporary discussion on care ethics with her book *In a Different Voice* (1982), psychologist Carol Gilligan argued that women are more likely to approach ethical issues from a perspective of care, sensitivity and relationality rather than impartiality and abstract rules. One of the first to articulate a theory of care, educator Nel Noddings emphasized the role of 'caring-for' as an ethical activity, grounded in the experience of being in a caring relationship (Noddings 1984). Her work focuses on teaching and learning, highlighting the need to cultivate caring by arguing that moral action stems from the practical reality of responding to the needs of others. Philosopher Joan Tronto expanded the scope of care ethics with her comprehensive definition of care and the identification of its key elements: attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness (Tronto 2013b). She emphasized that care is not only a personal virtue but also a public ethic affecting policy and politics by prioritizing the context of personal relationships and emotional connections (Tronto 2015).

A number of queer theorists such as Michel Foucault (1988), Eve Sedwick (2003) and Karen Barad (2016) have considered the way care is negotiated as a source of power, particularly in asymmetrical relations. In dance, as in other areas, human interactions always involve some power dynamics given that individuals make choices that affect others in positive and negative ways. Sometimes choices are intentional, thoughtful expressions of individual agency, while other times, they are the product of cultural norms and standards which may automatically reproduce problematic ideas (such as the idea that men must lead and women must follow).

For teachers of any subject, it is important to recognize that individuals are not all equal in their background experiences with care. Scholars like Noddings and Gilligan have argued that caring is commonly coded as a feminine competence in Western societies (Noddings 1984; Gilligan 1993), which may mean that men may resist care or need more scaffolding to practise care. Inclusive dance practices not only challenge traditional gender roles but seek to promote a more egalitarian and flexible approach to dance. This disruption is aligned with literature within care ethics, queer studies, and feminist epistemology. bell hooks' (1994) advocacy for an education as the practice of freedom, for example, serves here to highlight learning as a place of liberation rather than conformity.

The scholarship on CE continues to grow with evolving characterizations that are relevant for physical practice. For example, Tronto and Bernice Fisher define care as a 'species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible' (In Tronto 2013a: 19). Maurice Hamington's concept of 'bodily epistemology' (2004) suggests that physical interactions can be a form of knowledge crucial for relational ethics. Interactions characterized by an attuned responsiveness to another's movements and intentions can deepen understanding and empathy among individuals. Eva Kittay's work on dependency and interdependence resonates particularly well with inclusive dance

practices (Kittay 2011; Kittay 2013). For instance, her emphasis on the ethical significance of acknowledging our mutual dependencies offers a compelling framework for understanding dance as a site for relational ethics, where each partner relies on and supports the other, creating a dynamic balance of give-and-take.

Teaching care presents several challenges, particularly in conveying nuanced dynamics and ensuring it is genuinely internalized rather than performed superficially. Care involves complex emotional engagements and ethical considerations that can be difficult to articulate and teach in traditional educational settings, where abstract principles may dominate over practical, relational skills. The subjective nature of care – what feels caring to one person might not to another – adds another layer of complexity to its instruction. Dance courses can offer a unique avenue for teaching and practising care precisely given the interactive and embodied nature of movement. Physical and emotional closeness in dance can facilitate discussions about the complexity of relating – including concepts such as consent, boundaries, mutual respect and competence. The need for dancers to attune to their partners' physical and emotional states can help develop a deep sense of empathy, receptivity, and responsiveness – all of which are key aspects of care. Dance also invites ongoing adjustments and accommodations, reflecting the dynamic process of caring in real-world relationships.

Applied to the realm of dance, the practice of care can transcend mere physical coordination, alignment and synchronization. Care requires more than merely doing the right steps at the right time – there is a mutual respect and reciprocity that qualifies the relationship. This rhetoric of care embedded within dance partnerships offers more than an aesthetic experience; it serves as a microcosm for interpersonal dynamics and ethical engagement. As dancers physically interact, they engage in a silent yet expressive exchange that demands attentiveness, sensitivity and a harmonious give-and-take. This nuanced interplay enriches genuine instances of partnering, instilling a deeper understanding of relational ethics among participants.

Care ethics offers a rich framework to understand and differentiate action, particularly in the context of rehearsals and training without the immediate presence of an audience. There are at least two ways that care functions here: (1) as a kind of cognitive orientation towards others (at the very least to consider what others might need), and (2) as a kind of action that realizes the cognitive orientation of attending to the needs of others. Differentiating action is pivotal in understanding how practitioners internalize and practice care within their interactions, influencing both their personal development and their collaborative dynamics.

Despite these benefits, there are limitations to how effectively dance courses can teach care. The ideals of care and reciprocity in dance partnering are not automatic; they must be cultivated through deliberate practice and conscious interaction. The translation of physical and emotional awareness developed through dance into other contexts is not always straightforward. The specific forms of communication and interaction that work in a dance setting, such as non-verbal cues or physical support, may not apply directly outside the studio (though they may be abstracted and transferable skills – I will return to this later). Additionally, the aesthetic focus

of dance might sometimes overshadow the ethical aspects, with performance quality taking precedence over the relational dynamics of care.¹ By performance quality, I mean the way in which movement is executed (regardless of whether there is an audience present). There is a continuum here where certain priorities such as establishing and maintaining honest and open communication can support intrinsic care, while performing for an audience, striving to win a competition, or posturing to attract a particular partner can limit care such that it becomes a means to an end. Where one end of the spectrum care in dancing is a space of personal growth, the other end of the spectrum care enables the interaction to function well enough that the partners can continue working with each other to enhance the particular aesthetic possibilities.

Teaching care within the context of dance education is challenging, not only due to the inherent complexities of care ethics but also because of potential limitations posed by educators themselves. Dance instructors might prioritize the development of individual virtuosity and technical mastery over relational awareness and ethical interaction among dancers. This focus on technique can overshadow the nurturing of interpersonal skills that are central to the practice of care. Dance educators may themselves have been taught in environments where individual achievement and competition were emphasized over cooperative, collaborative, and relational practices. This background can influence their teaching approach, leading them to concentrate on perfecting physical forms and routines rather than fostering a supportive and empathetic group dynamic. In such settings, the subtleties of care – such as being attentive to a partner's movements and/or adjusting one's own movements in response to another's needs – may not be adequately highlighted or valued.

The subjective nature of dance and its interpretation add another layer of complexity for educators trying to impart the principles of care. While dance can serve as a powerful medium for expressing and practising empathy and responsiveness, the abstract nature of these concepts can make them difficult to teach explicitly. Dance educators might struggle with how to effectively integrate and assess interpersonal competencies within the curriculum, favouring progress through visible, quantifiable improvements in individual technique. Additionally, educators themselves might face personal limitations in modelling care. Without personal experience and comfort with principles of care, instructors may find it challenging to create learning experiences that genuinely foster care among students. This can then trickle down to the relationship partners have with each other.

Despite these challenges, I believe dance education can provide a valuable platform for exploring and instilling care ethics, offering a space where physical interdependence can scaffold discussions about mutual respect and empathy. To overcome the focus on individual virtuosity, educators can incorporate specific exercises that emphasize partnership and group cohesion, such as collaborative feedback sessions with shared reflection that encourage dancers to consider how their actions affect others. By doing so, dance education can broaden its scope to produce not only technically proficient dancers but also ethically aware individuals who value and practice care in their interactions both inside and outside the studio.

For example, by encouraging dancers to understand cause-and-effect relationships (including lead/follow, sequencing, rolling point of contact, etc.), decoupled from individual identities, dance education can become a powerful site for challenging societal norms and promoting quality education, gender equity and meaningful interaction. The question I take up in my work is one of versatility – what scaffolds competent ethical and physical practice across different traditions of partnering?

Somatic Partnering framework

As a somatic educator with experience in Latin/Ballroom, Contact Improvisation, classical ballet and contemporary dance forms, I offer an approach I've called 'Somatic Partnering', which involves a somatic warm-up, partnered prompts, and shared reflection. I chose to name the form 'Somatic Partnering' to align with the classic somatic agenda² of placing emphasis on approaching movement experientially (rather than on learning set steps, rhythms or patterns), as well as facilitating ease of movement. Taken together, these play a crucial role in nurturing mutual agency, responsibility and care among participants. This classification not only helps in structuring the learning experience but also illuminates the interconnectedness of physical and ethical dimensions of shared movement.

Somatic Partnering is different from traditional partnering classes in a number of ways. For example, social dance classes typically focus on particular movement patterns, often within a lead-follow paradigm (e.g. swing, lindy, tango, salsa, bachata, etc.). Typically, modern and contemporary classes focus on sequenced action, including oppositional tension for counterbalances and lifts. There is of course a rich history of disrupting traditional approaches. Contact Improvisation is a classic example of disrupting not just the typical patterned approach but also heteronormative standards that perpetuate male as leader and female as follower (Novak 1990; Pallant 2017). There are also inclusive forms of social partnering, such as switch-leading and fluid partnering (Kaminsky 2020) in practices like Queer Tango (Liska 2016; McMains 2018; Plass 2022), Contango, and Fusion Dance.

In my Somatic Partnering workshops, I encourage participants to explore roles fluidly and communicate openly about their needs and capabilities. I have worked with concert dancers enrolled in conservatory programmes at venues such as The School at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, professional concert dancers in contemporary companies including Chicago Hubbard Street, professional ballet dancers in companies including Boston Ballet, Royal Swedish Ballet, Berlin Staatsballett, social dancers in New York City, Chicago and Boston, and contact improvisation practitioners in London, Tel Aviv and San Francisco. I have found that such practices not only improve the skills of individual dancers but also promote a caring community that extends beyond the studio. Below, I outline a detailed classification of the class flow and discuss how each category fosters mutual agency, responsibility, and care. By integrating a Somatic-based approach with shared reflection, my aim is to cultivate a shared vocabulary of ethics and kinetics which can be practised, examined, discussed and developed.

Somatic warm-ups

Somatic warm-ups are exercises that focus on internal perception and experience. Activities are designed to increase awareness of the body's sensations, movements and potential, using techniques derived from systems like Viewpoints, Laban, Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, gyrokinesis, ideokinesis and yoga.

Exercises encourage dancers to develop a deep, introspective understanding of their bodies, promoting a sense of bodily autonomy and agency. Linking movement to internal experience, Somatic prompts provide a foundation for preparing dancers not only physically but also mentally and emotionally for the engagement with others.

My approach involves three particular stationary prompts:

1. feet and hand articulation, treating them first as one unit (clapping or stomping) then breaking into multiple units (heel drops and hand kneading) to isolate and integrate supination and pronation;
2. knee and hip articulation, isolating and integrating adduction and abduction; and
3. torso articulation, activating isometric and isotonic activation. I then take this activity into locomotion, encouraging internal awareness while activating other available senses (sight, smell, hearing).

I find that structured improvisation of prompt-based somatic warm-ups helps dancers recognize their physical boundaries and capacities for each session, which is crucial for engaging in ethical interactions with others. By understanding and respecting their own bodies, dancers are better positioned to approach partnering with sensitivity and respect for mutual limits and abilities.

Partnering studies

Inspired by William Forsythe's Improvisation Technologies (Goebel 2022), I have been developing a series of partnered movement exercises I call 'partnering studies'. These exercises are structured, prompt-based interactions between dancers where roles can be fluid and interchangeable. The ethical aspect emerges from the necessity to care for one's partner's safety and comfort, making space for interactions to be consensual and mutually beneficial.

To qualify as a partnering study, the relational task must activate dependence and intimacy in a specific way: Each study is (1) loopable, (2) generatively constrained and (3) mutually agentic. By loopable, I mean that the exercise is durational in that it can continue seamlessly *ad infinitum* (at least until the partners are exhausted, and then perhaps exhaustion itself may become of interest). By generatively constrained, I mean that each task features a series of rules that structure interaction in a way that is creatively productive rather than merely restrictive. For example, some rules prescribe stationary action to focus more on shifting the centre of pressure rather than the centre of mass, while others rules delimit movement for one partner so that the other can practice responding

to what emerges spontaneously. Through iterative repetition, the constraints are sufficiently complex to enable embodied inquiry and play. By mutually agentic, I mean that each partner can (and should) participate fully in making choices within the generative constraints. These three characteristics define a partnering study and differentiate them from other partnered exercises. For example, certain patterns of shared movement may be useful to facilitate connection, but are not loopable, just as certain patterns may be constrained in ways that feel restrictive or do not inspire play. Certain kinds of partnering require generosity but may overlook reciprocity, so that one partner is merely at the service of another. Thus, the partnering studies are quite specific in both their aesthetic and their function.

An example of a partnering study is the *shaping study*. The constraint of the study is that partners must remain stationary (no locomotion, though there can be changes in centre of pressure as weight shifts from foot to foot, side to side, and forward and back from balls of the foot to the heels). The generative aspect is that partners play with negotiating equilibrium of orientation (spinal pitch, side-bend, rotation, translation) with direction (forward, back, up, down, left and right). The study can be explored in different grips, including palm-to-palm, cross-handshake and close embrace. While typically executed in dyads, a *shaping study* can certainly also be done with more than two people. This means that each person must respond to cues from at least two people, rather than just one. What makes it partnering is not that it involves two people but the quality of interaction between individuals moving together. Care, then, can be practised by attending to the needs of the other within each prompt.

Each study invites an awareness of precarity in order to practise care through physical dialogue. By precarity I mean the negotiation of equilibrium, and in some studies, the precariousness is very subtle. For example, in my *pressing study*, the generative constraint is to move between intensity of pressure from skin surface, to muscular activation, to structural integrity of the spine and pelvis. Partners begin by gently making contact, increasing pressure until they can feel the muscles of their hand and arm activate and then softening the muscle to feel the deeper connective tissue and bones.

An important distinction I make in practice is between *coordinating* and *calibrating*. I find that interpersonal coordination involves an alignment of action between partners, which can be sequenced and partnered in such a way that partners need not necessarily be attending to each other's movements. Calibration, on the other hand, involves a mutual responsibility where each partner actively contributes to the welfare of the other. This mutual engagement ensures that both dancers grow and learn in a supportive environment, respecting each other's limits and strengths. Competence in calibration involves understanding both the mechanics of movement and consequences of movement.

Bridging Tronto's competence as technical skill with physical responsibility, calibration encompasses an ethical dimension where caring for one's partner becomes integral to the shared practice. This includes not only physical support but also emotional and psychological sensitivity, creating a nurturing space for both partners. The objective is to develop receptivity, responsiveness and

resilience. These exercises challenge traditional paradigms by encouraging dancers to alternate between leading and following within each exercise, thus recognizing and valuing the contributions of each participant equally. I believe practising calibration in shared action exemplifies the practice of mutual agency and shared responsibility. As dancers attend to and respond to each other's movements, they learn to negotiate space, weight and energy cooperatively.

Each study demands a high degree of responsiveness. This involves recognizing when a partner is struggling with a particular move or sequence and choosing to adapt or modify the approach, rather than strictly adhering to the original choreography. Such adjustments might include slowing down, offering physical support or verbally checking in with the partner. In a studio setting, attentiveness manifests as a dancer tuning into subtle cues from their partner, such as slight hesitations, changes in breathing or shifts in energy levels. This attentiveness allows for real-time adjustments in one's own movements to accommodate the partner's comfort and capability, enhancing the collective execution of dance figures. It also requires a heightened level of emotional flexibility – if partners are set on executing a fixed choreography or following through on familiar patterns, they will miss out on opportunities to pay attention or else they will force the other(s) to comply. At such moments, humility must be paired with care – rather than imposing one's will on the other(s), the studies invite attending without controlling. The physical practice provides the content on which individuals can then reflect together.

Shared reflection

Shared reflection involves small and/or large group discussions after the physical exercises. I typically include short writing assignments, including free-write or focused writing prompts to promote reflection. Discussions include verbalizing experiences, feelings and insights following physical activities.

Reflection allows participants to articulate and internalize what they have learnt about themselves and each other through the exercises. It promotes a deeper understanding of the ethical dimensions of their interactions, reinforcing lessons in responsibility and care.

In shared reflection, the ethical learning from the kinematic experiences is verbalized and critically analysed. This practice not only deepens the individual's understanding of their actions and their impacts but also reinforces the community's ethical standards. It highlights the importance of care and responsibility in maintaining a supportive and nurturing dance environment.

Limitations of care-informed pedagogies in dance

While the integration of care ethics into dance partnering presents numerous benefits for fostering mutual agency, responsibility and care, it is important to recognize and address potential limitations. These limitations particularly

concern the risks of harbouring false beliefs about the nature of interaction and the transferability of skills learnt in the studio to other life contexts.

In the controlled environment of a dance studio, interactions are often idealized, with structured exercises designed to promote positive outcomes. Participants might develop an unrealistic expectation that all interactions should follow this smooth, conflict-free model. This expectation can lead to disappointment and frustration when real-life interactions outside the studio do not meet these idealized standards.

Movement exercises, particularly those rooted in care ethics, can place a heavy emphasis on consensus and harmony. While these are valuable in a cooperative setting, they might underprepare dancers for situations that require negotiation or assertive confrontation. Individuals who show up to dance classes to practice ethical skills are also self-selecting in ways that mean certain conflicts may not arise, limiting the kind of power that is negotiated. Real-life interactions often involve conflicting interests that require more complex navigational skills than those practised in a studio setting. Partnering exercises can simplify relationships to a dynamic of mutual support without adequately addressing power imbalances that can exist outside the studio. This simplification can lead to a naive approach to interpersonal dynamics where dancers might expect equality and support as a default, not accounting for societal structures that complicate these ideals. Therefore, while dance *can* be an effective medium for teaching elements of care, it must be integrated thoughtfully and intentionally with explicit discussions and reflections on how these lessons apply beyond dance to be fully effective.

Aside from unrealistic expectations of consensus, another limitation of care-informed dance pedagogy is that the skills developed through shared movement – such as physical communication, non-verbal cues and synchronized movement – are highly specific to the context of dance and may not always translate directly to other settings. For instance, the physical closeness and touch used in dance are inappropriate in many professional and social contexts, potentially leading to misunderstandings. In addition, when framed through the lens of care ethics, partnering often involves a high degree of reciprocity and responsiveness. Dancers might expect similar levels of attentiveness and care in broader social interactions, which can lead to unrealistic expectations about the behaviour of others. While dance enhances sensitivity to non-verbal signals, excessive reliance on such cues can be limiting in environments where verbal communication is paramount. Dancers might misinterpret or miss subtle verbal nuances if they focus predominantly on non-verbal forms of communication.

Finally, embedding care ethics in dance education risks essentializing care as inherently positive, potentially overlooking how it can also be coercive or paternalistic. This characterization overlooks the complexity of care as something that can also involve manipulation or control under certain conditions. The universal application of care ethics principles may not take into account the diverse backgrounds and needs of dancers. What is considered caring in one cultural context may not be seen the same way in another, potentially leading to cultural insensitivity or misunderstanding.

Conclusion

Inclusive dance partnering, by redefining how dancers interact and relate, offers a powerful medium for the practice of care ethics through individual and shared action. This approach transforms dance from a mere performance of predefined roles into an active engagement in forming caring and ethical relationships. As dance educators, there is an opportunity to model and nurture these values, encouraging a broader cultural shift towards more empathetic and inclusive communities.

The classification of embodied exercises I have described integrates somatic awareness, partnered dynamics and reflective practices in dance education in order to foster an environment of mutual agency, responsibility, and care. Through the interplay of kinematic and ethical dimensions, dancers learn not just to move together but to care together, creating a dance practice that is as ethically engaged as it is physically expressive. This approach not only enhances the individual dancer's experience but also cultivates a dance community that values empathy, respect and mutual support.

By integrating the theoretical insights of Tronto, Hamington, Noddings, hooks and Kittay into dance education, we can foster environments that not only challenge traditional paradigms but also enhance the well-being of individuals and communities through the practice of care. While dance partnering based on care ethics provides valuable lessons in mutual agency, responsibility, and care, educators must be cautious not to oversimplify these lessons or overstate their applicability outside the studio. Acknowledging and addressing these limitations can help ensure that dancers are equipped with a realistic and nuanced understanding of interpersonal dynamics that can adapt to various life situations, promoting not just better dancers but more socially aware and ethically sensitive individuals.

In the studio, without the immediate feedback of an audience, the focus shifts more towards developing a deeper connection between partners. Here, the emphasis on partnering allows dancers to explore and experiment with movements in a more forgiving and flexible environment. This setting is ideal for cultivating a practice where care ethics can deeply influence the interaction, promoting a form of engagement that values the growth and well-being of each dancer as much as the perfection of the dance itself. By employing a care ethics framework, the practice of partnering in the dance studio becomes a powerful tool for developing not only better dancers but also more empathetic and ethically aware individuals. This approach fosters a culture within the dance community that prioritizes care, respect and mutual growth, extending these values beyond the dance studio into other areas of life.

Notes

- 1 There is an ongoing discussion about the role of ethics in performance practices in particular (see Stuart Fisch and Thompson 2020).
- 2 See Martha Eddy's *Mindful Movement* (2017) for an overview of somatic practices.