Circus Education In Québec: Balancing Academic And Kinaesthetic Learning Objectives Through an Artistic Lens

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ABSTRACT

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With this research, I investigate the coexistence of academic and kinaesthetic curricular goals in post-secondary circus education in Quebec, Canada, specifically exploring how students, circus instructors, academic teachers and administrators value curricular elements within the context of their perceptions of their institution's program objectives. The interdisciplinarity of circus studies invites analysis through methodologies and theories borrowed from other disciplines. From Sport Psychology I draw on models for assessing the kinaesthetic technical knowledge related to preparing an athletic body for elite performance (Bloom & Sosniak, 1985). The field of Curriculum Studies offers a lens through which to understand both the curricular models of each school and to assess the academic motivation of the students. The theoretical frameworks of hidden, null, implicit and explicit curricula provide a strong platform for investigating how circus schools communicate institutional values of subjects, student behaviour and career preparation (Apple & King, 1983; Eisner, 2002). In both post-secondary Quebec professionalizing circus programs, discussion groups of students, circus instructors, academic teachers and administrators were asked to define their institution's program objectives and reflect upon the curricular content in light of those objectives. After reflection and analysis, it is apparent that the Quebec post-secondary circus education community has a common understanding of the learning objectives surrounding physical, artistic and vocational content, but disparate understandings of how academic content relates to the program objectives.

Keywords: Circus education, curriculum studies, circus studies, Quebec circus, performing arts education, professional arts training, sport psychology

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tables

Figures

Circus Education In Québec: Balancing Academic And Kinaesthetic Learning Objectives Through an Artistic Lens

Chapter One: Introduction

With this research, I investigate the coexistence of academic and kinaesthetic curricular goals in post-secondary circus education, specifically exploring how students, circus instructors, academic teachers and administrators value curricular elements within the context of how they perceive their institution's program objectives. Currently, few researchers have examined how circus programs balance these curricular requirements. It is possible that understanding these perceptions will contribute to a greater understanding of choices around arts education and positively impact decision-making regarding curricular programming and objectives for both circus and other performing arts institutions. Through literature review of pertinent fields and focus group interviews conducted with students, instructors, teachers and administrators at the two degree-granting circus schools in the province of Québec, Canada, the National Circus School and the École de cirque de Québec, I identify how students and faculty describe and experience the coexistence of these two, traditionally juxtaposed, learning structures. This research is unique in its field and illuminates perceptions of how physical training and academic education fit together during the course of a degree-granting circus program.

Circus schools, with a few exceptions, began in the second half of the twentieth century. Many professionalizing circus programs, which train students for professional circus performance, are now accredited by federal governments and offer some form of academically-recognized circus arts diploma. Academically accredited circus schools, like other vocationally-driven arts programs, occupy a complicated space in the education world. The primary objective of circus schools is to prepare students for a career in circus performance, yet like other post-secondary accredited programs they must also provide the core academic courses required for a college degree. Because academic knowledge and physical prowess have often been perceived as antagonistic, this could present an area of tension regarding learning outcomes, co-existing as "a tensionality that emerges … from indwelling in a zone between two curriculum worlds" (Aoki, 2005, p. 59). We can only know the curriculum through the experience of it – lived curriculum and written objectives do not exist in the same physical and emotional dimensions.

The curriculum in both Quebec circus schools includes content where students learn specific circus disciplines, physical conditioning, performance techniques, techniques from other

performing arts domains, career management tools, and core requirements. Langlois (2014) describes three types of content at circus school, "academic, technical, and arts-based classes" (p. 57), but also observed that students "separated each learning experiences into 'neat little boxes' just as the curriculum schedule was structured" (p. 75). Because I wanted to discover how the students, teachers and administrators each described the curriculum, I attempted to keep my research categories as large, and without prejudgements, as possible.

I use two categories which encompass all of the possible content, 'academic' and 'kinaesthetic' For the purposes of this study, the term *academic* refers to the "normative 'content' " taught in the school cannon such as language, science, mathematics, history and philosophy, and which therefore generally hold "perceived legitimacy" over other subjects (Apple & King, 1983, p. 83). The term *kinaesthetic* references Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, and proposes that high bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence favours "the ability to use one's whole body, or parts of the body (like the hands or the mouth), to solve problems or create products (e.g. dancer)" (Gardner, n.d.). However, the research participants offered many more categorical descriptions of circus school course-work, describing overarching artistic goals, which will be described in the methodology section.

One further point about language use: I have used the term 'circus instructors' to refer to the circus coaches and trainers at the two circus schools, although the term 'instructor' is a poor translation. In French, the circus specialist instructors are called "formateurs," literally the people who help form the future artist. Lacking such a word in English, I have used 'instructor,' rather than 'coach' because of the athletic association. Furthermore, 'academic teachers' is used to describe the people who are not responsible for physical content and who therefore teach outside of the training spaces. When speaking about the ensemble of circus instructors, academic teachers and administrator participants, I refer to them as 'circus educators.' Although individually they may not be teaching circus content, all of them are teaching future circus performers, making them part of the circus education process in the context of this research. Finally, I have done all of the translations from French to English.

Roadmap

While following a phenomenological model, this paper also intersects domains in order to connect fields of study. To orient the reader, I offer an overview of the activities included in 'circus arts,' a brief history of the evolution of circus education models, and a description of the

education context in Québec. I will then present theoretical frameworks from both Sport Psychology and Curriculum Theory that offer perspective for understanding and evaluating circus curricula. Interspersed with these models, I offer direct connections with circus education literature in order to inform the circus reader about constructive intersections and to equally inform the reader new to circus about existing considerations when educating performers. The literature from this chapter describes the landscape within which I developed and researched my primary question, and also demonstrates the need for further research in the field of circus education. The chapter on methodology describes how I used demographic surveys and focus group interviews to record opinions and impressions of participants from the two circus programs. Within the methodology chapter are several examples of the themes that surfaced and the reasons why I chose to focus on the descriptions of 'vocational' content and 'academic' content for this paper. In the Results chapter, I report on the findings from the demographic surveys. The objective of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the participants' opinions about education, their past experiences, and their values regarding curricular content. Understanding their existing opinions helps contextualize the following discussion, but also provides a platform for potential future research. I do not directly connect the demographic survey results to the discussion, however I do postulate about the relationship between the demographic responses and the curricular experiences of the different populations. In Focus Group Discussions, I both report on the large themes that surfaced during the focus groups and connect them to the models from the Literature Review. Using those models, I demonstrate their relevance to understanding experiences of circus education in international contexts (as much of the literature is written about European circus programming). By organizing the themes that arose in the focus groups, I show that participant discussion related to vocational curricular content was valued consistently across all participant groups but academic curricular content was not described with consistent values. In my conclusion, I discuss why vocational and academic content are not seen as contributing equally to the education of circus artists, and offer another perspective, reframing the contributions of curricular content through the lens of the mission statements of each circus program.

Why Study Circus Education?

Circus education has not yet been part of widespread academic discourse, which makes it fertile ground for research. However this also means that there is limited previous analysis

contributing to the conversation. Glimpses of pertinent literature present many rich questions in the domains of gender studies, risk management, curriculum models and creativity research. Although some research has been done exploring potential links between kinaesthetic learning styles and traditional academics, these methods have not been widely adopted by the academy or, as it happens, circus schools (Touval & Westreich, 2003; Westreich, 2002). The rapid rise in degree-granting circus programs over the past 40 years suggests that investigating how circus arts blend with the academic structure could provide a compelling avenue of research. In addition, understanding the student, instructor, teacher and administrator relationships to curricular content helps shed light on differences between the "curriculum-as-plan" and the "curriculum-as-lived-experience" (Aoki, 2005, p. 159), furthering knowledge of both circus and potentially performing arts educational programming. The sparse literature about circus education contextualizes current understanding and debate regarding the method and aims of said programs. Yet even within this literature, the relationship of circus education to the traditional (and required) academic subjects is invisible, which points to a rich and under-explored discussion about the place of circus in school and school in circus.

The most comprehensive research about graduates of circus schools has focused on the relationship between circus education and vocation, without much regard for the academic or intellectual components of degree-granting circus education (European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2008b; Herman, 2009). Langlois (2014) interviewed professional circus artists who had graduated from Montreal's National Circus School to better understand how they felt about their circus school experiences. She finds that the socio-constructivist approach to learning was most favourably received by the students because it promotes "perceived usefulness" of each course in relationship to student goals (Langlois, 2014, p. 107). Student distaste for academic courses, for Langlois these were "any classes that occurred in a traditional academic classroom setting," was explained as a lack of academic confidence due to kinaesthetic learning preferences (70). Although she suggests that the students have a preference for kinaesthetic learning experiences, she did not evaluate learning preferences. In fact, this seems to be a frequent assumption – if a student is pursuing vocational education they are refusing academic knowledge. Perhaps circus students are self-selecting a physical career because they do not feel comfortable with academics. Without investigating assumptions of a mutually exclusive mind-body division in educational preference, it is impossible to know if that

accurately represents the student population. For my own research, I felt that examining the assumption that circus students are 'physical' (frequently mentioned by participants in my discussion groups) was important in order to contextualize student perspectives of curricular value. To do that, I explored the students' VARK learning preferences (visual, auditory, reading, kinaesthetic) (N.D. Fleming & Mills, 1992).

Intersecting Fields Of Study

Studying circus is by nature interdisciplinary, calling upon many different fields to understand and describe circus activities. Within circus are many specialized "disciplines," for example trapeze, hand-balancing or walking a tight wire. In addition, circus artists intersectionally draw upon other performing arts techniques and personal interests to create unique performance. Approaching circus studies from his position as a professor and bilingual theatre writer/ director, Leroux observes that

> Circus research requires interdisciplinarity in a way that I haven't seen in theatre or dance research [and is] steeped in many converging fields: aesthetics, dramaturgy and creative process, cultural politics, discourse of nationhood and paradiplomacy, circus training and pedagogy (from high performance training to physical literacy), ethics, philanthropy, social circus, engineering (massive structures, complex rigging), sports medicine (epistemology), branding and commerce, urbanism and social spaces, and hand's-on research and development (Leroux, 2014, p. 268-269).

The interdisciplinarity of circus studies invites analysis through methodologies and theories borrowed from other disciplines. This is not to *limit* circus studies within the confines of other disciplines, but instead to stand on the shoulders of existing giants and trace the gaps and overlaps in knowledge that arise when two structures are superimposed. Theoretical models from Curriculum Studies and Sport Psychology will be borrowed to understand experiences of parallel kinaesthetic and academic curricula. Ideally, this research would also include theories and models from the domain of artistic education. After all, circus arts have a different performance model than sports, no matter how athletic the practitioners. Yet both schools propose a curriculum that dominantly follows a sports model, as described on their websites, and which emphasize high-skill individual circus numbers as a demonstration successful program completion, rather than diverse, innovative or irregular artistic discovery and presentation. The domain of Sport Psychology provides information about physical and mental health through

multiple developmental stages as well as research related to coach-athlete relationships and team dynamics, which have yet to be explored with regard to circus education and which seem especially applicable to the training models in Quebec. Circus performers explicitly do not identify as athletes, sometimes "reject[ing] information that might be useful to their domain if they see it as derived from sport psychology" (Hays, 2012, p. 28). For this reason, it is important that those of us for whom circus education is important consider incorporating effective strategies for improving the physical and mental health of circus students, even if the tools are modified from a sports model.

From Sport Psychology, then, I draw on models for preparing an athlete, in body and mind, for elite performance. With a responsibility to the mental and physical health of the student, the circus curricula should be assessed for their adherence to professional standards of injury prevention, mental preparation and stress management available in other athletic disciplines (Becker, 2009; Bloom & Sosniak, 1985; Chelladurai, 1984; Home & Carron, 1985; Ménard & Hallé, 2014).

The field of Curriculum Studies offers a lens through which to understand both the curricular models of both Québec circus schools, and to assess the academic motivation of the students. I approach this research by following Ralph Tyler's first, and perhaps most important, question regarding curriculum design: "What educational purpose should the school seek to attain?" in order to understand how the curricular choices made by each circus school work towards their "educational purpose" (p. 1). In addition to the human experience, experiencing the organization of the schedule is also a learning experience indicating course value within its program (Apple & King, 1983; Eisner, 2002).

Personal Experience And Perspective

My personal background has included deep involvement with rigorous intellectual academic demands. While double majoring in sciences and humanities for my undergraduate degree, I simultaneously created and performed contemporary dance, and then subsequently pursued comprehensive circus training. The isolation/insulation of intellectual and physical subjects at circus schools mirrors my experience of separate values placed upon my traditional academic classes and the meaningful kinaesthetic experiences I had when dancing and performing on trapeze. In my own body and mind these tracks are not separate. The intersection

of the mental and corporal intrigues me and I became interested in accredited programs offering students the opportunity to pursue simultaneous physical and intellectual knowledges.

Expectations

When beginning this research, I anticipated a strong positive association between the perceived usefulness of a course for achieving future career plans and student engagement with the course. I was interested to see if circus instructors, academic teachers, administrators, and students agreed about which content was most essential for achieving the program objectives, with the aim of providing a foundation for curriculum analysis and future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

An Overview of Circus Education

Circus arts is challenging to define, for both practitioners and scholars, because of the many aesthetic, ethical, technical and cultural transformations it has undergone throughout the past 200 years. Extensive touring of tented shows throughout North America during the 19th and early 20th centuries created the firmly established image of tents, animals, clowns and sequins that still comes to mind when one hears the word 'circus.' In the 1960s and 70s, circus artists began reinventing their craft and teaching artists outside of the traditional families (Étienne, Vinet, & Vitali, 2014; European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2008b). This led to the rise of contemporary circus, generally characterized by human-centered shows with an artistic focus including emotional nuance, narrative arc, and cross-disciplinarity with dance, theatre and music. The evolution of circus performance has been accompanied and reinforced by differences in knowledge transmission (Achard, 2001; Jacob & Vézina, 2007; Lalonde, 2007). Currently, contemporary and traditional styles exist side-by-side and share many similarities, including the types of activities that are considered 'circus' (Cordier, 2007; Lievens, 2009; Sizorn, 2008)

Five discipline categories of circus activity. What is 'circus'? While there continues to be much discussion about the distinctions between 'traditional' and 'contemporary' circus, the same core movements can be seen in both contemporary and traditional performance styles, as well as in all types of educational circus. There are six large "families" of circus activity which broadly describe the type of motor skills that are called upon when practicing the techniques of that category: Floor Acrobatics, Aerial Acrobatics, Balancing, Clowning, Juggling Arts, and Equestrian Arts (Barlati, n.d.). Within those "families" are individual disciplines. For instance, Aerial Acrobatics includes anything done on an apparatus rigged in the air, such as trapeze, while Floor Acrobatics includes tumbling, trampoline and human pyramids. Balancing describes skills like unicycle and stilts. The first five of these technical categories are present in traditional and contemporary circus performance, although the way they are presented to the audience will vary depending upon the venue and style. Animal acts are rarely included in contemporary circus, although there are a few notable exceptions like Cavalia and Rasposo's "Le Chant du Dindon." The research presented here considers professionalizing circus schools in Québec, which are strongly correlated with contemporary circus performance aesthetics, and technical

and artistic innovation. In fact, the innovation of circus schools has been integral to the development of contemporary circus.

A short history of circus through the lens of circus education.

Family (early circus). Circus has traditionally been a closed community. Until the cirque nouveau revolution in the 60s and 70s, the primary predicator for working in the circus was being born into a circus family (J. Boudreault, 1999). In fact, even into the mid-twentieth century the featured performers were "born into the business" (Davis, 2002, p. 74). Family troupes diversified Philip Astley's English riding school spectacles, which were in-the-round and included animals, acrobats, and high-skill feats. These performances, beginning in 1786, are the beginning of "circus" performances in a format resembling that of the traditional circus (Kwint, 2016). Across Europe, fixed round theatres were built to accommodate regular crowds (Kwint, 2016). However, the smaller population in the United States instigated the development of touring tented shows in order to reach the dispersed population. These shows became a staple when they were facilitated by, and inextricably bound to, the creation of the transcontinental railroad system (Davis, 2002). Sparse towns across the United States were united by the circus, which influenced national language, politics, ethics, patriotism and knowledge of global geography. Although Canada did export circus acts, some even touring with the big American circuses, performances dominantly crossed the border from the US and no significant local Canadian circus identity was established during this time period (J. Boudreault, 2016; Lavers, 2015; Leroux, 2014b).

Traditionally, circus was taught through an apprenticeship model or one-on-one coaching (Achard, 2001; Wall, 2013). Professional performers, who then taught their children or spouse using the same techniques with which they were trained, transmitted knowledge during quotidian training experiences. The aesthetic and technique was slow to evolve, using internally replicating master-student transmission modes (Achard, 2001). Born into the industry, a child had little choice but to become a circus artist, their ultimate path paved by talent and family resources. Becoming part of the industry was nearly impossible for those born outside the tradition; family dynasties were notoriously closed to outside influence. This self-reinforcing loop meant that costume, technique, rhythm, artistry, had become codes of belonging passed between circus 'citizens,' keeping the traditions alive and exclusive (Jacob & Vézina, 2007).

Russia (evolving circus). This began to change with the 1917 Russian revolution. The Soviet leaders wanted to keep circus as a national art and believed that, like Ballet and gymnastics, it could be trained in schools (Wall, 2013). Institutional training would be a necessity as most circus families emigrated during the revolution in order to continue their traditional lifestyle. The success of the Moscow Circus School[1] would forever change circus education (J. Boudreault, 1999). When it was founded in 1927, 90 percent of Russian circus performers were from circus families. By 1960, only 20 percent could claim circus heritage (Wall, 2013, p. 33).

France (new circus). By the 1950s and 60s a variety of factors led to the stagnation of circus in Europe and North America. Practically, a significant rise in oil prices made travelling shows simultaneously less lucrative to perform and more expensive to operate (Etienne, Vinet, & Vitali, 2014, p. 23). Aesthetically, the prevalence of television enabled audiences to be amazed by new spectacles without leaving their homes. Politically, the post WWII Cultural Revolution was brewing and the Cold War was underway. The 1960s shook up political, economic and artistic ideas throughout the West, and circus was no exception. Formal circus education began in the West near the end of the Cold War when the first two European schools opened in 1974.

In the West, performers began learning circus techniques and creating shows that would come to be known first in France as *nouveau cirque*, new circus. They learned from master coaches, from each other, visited the Eastern Bloc circus schools and formed their own troupes, questioning the separation of circus and other performing arts (David, 2011; Jacob & Vézina, 2007). The resulting re-definitions of circus in each country's cultural imagination were influenced by different historical relationships to the circus. Thanks to this paradigm shift in France, the burgeoning new circus movement changed federal hands in 1978 from the Ministry of Agriculture, where it had been housed because traditional circus performance revolved around animals, to the Ministry of Culture and Education. With the goal of investing in the long-term potential of circus as an art form, the government quickly set about preparing for a national superior (post-secondary) circus training program which, after two years of planning, accepted its first class in 1985 (Étienne et al., 2014). France supported circus through extensive funding to companies, festivals and individuals, thereby valuing both politically insubordinate companies like Cirque Archaos and visually stunning performances like Cirque Plume (Maleval & Mullett,

[1] This is industry nomenclature; the actual name has changed frequently (Wall, 2013).

2002; Mock, 2016).

In North America, the ingrained history of tented circus (Davis, 2002) paved the way for the neo-traditional look of the first new circus companies, The Big Apple Circus (New York) and The Pickle Family Circus (San Francisco). Both of these companies launched training programs in the late 70s, with The Big Apple Circus initially forming as a school before becoming a troupe (Albrecht, 1995; Cohen, 2012). In Québec, gymnastics, theatre and street performers came together with the same ideas, formalizing their diverse acrobatic and performance courses into a circus program in 1981. The paucity of Québec circus history eventually became the motor for globally shifting concepts of what circus performance could be through the creative and corporate endeavours of Cirque du Soleil (J. Boudreault, 2016; Jacob & Vézina, 2007; Leroux, 2016).

From these pioneers of new circus, educational programs began to form as courses instead of the traditional apprenticeship models. The first Western schools were founded in Paris in 1974 by Annie Fratellini and Alexis Gruss, artists from European circus families interested in opening alternate routes into the profession (Purovaara, 2014). Training programs began to emerge in the West providing circus coaching to non-circus-family people at all levels of skill and certification (Étienne et al., 2014; European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2008a). Many are still in existence and more than a dozen of these provide post-secondary degrees in Circus Arts. Now, education to become a circus performer can come through formal or informal educational programs. Many countries have professionalizing schools, some of which are accredited through federal ministries and offer Bachelor, Masters or Doctoral degrees (European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2008a). Curriculum at these institutes is devised to both meet governmental standards and instruct the necessary artistic and physical skills to pursue a circus career as a performing artist.

Due to the high risk of injury, acquisition of circus skills takes many years of precise training with expert coaches. Historically, these skills would be learned in the performance environment by training with a peer or, for the younger generation, from a parent. The circus coach had a lifetime of performance experience (Appert-Raulin, 2016; European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2011; Purovaara, 2014). With the advent of circus schools, the role of coach and performer became distinct because education and performance were no longer simultaneous. Initially, coaches in these institutions were generally people at the

end of their career, perhaps from age or from injury. Now accredited coach-training programs exist in Canada and some European countries, while the U.S. offers a variety of non-accredited competences at varying levels of professionalism (National Circus School, 2015). France has separate federal coach certification levels for teaching circus and adaptive circus for those with diverse special needs (Fédération française des écoles de cirque; Opale; Avise, 2012). The first professional society for circus coaches in the United States was founded in 2014 (The American Circus Educators Association (ACE), n.d.).

Professional circus. To pursue a career in circus arts, a student must undertake intense training to increase strength, skill and flexibility. While there are a variety of paths to specialization, the most frequent modes of entry to professionalism are through intensive, full-time circus programs, whether they are formal post-secondary schools that incorporate academic core requirements or strictly vocational programs. Most students from either type of school graduate with an act that is honed to their specific talents as well as a variety of other performance skills, which will make them valuable assets during show creation. While each program has unique qualities, all prioritize circus techniques by teaching both focused work in specific disciplines and general circus knowledge. Other performance techniques like dance, theater, music and voice are usually part of the curricula. These schools teach the tools of the trade, and also socialize students into the interpersonal and professional behaviours of contemporary circus (Salaméro, 2009; Salaméro & Haschar-Noé, 2011). Unlike other performing arts, most circus performers enter the market with a personalized, specialized "act," which they will then sell to circus tours, cabarets, festivals and other venues. The "act" is crafted to showcase their unique physical and creative skills. The "act" can serve as a sort of business card – a company in the creation process for a show might hire an artist for specific qualities of their act, but use those skills to create something new, incorporate other performers or change the aesthetic (European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2008b; Herman, 2009). Because few companies hire an artist to only perform one single specialized act, the diversity of performing arts and acrobatic techniques taught in circus schools teaches diverse skills each artist might draw on in future performance scenarios. Through the selection and educational process, circus schools therefore exert significant influence on the trajectory and professional expectations of graduates arriving on the market.

For the few who sustain careers in circus, the world of professional performance holds little security (Goudard, 2005; Salaméro, 2009; Salaméro, Julhe, & Honta, 2016). Contract-based performance work means that many artists are perpetually searching for work. A circus artist may perform in many types of shows including traditional circus, experimental artistic projects, corporate events and cabarets (Herman, 2009). This type of instability will affect many societal norms, for instance financial institutions are often uncomfortable with contract-based income regarding credit (Lafollie, 2015). Social expectations are often broken, as performers often work evening hours and during holidays, limiting their social engagement with people outside of their industry (Kreusch, 2014). Because there are very few professional networks for circus artists, professionals are often alone in their management financial, vocational, and social instability (Lafollie, 2015).

Issues in contemporary circus education. This section looks at international literature discussing professional circus training in higher education and superior training contexts. At the time of this writing, no scholarly journal or bibliography exists in English or French for the researcher interested in higher education circus analysis or critique. Although research about professional circus schools has been rapidly growing since the early 2000s, there are still relatively few scholarly publications, therefore, dissertations, journal articles, books, industry magazine dossiers and essays by renowned industry professionals were included in this review.

In literature related to circus education, there seems to be a division between texts that face the past (descriptive or historical texts), and those that face the future by analyzing and critiquing the state of circus education. Until the 2000s nearly everything written about circus education was a descriptive recounting of the programs in existence (Ancion, 2015; Cordier & Salaméro, 2012; Coudert, 2013; “Faire école [Special Edition],” 2000; Goubet, 2001; Jacob & Vézina, 2007; Lalonde, 2007; Vinet, 2008; Vitali & Goudard, 2008). These texts don’t elucidate teaching methodology or other aspects of long-term student development. France is the first country to pursue a more critical regard of circus education, enabled by the cultural support for circus education and production and leading to a far superior, and disproportionate, volume of research when compared to English sources.

With increasing numbers of superior schools throughout the world comes an increased interest in how to professionalize circus training through academic channels. Accordingly, in the early 2010s, texts about circus education surge. Connections between circus schools and the

professional industry are investigated by authors trying to assess what the relationship is and how it came to be (Lalonde, 2014; Rantisi & Leslie, 2015; Roberts, 2014; Salaméro & Haschar-Noé, 2012). From 2011 forward, the published texts diverge beyond the professional context and many different types of research questions infuse the circus education literature with a depth impossible only a few years before, such as questions of risk, gender, methodology of instruction and continuing education. One consistent aspect of the literature in both languages is a relatively large introductory passage to explain what circus is and why it is worth researching. As the field of circus studies grows, one hopes that introductions can be more specific to the subject instead of covering the entire evolution of circus.

Looking back. These documents offer facts, statistics, histories of institutions or the industry, without asking incisive questions. These are often written by people affiliated with certain programs to ensure that a specific history of the circus school is remembered (David, 2011; Goubet, 2001; Jacob & Vézina, 2007). Other texts are more descriptive of circus education as a whole, including its evolution through time and across countries (Achard, 2001). This category includes texts such as the 25th anniversary books from the NCS and the CNAC, each recounting points of pride for the respective programs. Additionally, Amy Cohen contributes important information about the history of circus education in the United States (Cohen, 2012). One of the more unique texts of the group is an homage to outgoing CNAC president Bernard Turin describing his philosophies and his approach to the arts (Goubet, 2001), which revolutionized how CNAC educated circus artists and continues to be a pillar of their pedagogical vision.

Pertinent to the following research, one ‘state of the industry’ study from France (L’avise et al., 2012), which clearly describes the French system of circus education and also offers a short analysis of problems faced by multiple schools, namely consistent difficulties with human resources. All schools face upheaval when the program is transferred to the next generation. The paper calls for more comprehensive systems to replace the ethic ‘reactivity’ it perceives as prevalent in circus organizations.

Professionalization through accreditation. Several authors consider the multiple challenges to becoming a professional circus artist and how those difficulties are exacerbated by non-accredited programming (Coudert, 2013; Goudard, 2010; Salaméro & Cordier, 2012). Tim Roberts argues for clarity of programming, stating that a superior program must take into

consideration the market, the long-term employment of graduates, and the necessity for elite selection to feed the renewal circus arts (Roberts, 2014). Parallel to Roberts' conclusion, Rantisi and Leslie use Bourdieu's concept of cultural intermediaries to demonstrate that vocational arts schools, specifically the NCS, have a significant influence on building a professionally recognized sector because a "diploma provides students with institutionalized cultural capital" (Rantisi & Leslie, 2015, p. 414). They underscore how accreditation of circus education also facilitates professionalization of the industry by legitimizing its activities in the eyes of government and positioning circus as a commercial enterprise.

Looking forward: Gender. Every circus training program has some form of coexisting athletic and artistic education. Some researchers draw parallels between male/female and sport/art dichotomies, noting an enhanced value on 'masculine' traits in French circus schools, concluding that school audition processes and curriculum functionally value athleticism over artistry (Garcia, 2011; Salaméro & Haschar-Noé, 2008; Salaméro, 2009). Reflecting this preference, both the educational programs (students and educators included) and the industry are up to 70% male-dominated (Cordier, 2007; Salaméro & Haschar-Noé, 2008). This discrepancy is not due to lack of interest or auditions; multiple authors have noted a majority of female practitioners in recreational circus programs, indicating that the superior school audition process marks a bottleneck for female artists. Salaméro (2009) gives the example of the ENACR's 2005 class: females made up 33.6% of applicants but only 18.7% of accepted students. Furthermore, gender discrepancy impacts the type of disciplines that students are taught (Garcia, 2011) (Legendre, 2014). In France, some nuances of this culture appear through coach interviews where the male body is described as 'workable, teachable,' yet the female body is perceived as 'permanent' and so encouraged into a discipline that meets a preconceived idea of where her body fits, not the student's aspirations (Garcia, 2011, 99). These unexamined assumptions replicate cultural and traditional gender divisions between activities and often leave female soloists with apparatus that is difficult to train and complicated to hire, effectively diminishing their presence and income in the industry.

Looking forward: Risk. Discussions of risk and danger, once taboo among circus performers, are increasingly the subject of study. Beginning with Goudard's analysis of the industry, which included a strong critique of the dearth of institutionalized frameworks for risk assessment and risk management (Goudard, 2005, 2010), a variety of authors have investigated

how risk is introduced during circus education (Lafollie, 2015; Legendre, 2014). Lafollie finds that while artists are taught to understand the factors around bodily risk, management of fear is collaged together through peer observation and trial and error. From each of their vantage points, the authors unite in a call for more pedagogical consideration of risk. Although many of the self-created techniques seem to be working, they suggest that formalized intervention would enhance the future graduate's ability to manage stress and risk more effectively in their professional lives.

Looking forward: Envisioning and re-envisioning pedagogy. Through observation and experience of the many training programs now in existence, new proposals for ameliorating and re-thinking pedagogical content begin to emerge. Still, few sources consider the academic component of accredited circus programs. Most research focuses on the physical and performance traits, not the intellectual growth of circus school graduates. A few texts describe current curricular practices and philosophies, (David, 2011; Étienne et al., 2014; Langlois, 2014). Writing from the CNAC, Gwenola David (2011) explains how the school has solved the problem of '*former sans formateur*,' teaching without a teacher. This riddle is their pedagogical philosophy in a nutshell: they are preparing artists to create and perform skills and concepts that the coaches have never thought of. The teaching must therefore focus on methodology, not prescribed outcomes. Bridging the practical and the theoretical, several chapters in *Quelle formation professionnelle supérieure pour les arts du cirque?* are insightful calls to consider and reconsider how circus education is conceived of and provided (Étienne et al., 2014). Finally, essays from a circus-research-creation conference discuss methods to expand circus practice in service to artistic research, clarify approaches to research questions within circus, explore the challenges of simultaneously being performer and researcher, challenge the virtuosity/aesthetic dichotomy and use 'riskography,' as an essential component of circus (Damkjaer, 2012).

The only critical perspective of circus education is offered through rich interviews with NCS graduates about their experience of the curriculum (Langlois, 2014). As a previous student of the school, Langlois enters her work with the assumption that the school is "one of the best programs in the world" (Langlois, 2014, p.4) Contrary to school narrative of putting equal value on the program's academic components, many students interviewed dismissed the academic courses as a 'joke.' Langlois arrives at the broad conclusion that the NCS serves as a site of learning about the social and cultural expectations of professional circus work where students bond closely with their coaches and cohort. The many questions raised make it a valuable

contribution to the discourse about post-secondary circus training and point in the direction of future research sites.

Looking forward: Structural impact. The FEDEC undertakes several important investigations into the relationship between schools and the industry comparing the expectations of graduates and employers, and compiling a list of training locations around the world (European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2008a, 2008b; Herman, 2009). Overall, the diverse employment sectors were unified by the impression that many graduates from the schools are immature performers, unprepared for the actual, not idealized, reality of circus work. Written feedback from surveyed graduates demonstrated that many of the graduates would like more preparation for professional work, including knowledge of stage technique like lighting and sound and more tools for managing their own careers.

Salaméro and Hascher-Noé critique the organization of circus education in France by questioning the efficacy and relationship to market reality of the institutional educational pyramid. The authors propose that circus education has been forced into an inadequate structure through this imposed system, which is at odds with the socializing influence of the culture generated by each school's individualized pedagogical priorities. They compare this to the Québec system and conclude that less federal funding equates to less diversity in programming and therefore creates more cohesion between the social and aesthetic expectations of the students and professionals.

Looking forward: Coaching and coach training. Another aspect that occasionally appears in the research is coach qualities and how the coach impacts the professionalism of the students (European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2011; Goudard, 2010; Lafortune, Burtt, & Aubertin, 2016; Quimper, 2009). The FEDEC's exploratory study of the qualities needed to be a circus coach concludes that there is not enough information yet available to discover what the career of a circus arts coach looks like, or could look like (European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), 2011). Re-evaluating coach-student relationship during the elite training process, the first research publication from the NCS details an intervention where Decision Training techniques are applied to circus coaching with the aim of guiding the student to self-reflective practices so that the inevitable removal of a coach will not impact long-term motivation and productivity (Lafortune et al., 2016). Additionally, supported by the work of the FEDEC and the FFEC, a gradual process of documenting different

methodological approaches and artistic philosophies has begun. Circus technique manuals are now produced for wide dissemination (Cirque du Soleil & National Circus School, 2011; Demey & Wellington, 2010).

The Trouble with Validation by Academic Standards

In one sense, circus schools have arisen alongside a global shift of educational values. The theoretical framework of knowledge imperialism (Naseem & Arshad-Ayaz, 2012) sheds light on how degree-granting circus schools are problematically linked to the commodification of education. Drawing upon Galtung's interconnecting imperialisms (Galtung, 1971), Naseem and Arshad-Ayaz contemporary education through the lens of "knowledge imperialism". This global era is hallmarked by the dissemination and infiltration of Western knowledge standards into cultures and trades where those standards were not previously significant. For circus performers, the traditional credentials were family name, reputation and experience. The creation of circus schools reveals circus knowledge as permeable to Western thought regimes. Once circus is placed in an academic setting, traditional standards are no longer adequate signifiers of expertise. Instead, "the developed nations provide validation and standards of what can be considered legitimate knowledge" (Naseem & Arshad-Ayaz, 2012 p. 157). That validation necessarily reflects what is already familiar to Western cultures, undermining tradition because "Western education … endorses the superiority of Western knowledge over indigenous and local knowledges" (Naseem & Arshad-Ayaz, 2012, p. 162). Perhaps because of this, students from school programs often experience culture shock when they enter the professional market. A study by the European Federation of Circus Schools (FEDEC) found that:

> traditional companies … question the fragility and difficulties experienced by the young artists in accepting this complex day-to-day life where the regularity of the tasks involved in addition to participation in the show often has a de-stabilising effect on individuals who are not used to living such a rhythmical existence. (FEDEC, 2008b, p. 8)

The Merits of Institutionalized Circus Education

When compared with traditional, familial knowledge transmission, institutionalizing circus education definitively changes how content is presented and which content is transmitted. Whereas apprenticeship leads to productive knowledge, "locally relevant information grounded in a particular societal and community context and that is relevant to the needs of a particular community or society" (Naseem & Arshad-Ayaz, 2012, p. 163), circus schools are generating

speculative knowledge - speculating on what the student might need to know when entering the job market.

From a practical perspective, there are many reasons for a circus program to seek accreditation. From the administrative perspective, the benefits of institutionalization include reduced financial burden for the student, because all of the resources are combined in one location, and increased reputation for the circus arts through the accreditation process. Diplomas benefit students pursuing circus arts because they enable student status, funding possibilities, foreign student exchange, access to festivals, workshops, and networking. A school's ability to grant diplomas ensures degree equivalency, enabling their holders to pursue other careers should they choose to in the future. Without a degree, the non-accredited circus performer is back to square one should they choose (or be forced to, due to injury) to find another career path.

Quebec Context

There are many nuances to the different permutations of the educational structure in every country. This section will explain the educational structure in the Province of Quebec and explore the similarities and differences between the Quebec system and those of the United States, France, and the rest of Canada (see Appendix A). The different degrees offered at Quebec's circus schools will be discussed, as well as brief histories of how each school came to exist.

Circus education in the US and France. In the United States, higher education arts conservatories stem from a history of prestige in music, dance and theatre. High schools and Universities offer arts courses individually or as a major course of study. Intensive training exists almost exclusively in the private (read expensive) educational system. Although there is little published research on circus education in the United States, many programs offering "professionalizing" circus training rival or exceed the price of state Universities, even without either an industry or an academic accrediting body (see the American Youth Circus Organization (AYCO) or American Circus Educator's (ACE) websites for a list of circus programs) (Organization, n.d.; The American Circus Educators Association (ACE), n.d.). Implementation of a circus arts school from scratch faces the same cyclical challenges 40 years later that Big Apple faced in the 70s, lack of federal interest in supporting the art form, lack of private interest because the art form is still considered marginal, lack of legitimization/ professionalization

because there is no accredited/recognized program to promote the circus arts (Rencontre Internationales des Écoles Supérieures des Arts du Cirque, 2000).

Without government support to give circus an opportunity find its voice, and with the financial burden of private insurance, circus art in the US finds itself flourishing in nooks. The recreational market is enormous and has led to a variety of professionalizing certificate programs that have no academic component.[2] Without a governing body such as FFEC[3] in France, each program is individual and there are no equivalencies recognized within or beyond the circus training. Accredited circus is popping up as part of wider degree programming and collaborations with other private arts institutes.[4] In all circumstances, the students must be first accepted into the parent educational structure in order to receive credit.

France's system is designed to guide students towards their careers earlier in the education process than in the US. Degree programs are divided at the high-school level depending upon the student's future goals: entering the manual labour workforce, pursuing further education or entering a technical field like engineering or music. Students test into the program they wish to pursue and must therefore show an aptitude from their earlier education. There are many degree categories spanning high school and university years. Broadly, the Baccalauréat indicates completion of the high school academic level and can either lead to vocational placement or to further education. There are a variety of circus arts degrees in France, federal degrees signifying academic course load components (DNSP, artiste clown niveau III, BATC, DE) and technical teaching certifications from the Fédération Française des Écoles de Cirque (FFEC), a national organizing and standardizing body (BIAC, BISAC, BPJEPS) (Fédération française des écoles de cirque; Opale; Avise, 2012). The FFEC certifications hold degree equivalencies in the case of career change.

The educational channel towards a circus career is based on a pyramid hierarchical structure. More than 500 recreational schools introduce students to circus at an early age. Some choose to pursue a high school circus program through degree or non-degree programs. Students can also finish their BAC and then enrol in either a year-long, FFEC-certified preparatory program which will prepare them to audition for one of the superior schools (which require a BAC degree) OR a professionalizing, non-certified program offered by one of the many circus

[2] NECCA, Aloft, Frequent Flyers, Circadium
[3] http://www.ffec.asso.fr
[4] UNH, Kinetic Arts, Columbia College

'schools' around the country. If the student chooses the preparatory (state-funded) route, they have a better chance at succeeding their audition for one of the 3 superior schools. Two are interconnected, ENCR offers the first two years of professional training (Bac+2) and CNAC finishes the track by offering the last 3 (Bac+5). The Académie Fratellini also offers a superior training diploma. The relatively broad government support of French circus education and performance explains the significant scholarly interest in circus education in France (Appert-Raulin, 2008, 2016; Salaméro, 2009; Salaméro & Cordier, 2012; Salaméro & Haschar-Noé, 2012). Not only has the government commissioned reports to analyze and strategize its relationship to circus arts education, similar types of schools enable pertinent comparison and research. There is an investment in discovering and ameliorating the many pathways through which people become circus artists and integrate into the profession.

Post-secondary education in Quebec: DEC and DEE. The Quebec educational structure more closely resembles that of France and England rather than its neighbouring USA or other Canadian systems. In Canada, there are publicly funded and privately funded arts education programs at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Within Quebec, there is a program that allows students to combine their secondary academic courses artistic or sports achievement. These programs are entitled Art-Study and Sport-Study, respectively, and provide the context for the high school circus programs at both the NCS and the ECQ (F. Boudreault, 2008; Éducation et Enseignement supérieur Québec, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Credit, goals and grades apply, and failure to maintain academic status or the physical and artistic qualifications will result in removal from the program.

In Quebec, high school finishes in the equivalent of 11th grade. A student will attend a College before attending University, but some students will choose a vocational college degree and directly enter the workforce. For the University trajectory, a student will attend a two-year collegiate program, the prerequisite for the three-year university degree. Those two years cover the education that would happen in grade 12 and the first year of University in the rest of Canada or the US. Students graduate from college with a *Diplôme d'études collégiales* (DEC). The DEC diploma is also offered as a three-year vocational degree, covering the core academic requirements and preparing students for direct entry into the workforce in a broad variety of disciplines. Both versions of the DEC are awarded by the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec* (MELS). Students with a vocational DEC degree are academically prepared

to attend a higher education program in Quebec should they choose to apply. In Quebec, reference to a 'college' degree is therefore not synonymous with a university degree, as it is in the United States.

Both circus schools in Québec confer the three-year vocational Diplôme d'études collégiales en arts du cirque, hereafter referred to simply as the DEC. Both programs comply with the same Provincial Education criteria and crediting system. Acceptance into the program requires a secondary school diploma or equivalent, and is dominantly based on an intensive multi-day audition. Once in the program, students must maintain a passing GPA in order to fulfill the requirements. An institutional Diplôme d'études de l'École, hereafter referred to as the DEE, is also offered by both schools. The DEE program has no general education requirement, is not governmentally regulated, and the curriculum and delivery is exclusively managed by the provider. The DEE program has logistical pros and cons for the circus schools. On one hand, students may be admitted who are at a high skill level but who also have no interest in a diploma, either for personal reasons or because the diploma is so specific to the Quebec and French systems. On the other hand, students registered in the DEC are supported with government finances, even at the 'private' NCS, meaning that DEE students require a more laborious budgeting strategy for the schools.

Montreal's National Circus School. The National Circus School, hereafter referred to as the NCS, was founded in 1981 by Guy Caron and several other acrobats (Jacob & Vézina, 2007). Some of the artists training in this program were part of the group that eventually founded Cirque du Soleil (CdS) in 1984, for which Caron became the first artistic director. The parallel development of CdS and the NCS has brought creative tension and international renown to both programs. Because many of the CdS artists were training with the school program, certain resources returned to the school through increased training demand and coach talent (Jacob & Vézina, 2007). In 1997 the NCS obtained college accreditation with the DEC program. It is considered a 'private' school because all students must pay tuition once accepted to the programs. All of the required academic courses, for both the high school and the college programs, are offered on the premises of the circus school and the students do not mix with any other student population. The academic courses are offered in three-hour-long evening blocks, after the training day is over. At the NCS, the DEC is aimed at students from Quebec and France, because of an agreement between France and Québec, but open to other international students.

While the DEE certificate is not open to Quebeckers, students from France will be considered ("École nationale de cirque | National Circus School," n.d.). The size of a typical graduating class is around 20 students.

Québec City's École de Cirque de Québec. The ECQ was founded in 1995 by members of the Cirque Eos troupe. In 2003 they converted a Catholic church in a small suburb of the Old Port tourist region into a circus space. As a 'public' school, students accepted into either the art-etudes high-school program or the college program do not have to pay tuition. In both cases, students will take their academic courses with their peers at the local school but do their circus courses at the ECQ. The college program became accredited in 2010 in conjunction with the Collège d'enseignement générale et professionnel (CÉGEP) Limoilou. Students take technique courses and circus-specific academics at the circus school and their non-circus academic courses at the CÉGEP, with the result that academic courses are not exclusively at night, students have separate spaces for study and training, and they also mingle with non-circus students. The size of a typical graduating class is around 15 students.

Intersections with Other Fields

In this section I outline theory and research from the domains of sport psychology and curriculum studies, which have bearing on the research results. In order to focus on the intersections specific to these fields, I have not included research related to artistic education or other performing arts education, although these fields necessarily contribute both to circus education itself and understanding learning experiences. Furthermore, I have chosen these two fields because they have not been previously explored in relationship to circus education. In order to demonstrate points of connection, circus authors are included here when they raise concerns pertinent to the domain in question.

Sport psychology. Sport psychology could be characterized by a goal-oriented approach, where interventions are used to assist athletes in achieving their best performance. There are many parallels along the physical, psychological, social, and emotional trajectory of circus artists and athletes; both circus and sports require physical commitment and preparation for high-performance careers (Hays, 2012). Nevertheless, alongside the many similarities are significant differences between sport and circus (Ménard & Hallé, 2014). Few circus artists benefit from the many effective interventions that have been developed to assist with common issues like motivation, stress management and goal setting. Cirque du Soleil (CdS) is the only circus

company known to consistently employ a psychologist for its artists. In an insightful article about their work with the circus artists, two CdS consultants advocate for increased psychological intervention in circus arts, including risk management and career transitions into and out of circus performance (Ménard & Hallé, 2014). In drawing these parallels, I encourage researchers from sports domains to maintain an open mind in order to understand the macro and nuanced differences between sport and circus culture.

Talent development in sport and circus. Longitudinal research conducted by Bloom and Sosniak demonstrated consistent patterns that favoured recognition and cultivation of elite professionals across many different disciplines (Bloom & Sosniak, 1985). They categorized three stages of development, which do not predict talent or success but have been traversed by those achieving mastery in their discipline. This trajectory provides a framework for comparison of the tasks undertaken in sport and circus activities during these pivotal transitions. These stages are divided into early years, during which a student will discover many types of activity, the middle years wherein a student decides to focus on achievement by specializing in one particular domain, and finally the late years where they will perfect their physical and mental acuity. Here I will elaborate only the middle years, which is equivalent to the level of commitment and training found at professionalizing circus schools, whether they carry an academic load or not.

Bloom's Development Stage: Identification with a Specific Activity. The middle years of an athlete's development occur when they begin to choose and identify with specific activities (Bloom & Sosniak, 1985). This stage is an opportunity to initiate and practice good mental habits as the emphasis of activity shifts from sampling to specialization, and from "deliberate play" to "deliberate practice," which requires more active participation from the athlete (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993). An athlete's relationship to their activity becomes more task-oriented and they often participate in goal setting and self-evaluation. Other activities, including social and academic events, are likely to be secondary to training as skill improvement becomes the primary focus. At this level, coaches must be well versed in the sports' requirements, while the caregiver role is to provide moral, financial and logistical support.

Coach-athlete relationship. Research investigating the coach-athlete relationship is extensive in athletics, and non-existent in circus arts. Coaching style, leadership qualities, and their ability to manage the surrounding environment all impact an athlete's experience and subsequent success (Becker, 2009; Home & Carron, 1985; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995; Vella,

Oades, & Crowe, 2010). Chelladurai finds that athletes prefer task-oriented coaches who encourage mastery over competition (Chelladurai, 1984). Because circus arts are not focused on competition, perhaps circus artists also connect with a task-orientation coaching style. Preliminary research about the circus student-circus instructor relationship certainly suggest many parallels. Athletes describe their coaches as "teachers, mentors, and friends … [and] also viewed their coaches as parental figures (Becker, 2009, p. 99), while the circus students in Langlois' (2014) study include their instructors in the circus family they construct during their school years.

Stress management. Stress management skills are urgently applicable for circus training and performance. Circus students must manage many types of stress: physical, emotional, motivational and financial. Professional training programs present an excellent opportunity to implement acquisition of mental techniques that promote healthy coping during training and performance situations. In the domain of physical stress management, both Eileen Wanke and Delphine Lafollie find that the progressive technical skill acquisition favoured healthy assessment and management of bodily risk (Lafollie, 2015; Wanke, McCormack, Koch, Wanke, & Groneberg, 2012). Mental skills, however, do not appear to be a part of the circus education cannon. Wanke observes high psychological stress experienced by students regarding injury risk as they work towards high skills while simultaneously protecting their bodies for their future career (Wanke et al., 2012). Lafollie (2015) finds that stress management is virtually non-existent in professional circus training institutions. Her interviews found that students had no formal introduction to fear management techniques, even though they identified "fear" as the most frequently encountered psychological obstacle. Students relied on trusting their coaches to allay fear during training sessions, or the "don't think, just go," strategy, collaged from peer observation. Lafollie concludes that stress management techniques could better provide students with more efficiently learned mental tools. Langlois' study of circus student experiences found that emotional support during the turbulence of circus school was dominantly provided by the student's primary coach (Langlois, 2014). While appropriate to the context, this poses a problem for those who do not have a close relationship with their coach, as they are left without experienced resources to learn essential mental tools.

Cohesion in partner work. For students performing with partners or in groups, circus school will likely be the time when they form a professional 'team.' Carron, Brawley and

Widmeyer define cohesiveness as a group's motivation to "stick together… in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998, p. 213). This definition is applicable to circus, where "instrumental objectives" are understood to be safe, successful and enduring performance. To study group cohesion in circus, one must understand the nuanced differences between circus groups and sports groups. In her discussion of risk management within group acts at circus school, Lafollie (2015) notes that "the physical risk to the flyer, who must rely on the hands of their catcher, makes their relationship a priority, whose equal is not seen in sports teams[5]" (p. 29). She draws out the nuanced nature of trust between partners as an essential territory for both circus technique and the circus community. The element of trust in cohesion has not been researched in circus partnerships, nor been a "highlighted variable in studies of cohesion in sports groups" (Lafollie, 2015, p. 29). Community trust enabling the formation of a cohesive professional group has also been observed among school cohorts. Langlois demonstrates that students feel that they are competing to retain their place in the group, not compete with each other (Langlois, 2014). During school, students increase connections with the circus community and decrease connections with the outside world, an unexplored experience of cohesion among circus students that transcends from the training program into the professional world.

Curriculum studies. The field of curriculum studies seeks to understand how the content and experience of learning activities contribute to what a student actually learns. Ralph Tyler (1949) asks four simple questions regarding the construction of curricula, the first of which is to define the "educational purpose" of the program. Tyler argues that in order "for continued improvement are to be made, it is very necessary to have some conception of the goals that are being aimed at" (Tyler, 1949, p. 3). Although the "Tyler rationale" is somewhat simplistic and has been appropriately critiqued, the framework of Tyler's questions provides perspective on the value of curricular elements as they pertain to the learning objectives of a school. In fact, Tyler's four questions are broad enough that they enable envisioning a structure for accomplishing educational goals that are not traditional 'academic' assessments, and therefore pertinent for exploring the goals of circus programming: What experiences will lead the circus student to be

[5] "…la mise en jeu de l'intégrité physique du voltigeur qui se trouve entre les mains de son porteur, ajoute une dimension de premier ordre à cette relation qu'on ne retrouve pas dans les sports collectifs. Or, à notre connaissance, aucune recherche n'a pris en compte cette particularité, ce qui pourrait expliquer que la confiance en l'autre est une variable qui n'est pas mise en avant dans les études sur la cohésion d'un groupe sportif."

prepared for their career? How can those experiences be facilitated? How can we assess that if those experiences lead to graduate "success"? These are the questions that have guided the discussion groups at each circus school.

Other theorists also shed light on how to understand curricular elements. John Dewey (1959), the ostensible founder of the curriculum studies field, proposes that planned curriculum is like a map; it provides a means to navigate and is drawn from the experiences of previous travellers. Yet, like a map, the written curriculum is only a guide to the location of learning, the learning itself "all depends upon the activity which the mind itself undergoes in responding to what is presented from without" (Dewey, 1959, p. 110). Kliebard takes Dewey's proposal a step further with the assertion that "the most significant dimensions of an educational activity or any activity may be those that are completely unplanned and wholly unanticipated" (Kliebard, 1975, p. 80). The student experience of the curriculum could be understood as the mortar surrounding the explicit learning objectives, the "curriculum-as-plan" (Aoki, 2005). However, the experience of the curriculum teaches as much as does the explicit content and will influence how students, instructors, teachers and administrators all experience the learning trajectory.

Explicit and Implicit/Hidden Curriculum. Much of what is learned by students is a result of "the culture of both the classroom and the school [which] socializes children to values that are a part of the structure of those places" (Eisner, 2002). In addition to the written, "explicit" curriculum, the "implicit" curriculum includes the organization of content, i.e. "when various subjects will be taught and how much time will be devoted to them (Eisner, 2002, p. 94). The 'hidden curriculum,' is another term to describe what students learn beyond the lesson plan; the behaviours, expectations and attitudes which prepare the student for entry into a corresponding world (García & De Lissovoy, 2013). In addition to content taught explicitly and implicitly, there is content which is not taught at all: the "null curriculum." Elliot Eisner defines the "null curriculum," in part, as the category of content which is excluded from a program (Eisner, 2002, p. 98). In all curricula, the "selection, organization, and evaluation" of course content reveals "valuative selections from a much larger universe of possible knowledge," indicated by both the "explicit" and non-existent "null" curricula (Apple & King, 1983, p. 84; Eisner, 2002).

Canonized knowledge. Apple and King describe school in vocational terms – the structure is set to prepare students for their eventual social place. If the purpose is 'vocational,'

then restrictive structures prepare students for a likely professional format and benefit the students by giving them the tools to succeed in traditional jobs. Why, then, introduce general knowledge of the world? For Apple and King, "in advanced industrial societies, schools … play a critical role in giving legitimacy to certain categories and forms of knowledge" (83). A feature of the hidden curriculum is that by choosing *what* we learn and *how* we learn it, the academic structure canonizes certain knowledge as serious/work/valid and other types as frivolous/play/ irrelevant. Integrating required academic subjects changes the time available for the physical and creative training essential to circus performance. For instance, should non-accredited circus programs make time for the required "Philosophy" and "Ethics" courses when preparing future artists? If not, how does the school communicate the value of those courses?

Student engagement. Within the traditional academic context, diverse studies have been undertaken investigating factors that motivate engaged study. Many studies "suggest that the personal valuation of future goals promote the recognition of tasks importance for achieving those goals, which, in turn, has impact on engagement" (Veiga et al., 2012, p. 1338). Still other studies have demonstrated other influential nuances: classroom design, social interactions, previous motivation in secondary school, and educational environment (Gorges, Schwinger, & Kandler, 2013; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). All studies demonstrate that student engagement and motivation can be understood and thereby influenced. A study investigating the connection between student recollections of secondary school motivation and concurrent motivation in post-secondary courses found that "motivational orientations associated with secondary school—and probably actually experienced at that time—are important prerequisites for the formation of task value during adulthood" (Gorges et al., 2013, p. 773). They looked at inward and outward motivation, finding that a surprisingly "important contributor to learning motivation is the learner's self-concept of ability" (Gorges et al., 2013, p. 774). It has been proposed that lack of student engagement in circus school may be related to discomfort with academic knowledge (Langlois, 2014).

Athletes and academic engagement. While few studies on student engagement cross over between physical and intellectual learning, research studying athletes in post-secondary settings provides a complementary lens through which to view the relationship of physical and academic knowledge acquisition. Responding to cultural concerns that athletes form an academically resistant sub-culture within universities, Gayles and Hu (2009) observe "powerful

educational effects [from] creating opportunities for student athletes to interact with their non-athlete peers (329)" which are not available to students in some full-time circus programs. Proximity to non-athlete peers provides student athletes with the opportunity to benefit from peer commitment to, and enthusiasm for, academic knowledge acquisition.

A struggle over 'legitimate' knowledge is currently taking place in the circus industry as training has rapidly moved from apprenticeship-learning to academically-framed degree-based training programs over the last 40 years. Although much of the curricular content in circus schools is kinaesthetic, the conflict is the same: are we educating for the vocation, or educating a citizen? Accredited circus programs challenge traditional academia by blurring the normative work/play categories. Will 'legitimizing' kinaesthetic knowledge permit 'legitimate' forms of kinaesthetic and artistic learning to penetrate traditional academic structures? If so, the experience of fused academic and kinaesthetic learning could change the 'hidden' meanings around classroom interactions.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

In this chapter I will describe the methods that were used to collect and analyze data during the investigation of post-secondary circus curricula in Quebec and why these methods ensure trustworthiness and reliability of the data. This section includes descriptions of the purpose of the study, why each method was chosen, and how it was implemented.

Purpose of Study

The present study investigates how curriculum is understood in the two post-secondary circus school in the province of Quebec with specific attention to any differentiations between the descriptions of courses based in academics and those based in kinaesthetic knowledge. In order to answer this question, we must understand how students, instructors, teachers and administrators of degree-granting circus schools describe the curriculum and focus on their responses to the coexistence of academic and kinaesthetic courses. The goal was to describe and interpret first-hand and observation-based experiences of student engagement across both technique and academic classes in a kinaesthetically inclined student population.

In her foundational research, Langlois (2014) points out that the students she interviewed did not feel connected to the academic component of their courses. Possible reasons for this were the time of day at which courses were offered and perception that the content was not pertinent to student goals. This does not seem out of place as the students who chose this program did so because of the physical focus. What stands out is her observation that students perceived ALL of their courses as discrete and distinct, including private classes on their specialty equipment that were with their primary coach (technique) and with their artistic advisor (creation). The ‘silo-ing’ of not only academic and circus courses, but all courses within the circus training program leads to the question of WHY students feel their courses do not interrelate/interconnect, IF they ever begin to see the experience as collaborative between their classes and WHEN that happens. My goal with this research, therefore, was to understand how students, instructors, teachers and administrators at post-secondary circus schools in Quebec define the objective of their circus programs, and subsequently value diverse curricular elements. I hope this research will contribute to a more conscious understanding of how curricular elements are perceived so that educational institutions can maximise the learning experiences that reflect their pedagogical missions and alter content or systems that do not promote their values.

Research Question

Educational philosopher Elliot Eisner believes that "qualitative inquiry in education is about … trying to understand what teachers and children do in the settings in which they work" (1991, pg. 11). Following from this perspective, it is important to explore how students, instructors, teachers and administrators in circus schools talk and feel about their teaching and learning experiences in those schools. Therefore students, coaches, teachers, and administrators from each school were asked to participate. In order to understand this subject more fully, I generated the following sub-questions that would help me discover context and provide the opportunity to explore areas outside my informed assumptions.

- How do students and circus educators at Quebec circus schools prioritize different curricular elements?
- What are student goals within and after the program, and do those goals influence the value students place on different courses?
- Do instructors, teachers and administrators see the courses as interrelated, or separate?
- How does the school culture/discourse describe and differentiate courses?
- Does the student's past scholastic experience influence their current engagement?
- Do instructors, teachers and administrators feel integrated into the pedagogical project?

Research Design

This study of two college degree-granting circus programs in the province of Québec, the National Circus School (NCS) in Montreal and the École de Cirque de Québec (ECQ) in Québec City, builds on research conducted by Langlois (2014) and the European Federation of Circus Schools (FEDEC) (2008, 2012). Both qualitative and contextualizing quantitative data were gathered in order to understand how students experience dual-emphasis curricula (circus career readiness and academic DEC completion).

The circus community is very small; as a performer and teacher in Québec, it would be difficult to find participants with whom I had no connection. Because I have a pre-existing student and teaching relationship with both schools, my role was participant-researcher. Participants knew that their words and experiences were understood from a first person perspective. I am not currently an instructor for any of the participating students but I do have a co-worker relationship with some of the instructors, teachers and administrators. In order to moderate this shifting relationship with the participants, I aimed to "bracket" my opinions by enabling participants to guide the conversations (Apple & King, 1983, p. 84). At the time of the

research, no participants were my students or direct supervisors, and most I have never worked with in an official capacity.

Participant selection. I used a criterion selection sampling process in order to find candidates for the focus groups (McMillan, 2012, pg. 105). Criteria for student inclusion were enrolment in the DEC degree or the DEE certificate, being 18 years or older, and speaking French or English. Instructors, teachers and administrators were invited based upon their role at the school, their willingness to participate and their availability. Because all groups were volunteer samples, it is possible that responses are influenced by the fact that "volunteers tend to be better educated, higher socioeconomically, more intelligent, more in need of social approval, more sociable, more unconventional, less authoritarian, and less conforming than nonvolunteers" (McMillan, 2012, pg. 110). However, it is also possible that people who would not have 'volunteered,' as evidenced by the initial reactions of certain teachers and administrators, were also included in the study, thereby mediating the volunteer effect. While both administrator and teacher samples are observably representative of typical nationalities and languages found within the school, the student group and the coach group were not representative; many nationalities of educators and students were not represented due to scheduling conflicts and participation interest. Additionally, a significant personnel change at one of the schools inspired me to conduct an individual interview with the new employee, integrating their responses into the summary of the respective peer focus group.

Participant access. I initially approached the research department at the NCS to propose this study (Appendix B) Because my thesis supervisor, Dr. Leroux, is authorized to supervise student research at the NCS with an ongoing and valid research agreement with Concordia I was not asked to provide a separate memorandum of understanding between the two schools, a requirement for most studies conducted at the NCS. After approval from the research department I requested permission from the director of studies in order to access the students and instructors, who were then contacted with an initial email request (Appendix B) followed by scheduling emails or in-person conversations. Due to scheduling conflicts, the focus groups were spread across the spring session and the fall session. Because key administrators were not available for a focus group, I conducted individual 30-minute interviews, which were later, combined into summaries of the 'administrative' voice. Although these participants were not able to feed off of each other in discussion, the shorter interview meant that they did not receive significantly more

attention than the focus group participants. At the time of the student interviews, no students from the 2nd or 3rd years were willing to take time from their rehearsal process, therefore 1st year students were recruited. Although in the first year of the college program, several of these students have spent multiple years in the school because they had previously attended the 'Mise-a-Niveau' preparatory program, which lasts one year.

In Québec City, I proposed this research project to key administrators at the ECQ through an email introduction followed by an in-person meeting (Appendix B). Due to the complicated scheduling and room availability, they chose to invite select student, instructor and administrator participants and conduct the interviews on-site. While administrators at the ECQ were very collaborative in the organization of student, instructor and administrator focus groups, they were unable to connect me with any of the CEGEP teachers. Although I contacted several teachers through email, only one agreed to meet with me. The subsequent impact on the research will be further explored in the discussion section. The ECQ did not ask for a memorandum of understanding with Concordia University.

Because the students at each school came from different graduation years, their relationship to the overall curriculum was necessarily different. Students who were graduating reflected back on their entire experience while those close to the beginning expressed looking forward to learning in certain domains. In the context of the research reported here, however, this difference in student timeline does not detract from the observations and conclusions; rather, it enhances the findings because of the ideological consistency among all student groups.

Questionnaire packages. Because it is "advisable to begin the session with some transitional period," (Anderson & Arsenault, 2001, pg. 204) prior to the discussion, participants were asked to fill out several survey forms anonymously, the data from which remains separate from the ensuing discussion. In order to construct these instruments, I evaluated what kind of information would be most useful for contextualizing the focus group discussions. I then followed the distinct steps outlined by McMillan (2012) towards clarifying the questions and statements in both English and French. The purpose of these was two-fold. Firstly, it enabled participants to enter a mental space where they could reflect upon their opinions and impressions of the programs. Secondly, the surveys describe the respondents by providing data on gender, experience, academic and professional history, and valuation of the existing programs *before* contamination by peer discussion. Participants were informed that they could leave any

question/section blank. Participants were asked to complete the following surveys in their language of choice (Appendices C-H):

- A demographic survey including several open-ended questions regarding their perception of the objective of the DEC program;
- A " Circus Values" Likert-scale questionnaire with statements about current and previous academic and social values;
- A "Course Importance" questionnaire asking them to list content they believe to be important followed by a checklist of reasons that content is valuable;
- Students were also asked to complete Fleming's VARK learning style preference questionnaire in order to assess learning preference.

Focus group discussions. In order to ensure that "the voice of each group [was] clear and well-represented," (McMillan, 2012) four separate focus groups were scheduled at each school for a total of eight focus group discussions. These groups were divided into: 1) students in the DEC or DEE programs, 2) instructors of circus technique 3) academic and 'theory' teachers, 4) administrators and program designers of the DEC program. Each focus group included a pre-set list of four semistructured questions with several possible sub-questions (Appendix I), "specific in intent, allowing for individual responses" (McMillan, 2012, pg. 168). The discussions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were conducted bilingually by asking each question in both English and French, allowing participants to respond in their language of choice. Participant responses were also translated in order to facilitate group discussion. Although I attempted to avoid leading questions which would bias the research (Anderson & Arsenault, 2001), I did allow focus groups to direct discussion towards topics they felt were important and related to my semistructured question. I moderated the focus groups, provided translations, and recorded the conversations with separate audio and video recorders for transcription and analysis. The video recordings permitted revision of conversation dynamics and non-verbal emotional responses.

The focus group subdivisions were intentionally designed to "create a synergistic environment resulting in deeper, more insightful, discussion" (Anderson, 2001, p. 200). The students were grouped in cohorts in order to uncover a sense of student culture, peer interaction, and also to respect lived experiences of the curriculum. The separation of different educator categories was meant to enable open discussion of teaching experiences without the presence of

students or supervisors, providing a wider scope of issues, considerations and solutions, and uncovering the discourse around the programming present at different levels of curricular interaction. One of the limiting factors of the focus group methodology, the disinclination of participants to share sensitive information in group contexts, therefore served this study (Anderson, 2001, p. 201).

For the focus groups, I developed interview guides designed to uncover individual impressions of the program goals, how the courses relate to those goals and what student success looks like (Appendix I). A proprietary and secretive relationship to unique training methods is part of the shared history of circus and seems to also exist within circus school culture (Leroux, 2014a). In traditional circus, performers kept their competitive edge by only transmitting training, artistic and equipment design techniques to family members, and this sense of secrecy has filtered into some contemporary training programs as well (Davis, 2002). To increase the participants' experience of confidentiality in this regard, focus group questions were crafted to avoid any impression of digging for 'secrets.' Participants were asked about their impressions and observations, not their individual opinions, for instance "what do students believe the objective of the DEC program is?" rather than "what do you think the objective of the DEC program is?" While quiet participants were encouraged to share their thoughts, no one was obligated to respond to every question.

Data Collection and Organization

I intended to undertake data collection for both schools within the same month so that the time of year did not influence responses. Due to fluctuating schedules and rehearsal periods this was not possible, however responses did not seem to reflect the time of year. Additionally, I had planned to conduct the focus groups in a third party location to better preserve anonymity and enable free discussion. Again, scheduling constraints prevented following through with using a third-party location. Focus groups were conducted on-site at each school, except for the ECQ teacher interview. To thank participants, I brought food to the focus group discussions and provided lunch for one group of circus students so that they would be able to attend the session.

Procedure. When participants entered the room, I introduced myself and the purpose of the research, asked them their language of preference and then provided them with a consent form and a pre-numbered questionnaire packet (Appendices C-H). I was present during the survey completion in order to clarify participant questions. Survey completion took between 20-

45 minutes to complete. Once finished, participants were asked to place their questionnaires in an envelope and separately hand me their signed consent forms. When all participants had completed the package, I introduced the focus group discussion and set certain parameters for respect and clarity (Appendix J). Although I initially developed topic-expectation notes for each discussion topic, after the first two focus groups I found it hindered my openness as an interviewer. I stopped predicting which topics might arise and instead focused on listening to the participants, asking clarifying questions, and jotting down notes for follow-up topics or references to published works discussing similar content.

Reflective practice. Following each focus group, I wrote reflective notes about my impressions of the focus group session. Anderson describes phenomenological research as reliant upon post-experiential reflection to search for meaning (1998). In these notes, I noted how comfortable participants were during the various discussion points, reflected on the topics that I pursued, and if the interview guide questions were eliciting the information that I sought. This type of practice gave me the opportunity to reflect upon the data collection, the group dynamics of each session, and re-center my research after a group discussed topics outside of my primary research questions. In order to preserve the trustworthiness of the research, the protocol remained unchanged between focus group sessions.

> One of the strongest things I came away with was their pride in the program. They seem to feel very strongly that the program covers the important bases, and they seem to take the feedback from the students very seriously. They never rolled their eyes about the students; they really gave the impression of working *for* the student population, to serve them. - Reflective note from Administration focus group. – A. Funk reflective note, 12 May 2016.

Transcription. I transcribed each focus group session from the audio recording, remaining faithful to the spoken language. The initial transcription followed speech and pauses closely and identified each speaker so that dialogue could be tracked more easily. I attempted to capture their rhythm of speech by using ellipses to indicate either pauses to think or moments when the participant re-framed their approach. Commas represent pauses where the idea remains continuous and also reflects the rhythm of slang usage. The secondary copy, still in the initial language, frames each speaker's content into coherent sentence structures and removes the participant names in favour of their category and a number as well as eliminating other

identifying data. As Langlois (2014) observes, the global circus community is relatively small and interconnected and both circus schools are well-known, therefore associating any individual with a specific discipline, nationality or school characteristic is considered 'identifying' information. I have used empty brackets [ ] to indicate where information has been modified to preserve anonymity but was considered in my summary analyses.

> Name 1: I also feel, like, especially here, since a lot of the coaches … were…performers or are still performing? Like you learn a lot, like once like on the market… and I feel like they want to teach us, like, prepare us for like, the… mmm, comme le plus de scénario possible, just being like 'yeah but, what if… they ask you to do this? Or what if your stage is crooked? Or like'… I feel it's very, um… yeah, a little bit like you said like, they…
>
> Student 1: I also feel, like, especially here, since a lot of the coaches were performers or are still performing? Like you learn a lot, once [you're] on the market, and I feel like they want to teach us, prepare us for the, comme le plus de scenario possible, 'what if they ask you to do this? Or what if your stage is crooked?

Data Analysis

While both qualitative data and quantitative data were collected, they were not paired in the analysis. This research is phenomenological in nature and explores the lived experiences of people experiencing circus curriculum in Québec. The demographic surveys were used in order to better understand the overall groups and to enable participants equal opportunity to express their opinions, in case the discussions ended up being dominated by certain personalities. Although triangulation of the surveys and the discussion groups would undoubtedly lead to greater knowledge, it also risks compromising the anonymity of the participants. In the small circus community, where reputation is your business card, I wanted to ensure that participants felt able to speak without being overly connected to their age, language or specific school.

Analysis of questionnaire packages. All responses from the surveys were entered into excel documents labelled by the school name and focus group category. Limited transformation of data has been performed where it enhances clarity of responses.

Analysis of focus group text. A phenomenological design was chosen for this study because that method seeks to "describe and interpret the experiences of participants in order to

understand the 'essence' of the experience *as perceived by the participants*" (italics in original) and therefore enables consideration of issues beyond the informed assumptions of the researcher (McMillan, 2012, pg. 282). In order to contextualize their voices and "bracket" my own "preconceived ideas" (Apple & King, 1983, p. 84), I read the field texts for ideas that resonated with theories related to curriculum models and design, issues that have been raised by other researchers in circus education, and observed categories that arose from the discussions themselves. In this way, I aimed to separate my assumptions from the participant responses and let them voice the ideas and issues that they felt were most important.

Uncovering themes and coding. In my initial plan, I had hoped to follow each major interview question with a written summary of participant impressions, the direction of the conversation as a whole and the connections that were made. I found that participants would frequently loop their discussion back to previous topics that had been raised, either as a reference or to add new thoughts. I found it necessary, therefore, to cluster topics and responses separately rather than write a simple summary of each questions response. I began by using the constant comparison inquiry technique (Glaser & Strauss, 2009) to tag recurrent themes and code them. Each paragraph of transcript was numbered along the left-hand margin and I tagged concepts in my right-hand margin.

Through close reading of the transcripts I described the content of participant responses. I looked for several major categories of information: 1) ideas related to curricular experiences, 2) ideas related to curricular content, and 3) indications of implicit and explicit learning objectives. During the course of reading through the transcripts, several other categories became apparent and so I included tags for the following topics: 4) the definition of 'circus,' 5) work expectations and work experiences, 6) what it means to be an artist, 7) living in a foreign culture, reputation of the school, 8) categorical descriptions (i.e. 'foundational techniques are…' or 'coaches are mostly concerned with…'). The above topics are either tagged descriptively or with a "category=" indicator (Table 1). All tags were written in English, providing the translation of ideas into the reporting language. I also numbered each paragraph so that the tags could be situated within the larger conversation.

Table 1

Excerpt of Category Generation from Transcriptions

333	Instructor 1: I think the objective of the DEC	DEC obj.=train future circus

	program is to train future circus artists, to prepare them for careers as performers, but I think we also add the idea that they are to be performers but they need to also… to the best of their capacities be creators of their own work. And I think they're… basically we are trying to make people… able to get a job. Like, employable.	artists as performers and creators of their own work, DEC obj.=able to get a job, DEC obj.=employable

Because ideas and topics resurfaced throughout the discussions and not only in response to the interview questions, I summarized the transcript topics in two different ways. One method was to copy all of the tags from a focus group into a separate document, place them into a table alphabetically (Table 2), and then separate the tags by category to provide an overall description of how participants in that focus group spoke about the topic (Table 3).

Table 2

Excerpt of Alphabetical Tags

DEC and DEE same except one funded by Gov.,
DEC and DEE same in circus identity
DEC and DEE same in terms of circus,
DEC and DEE same,
DEC is for career transition,
DEC is for Gov.,
DEC now accepts foreign students so any student could be in DEC
DEC=foundation for professionalism

Table 3

Excerpt of Tags Organized by Topic Category

DEC obj.	**Add**	**Remove**
DEC advantageous for finances,	Add=opportunity to play	Remove hours=recovery time,
DEC and DEE have different academics but same circus	Add=partner work,	Prefer 1hr to 2hrs,
DEC and DEE obj. same for admin	Add=performance	Over-taxing students,
DEC and DEE same except one doesn't have academic courses,	Add=performance experience	Too much in curriculum

The other method was to summarize the responses to the prompt question in paragraph

form. Below these summaries I included the complete contents of the category tags so that I could include all relevant discussion topics in the final summaries (Table 4). These summaries were then grammatically and structurally polished.

Table 4: Excerpt Of Prompt Question Summary With Category Tags

NCS instructors were grateful to the existence of the DEC program because they believe the school would not exist without it and that the government contributes valuable resources to the school. They described the goal of the DEC program first and foremost as providing students with the ability to find and maintain employment. Specific tools taught by the DEC program for this purpose include:

- A solo number, described as the cornerstone of the DEC;
- Development of both specialization and multidisciplinary techniques;
- Training students to be both interpreters and creators of artistic work;
- Tools for professional behaviour from finances to social conduct;

DEC advantageous for finances,
DEC is for Gov.,
DEC now accepts foreign students so any student could be in DEC
DEC obj.=able to get a job,
DEC obj.=employable
DEC obj.=multidisciplinarity
DEC obj.=specialization,
DEC obj.=train future circus artists as performers and creators of their own work,
DEC obj.=train professional circus artists to be creators and interprètes
DEC obj.=train professionals for entrance into market (in official paperwork),
DEC=foundation for professionalism

Each focus group member was sent an English summary of the focus group they participated in. The objective was two-fold; first the participant was able to verify if the summary reflected the content of the group discussion. It also gave them an opportunity to clarify or add anything to the content that they did not feel was represented. Most participants responded that the summaries accurately reflected the discussions, but two participants clarified specific information. Additionally, as agreed in the research proposal, each school was provided with the final summaries of all the focus groups from their program for additional program evaluation purposes. The school administrations were also provided with this complete document in advance of publication or dissemination to verify content and ensure the anonymity of participants and unique programming elements.

Ethical Considerations

The study did not involve deception, presented no physical, personal or reputational ethical concerns and adhered strictly to ethical standards of educational research. The goal of this

research is not hierarchical comparison between circus training institutions, rather it aims to report how students, instructors, teachers and administrators describe Quebec accredited circus programs. The focus group design was intentionally chosen to enhance institutional comfort with the research because the group setting disinclines participants from discussing overly sensitive information (Anderson & Arsenault, 2001). All written and spoken information related to the recruiting and data gathering process was provided in French and English. Participation was voluntary and non-compensated. Informed consent included an explanation of the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence, a complete description of how the data was to be collected, used, and might be used in future studies (Appendix K).

Management of field texts. The most important component of managing this research is maintaining the privacy of the participants. Audio recordings, once transcribed, were transferred to a USB key and will be kept in a private office for 5 years in case of the need for verification in possible future research. Video recordings were deleted after the transcriptions were made. Anonymized transcriptions of the focus groups remain in password-protected storage, labelled school name and peer group. Consent forms and survey data are also kept in a private office. No names are associated to the questionnaire packages.

Verification and trustworthiness. Verification of my work occurred at several different stages. My bilingual supervisor, Dr. Louis Patrick Leroux, has listened to randomized sections of the audio recordings to ensure faithful transcription. He has also received copies of the tagged anonymized transcriptions to verify topic ascription and accurate translation of ideas, as well as the full summaries of the focus groups (McMillan, 2012, p. 303). Further verification was ensured when participants were given a chance to respond to the summaries of their focus group.

Benefits to participants. It is possible that the individual participants benefited from the introspection inspired by the questions and had an opportunity to reflect upon their own goals, opinions, and pre-judgements about the merits of various curricular choices. For some, the opportunity to have had their voices heard may also be perceived as a benefit. The institutions themselves may benefit by showing an investment in evaluation and analysis of their DEC programs, something the Québec government encourages and expects.

Limitations

Several factors that might influence data quality should be noted. Firstly, no group was large enough to be considered representative of the entire population. I was only able to

interview one academic teacher from the ECQ system while I interviewed six from the NCS system. For scheduling reasons, it was not possible to interview students from the graduating year at the NCS. Interviewed students from the ECQ therefore have a more comprehensive experience with their program because they are from the second and third years of the program. It is possible that by their final year in school they will have different perceptions of the program content.

Finally, language use may have influenced participation in conversations. Some discussions within the focus group context happened in one language, followed by the other, which may have limited the discourse. Within the context of both of these schools, most participants are familiar with navigating between French and English. In every focus group session, at least one person aside from myself was fluently bilingual and was also able to contribute to translations or cognate confusion. The most significant of language confusion led to more discussion:

> Student 8: Et pour moi, ça c'est quelque chose qui nous manque à cette école. Tu sais, genre, on a approximativement zéro classe où on est toute la promotion ensemble. Et j'ai… il y en a que je ne connais pas de ma promotion, genre, on se dit « bonjour », mais… [6]
>
> Student 10: I feel like that should fit in to the, like, career class, like that should really be a good part of it…
>
> Alisan: Are you thinking promotion like 'marketing?'
>
> Student 10: I'm thinking both like, communication and, like promotion/marketing
>
> Alisan: ok, so what… in French, that "promotion" is your whole graduating class…
>
> Student: Ok. Oh! Oh, I didn't know that. That's learning.

[6] Student 8: And for me this is something that we're missing at this school. You know, like, we have approximately zero classes where the whole class is together. And I ... there are some people I don't even know in my class, like, we say hello, but ...

Chapter Four: Results

Participant Demographics

Because of scheduling and participant availability, not every interviewee completed the demographics form. The demographic distribution of each group is summarized below with an accompanying table. Although the schools have different environments, these surveys aim to describe overall participation. Therefore, peer groups from the two schools are conflated in order to both describe the demographic more completely and preserve anonymity, unless specifically noted otherwise.

Student demographic distribution. Student participants were from a wide variety of national origins. Some were bi- or tri-lingual while others only spoke one language comfortably. There were participants from both programs in the focus groups for each school. While the majority of students entered circus school directly after graduation from secondary school, some had either not finished secondary school or had previously completed a 2-year (non-vocational) DEC program. This distribution represents diverse knowledge upon entry into the DEC and DEE programs. Because students also came from the United States, Mexico and home-school programs, and using parental education as a proxy for socioeconomic status, it cannot be assumed that students entering have equivalent academic foundations. Of the participant groups, students had the most diversity of socioeconomic background, education and nationality.

Table 5

Student Demographics

Country of origin	Canada, Switzerland, United States, France, Mexico
Gender distribution	6 male, 5 female
Ages represented	18, 19, 20, 21, 22, no answer
Circus program	7 DEC, 4 DEE
Highest previous degree	secondary school diploma, BAC (France), GED (US), DEC
Type of secondary school	7 traditional secondary school, 3 sport etudes, 1 home school
Mother highest degree	5 BA, 3 MA, 1 PhD, 1 secondary school, 1 junior high
Father highest degree	PhD, MA, BA, DEC, secondary school, junior high

Instructor demographic distribution. During the discussions, instructors were either fluently bilingual or primarily francophone; none were exclusively Anglophone. Several of the

instructors attended a sport-etude secondary school program, indicating an interest in kinaesthetic learning outside of traditional educational structures. Circus instructors had the widest range of previous education as well as the broadest range of number of years working in their teaching discipline. Information gathered from the short-response questions shows that the participating instructors mostly had performance (circus and dance) or competitive gymnastics in their background. Some had certifications as instructors through gymnastics organizations or the National Circus School Circus Trainer program. Others had taught recreational circus, and one thanked their students because they considered teaching itself to be the source of their education as an instructor.

Table 6

Instructor Demographics

Country of origin	Canada, United States
Gender distribution	4 female, 2 male
Ages represented	26, 26, 41, 44, 46, 59
Years working in discipline	4, 7, 12, 13, 21, 45
Do you work elsewhere?	4 yes, 1 no, 1 also circus artist
Highest degree	None, Secondary school, DEC, BA, BFA
Type of secondary school	2 sport etudes, 4 traditional secondary school
Mother highest degree	Primary school, DEC, DES, professional certificate
Father highest degree	Primary school, secondary school, DEC, DEP, DES, MS

Teacher demographic distribution. Academic teachers reported both the highest personal academic accomplishments and also the highest socioeconomic backgrounds. They did not report participating in sport-etudes, showing a commitment to traditional academic formats. While some were relatively new to teaching, the majority had been teaching close to 10 years or more. Focus groups with teachers were dominantly conducted in French, however many were bi- or tri-lingual. Unilingual teachers spoke either French or English.

Table 7

Teacher demographics

Country of origin	Canada, United States, Romania
Gender distribution	3 female, 4 male

Ages represented	29, 36, 38, 39, 44, 44
Years working in discipline	2, 3, 9, 9, 12, 15
Do you work elsewhere?	3 yes, 3 no,
Highest degree	DEC, MA, PhD
Type of secondary school	traditional secondary school, no response
Mother highest degree	DEC, BA, MA, professional certificate
Father highest degree	DEC, BA, PhD

Administrator demographic distribution. Of the 8 administrators who were interviewed, only four completed the demographic survey, therefore the following distributions may not be representative of the entire sample. Administrator interviews took place in both English and French, although the majority of administrators were comfortably bilingual. Administrators had either attended traditional secondary schools or sport-etudes programs, indicating an interest in physical knowledge from an early age. Responses from the demographic survey show that the administrators had a strong mix of post-secondary and physical education. Many had competition experience; most also had certifications or degrees in some kind of physical education training.

Table 8

Administrator Demographics

Country of origin	Canada, France, Eastern Europe
Gender distribution	3 female, 5 male
Ages represented	34, 58, 64, unknown
Years working in discipline	10, 15, 20, 40, unknown
Do you work elsewhere?	1 yes, 3 no, unknown
Highest degree	BAC, BA, BES, unknown
Type of secondary school	traditional secondary school, sport etudes
Mother highest degree	Primary school, secondary school, DEC, DEP
Father highest degree	Primary school, secondary school, BA

VARK Learning Preferences

The Visual-Audio-Reading/Writing-Kinaesthetic Learning Preferences questionnaire identifies how learners prefer to receive their information (N.D. Fleming, n.d.; Neil D Fleming, n.d.-a). This questionnaire was used with permission from Fleming for this research and was accompanied by recommendations for interpreting responses. Once considered learning styles, the four modes are now recognized to be preferences. It acknowledges that while some learners might prefer, for example, auditory information, all learners are learning from multiple presentation modes. Some people exhibit a strong preference for acquiring information through one mode (ex. observing a graph) while multimodal learners might equally prefer two or three modes (ex. observing a graph or reading or listening to a description). Importantly, therefore, this instrument reflects participant impressions of learning *preference* and does not, in fact, indicate which methods would be most efficacious.

This instrument was chosen to better understand how circus students conceive of their ideal learning environments. Langlois noted that circus students broadly dismissed academic courses, derogatorily differentiating them from circus courses as “sit-down” and “night” classes (Langlois, 2014, p. 70). She wonders if circus students “masked their lack of confidence in traditional academic settings” by embracing a physical identity that precluded them from remaining seated during courses. However, because of the small sample size, the following results cannot be considered ‘representative’ of all circus students. Instead, they provide a preliminary investigation into the accuracy of anecdotal descriptions of circus students as ‘more physical’ than the general population. Use of the VARK instruments was therefore intended to discover whether circus students indicate preference of kinaesthetic modes. In fact, their learning preferences do not seem to differ from the general population.

Learning preference by percentage. Although students indicated strongly preferring kinaesthetic (31%) and audio (34%) learning modes over visual and reading/writing modes, the kinaesthetic and audio are nearly equal, which shows that the students are not limited to preferring physical interactions (Figure 1). The percentage of kinaesthetic preference is equivalent in general populations, generally from 31-35% (Neil D Fleming, n.d.-b). However, when compared with the broader population, these students demonstrate a higher preference for the auditory mode and a lower preference for the reading/writing mode. The higher facility with audio learning could be because they regularly receive audio instructions in the majority of their coursework (disciplines, dance, theater, conditioning, etc.). Equally possible, they may be able to

achieve in these courses at high levels *because* they have a strong preference for auditory learning. Again, while this student sample cannot be considered representative of all circus students, the results show that circus students may have a cross-section of learning preferences similar to those of the general population. If true for larger groups of circus students, this could remove an assumption that circus students aren't interested in, or able to do, academic course work (Langlois, 2014).

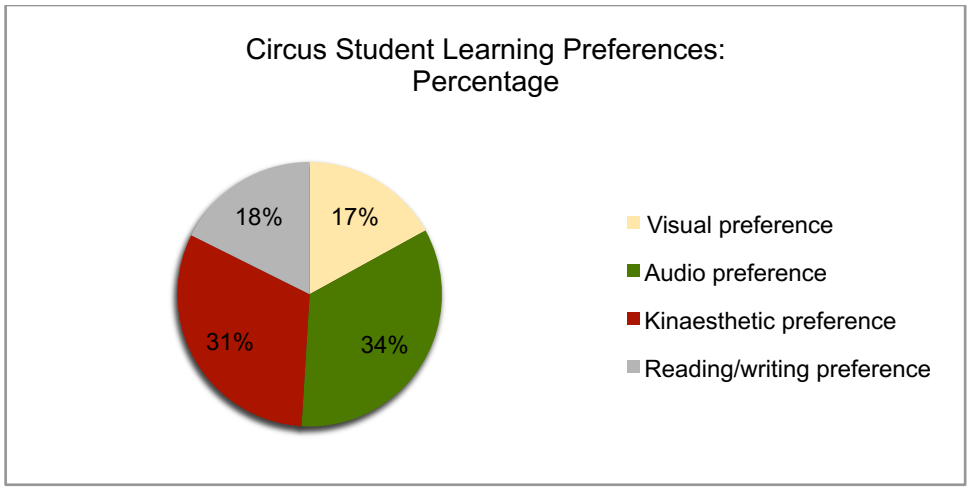

Figure 1. Circus Student Learning Preferences.

Strong and multimodal learning preferences. Because of the small sample size, this research only compares average circus student preferences from this study with the averages from the general population. Existing VARK research indicates that 36.2% of the population exhibits a preference for one particular mode, be it mild, strong, or very strong (Neil D Fleming, n.d.-b). Of those the largest proportion, 14.4%, prefer kinaesthetic modes and 8.6% prefer aural modes. 15.8% of participants were bimodal with two strong preferences, of that visual-kinaesthetic is 3%, aural-kinaesthetic is 6.1%, and reading/writing is 1.2%. It is worth noting that standard education focuses on the narrowly preferred reading-writing modes for teaching and learning. Trimodal preference was exhibited by 12.7% of the general population, with aural-visual-kinaesthetic preference at 4.2%. Given the small sample size of the student population that participated in my research, it is remarkable how close the circus student averages from this study are to the general population (Figures 2 and 3). In fact, the small sample size shows that the general population has a *greater* preference for kinaesthetic learning than the circus students surveyed. Using a 'preferred physicality' to reduce academic rigor is not supported with the

current data. It is therefore worth exploring reasons beyond learning preference that might inform opinion of academic course-work in circus programs.

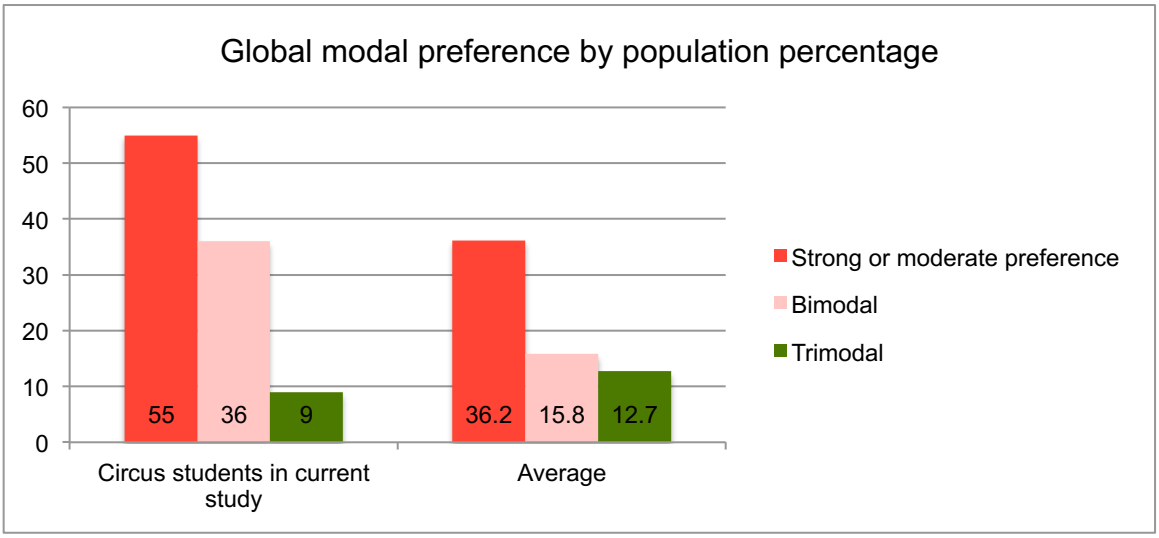

Figure 2. Global Modal Preferences By Population Percentage.

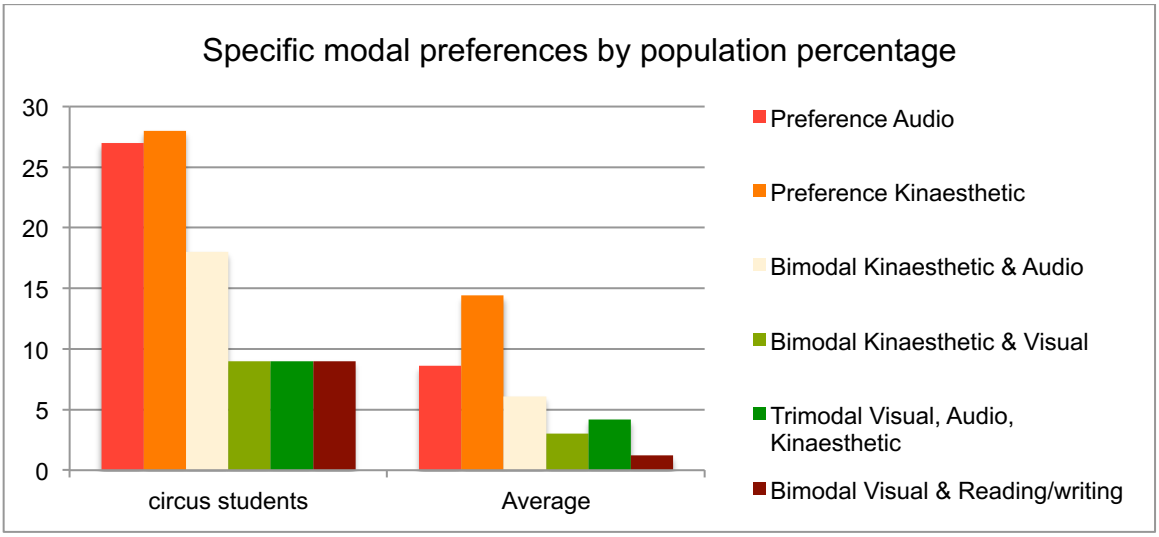

Figure 3. Specific Modal Preferences By Population Percentage.

Past And Present Relationship To Learning Objectives

Langlois (2014) suggests that students are insecure in their relationship to academic work. I developed a questionnaire in which I asked participants to reflect upon their previous and current learning experiences in academic and physical domains (Appendices D and F). The objective of this survey is to provide contextual information; if students *never* enjoyed academic courses it seems unlikely that they would begin to enjoy them in circus school. However, if students previously valued academic work but no longer express interest, cross-curricular content could be effectively developed. In order to present the information concisely, the 'disagree' and

'somewhat disagree' categories have been collapsed into 'disagree,' for certain groups. Overall, it seems that students had a preference for humanities-type courses in secondary school and a disinclination towards math and science. Although their academic courses at circus school are dominantly humanities, they do not seem to maintain a significant level of interest in these courses.

Student relationship to past and present learning objectives. Few students (2/11) agreed with the statement 'I value academic achievement,' while more than a third disagreed (4/11) (Figure 4). This is strongly contrasted with the statement 'I value daily training,' with which 10/11 students agreed (Figure 5). Only half felt that their parents valued academic achievement. Perhaps this is indicative of parental support for the pursuit of a circus career. Overall, this information indicates the individuality of the participants, who are arriving from a variety of different educational contexts. Furthermore, it seems that they may dominantly be responsible for maintaining their own training ethic. It is possible that the students in circus school are very self-motivated in pursuit of values that are important to them.

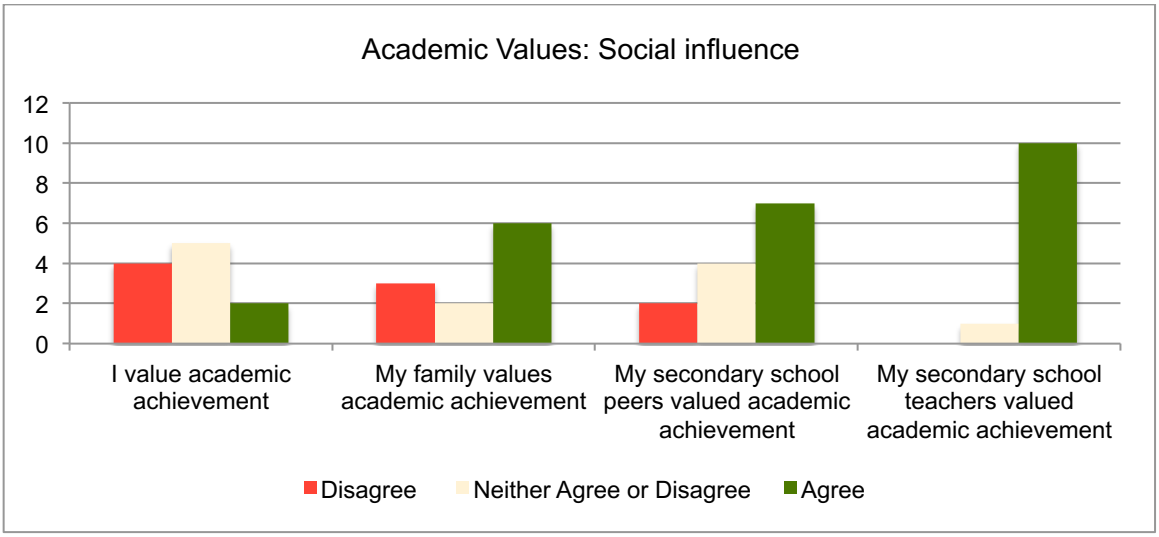

Figure 4. Academic Values: Social Influence.

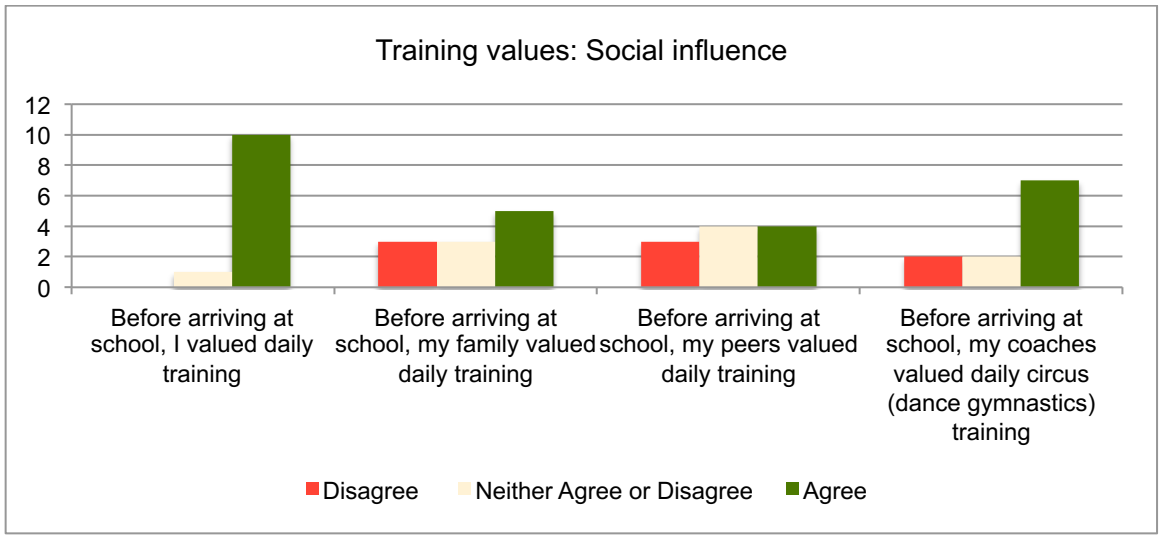

Figure 5. Training Values: Social Influence.

Most of the participating students enjoyed humanities-type academic classes and did not like math classes (Figure 6). Only one student reported not enjoying Humanities courses. The courses in the circus DEC program are generally Humanities-type courses, covering literature, ethics and philosophy in addition to the language courses. Given the students' previous enjoyment of courses in these categories, one would expect students to be inclined towards engagement with their academic DEC courses. However, equal numbers of students agreed and disagreed with the statement 'I enjoy my academic courses at this school.

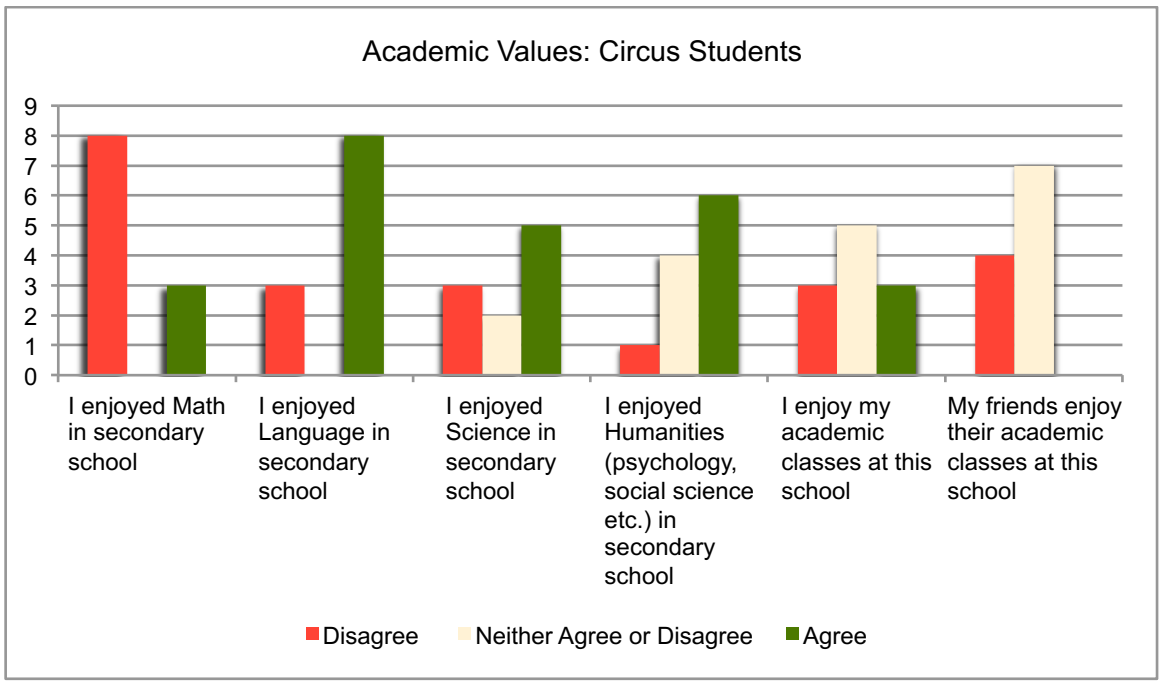

Figure 6. Academic Values: Circus Students.

Significantly, no participating student believed that the other students enjoyed their academic courses. It is possible that the sample of participating students had an unusually high interest in academic courses but recognize that their peers do not feel the same way. It is also possible that students complain the most about academic courses to other students, leaving them with the impression that no one enjoys academic learning. It is possible that students would be more inclined to report affinity towards academic course-work if there was an equal culture of appreciation among the students. Speculation aside, these responses indicate that academic learning is not perceived as 'enjoyable' by the students despite their own personal interest in academic content. Therefore, academic learning objectives and interest remain unexploited resource for the student body.

Participating students indicated that they enjoy their technique classes and also believed that their peers felt the same way, indicating that the student culture at both schools strongly values physical training related to circus techniques (Figure 7). Most students reported enjoying the category 'creation classes,' although they seem to be more individually valued. It is possible that lumping multiple courses together for these questions was inadequate for gathering nuanced response.

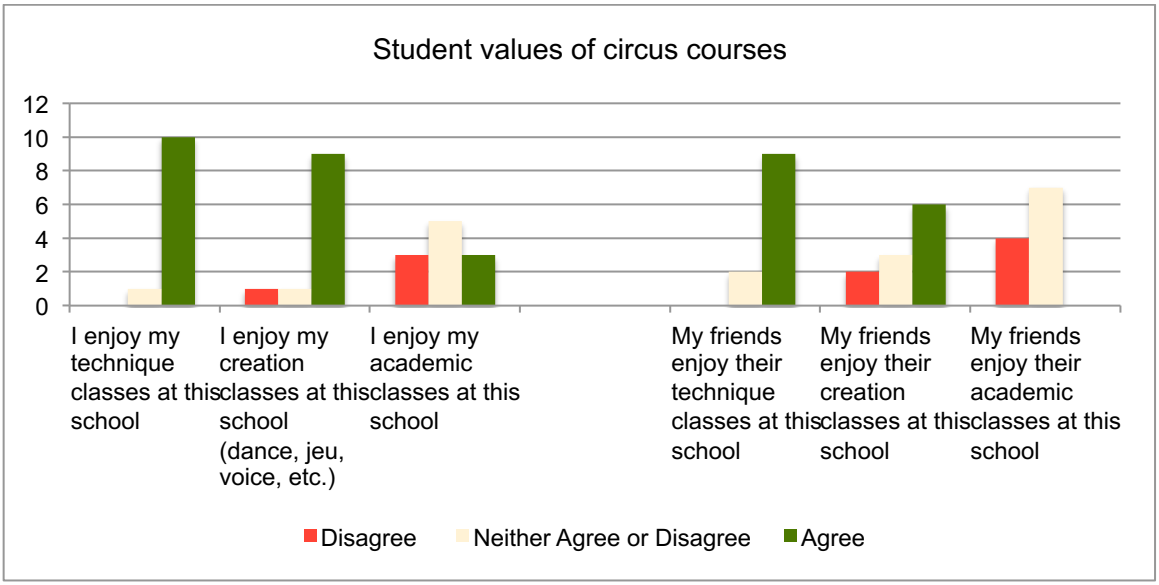

Figure 7. Student Values Of Circus Courses.

Instructor, teacher and administrator relationships to past and present learning objectives. Because so few administrators were able to complete this questionnaire, the administrator responses have dominantly been removed to preserve anonymity. The instructors, teachers and administrators answered questions about their social group to provide a context for

their social influences. All of the educators (including administrators) seem to enjoy the work they do for the circus schools and generally believe that their peers enjoy their work also (Figures 8 and 9). It is remarkable that responses are so consistent and so elevated. This could be an indication of constructive and creatively challenging work environments. There is a risk that these participants falsified their responses. However, it seems likely that they would have marked low peer enjoyment to indicate dissatisfaction. Such high regard for work experiences is a very positive finding regarding work environments. Future research could investigate the factors which lead circus educators from such different domains to all regard their work so highly.

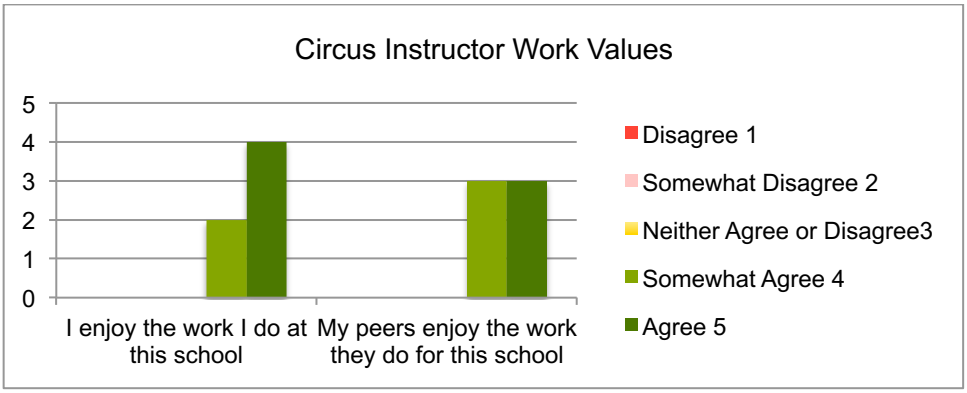

Figure 8. Circus Instructor Work Values.

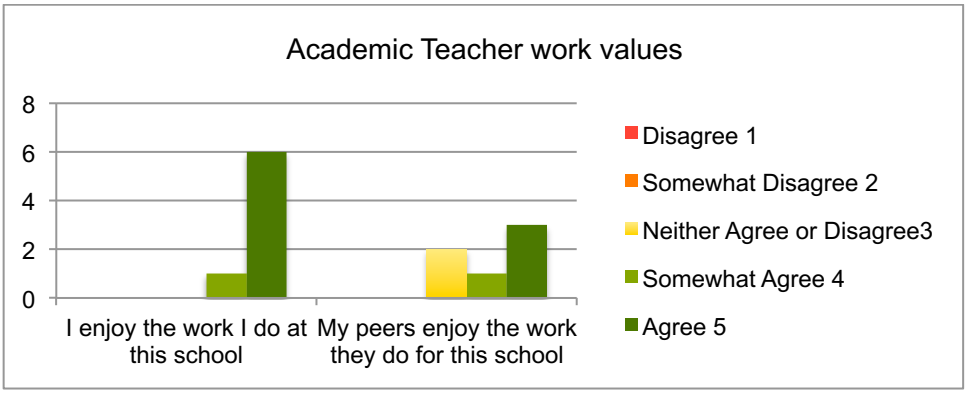

Figure 9: Academic Teacher Work Values

Overall, participating instructors, teachers and administrators had an extremely high regard for academic learning objectives (Figures 10 and 11). All either valued or were indifferent to academic achievement, and broadly came from environments where academics were considered important. The 'neither agree nor disagree' responses are perhaps an indication of valuing academics in general but perhaps not specifically for circus school. Alternately, the term

'academics' could be too broad and those responses indicate that only certain types of academic learning are valuable for those respondents.

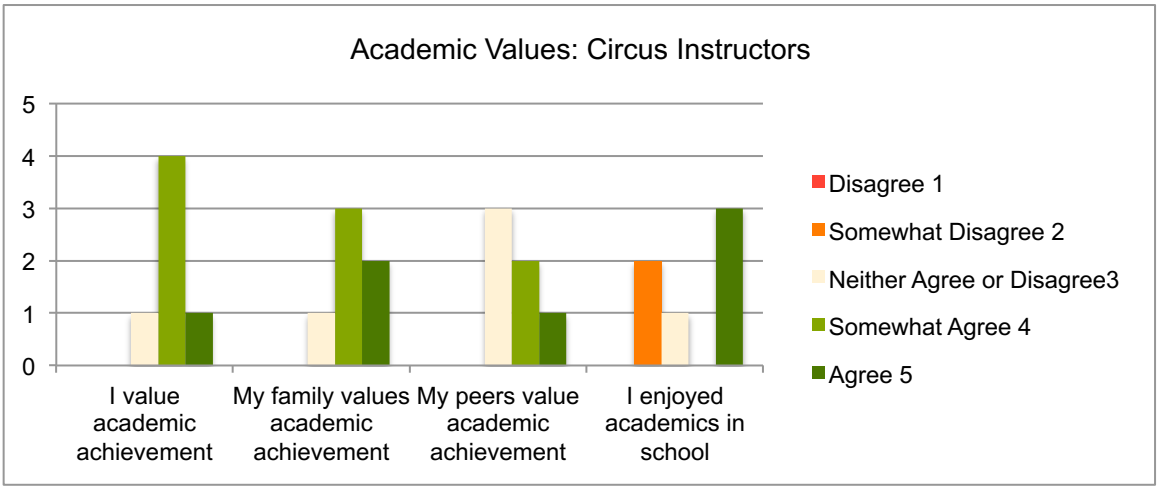

Figure 10. Academic Values: Circus Instructors.

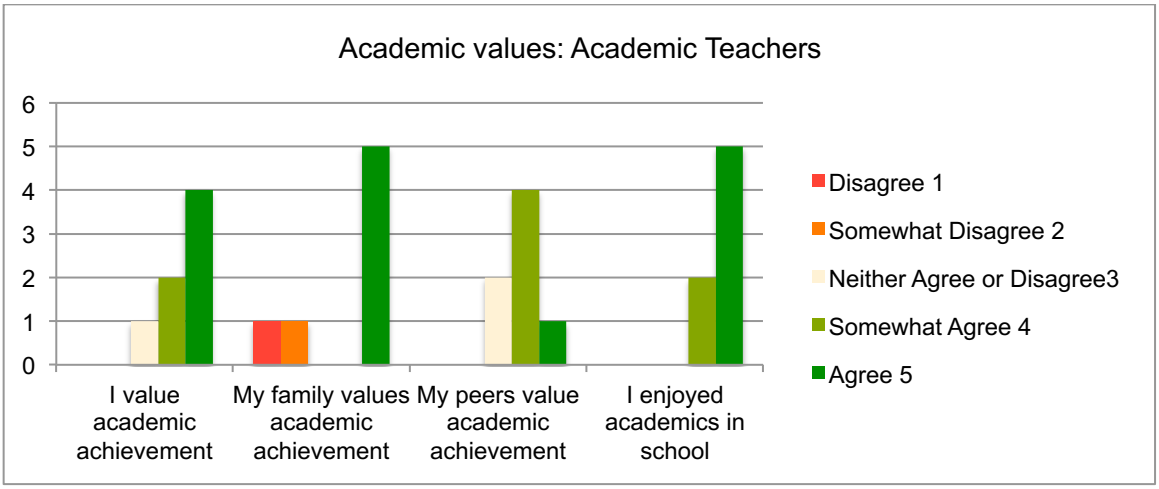

Figure 11. Academic Values: Academic Teachers.

Instructors, teacher and administrator agreement that academic achievement is important is contrasted with the diverse responses to questions about daily training (Figures 12 and 13). Here, circus instructors indicate that they valued rigorous training across the board, however several academic teachers felt that these questions were not directed at them and were only for circus instructors or students, an example of separation of knowledges bases. It appears that most instructors, teachers and administrators broadly value both academic and physical learning objectives, though each has a stronger relationship to their knowledge domain.

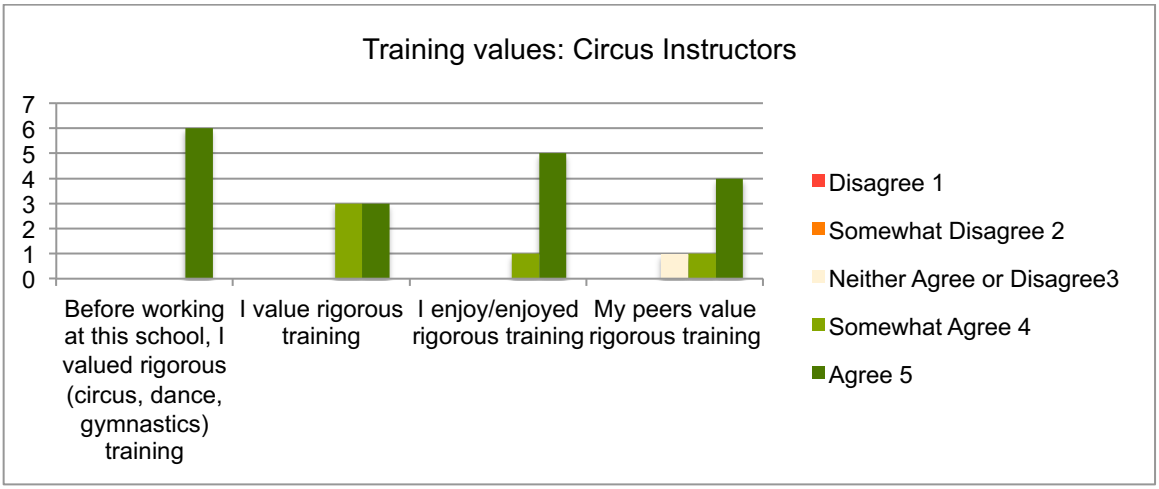

Figure 12. Training Values: Circus Instructors.

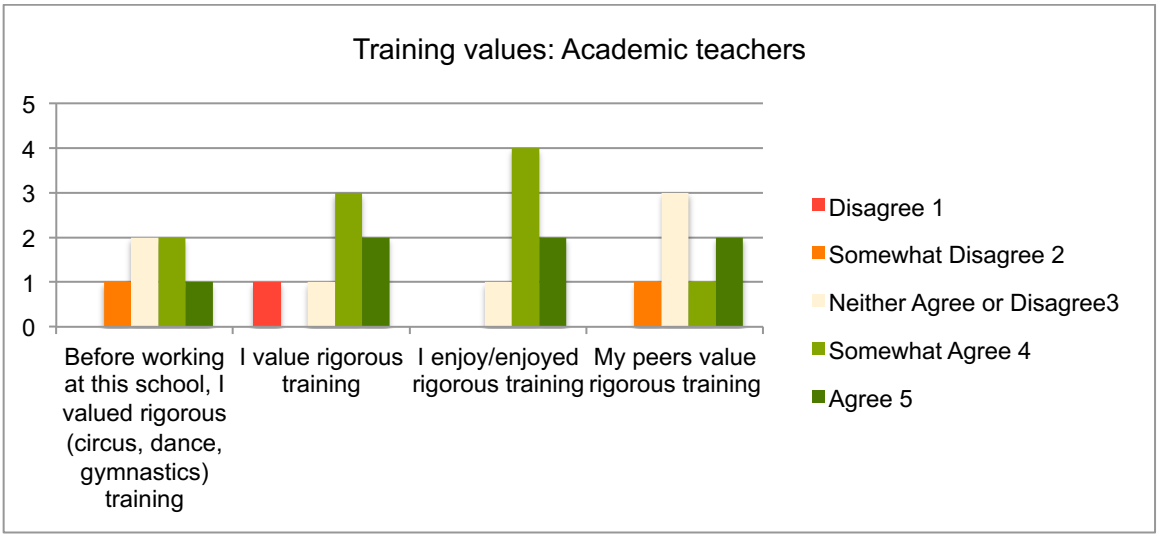

Figure 13. Training Values: Academic Teachers.

Instructors, teachers and administrators were asked to assess student engagement in the courses that they teach and were also asked to evaluate the course's importance in relation to the DEC objectives (Figures 14 and 15). Although tasked with organizing the programs, more than half of the participating administrators still work directly with students. All circus instructors felt students were engaged in their courses and that their courses were important to the current and future success of the students. Academic teachers did not share the same perception of student engagement in their courses. Most felt that the academic courses would be more important for success after the DEC. Teachers were also very divided about whether students valued their classes.

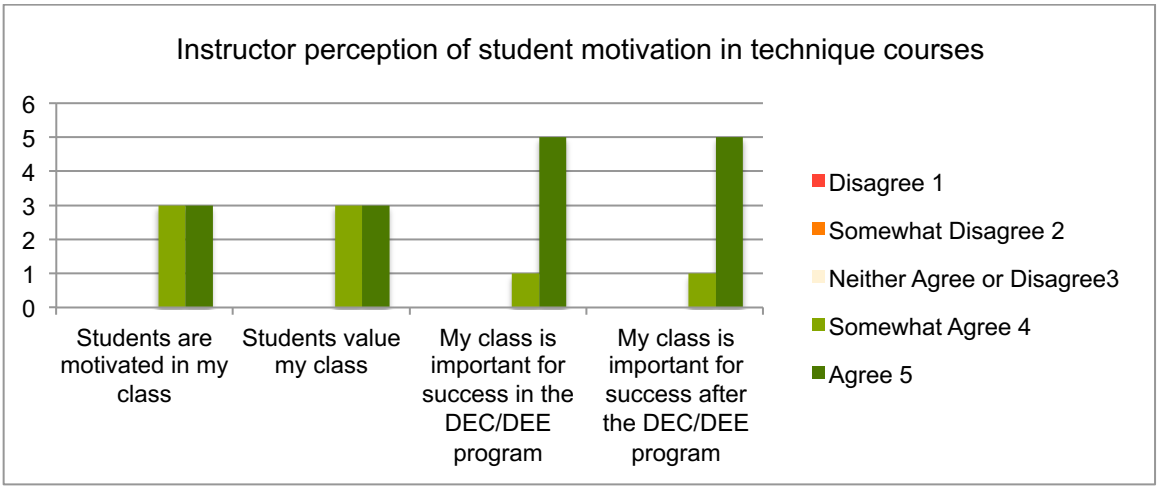

Figure 14. Instructor Perception Of Student Motivation In Technique Courses.

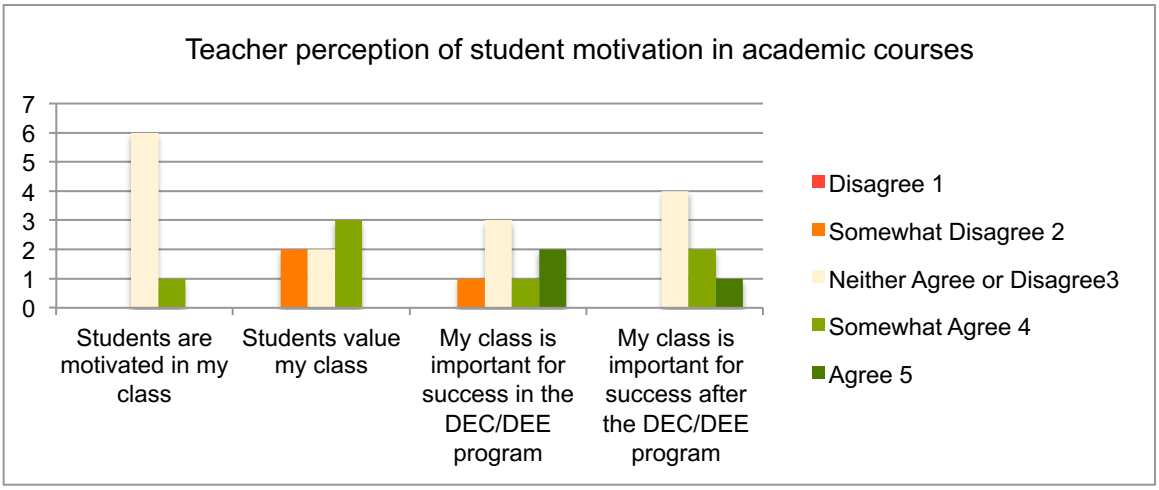

Figure 15. Teacher Perception Of Student Motivation In Academic Courses.

Finally, instructors, teachers and administrators were asked to provide their overall impressions of student engagement in courses. Consistently, the educators perceived that students are very engaged in technique courses, mostly engaged with creation classes, and not very engaged with academic course-work (Figures 16-18). These responses are very similar to the student perceptions of their peers' attitudes (see Figure 7). Although a quarter of the students (3/11) expressed enjoying academic courses in their school, this enjoyment is not apparent to the instructors, teachers, or administrators. Because it is unlikely that a random sample of students held the only three who enjoy their academic courses, there may be an undercurrent of appreciation for academic classes. An assumption that 'students' do not enjoy academics may be ultimately limiting a positive relationship to academic content.

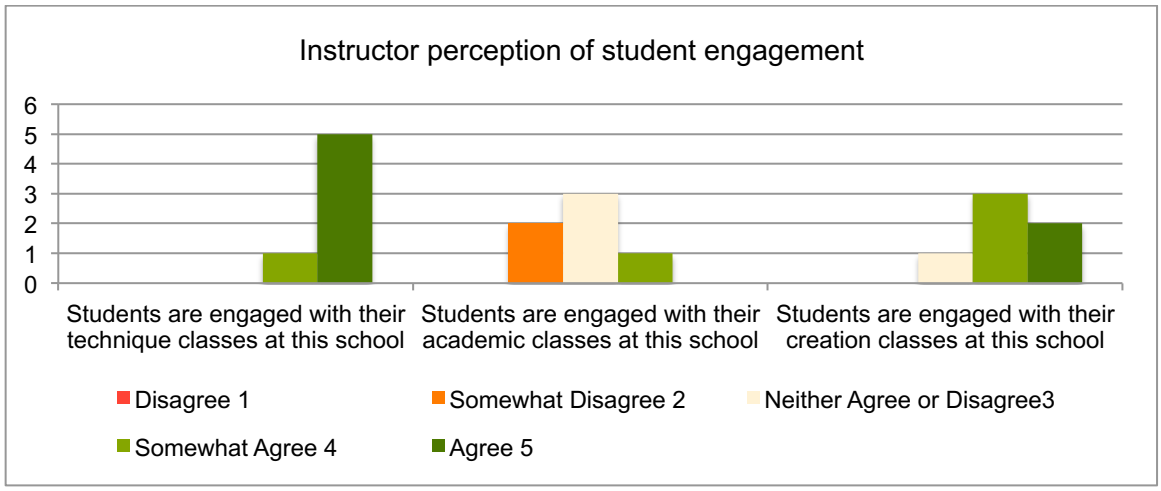

Figure 16. Instructor Perception Of Student Engagement.

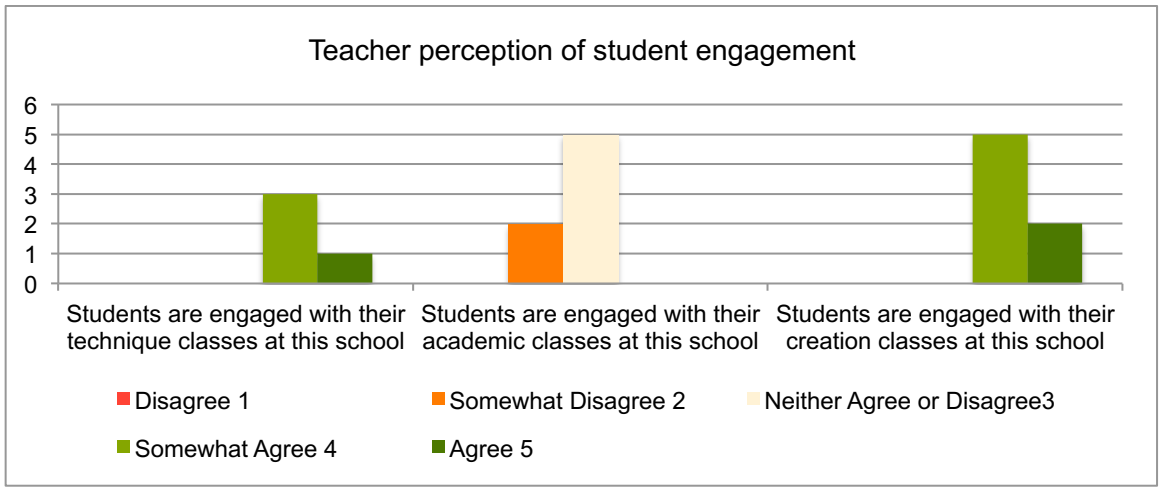

Figure 17. Teacher Perception Of Student Engagement.

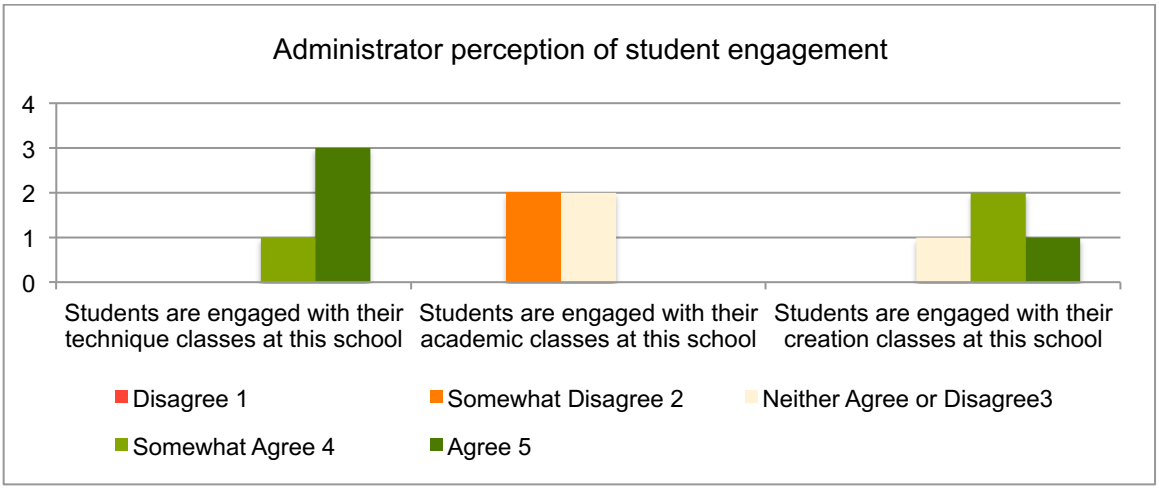

Figure 18. Administrator Perception Of Student Engagement.

Importance of Courses

The 'Importance of Course Type' questionnaire aims to discover how members of the circus school community prioritize curricular elements. Participants were asked to list up to five curricular elements they considered important for achievement of the learning objectives (Appendix G). A checklist following each listing let the participants identify reasons they believe the content to be important, both for current students and for graduates in their future careers. Participants were instructed that they could identify content either by a course name (ex. 'Profession Arts du Cirque') or by a category title (ex. specialty). Two participants left this questionnaire blank and expressed that the curriculum was so well-balanced they could not break it into distinct elements.

How 'course importance' was tabulated. For each participating group, each course type or category was entered as written by the participant. If two categories were identical, i.e. specialty and principal technique, then the two categories were combined. Every check on the checklist was tallied as '1,' therefore, three participants marked the same thing that category would receive a total value of '3' (Table 9).

Table 9

An Excerpt of Important Courses

	Specialty Technique	Artistic Counsellor	Career Management	Dance
P: social life/ network	1		1	1
P: creative process	3	2	1	1
P: technical strength	3			2

P: artistic skill set	2	2		1
P: knowledge as a circus artist	3	1		2
P: knowledge as a person	3	2		1
P: other (list):		1	1	1

Categories of important course types. This questionnaire provided insight into how participants value different curricular elements by enabling participants to describe their own content categories, unlike the other questionnaires where content categories were listed. This posed a challenge when tallying responses. For instance, one student listed "theater, dance, artistic coaching' as one category, while many students specifically listed 'dance' or '*jeu*.'[7] Ultimately, this study is not about analysing the delivery of specific curricular content, but rather about how that content is experienced by members of the community. In the interest of representing they type of learning objectives that students are tasked with, and for readability of the information, I have combined individual courses into categories defined by participants on this questionnaire. The following seven categories emerged from the responses; they are not numbered because they are not listed in order of importance or priority:

- Primary discipline - specialized technique, the foundation for the student's graduation number in which they hope to find work;
- Complementary disciplines – all other circus disciplines which the student takes, often with the goal of creating a secondary number;
- Creation techniques – tools for generating ideas (physical and mental) and pathways to performance;
- Artistic techniques – skills in other established artistic domains like dance, *jeu*, music, voice, etc.;
- Foundational techniques – tools for body maintenance, like conditioning, flexibility, and essential techniques for further development, like acrobatics;
- Academic courses related to circus – course content which directly relates to the activities of the circus profession, like make-up and career management;
- Academic core courses – course content required for completion of the program but seen as unrelated to the profession of circus.

[7] These classes include theatrical, performance, and corporeal performance techniques. In French, the word '*jeu'* translates directly to 'play,' which provides an idea of the context in which the theatrical techniques are taught.

Table 10 shows the "content names" used by each participant group and which categories I placed the "content names" into. Students and instructors did not list academic core courses, aside from language. It is also interesting to note that participants differentiated creation techniques and artistic techniques, which seem to be understood as skills from fields outside of the circus.

Table 10

Categories of Curricular Content Proposed by Participants

Categories	**Students:**	**Instructors:**	**Teachers:**	**Administrators:**
Primary Discipline	Specialty; Primary discipline; Personal training time	Specialty;	Specialty;	Principal techniques;
Complementary Circus Disciplines	Complementary discipline, 2nd discipline, Workshops			Secondary technique and polyvalence;
Creation Techniques	Artistic counsellor; Artistic coaching; Collective creation, End-of-year show	Participation in shows; 'Research' courses; Artistic counsellor; Creation week	Creation courses; Artistic counsellor	
Artistic Techniques	Jeu; Dance; Music, singing and rhythm; Theater	Jeu; Dance; Interpretation	Dance; Jeu;	Jeu, stage presence, dance; Music; Movement (posture, dance)
Foundational Techniques	Acrobatics	Conditioning; Flexibility; Foundation courses (equi, acro, trampo); Preparation physique	Acrobatic technique; Juggling; Physical training; Circus disciplines	Preparation physique, longevity, injury prevention; Les bases (acro, trampo, hand balance)
Academic Courses Related to Circus	Academic courses related to circus; Arts du cirque method and research; Profession artiste de cirque; En scene 2; Injury prevention; Training theory	Profession artiste de cirque;	Arts du cirque; Career management; Career/professional development; New trends in circus	Profession artiste, tour de piste, l'emploi;
Academic Core	French		French; English;	A space for

Courses			Academics; Literature, career management, anatomy, history; Philosophy; General culture; Art history, English as a second language	reflection, philosophy, art history;

Student perceptions of course importance. Many students felt that much of what they learned in school would be even more valuable in their future careers, with the exception of their primary discipline (Figures 19 and 20). This indicates an awareness that the skills they are learning are relevant both for succeeding in the DEC program and for vocational success. Students appreciate their Primary discipline because they are learning self-discipline, patience, and discovering their own style. While students believe that their complementary techniques will enhance multidisciplinarity, they feel that dance, voice, *jeu*, music and other artistic skills will serve significantly in their working life by helping them become aware of their movements and actions learn spontaneity, stage presence, and practice collaboration. Students believe that Academic circus courses teach them about career management. They listed managing money, finding employment, and "how to take care of myself" among the 'other' reasons they valued these courses.

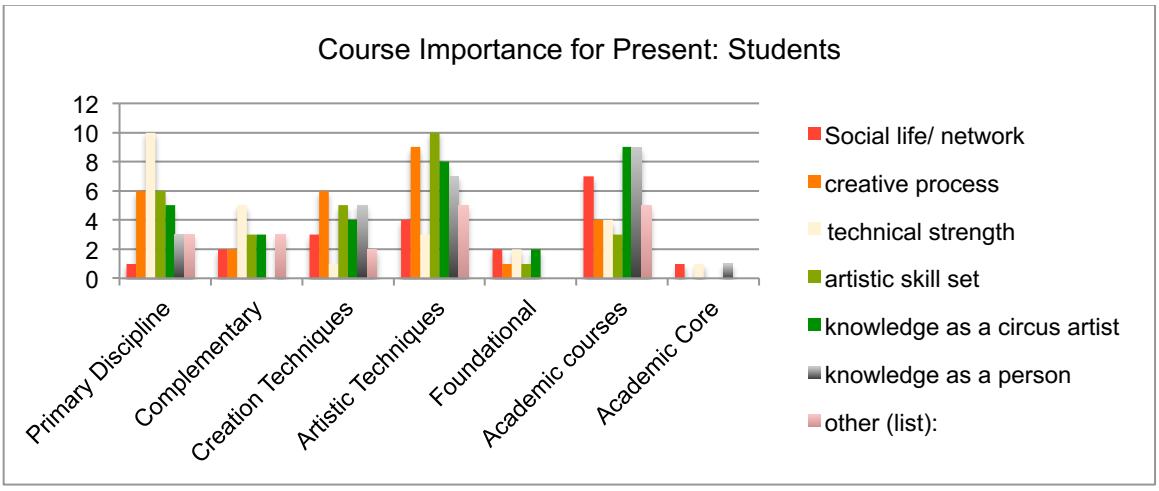

Figure 19. Course Importance For Present: Students.

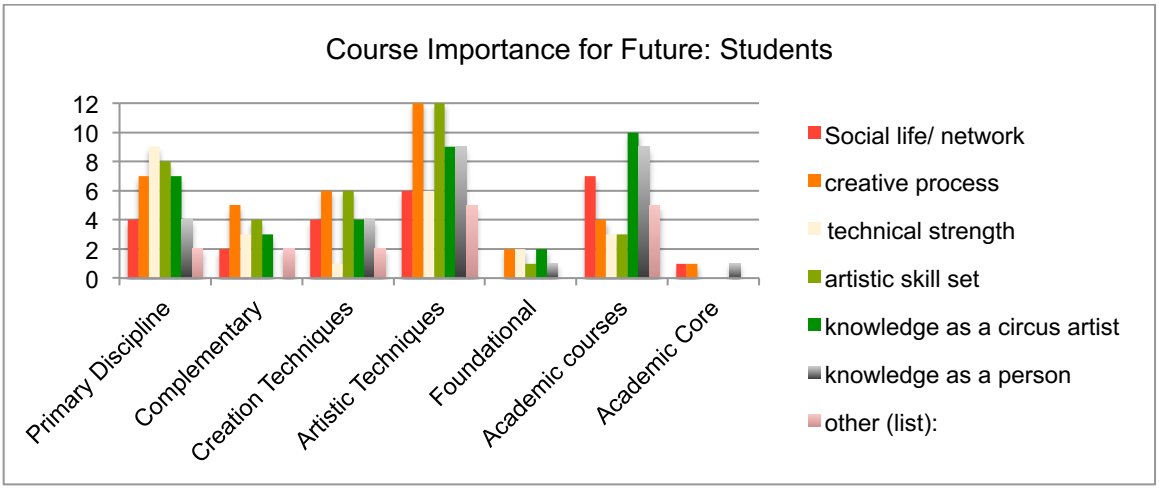

Figure 20. Course Importance For Future: Students.

When viewed with the axes flipped (Figure 21), the graph shows which learning experiences students believe they are gaining from their course types (showing only those with the most responses). Students believe that Artistic disciplines will facilitate their creative processes, provide them with a strong skill set and enable knowledge as a person. Their primary discipline, in the present, provides them with technique. In the future it will also help with creative process and an artistic skill set. Academic courses related to circus provide knowledge as a circus person, as an overall person, and facilitate their social and professional networks. Creative techniques are perceived as useful for the creative process and artistic skill sets, but also for enabling more present knowledge about themselves.

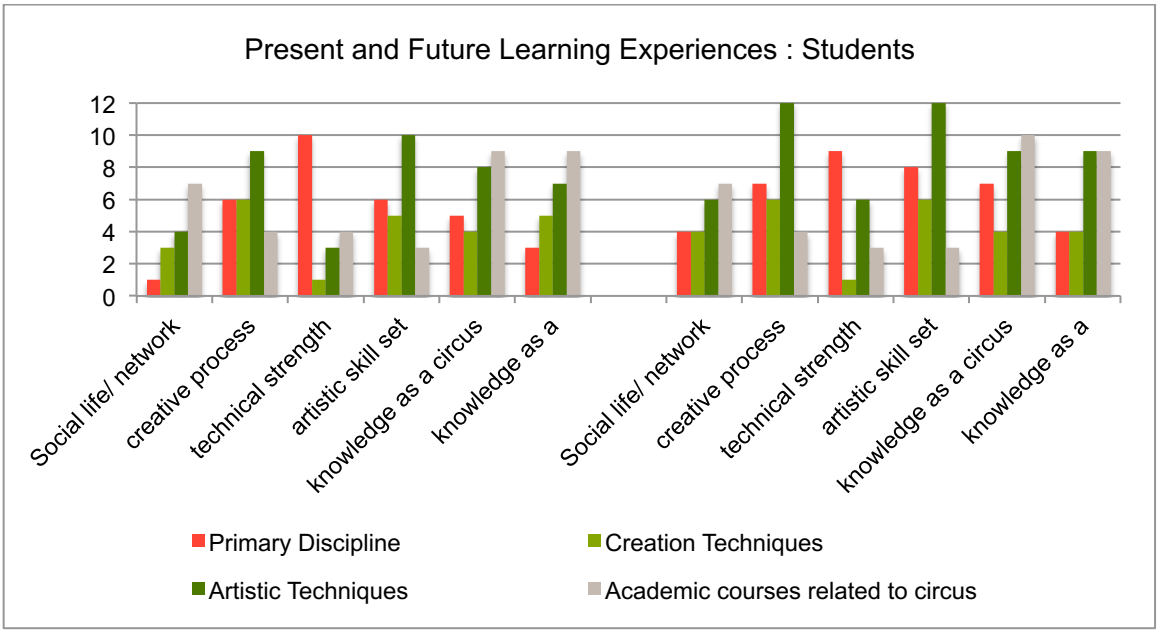

Figure 21. Present And Future Learning Experiences: Students.

Instructor perceptions of course importance. Instructors dominantly valued foundational course-work including acrobatics, trampoline, balance work, conditioning and flexibility (Figures 22-24). From their perspective, foundational techniques also support technical strength, self-knowledge, and knowledge of circus arts. Although the curves of their 'Present' and 'Future' evaluations of the importance of learning experiences are similar, they are more focused on benefits in the present. Instructors generally agreed about which types of courses are important. Instructors from both schools placed strong value on the Artistic courses, which they believe enable students to learn musicality, group movement, improve gestural vocabulary, and polish their movement.

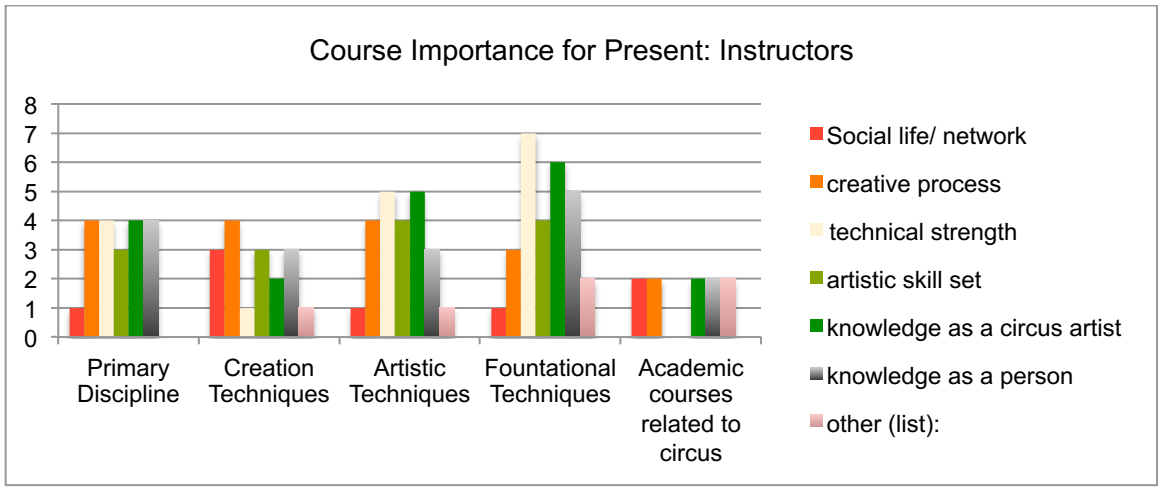

Figure 22. Course Importance For Present: Instructors.

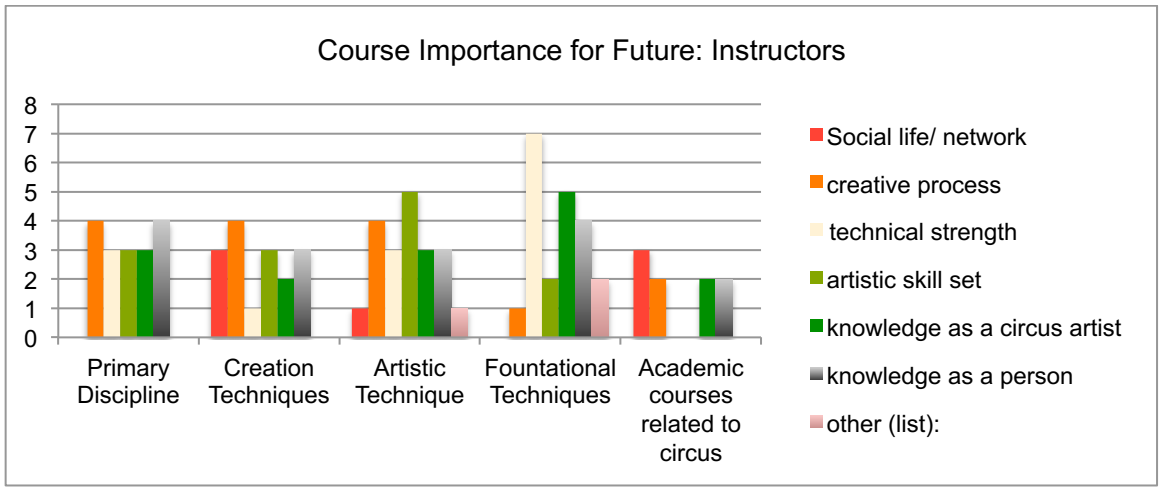

Figure 23. Course Importance For Future: Instructors.

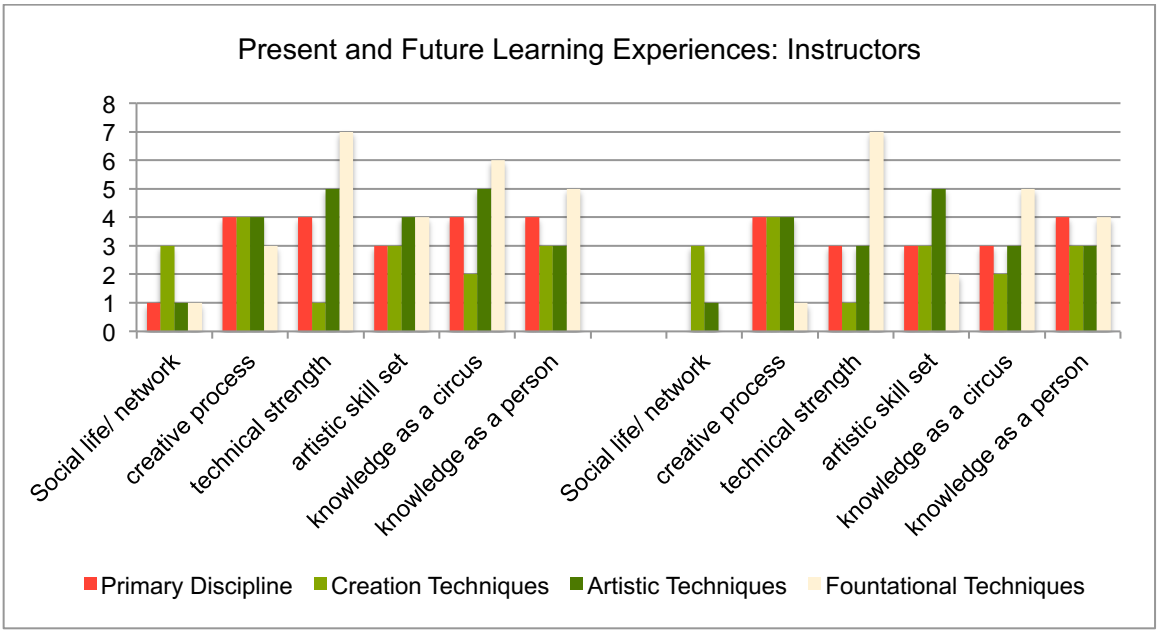

Figure 24. Present And Future Learning Experiences: Instructors.

Teacher perceptions of course importance. The academic teachers who participated offer a view of the coursework that differs significantly from that of the other participants. They agreed that Academic core courses were essential, but did not have similar agreement on any other course type. Because the agreement is so high for Academic core courses, it gives the impression that other course work is not considered important by the academic teachers. In fact, this is only because the academic teachers named many more core courses, which were then combined into the category 'Academic core courses.' Every academic teacher included an academic core course among their list of important courses, which cannot be said of any other participating group. A close look at the tallies shows that teachers and instructors have the same level of agreement for the category 'Foundational techniques.'

For academic teachers, the academic core courses are essential for meeting program goals because they teach social etiquette, networking, creative process, knowledge as a circus person, knowledge as a person, and an artistic skill set (Figures 25-27). Noted among the 'other' reasons why these courses are important, teachers pointed to the importance of historical context and background for artists offered through circus history courses. Perhaps this indicates an emphasis on the creative artist over the circus artist, acknowledging that a multidisciplinary artist will continue to evolve beyond a single discipline or technique. However, it could also represent a disconnection from the content of other course-work in the school.

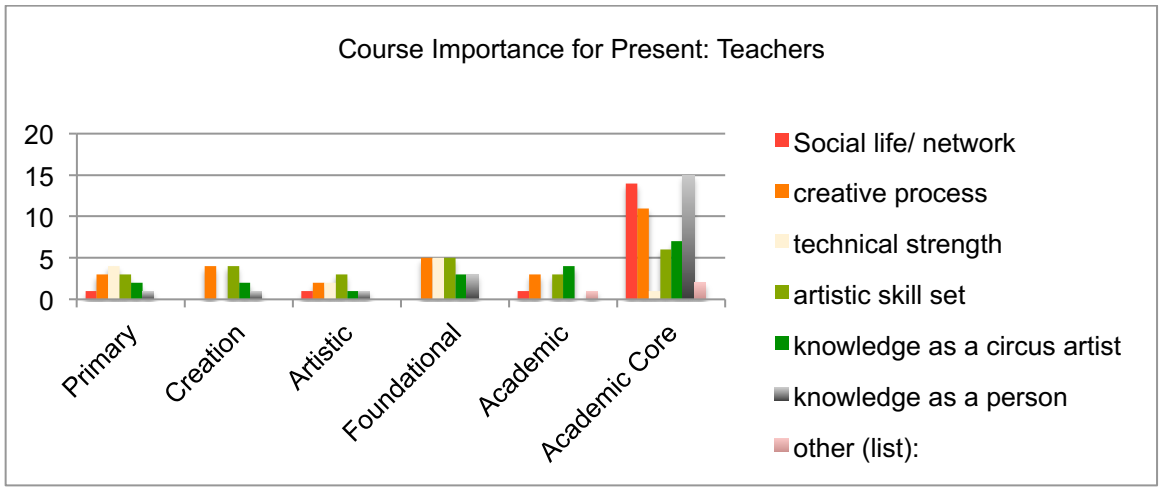

Figure 25. Course Importance For Present: Teachers.

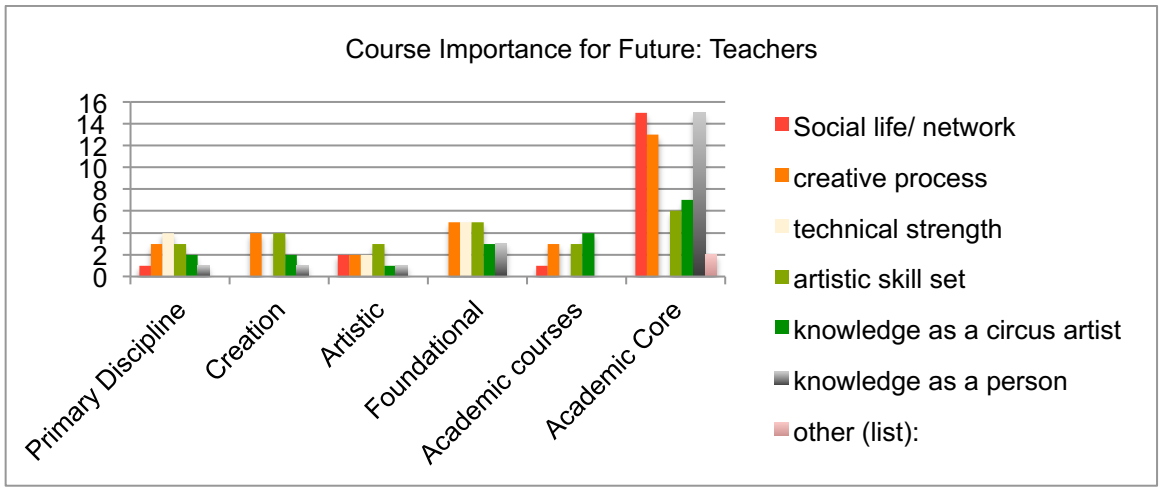

Figure 26. Course Importance For Future: Teachers.

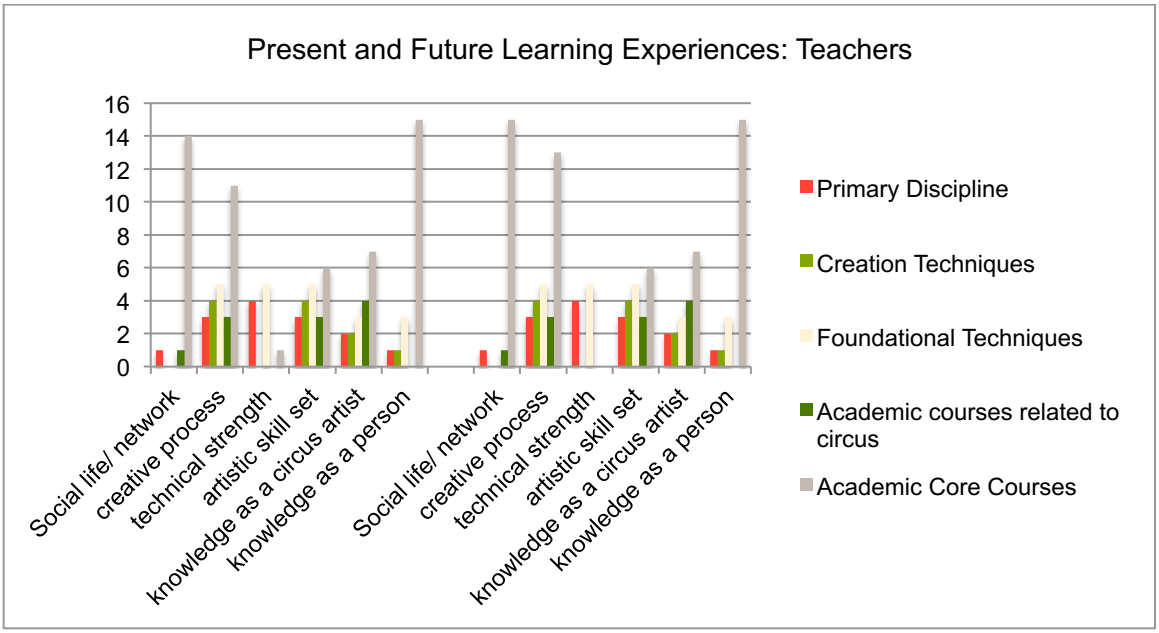

Figure 27. Present And Future Learning Experiences: Teachers.

Open Ended Question Responses

Participants were invited to complete short prompts or provide short answers to several questions. The objective of these questions was two-fold, firstly to prime the participants to think about the learning objective of the DEC programs and their own learning experiences, and secondly to ensure that each participant had an opportunity to write key ideas in their own words. These responses have been integrated into other sections where they can shed light on discussion responses.

Chapter Five: Focus Group Discussions

When entering the research, I perceived that participants would experience the curriculum with a division between physical courses (active classes related to circus and performance) and academic courses, including any course where the majority of the work is intellectual and students remain seated. In fact, many different categories were described during the discussion. For consistency, I will use the categories derived from the 'Importance of Course Types' questionnaire, where participants wrote which curricular elements they thought to be the most important (see Results). In the focus group discussions, it became apparent that while all participants would group course content, they had different perceptions of how those groupings should be done.

Languages were considered 'academic core courses,' but also seen useful for work and sometimes included in the 'academic courses related to circus.' Additionally, courses that teach an established technique from another artistic domain, i.e. dance, *jeu*, music, are mostly viewed as different from the process of learning improvisation, collective creation and rehearsals, even though there are techniques for creation and rehearsal methods. Students would also place a course in a particular category as a measure of its value. For instance, some would consider 'Circus History' to be an 'academic course related to circus' because of its content and relevance to a broader knowledge of the industry. Yet other students did not enjoy the course, or did not find that the material was relevant to their future, and therefore experienced the course as an 'academic core course' because they did not feel the knowledge would assist them in their career.

The Objective of the DEC and DEE Circus Programs

In his classic text on curriculum theory, Ralph Tyler (1949) states, "if we are to study an educational program systematically and intelligently we must first be sure as to the educational objectives aimed at" (p. 3). Identifying the educational goals establishes the framework for understanding how curricular content is chosen. With the exception of certain nuances, all participants similarly described the overarching objectives of the DEC and DEE programs. Both circus schools have an explicit aim to educate circus artists by providing students with the tools necessary to access and maintain a career performing circus arts. In Quebec City, their mission is to "promote the circus arts, and to stimulate the emergence of a new generation of artists" while in Montreal, the school is "dedicated to the education and training of professional circus artists

(École de Cirque de Québec, n.d.; École nationale de cirque, n.d.). Through these mission statements, the schools identify with new and contemporary forms of circus, and position themselves with a view of circus as an art, sometimes explicitly distanced from 'entertainment.' The notion of becoming an artist and discovering one's artistic personality pervaded the discussions.

> Instructor 6: Je pense que pour développer la base de tout ce qu'ils vont avoir besoin pour devenir et pour pouvoir ensuite entrer sur le marché professionnel en tant qu'artiste.[8]

> Administrator 6 : …to initiate themselves into the idea of a circus artist, outside of a circus performer, outside of un amuseur publique [an entertainer], … and by that I am not saying that the circus artist is in any way higher, but its another way of seeing, and the idea of seeing yourself as an artist is also … where do you see yourself in society, where do you see yourself in the actual moment that we're passing through, and what do you feel that *you* can bring, of the specialty and yourself as an artist, to what is going on…

Participants felt that the program prepares performing artists by providing opportunities such as: enabling students to become exceptional technical multidisciplinary artists, graduate with an act in their specialty discipline, find themselves and their artistic voice in their art, providing a complete education that includes tools so students can continue developing in their career and training after school ends, and enabling the kind of inquiry to form artists who are able to reflect on the society they live in, are autonomous in decision-making, can give something to creative projects, can audition for any company they choose with possibility of getting in, and know their own strengths and weaknesses and individuality, and who are able to adapt to multiple creative and performance contexts. Several words were repeatedly used to describe 'circus arts,' 'career,' and 'tools.' Because the words 'artist,' 'multidisciplinary,' 'autonomous,' and 'open' were invoked in every focus group, it is clear that all groups had a similar understanding of what the objective of circus schools in Quebec is.

Participant group understanding of DEC/DEE objectives. One way to triangulate how participants understand the question of program objectives is to have them describe what they believe the attributes of a successful graduate are. In other words, the program should be able to

[8] Instructor 6: I think [the objective is] to develop the base for everything that they will need in order to become, afterwards, being able to enter the market as a professional artist.

provide the kind of learning experiences that will give students the opportunity to learn the attributes of success. Below are descriptions of how each participant group sees the DEC/DEE objectives in relationship to student success. Each group independently defined "success".

Students. Overall the student goal was readiness for any kind of professional work upon graduation. Both groups of students mentioned that the circus programs had helped them to discover and develop their artistic personalities. They felt that the course content and structure of the program helped them discover themselves and their artistic personalities at school, learn autonomy, and gain the knowledge to enter the profession.

> Student 6: Je pense aussi que l'école, oui devrait former des artistes, mais aussi nous préparer à la vie de travailleur autonome, ça fait que, faut qu'on gère nos affaires seul, faut qu'on fasse nos affaires tout seul, pis il faut qu'on soit à notre affaire, si non, ça marchera pas, fait que c'est aussi de nous former, de nous apprendre comment bien tout gérer ça, en fin compte.[9]

In both groups, enthusiastic discussion belied an undercurrent of uncertainty throughout the discussion; they do not know what their future will be or where they will find work. Students tended towards contradiction during the discussions, an indication of students trying to discover what information will be most valuable to them without neglecting information that could be pertinent. For instance, in both groups, students asked for more *and* less curricular freedom, as was more *and* less discipline accommodation.

Students at the ECQ believe that circus school is preparing them to face an erratic industry, where performance situations will vary and they must be resilient in the face of change. Some students expressed wanting to begin their careers as established artists, an inflated expectation that they will be ready for *every* kind of professional work, rather than build towards that goal, "Moi, c'est d'être une artiste accomplie, mais aussi d'être prête et ouverte.[10]" Montreal students described their experiences at the NCS as being pushed, mentally, emotionally and artistically, harder than other schools would push them. Additionally, they mentioned that succeeding in their final exam, the 'épreuve synthèse,' was an important program goal, perhaps marking it as less of an 'evaluation' and more of a threshold into professionalism, a gauntlet

[9] Student 6: I also think that the school, yeah, should train artists, but also prepare us for being self-employed, that is, that we will be managing our business alone, we have to do all our business all alone, we have to be on our game, if not, it won't work, it's also to train us, to teach us how to manage everything well, ultimately.
[10] For me, it's to be an accomplished artist, but also being ready and open.

which, once completed, marks the survivor's readiness for the profession. Students at the NCS believed that the DEC/DEE program would give them the tools to navigate their profession, but that they would be the ones to put it together.

> Student 8: Pour moi, c'est plus comme avoir un… un bagage technique dans une ou plusieurs disciplines et de savoir comment modeler ces outils-là une fois qu'on nous les a enseigné. Mais pour moi, l'école c'est plus comme qu'on nous donne énormément de technique, et après c'est à nous de faire ce qu'on veut avec.[11]

> Student 10: the goal of the school, is to give everybody the tools that they need to be an artist, professional circus performers, more than professional circus artists. That's the goal, just so they have the tools, not so they have an act, just so they have, like, experience, so they have the tools to go into the world.

Students at both schools described a variety of traits they considered successful, ranging across activities, personality, and intellectual attributes. Completing the DEC/DEE program was considered to be an indicator of a student's determination to succeed in circus arts. For some students, earning a living from circus work was a mark of success. Others were more precise about the type of work experience they considered successful; these students would feel successful if they were adaptable enough to be able to perform in diverse performances because of their multidisciplinary expertise. Further precision included being able to choose which environments to work in, not always performing the same circus act, having multiple simultaneous projects, and the freedom to pursue creative projects without needing the financial rewards. Access to creative outlets was also considered a mark of success and students expressed the desire for solo and group creation opportunities. Students also felt that having a good attitude was important, specifically "not being a diva," and being able to work well with others.

Instructors. Instructors described the goal of the DEC program first and foremost as providing students with the ability to find and maintain employment. They believed that the DEC also develops the foundation for the artist a student will become and enables possible career transition because of the diploma. They also felt that the student's attitude will be the indicator of success: if students are able to remain open-minded, determined, versatile, have a good work

[11] Student 8: for me it's more like getting a … technical background in one or more disciplines, and then, knowing how to model the tools that they give us, but for me, the school, it's more like they give us a lot of technique, and then it's up to us to do what we want with it.

ethic and be passionate about their work. When envisioning what students will pursue after school, most instructors believed that they would discover more about themselves as artists by practicing interpretation and creation in multiple contexts and developing technical and artistic maturity through experience in the professional world.

On a practical note, performance work was essential to "success" and instructors believe students should have found work within a year out of school. No instructor judged the type of performance, considering busking and winning awards to be reflections of an individual student's goals and personality. Some instructors specifically noted that if a student could avoid teaching, or teaching at the circus school itself, they would be considered more successful. This poses an interesting counterpoint to the traditional academic trajectory, where teaching is a vaunted position. Instructors also spoke about how short and difficult circus careers can be, and how the choices an artist makes will influence their longevity as a performer. The general assumption was that students would have a career lasting between 5 and 10 years, maybe 15 at the maximum.

Teachers. Academic teachers in Montreal are in a unique position, teaching the core courses within the context of the circus school to a population of circus students. They saw the program as an intensive artistic immersion program (gauntlet) enabling students to develop an artistic voice, self-confidence and reflexive artistic strategies that will serve them as autonomous workers. The teachers also believed that the DEC core courses enable the development of skills other than performance, which may serve in future career transition. They also added that the purpose of the degree includes a "comprehensive general education" in the languages of Canada, becoming citizens, enhancing the student relationship with society. Some described student success as the ability to find their place in the market, continue learning and develop their voice as an artist beyond the technical and theoretical perfection of their craft.

Administrators. Administrators from both schools believe that the DEC program is well defined and designed to accommodate different student goals, therefore the DEC experience is very personal for each student. There was consensus that the program is already very full and that the students work hard. There is continued reflection upon learning experiences and objectives across all programs through observation, discussion and feedback from students, instructors, teachers and administrators, and communication with other circus programs. Some

administrators specified that while the DEC program provides the tools for entry into the career, the graduate will not have the same abilities as someone who has been performing for 10 years.

Administrators were also able to shed more light on the DEC/DDEE from the institutional perspective. The DEC program is a governmentally regulated college degree designed to educate circus performers, a transition program between secondary school and a professional career. Because the DEC is accredited, students must complete required academic courses; the program is not simply a series of private lessons. Some administrators felt strongly that the DEC diploma was an asset for Quebec students, who graduate high school with comparatively fewer credits. One participant indicated that the circus DEC degree "provides an opportunity for artists to pursue academic training through an adapted framework."[12]

Graduate success happens across a spectrum of physical, emotional and intellectual properties, including work with many types of companies, development of their own companies, and continued evolution as artists. Although administrators from both schools mentioned similar attributes, those at NCS seemed to emphasize technical and creative excellence with maintenance of personal passion, while the ECQ discussion returned frequently to interpersonal ability and free-lance business acumen. Lack of self-confidence was seen as a barrier to achieving success within school. Some administrators acknowledged that students have excitement and insecurity about entering the job market but that insecurity is assuaged when they have a contract in hand.

Differences between the DEC and DEE programs. With the exception of the academic teachers, all participants from both programs held similar views of the DEE and DEC program objectives. The first response was always that there is no difference between the objectives of the DEC and the DEE program. This was later amended to clarify that there is no difference in the domain of performance objectives, and caveats were then provided to describe the differences between the two programs. Administrators and instructors were unanimous that students are treated the same by teachers, instructors and administrators regardless of which program they are pursuing. Students in both programs are in school to become circus artists. Students seem to

[12] Offrir la possibilité à des artistes de poursuivre leurs formations académiques dans un cadre adapté

experience the programs the same way, feeling that "There are still a lot of, well, some differences between the two programs, but the objectives are still essentially the same." [13]

> Instructor 1: There's no difference between the two programs. Sometimes I don't even know if my students… if they are DEC or DEE. If I don't look.

> Instructor 3: In terms of circus, we don't treat people any differently, you're a student to become a professional artist, so in terms of circus, there are no differences. Academics, I mean, obviously, there's a difference, but not for circus.

The difference between the two programs, then, was the presence of academic core courses. Therefore, participants who felt the program objectives are the 'same' are including only vocational objectives while participants who include academic and citizenship learning objectives feel the programs are not equivalent. For the academic teachers, the differences in curricular content were pivotal to understanding the objectives of each program. Because the course-load was different, the objectives were inherently not the same. While they felt confident that the circus content was equivalent, they believe that the DEC program educates the whole human while the DEE program educates the circus performer. From the perspective of the teachers, the paucity of academic content in the DEE adversely impacts how a student will grow to understand themselves, their path, their creative process and their relationship to the world. They notice that DEE students are less motivated to pursue knowledge outside of circus, are less likely to invest in academic exercises like writing, are less informed about other arts, and are less likely to engage in self-reflection. Furthermore, they feel that an inadvertent division between DEC and DEE students is created because students do not face equal academic curricular challenges.

DEC or DEE as foundation program? Institutional differences towards the balance between the two programs came to light as the DEC and DEE were described. Participants in Montreal seemed to use the DEC as the base model, of which the DEE was an extension. One instructor believed that "if there's a DEE program, it means that there's a value for [the school]. If they offer it, it's because they want to get the best of the best who can't do the DEC program." In contrast, the Quebec City participants seemed to view the DEE program as the base model.

[13] "Il y a quand même beaucoup de, ben… quelques différences entre les deux programmes, mais les objectifs restent quand même les mêmes."

Some administrators felt that DEE students benefit from more concentrated time towards circus goals, which can lead to a higher skill level. For instructors and students, the DEC schedule added additional stress to student's lives because of increased workload and reduced training time. Instructors believed that the DEE curriculum contained courses essential for becoming a professional artist while the DEC program only added irrelevant government requirements. Students felt that the DEE program had more prestige and was harder to enter because, without the limitations of a degree, it draws from a broader international pool of candidates competing for fewer spots.

> Instructor 4: Surtout ça amène des contraintes de sorte que dans ce DEC, il y a des plages horaires quand on peut pas s'entrainer ou ça amène des contraintes dans l'horaire, tandis que les autres sont ouverts toute la [journée]. C'est plus des contraintes…[14]

> Instructor 5: les DEEs deviennent plus multidisciplinaires parce que justement, ils ont pas les plages du cégep, donc ils s'ouvrent beaucoup plus pis, ils vont plus s'entrainer.[15]

> Administrator: c'est sûr que les gens qui sont inscrits au DEC doivent s'ajouter des heures supplémentaires en formation générale. Ça réduit le temps de participation, d'engagement ici, ça créé des frustrations parce que pour eux c'est du temps qu'ils peuvent pas consacrer à leur entrainement ici. Donc par rapport aux autres, il y a une petite comparaison qui est venue… Donc, oui ça devient un peu, ça a un petit côté un peu… (rire) désavantageux pour eux d'être au DEC là.[16]

These different perceptions might be accounted for by taking into account the timeline for each program. In Quebec City, the DEC diploma began in 2010 but the DEE equivalent has been running, with various overhauls and evolutions, since the inception of the school in the late 1990s. In contrast, the NCS pioneered accredited circus education in North America, accepting

[14] Instructor 4: Above all it adds limits in a way that, with the DEC, there are time slots when they can't train, or it limits their schedule, while the others have time all [day] . It is more constraints ...
[15] Instructor 5: DEEs become more multidisciplinary exactly because they don't have the cégep schedule, so they become more open, and they train more
[16] Administrator: certainly, the people in the DEC have to add additional hours of general education, it reduces the time they have for participating, committing here, It's frustrating for them because it's time that they can't commit to their training here, so when they compare themselves, there was a little comparison happening, there's a side of it that seems a little…disadvantageous for them to be in the DEC.

its first accredited class in 1997, meaning that the DEC diploma has been in Montreal for a substantially longer time.

How Curricular Elements are Valued

Many participants felt that isolating specific elements of the curriculum was problematic and that no particular curricular element could be isolated as most important. While the learning objectives are vast and the schedule tightly packed, the balance of physical and theoretical material in the program was considered effective. Curricular content was thought to be interdependent, with a role for each learning objective.

> Administrator 8: C'est comme une pyramide. On commence large; si la base n'est pas large, le haut de la pyramide tiendra pas non plus. Ça va se s'effondrer. Et plus la base est large, plus la pyramide peut être haute, donc plus loin on peut aller. Donc, moi, je pense que de commencer à dire « ça c'est essentiel, ça c'est pas essentiel… » c'est pas une approche correcte... La base du programme a été rédigé afin de donner des outils de formation nécessaires pour atteindre les compétences pour être un excellent artiste de cirque de niveau international et novateur… c'est comme le plus riche, le plus ouvert… et chacun par rapport à ses capacités individuelles peut aller chercher son maximum pendant le passage à l'école. Donc, on a construit la base de la pyramide pour que la pyramide soit plus haute, donc les cours qui sont au curriculum ont leur rôle. Et la question pour moi qui se pose n'est pas la question « qu'est-ce qui est essentiel? » mais « comment leur fournir l'essentiel pour qu'ils soient le plus efficace, le plus efficient, le plus optimal par rapport à la formation que l'étudiant à besoin? » [17]

Another description was that courses are like languages: the more languages a person speaks the more types of work they can do and the more places they can draw inspiration from, therefore the more types of courses students are exposed to, the more material they can access for

[17] It's like a pyramid. You start wide, but if the base isn't wide the top of the pyramid won't stay up. It will crumble. And the larger the base, the higher the pyramid can be, the farther you can go. So, myself, I think to say 'that, that's essential, that, that's not essential…' it's not the correct approach … The foundation of how this program was written is the vision to provide the training tools in order to achieve the competence to be an excellent circus artist at an international level and a creator … to be the richest, the most open … and each according to their individual abilities to seek their personal maximum during their time at the school. So, we construct the base of the pyramid so that the pyramid can go as high as possible, therefore the courses in the curriculum all have a role. And the question worth asking, for me, is not 'which is essential,' but 'how can we furnish them in the most effective, most efficient, most optimal manner for the training that each student needs.

inspiration. In reality, however, participants described asymmetrical values, indicating that there is, in fact, a distinct hierarchy of knowledge in these two circus schools.

Two perceptual filters drove assessments of course value during the discussion. The first is explicit value. Eisner (2002) describes "explicit" curricula as "an educational menu of sorts; [the school] advertises what it is prepared to provide." In circus education, the explicit content valued most by the participants responds directly to anticipated future vocational tasks. The second filter is implicit value, which influences students through "behavioural consensus [and] institutional…goals and norms" (Apple & King, 1983, p. 82). This implicit, or 'hidden,' curriculum "socializes [students] to values that are a part of the structure of those places" (Eisner, 2002). It is through these values that circus students learn about their career and professional behaviour. Institutional values are communicated through the presentation of their courses and training spaces, scheduling decisions, and how content is included or excluded from the curriculum (Apple & King, 1983; Eisner, 2002).

Explicit values. Students, instructors and administrators all indicated that the most valuable course content was that which would lead students towards a sustainable performance career. The list of explicitly valued content is informed by the kind of knowledge they expect they will need to have learned before entering the professional market. When considering these responses, it is important to keep in mind that all respondents were thinking about the program through the lens of over-arching program objectives. Areas where content is desired may or *may not* be appropriate content for a post-secondary program. Whether content is essential or not depends upon the program goals. It is possible that zones of change can reflect upon poorly understood or poorly integrated aspects of the curriculum; the writers of the program may arrive at different solutions than the focus group participants. Participants themselves recognized that the curriculum is packed; after listing many elements they would like to learn, the ECQ students paused to laugh at themselves for wanting everything, because they were well aware that the ideal curriculum was physically impossible

For Montreal students, the value of courses was judged both by how useful the course material was to the épreuve synthèse and also the future career. In Quebec City, students expressed that the most important courses were the ones they did not have access to outside of the school because, while they could hire an instructor anywhere, they could not attain the bulk of professional knowledge through private sessions. Work expectations inform course value, and

therefore inform student engagement. The following categories have been derived from recurring themes presented by participants during the discussions.

Managing physical longevity. Outside of specialized circus technique, professional artists must be adept at rapidly evaluating both internal and external environments to ensure their safety.

Physical risk and injury prevention. Students from both schools wanted to increase their knowledge of injury prevention, first aid, and emergency procedures, while also enthusiastically discussing the value of what they had already learned:

> Student 2: they teach you what to do in an emergency case you get injured, go and search for the glace… sorry, I mean ice, or like how to tape yourself, and even if its not really a professional thing, it gives you the knowledge to take care of yourself until you can see someone that can take care of you, so like you can treat any emergency in the moment, or you know the injuries that you can prevent, and not make it worse in the future

Especially interesting is the student push for more anatomy, injury prevention, "and also just like, 'don't-hurt-yourself-course,' 'this is how you not die,' " because both schools already offer this type of course. I suggest several reasons students are asking for a course they have already taken. It is possible that, although they have learned the content, they have not yet practiced the knowledge (because they have not been injured) and therefore do not feel they have mastered the knowledge. The request for more content, then, is actually a request to practice skills they are afraid to forget in a critical moment.

The request for more content also reveals fear of the necessity of this knowledge. For students, the prospect of injury is so significant that no amount of information will make students feel they have learned the important features. Underlying this discussion is an explicit acknowledgement by circus educators that a circus artist's career can be intentionally or unexpectedly short. Rigorous physical maintenance provides graduates with the best chances of professional longevity. While the terms "risk" and "danger" were never mentioned, all instructor, teacher and administrator groups quantified the duration of a circus career (5-10 years, occasionally longer). What students are expressing, then, is a fear of the ramifications from injury. Increasing psychological tools, as noted by Legendre (2014), might help the students feel ready to assess risk ahead of time and not only rely on taping and ice to recover from injury.

Stress management. In her exploration of the transmission of risk management in French circus schools, Legendre (2014) reports that management of physical risk is part of the curriculum but stress management is not. While both Quebec schools have courses in "Psychological Preparation," which could include risk management, students and instructors expressed a desire to learn more stress management because "working your body all the time is not only a toll on your body" (Student 11). In the French schools, management of psychological factors, such as fear, frustration and stress, fell to the primary coaches, which also seems to be the case in Quebec schools.

> Student 11: I would find this important, but I'm sure that the coaches would too, is, managing your stress, and like, balancing psychological and physical issues more? I think that's very important because if you don't have like a clear head going into your class then its gonna be a lot harder for your coach to help you. And they can't be your psychologist, so…(laughter from others)
>
> Student 10: There's a lot of problems going around this school. So it could be, it would be helpful

Does each school have institutional learning objectives regarding 'risk management'? Legendre (2014) notes that instructors from a sports or circus background did not view 'risk management' as a teachable subject whereas teachers who had been educated in university programs believed risk management could be taught. Relying on primary coaches for psychological support may therefore generate informal and inconsistent information.

Training hygiene. Finally, instructors, teachers and administrators indicated structural methods for teaching students healthy training hygiene. For some instructors, the valuable content was not contained within courses as much as it was a by-product of courses. These instructors felt that teaching students to learn, teaching them to take care of their bodies (their instruments), and enabling the acquisition of agility, balance, coordination and spatial awareness was more essential than any specific course – and yet these essentials could be learned in any course. Students become able to protect themselves by learning physical autonomy through self-reliance and self-assessment during training. This can be done by using specific teaching methods that emphasize reflection during training sessions, anticipating the student's future without a coach present. Teaching self-care also means demonstrating healthy rest and recovery

practices. For some instructors and administrators, the only addition would be to *decrease* the number of training hours in order to increase recovery time.

Competitive performance techniques. It comes as no surprise that all participants, including academic teachers, prioritized high quality performance skill acquisition, and therefore all relevant course content. All groups mentioned speciality disciplines at the heart of the curriculum. A few students wanted more hours of training time in their specialty disciplines and the opportunity to learn more circus skills, but most felt that the schedule was balanced.

Foundational techniques. All valued physical foundation techniques because they provide the basis for learning more specialized techniques. Instructors emphasized the need for conditioning and flexibility, artistic techniques like dance because they enhance artistry, memorization and group movement. Students in Quebec City wanted to add more foundational technique courses (although some also critiqued the curriculum as offering too much acrobatic choice to students). For instructors, teachers and administrators in Quebec City, one of the perceived obstacles to effective curricular delivery was the relatively low technique level of many auditionees, which compromises the amount students are able to learn in three years. Instructors find that much of their time during the first year is spent repairing poor pre-existing technique. Therefore, they suggested adding a preparation year where students could "develop the basics, learn Pilates, so they develop ... the basics of everything so that when they get their first year ... instead of needing, sometimes, half a year or being at the beginning of a full year of catching up" (Instructor 4).[18]Administrators brainstormed a variety of methods to better facilitate the acquisition of foundational technique or recruit applicants with stronger physical preparation.

Artistry. The mission statements of both programs aim to prepare circus artists. When coding the discussions, I added a category for "being an artist" because 'artists' were differentiated from 'technicians' in every participant group. According to the participants, artists are distinguished from technicians because they have 1) creative qualities and the ability to generate new ideas, 2) an attitude of openness and interest in the world, and 3) the ability to 'interpret' on stage, which is to say, have an emotional communication with the audience.

[18] Instructor 4: "Ils développent leur base, ils apprennent le Pilates. Faut qu'ils développent une base d'à peu près tout pour que quand ils arrivent en première année, ils puissent commencer leur première année… au lieu d'être, des fois, de demi-année ou au début d'une année de rattrapage."

> Instructor 5: J'aime souvent dire qu'il y a deux types d'artistes, t'as les artistes-artistes pis t'as les techniciens, mais il y a aussi les techniciens qui vont aller loin… Je parle plus des techniciens… des génies moteurs-là, tu sais, tu va aller… une coche plus haute.[19]
>
> Instructor 4: Oui, c'est ça que je veux dire, tu sais, ils vont être moins artistiques mais ils vont travailler pareil là… Dans le fond, on doit leur apprendre à avoir l'ouverture parce que être artiste, c'est ça.[20]
>
> Instructor 2: To train … Professional circus artists who can be creators and interprètes.
>
> Instructor 1: There are students who are just like, 'please tell me what to do and I will execute it perfectly, but I need you to tell me what to do,' and that's fine too, I feel like we have fewer of those kinds of students now, and more students who are more curious about everything and wanting to experience everything.

Although participants all expressed the importance of becoming an 'artist,' they did not offer many clear indications of where or how students will discover their artistic voice. In the above quotation, an instructor emphasizes the importance of students learning 'openness,' but does not express who will be teaching 'openness,' which course it might happen in, or how it would be evaluated. Artistry, while a pervasive objective, seems to be perceived by the participants as the result of informal transmission, left to the discretion of individual instructors and artistic advisors. For students, 'Artistic techniques' were categorically separated from other kinds of content, indicating that they only perceive 'artistic' learning to happen in their *jeu*, music and dance classes. Notably, these types of courses teach technique, not individuality, and were viewed by coaches as contributing to student ability to work in a group, not necessarily develop a unique voice.

Multidisciplinarity. Regardless of artistic ability, everyone agreed that a circus performer must be multidisciplinary in order to achieve a career. Participants felt that employers were only interested in multidisciplinary artists. Yet the definition of 'multidisciplinary' was not universal.

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[19] Instructor 5: I like to say that there are two types of artists, you have the artist- artists, you have the technicians, but there are also the technicians who will go far ... I'm talking about technicians ... motor geniuses, you know, you're gonna go ... a level higher.

[20] Instructor 4: Yes, that's what I mean, you know, they're going to be less artistic but they're going to work just as hard ... In the end, we've got to teach them to be open because being an artist, is that.

Some circus educators suggested increasing student exposure to physical and creative methods in order to broaden their experience, while for others the schedule is already too demanding. These participants felt that students could instead focus on abilities outside of circus arts, like musical instruments or dance, to enhance multidisciplinarity. Students, anxious about finding their place in professional work, felt that they needed to graduate with specialty acts in multiple disciplines as well as achieving high technical work in 'generalist' disciplines like acrobatics, because they expect to be hired for work outside their specialty.

For students, complementary disciplines are seen as critical to achieving this goal; technique courses make them employable and the artistic courses enable them to differentiate from their cohort. Because they believe that group work will be expected of them in professional world, students also identified 'partner-work' as an area they would like to learn, and expressed a strong desire to have more workshops throughout the year to introduce them to new techniques, methods and people and add more group acrobatics with other bodies (partnering). When students spoke about adding content they also expressed concern that they would not have all the tools necessary to succeed in the professional world.

Creative opportunities. Circus educators thought that opportunities for creative practice and artistic input were especially important for the growth of artistic identity. They felt that the end-of-year shows and other performance opportunities were essential and important because they teach students to work as soloists and in groups, but are also opportunities to work with creators and artists outside of the school (and sometimes outside of the circus industry). Montreal instructors expressed a desire to see students have more opportunity for exploration and discovery without being evaluated, mentioning that they "heard other schools have, once a week, half of the day off, 'let's present, let's do things' once a week, every week" (Instructor 3). Some NCS administrators also wanted to enhance the development of creative and artistic identity, through more creative opportunities within existing course-work and also by increasing exposure to diverse artistic domains. Students from both programs also want more creation opportunities, expressing that material in circus is only created though doing and that 'doing' would give them the opportunity for more exploration of diverse creation methodologies.

Performance opportunities. Because the ultimate goal of the DEC/DEE is circus performance, it makes sense that most participants felt that students should have increased performance opportunities. Instructors at the ECQ noted that in-house presentations did not

provide students with a realistic reaction to their work, as informed audiences of coaches and circus students react differently than the 'real' reactions of the unhabituated eye. Students at both schools wanted more performance opportunities, especially outside of the school environment. Some even suggested weekly performance opportunities or showcases.

Cross-curricular integration. Many circus educators were concerned that students were not applying knowledge across the curriculum. ECQ instructors noticed that course content remains silo-ed in each course. Instructors therefore proposed the integration of artistic course-work into the specialty training blocks, suggesting that would increase cross-curricular comprehension of learning principles and students would be better trained to integrate the principles learned in artistic courses when working on their primary discipline.

> Instructor 6: Parce que là, ils voient concrètement, « je suis entrain de faire ma trampo, pis là, ça m'aide »… si non là, on dirait que… ils savent mais ils le font pas. C'est ce que moi j'ai remarqué en danse. C'était ça, ça restait en danse, ça restait dans le cours de danse.[21]

For the ECQ administrators, the lack of art and philosophy courses in the DEE program risks depriving students of crafting distinct and personal artistic voices. Without courses in arts, the program can become only about technique and performance, not creation. To enhance creative work, they would emphasize connections between art movements and personal artistic development for all students in the post-secondary programs. Overall, instructors, teachers and administrators from both schools believed that certain learning objectives could be integrated into existing course-work spoke about adding opportunities for cross-curricular learning, especially regarding academic content. ECQ Administrators praised instructors whom they have noticed encouraging cross-curricular integration.

Preparation for being professional. Much of the content participants valued was seen as preparing students for the diverse tasks they could be expected to undertake as professionals in the circus industry, and cultivating successful attitudes.

Autonomy. Autonomy was considered an essential quality for the independent lifestyle of a circus artist. A working artist must be able to maintain their physical state, and is therefore responsible for maintaining an adequate training schedule at all times, including injury

[21] Instructor 6: Because then, they concretely see, "I am doing trampoline, and it's helping me," if not, it seems like ... they know it but they don't do it. That's what I noticed in dance, the information stayed in dance, it stayed in dance class.

prevention and recovery techniques. They may also be responsible for the conditions of their performance, like rigging. Furthermore, the artist is an independent contractor and must produce promotional material, actively seek work at all times, and be adept at negotiation and budgeting. Some artists will start their own companies, and will need access to the associated management skills. Academic teachers were primarily concerned with content regarding students' readiness for the professional circus industry, and would add content in the areas of finances (including accounting, tax management, show budgeting and use of excel), politics and economics (to prepare students for understanding how those influence access to funding), and professional development. If the student has not mastered autonomous motivation for physical and business goals, they are unlikely to sustain a performance career.

Networking. Marketing is an important, but often secondary tool for finding employment in the circus industry. Reputation still carries the most weight and therefore students desired means of strengthening and expanding their networks. Perhaps because of location, language, or simply the fact of being enrolled in a school program, some students mentioned feeling isolated from the 'real' world and without necessary contacts for contracts and hoped that the school would provide them with more opportunities to develop professional contacts. Montreal students felt isolated from their peers, including not knowing everyone in their cohort, and wanted more time in cohort groups to connect and learn from each other's circus practice. Students at the ECQ felt that workshops with visiting artists expanded their professional connections. Second language courses, normally in the 'academic core courses' category, were generally considered important because they enable networks and employability. However, some ECQ instructors thought that French was only relevant in Quebec and not pertinent to international work.

Rigging. What kind of expertise would be required on the market was a point of debate among the students. Because students understand that an artist will often be solely responsible for rigging their material, students from both schools discussed rigging as an essential learning objective. Contradictorily, some felt that non-aerialists should exempted from rigging, yet also that basic rigging knowledge is essential for all artists in the professional world because a broad knowledge base is best to prevent problems and facilitate employability. Overall, more in-depth rigging training was requested for aerialists so that they could learn how to assess performance spaces.

Support after graduation. Administrators discussed supporting graduates in their careers through programs in connected areas, including career transition internships for off-stage professions like teaching, directing and show management, or investigating methods for supporting student entrepreneurship. From an institutional perspective, schools have the opportunity to be cultural hubs by introducing circus arts to new populations and diversifying institutional interactions with the existing circus community (Rantisi & Leslie, 2015). Students expect school to provide them with tools to support them during the audition process and prepare them for a diversity of performance scenarios including large shows, solos and group work. Furthermore, they want the school to support them in the creation of their own shows and companies post-graduation.

Attitude. Finally, circus educators consistently iterated 'openness' as an essential quality for students. Because the circus arts are a fluctuating and unstable milieu, circus artists must be open to new types of performance, new networks, new people and new opportunities. A high technique level was not considered adequate for maintaining a career; students must also cultivate a professional personality that is agreeable, curious and open, and learn to connect with other artists and employers. Some instructors, teachers and administrators noted that reputation goes a long way in the circus world, so being a hard worker, polite person and being present for directors will go farther than having exceptional talent.

Implicit values. Implicit value is communicated through the organization of courses and school culture. Administrative decisions related to schedule, content and physical space "are not intended to reflect to students value judgements about the significance of various subject area, [but] in fact, they do. Students learn in school to read the value code that pervades it" (Eisner, 2002).

Publicly facing institutional values. The organization and presentation of publicity material and program descriptions offer insight regarding institutional values. Because circus arts have transformed rapidly over the last 40 years, circus schools face the challenge of aesthetic representation, attracting students with complementary professional aspirations. Commitment to aesthetic aspects of circus performance also reveals an ideological relationship to circus history and culture and positions the school's relationship to the profession because these "hidden" institutional values socialize students towards their future work environments (Apple & King, 1983).

Mission statements. Examination of the mission statements reveals that both Québec schools are invested in educating circus professionals (Appendix L). For the ECQ, "stimulat[ing] the emergence of a new generation of artist" is only one aspect of their overall mission, to "promote the circus arts" (École de Cirque de Québec, n.d.). The NCS is more narrowly "dedicated to the education and training of professional circus artists," (École nationale de cirque, n.d.). Neither school describes their educational goals as contributing to an educated citizenry, or references subsequent University or Graduate studies. Underscoring their mission statements, success stories on both websites highlight graduates working with professional, contemporary performance companies.

Physical atmosphere. In their 25th Anniversary book, the NCS wrote extensively about their newly commissioned building, which they began to occupy in 2006 (Jacob & Vézina, 2007). The modernist aesthetic of steel, glass and concrete matches the discourse of 'legitimization' and 'professionalization' put forth by the NCS on their website, in their publicity and in position pieces by employees and journalists (Lalonde, 2007; Rantisi & Leslie, 2015). Words in their mission statement (international, institution, professional, and research and innovation) also reinforce a corporate aesthetic ("École nationale de cirque | National Circus School," n.d.). The ECQ is equally proud of their space, a converted church, which ties the school to regional and provincial heritage while also providing an aesthetically individual, quirky and richly sculpted space (Québec, n.d.). Although no research has been done to discover how this space impacts students, the creative reconversion, history and nuanced spaces likely incubate students differently during the creative process.

Online atmosphere. Both schools have crafted an online presence that connects them exclusively with the contemporary circus movement. Neither school has images traditionally associated with circus arts, like red noses, animals, or sparkled and spangled costumes, although graduates from both schools have worked with animals (especially horses) and in flashy costumes. The clear choice of contemporary aesthetics chosen for the images reinforces that these schools are both invested in the future of circus arts, not the past. Each site has one photo of students in a traditional classroom and many of training and performance, which acknowledges their status as degree granting while still emphasizing physical achievement.

Presentation of courses. The dominance of technical content in the curricula of both schools corroborates their educational goals of producing professional performing artists. Both

schools emphasize specialized training in circus disciplines, as well as complementary training in physical, artistic, and circus-specific subject domains (e.g. Career Management). Technical courses of this nature generally have learning objectives determined by "subject specialists," which both Tyler (1949) and his critics agree are beneficial in the context of "vocational aspirations" but are inadequate facilitator for general education (Kliebard, 1975, p. 73).

One element that stands out between the websites is the comparatively explicit and detailed curriculum presented by the ECQ. Between the ECQ's website and the CÉGEP website, potential students are presented with a very thorough view of student schedules, which includes a detailed list of courses for every semester (with learning objectives, credits and hours-per-week on task), a generalized schedule, and a specialized mock-daily schedule. Through these details, students can frame the circus school experience in light of other school experiences. It is likely that enumerating course objectives increases the structure of courses by highlighting specific goals, which could both limit student individuality related to circus work and yet also enhance student engagement and accountability with the course material. By fitting course work into the academic framework, the ECQ projects an investment in student education and academic status.

By contrast, the NCS provides a list of course titles for each of the three years, followed by a long list of all the possible circus disciplines a student can specialize in. No further details are provided, not the number of hours per week, learning objectives, credits or hours spent on task. Additionally, the course lists in English and French are different enough that one must question how recently the presentation was updated. By not revealing how they prioritize or organize course-work, the NCS ultimately reveals that credits, hours and learning objectives may not be important to the final evaluation of student success. The 'legitimacy' that the school seeks through its discourse of professionalization is therefore undermined by a lack of integrity regarding the actual commitment to coursework. The structure of the website indicates that circus technique is the true standard of evaluation, evidenced by the volume of information on circus technique. The discrepancy between the discourse of academic integrity and the lack of academic protocols reveals a site of ideological tension that is passed on to the students and influences their educational experience, as they are required to take courses which neither they, nor the school, seems to believe are important.

Physical schedule. Eisner (2002) observes that "the structure of the school day itself has educational consequences." Participants from all groups indicated that the schedule of circus

school influenced how they perceived course importance. The duration and scheduled time for different courses influences the value ascribed to the subjects (Eisner, 2002). Some students felt that while everything was *theoretically* part of the program, that content was not *actually* available to them, indicating a discrepancy in the written and lived curricular experience (Aoki, 2005).

Academic course-work is one content area where value is clearly influenced by scheduling. Academic work holds a strange place in the curriculum. As observed by the academic teachers, academic courses are required for the DEC diploma but are complementary to the core circus courses. Most participants felt the 'purpose' of academic work was to facilitate future career transition, but was unrelated to the core circus objectives. While part of that opinion can be attributed to how the content is conceptually related to pursuing a career in circus arts, schedule organization reiterates perceived mind/body divisions. At the NCS, where the administration has full control of the schedule, technique courses begin early in the morning while academic classes mostly happen in three-hour blocks after 5pm. Montreal educators felt that the evening schedule is problematic for student engagement and describe the evening courses as a comfortable, sedentary, warm environment, which makes it difficult for students to stay present. In that context, achievement requires exerting mental prowess. The ECQ, beholden to the CEGEP schedule, shifts DEC courses to reflect student availability. ECQ students felt that the spatial separation was a barrier to participating in CEGEP courses because taking early morning courses "casse tout la journée [break up the entire day]". In both programs, then, 'academic' courses are physically or temporally separated from the 'circus' content, functionally dividing 'mind' from 'body' knowledge.

Impact on students. It comes as no surprise that students enrolled in a vocational circus program are primarily focused on content related to building their performance career. However, the students would have preferred taking the academic courses at the circus school itself, which they hoped would enable them to focus more on connecting the academic content with circus.

Participants in my study shared many of the characteristics also found by Langlois (2014). Although my participants did not refer to academics as "a joke," they certainly indicated that fatigue is an issue. Gender stereotypes may also be an issue; some instructors remarked that male students are reputedly more difficult to teach because they fall asleep in class more than the females (although the females also sleep in class) and that students are often seen sitting in

hallways during class time. But overall the students expressed a desire for more in-depth content to justify their engagement. Similarly, Langlois (2014) notes that multiple graduates reported feeling "starved for intellectual stimulation" (p. 72). Whereas she proposes that "includ[ing] more authentic connections to their physical training practice would influence the participants' experiences" of academic content, I suspect that true engagement would only come from a shift in school culture. The instructors in both schools had little to no knowledge of the academic course content, which necessarily prevents them from engaging students in cross-curricular projects. Some instructors feel it is, in fact, their responsibility to provoke external artistic research for the students, content which would most naturally be ascribed to the academic requirements. Additionally, scheduling academic courses at night, during peak fatigue, sends a message to students that the content is less important and makes it difficult for those who desire academic stimulation to receive rigorous content. Student comments and behaviour indicate that they understand the educational focus to be on physical achievements, an objective aligned with the mission statement of the school and the students it considers successful.

Impact on content. Teachers in Quebec City did not encounter the same challenges as teachers in Montreal. Circus students do not differentiate themselves in the large group classes, other than to sit together. At the ECQ, because students must go to the CÉGEP for classes, they must meet the same expectations as all other students enrolled in the program. Because of this, it seems that students cannot avoid a certain engagement with academic courses. Although they did not necessarily enjoy their courses, they all took them seriously. The rigor of courses was not in question, only the pertinence for a circus performer, which is reminiscent of Gayles and Hu's (2009) finding that athletes who take courses with non-athletes are more engaged scholastically. This was not the case for teachers at the NCS, who spent time discussing the methods they have devised for combatting exhaustion from students who say they are interested in the content but have no more energy for concentration. All of the NCS teachers indicated they had already removed assignments and pared down the requirements in their CEGEP courses because these standard homework loads set the circus students up for failure. Due to student fatigue, they have re-framed courses in order to facilitate achievement of essential learning objectives. The pressure to constantly adapt courses to 'engage' dismissive students was fatiguing for some teachers but not a problem for others. Because certain students 'refuse' to learn French (likely from the DEE program), another constant modification is bilingual presentation and accommodation.

Teachers also navigate when and where to let them stretch during class. NCS students are resistant to sitting for three hours and often will complain if not permitted to stretch, yet the teachers also noted that allowing stretching was not an assurance of student focus. Incidentally, this was not a problem for CEGEP teachers in Quebec, who have never experienced a circus student asking to stretch during an academic class. Teachers were unsure if 'sitting down' should also be one of their academic learning objectives. Finally, teachers observed increased absentee rates associated with daytime physical evaluations and expressed wanting more access to student schedules so that they could avoid overlapping assignments or better prepare for fluctuating student attendance.

NCS teachers observed that the strong temporal dividing line between 'circus' and 'not-circus' classes gives students the impression that theory material is 'outside of circus' and made it more difficult for the students to discover connections between theory and physical content. Teachers wanted to be more involved and knowledgeable of overall curricular content in order to better accommodate the overall program. Most teachers have also modified course content to reinforce connections between their content and the development of artistic and creative identity. In an ideal world, they would offer interspersed courses or have 'elective' options in order to facilitate better student engagement.

Impact on teachers. The implications of this division are not only experienced by students. Academic teachers at the NCS felt that they were isolated from the rest of the program and left on their own without resources. Because they "arrive after everyone is gone" they do not frequently interact with other educators or employees from the school and their questions are only answered through email. In fact, both instructors and teachers at the NCS lamented that they were not in meetings together in order to better facilitate cross-curricular learning objectives. Furthermore, teachers in Quebec City had very limited knowledge of the content in the circus arts program, demonstrating a complete divide between the core academic courses and the rest of the program.

Impact of school culture. Instructors, teachers and administrators in both schools remarked that school culture influences how course content is prioritized. Some circus educators at the NCS noted that students are more likely to miss a theory class than a specialty class. Additionally, the administration overrides academic courses in favour of new content or events, placing all-school events on days with the least specialty classes. This indicates to students,

instructors, and teachers that there is less value lost if an academic course is dropped than a specialty course. In Quebec City, circus educators notice a behavioural difference between DEE and DEC students. DEE students, because they do not have to complete the core academic requirements, behave as if they are not in school. These students view the program through a lens of which courses they do *not* have to do, which results in less participation regarding their own education. Ideally, the DEE and DEC programs would have content that is much more similar, so that the students would not feel as if they had 'bought' training time, but rather were participating in a comprehensive program.

Impact on professional expectations. Like other collegiate programs, circus students in Quebec generally attend discrete classes that last between 50 minutes and three hours. These recognizable, "rigid" course blocks enable circus knowledge to be boxed into the credit loads and learning objectives required by accrediting bodies. This structure began as a form of "social control," favouring behavioural conformity and foreshadowing the weekly rhythm of the factory work-day (Apple & King, 1983, p. 85). The work of circus performance, however, does not resemble a 9-5 job. Reports about circus school graduates show that they are significantly destabilized by the atmosphere of professional work and have a hard time adjusting to the rhythms of touring (Herman, 2009). A schedule that prepares students for the rhythm of performance might train students in the afternoon and evening and give them Monday and Tuesday off instead of the weekends. As the schedule does not reflect the educational purpose of "preparing professional artists," it seems likely that this rigid organization serves the school by "legitimizing" the process of knowledge transfer, creating a zone of tension between the curricular needs of the school and the student.

Motivation. Aside from institutional decisions, student motivation for attending school influences how they perceive the curricular content. One student summarized the differences between a traditional college setting and circus school by describing what motivates each student.

> Student 6: Souvent au DEC [traditionnel], les gens dans n'importe quelle niveau au DEC vont pas nécessairement vouloir apprendre, ils vont juste vouloir passer leur cours, ils vont juste vouloir avancer. Contrairement, au DEC, dans les écoles de cirque, d'après moi, les profs puis les élèves ne sont pas nécessairement là pour passer leur cours, mais ils sont là pour vraiment devenir plus fort dans leur technique, fait que c'est sûr que les

> profs poussent vraiment pour qu'on devienne meilleur, pas juste qu'on passe notre session. Fait que c'est… c'est vraiment deux mentalités différentes qui sont ou « je veux passer mon cours » ou « je veux apprendre ». Le fait de vouloir apprendre devrait être une mentalité qui devrait être inculquée au CEGEP, mais le système est fait d'une manière que l'on… valorise plus les notes que l'apprentissage, bien, ce que je veux dire, pas qu'on ne retrouve pas ça, mais ici c'est l'inverse. C'est vraiment on valorise plus l'apprentissage que les notes parce qu'on est des artistes.[22]

This student speaks to the intrinsic motivation of learning for self-betterment rather than the extrinsic motivation of receiving high grades and attaining a pass to the next level. What is also interesting is that the students who feel this way do not see the content of the academic courses as a means of increasing their artistic knowledge or their knowledge of self. Therefore, the academic courses are construed as serving an other, not serving the self, which makes them separate from the technical, artistic, creative and practical work of the 'circus content' courses. The curricular differences between the DEE and the DEC reinforce this division. By not requiring any type of 'academic' content for the non-degree-track students, the administrations are confirming that academic work is functionally irrelevant to the work of circus performance.

Null curriculum: Eisner (2002) presents the idea that what schools "do not teach may be as important as what they do," identifying the subjects excluded from the formal curriculum as "null" (p. 97). He encourages researchers to consider which subject areas are not represented and how their exclusion impacts student learning. One example of this is language at the ECQ, which demonstrates mixed signals from the administration about the value of content and calls for an examination of subject exclusion.

Students whose native language was not French, and who were enrolled in the DEE program, brought up a frustration regarding the language of instruction. The language of instruction is unabashedly French, appropriate for the Capitol City of the Francophone province of Canada. Yet because English is the contemporary lingua franca, students who speak English

[22] Student 6: Often in the [traditional] DEC, people in any level at DEC don't necessarily want to learn, they just want to pass their course, they will just want to get to the next level. On the other hand, the DEC, in circus schools, in my opinion, where the teachers and the students aren't necessarily there to be in school, but rather they're really there to get stronger at their technique, I mean, they really push the teachers so that we get better, not just to pass at the end of the session. It 's really two different mentalities, which are ' I want to pass my course' or 'I want to learn.' Which is a mentality that should be at CEGEP, but when the system is made in such a way that we … value grades more than learning, well, what I mean is, not that we don't have it, but here it's the opposite. It really is that we value learning more than grades. Because we're artists.

are able to complete the program. Because there is no official French course associated with the DEE curriculum, due to funding and staffing, those students must absorb French language through social and scholastic interactions, supplemented by voluntary independent learning. Several students expressed that they did not appreciate the courses due to lack of comprehension and, at times, were exempted from content requirements in order to pursue learning French. When they did accomplish the course requirements, they did so through heavy reliance on Internet translation tools.

> Student 3: So, I didn't know any French when I got here, and immediately you have all your technique classes in French, and you have your training theory classes in French, and I was sitting there for an hour and a half like: "I have no idea what's going on" and yeah, ok, there's bilingual students that'll try to translate, but they can't sit there and do that for an hour and a half, it's way to much to ask of them. So they would send us the power points, and we'd go home and translate, and they got to the point where they would let us study French in class because I was like, I can't … I'd be on Duo Lingo, because [the teacher] was like, "you don't understand anything I'm saying to you", and so, French class would have been really nice? Because frequently [an administrator] would come up to me and they'd be like, "why aren't you speaking French to your coaches," or "why aren't you doing this in French" and I'm like, (all laugh) "cuz I don't speak French!"

It was surprising to me to hear that foreign students felt entitled to course-work in English, albeit from instructors who spoke functionally fluent English[23]. One student felt that the administrative encouragement to speak French in specialty courses hindered their safety because the instructor spoke English. Yet, after three years at the school, the student was not comfortable communicating in French. Another student noted that their grades were marked down for a lack of fluency in French, which they felt was inappropriate because they could not access a French

[23] Here I will interject with my own experience as a student at the same school. When I attended, the DEC program did not exist and the DEE equivalent was in evolution, with a different curriculum than exists currently. I had taken French as my second language in secondary school, but had not taken French courses for the preceding 5 years. I felt very fortunate to find a fully bilingual roommate who, although not in my class, was familiar with the circus school and would help me navigate important information. I was the only unilingual Anglophone at the school, although before I left other students had arrived whose native tongue was also not French (Portuguese, Japanese, English). I had no expectations that the instructors, administrators or students would speak English to me, and considered it my burden to prove that I merited inclusion through my physical efforts in circus, despite frequently misunderstanding directions, and working towards a functional fluency in French.

course within the school. Required course content in French without access to French as a second language courses poses a significant challenge to fulfilling learning objectives and creating a common culture within the school. Even if the school cannot fund FSL courses, they might be able to work with one of the many FSL services offered in Quebec to ensure that their students have access to basic grammar and means of communication. There seems nothing inappropriate about requiring a certain level of French acquisition during the process of the program, especially as it will serve the student's network by building more diverse peer groups. Students without access to the French language are effectively excluded from the Quebec culture in the heavily Francophone Quebec City region. One student explained their paucity of French by stating that they came to school to learn the circus, not the language. It seems that they are only able to arrive at this conclusion because of the second-language English efforts on the part of their coaches, teachers and peers, and represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the international learning experience, which provides an opportunity to discover new languages, cultures, and expanded perspective.

Role of Academic Coursework

One of the most interesting observations from the focus group discussions was the diversity of reactions to the presence of academic coursework. Participants generally felt that the coursework was important (if not for them, then for someone), but there were few common reasons. The community of students, instructors, teachers and administrators at large held such common and consistent opinions about the purpose of the DEC program objectives and course content within the program that exploring the diversity of justifications for the inclusion of academic content sheds light on a zone of inconsistency and confusion. No participant group held a consistent opinion of the role of academic courses, although academic teachers dominantly agreed on the purpose of academic coursework. Additionally, most justifications for academic inclusion were present in every group.

Graduation with a diploma. One perspective was that academic courses are part of the program because they enable students to graduate with a diploma. From this perspective, because academic classes only serve a diploma, and a diploma does not increase circus employment, the academic courses are irrelevant by association. Academic courses become feedback loops towards an academic certification. The degree was only deemed important for people who might

be interested in future education or as a means of recognition from groups of people who value diplomas.

> Instructor 5: Moi personnellement, c'est pour le bout de papier, pour aller à l'université après, non je ne vois pas ce que ça peut me donner d'autre.
> Instructor 6: Moi, je pense que ça aide du côté – je ne sais pas si on a remarqué, mais – du développement humain, du développement de la personne, mais... je ne pense pas que ça ait un impact au niveau circassien.
> Instructor 4: Oui, non. Moi non plus.[24]

> Student 9: Ça va être important pour les gens pour qui les affaires administratives sont importantes. Mais quelqu'un qui va regarder ce que tu vaux sur scène, ce que tu es en tant que personne, s'en fiche si t'as eu ton diplôme ou pas, je veux dire, si au final tu es la personne qu'il veut, ou tu plaîs à quelqu'un…il va pas regarder si t'as eu ton diplôme ou pas, il va te prendre, après c'est… c'est sur que c'est toujours un plus d'avoir un diplôme… ça donne toujours un certain prestige dans certains milieux… mais ça veut rien dire en soit.[25]

Only three of the nine students felt that a college degree was important; two saw it as a means of being taken seriously by non-circus people, and the third indicated interest in pursuing a future job outside of circus where a degree would be an important asset. The rest expressed that diplomas do not assess circus readiness. One responded that a degree was not important for circus because "being a good student at school does not make you a good circus artist on stage. There is no diploma for the stage, experience is the only thing that makes a difference."[26] Another student described how failing a course could prevent the acquisition of a diploma but not affect work prospects in the circus. Students considered their school's reputation to be

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[24] Instructor 5: Me personally, it's for the slip of paper to go to university after, no I do not see what else it does
Instructor 6: For me, I think it helps from the side of - I do not know if it's been said, but - human development, development of the person, but ... I do not think it has an impact on the level of circus.
Instructor 4: Yes, no. Neither do I.

[25] Student 9: It's going to be important for people for whom administrative matters are important. But someone who is going to watch what you're doing on stage, what you're going to do as a person, doesn't care if you got your diploma or not, I mean, if you're the person they want, or someone likes you ... they won't look to see if you got your diploma or not, they'll hire you, after that ... it's always a bonus to have a Diploma ... it brings a certain prestige in some places ... but it means nothing by itself.

[26] " Selon moi, c'est pas parce que t'es un bon élève à l'école que t'es forcément un bon artiste de cirque sur scène. Il n'y a pas de diplôme pour monter sur scène, il y a juste l'expérience qui fait la différence."

professional accreditation; employers know what to expect based on the program you attended. Building networks and establishing a good reputation were considered to be essential. As an example, students discussed a peer who had befriended a circus director during the summer break and did not return to school because he was contracted for other projects.

Administrators and instructors agreed that a diploma is important to those who value diplomas (general society, parents and a few students) and assume most circus artists see it as a fall-back in case of injury. Generally, administrators did not feel that the academic courses directly enhanced a students' ability to enter the professional world. Some underscored that an institutionalized program is not the only way to access the circus profession, nor should it be.

Career transition. Most participants saw the DEC diploma as a type of insurance in case a career in circus arts didn't work out; a way of ensuring that time spent in circus school was not wasted if the graduate could no longer perform due to injury or other circumstances.

> Student 6: Ça ouvre une porte de sortie aussi d'avoir le DEC, c'est réconfortant de savoir aussi que oui, tu peux faire ça [du cirque] de ta vie, ou tu peux faire ça [formation] de ta vie, mais s'il t'arrive quelque chose, bien...[27]

> Instructor 3: [The diploma is] important for their personal development if they get injured, to have something to fall back on, but in terms of companies… they want to see the act and not the academic [syllabus]."

> Instructor 5: Je trouve ça utile pour certains élèves. Il y en a qui sont plus académiques dans la vie pis ils savent, en plus de performer en cirque, qu'ils veulent continuer [leurs études] par la suite, c'est ce que je trouve bien avec le programme. Mais je ne pense pas que ça puisse aider tout le monde.[28]

Administrators recognized that not all students will pursue a career in circus arts, or that their careers may be short, and therefore felt positively about student access to a diploma.

> Administrator 3: Il y en a pour qui l'éducation, le diplôme va être important parce qu'ils veulent se couvrir, ils le veulent pour le après, si jamais ça fonction pas comme artiste,

[27] Student 6: It opens an exit, too, having the DEC, and to know that yes, you can do this [circus] with your life, or you can do that [diploma] of your life, but if something happens to you, well ...

[28] Instructor 5: I find it useful for some students. There are some who are more academic in life and they know that, in addition to performing in circus, that they want to continue afterwards, that's what I think is good about the program. But I do not think it will help everyone.

> « au moins j'ai un diplôme »… Donc, il y en a pour qui ça n'a pas d'importance. Dépendamment un peu d'où ils viennent là, il y a des parents qui mettent de la pression : « c'est important que t'aies un diplôme plutôt que de rien avoir après des études »… puis… il y a une partie de la population qui accorde de l'importance au diplôme et une autre partie de la population qui n'y accorde pas.[29]

> Administrator 2: Notre DEC, d'avoir fait des cours d'histoire du cirque, d'avoir fait tout ça. Je prends le cas d'un élève récemment qui s'est blessé au dos là, qui peut plus vraiment… mais qui avait commencer à la rentrée à l'université mais qui avait justement acquis toutes ces bases-là à l'école, donc c'est essentiel pour, oui on parle pu d'une profession d'artiste, mais, des fois on a pas le choix là, dès que tu t'en vas là tu t'en vas là, ben tu peux arriver avec une bagage scolaire en disant « ben j'ai quelque choses qui suit derrière…[30]

> Administrator 7: Ils ont aussi les connaissances académiques qui leur permettent d'aller ailleurs parce que la carrière d'artiste de cirque est une carrière à risque d'une part, d'autre part, c'est une carrière relativement courte. Donc, si en cours de route, on doit changer de carrière, si à terme on doit changer de carrière, mais qu'on puisse se réorienter facilement parce qu'on est atypique aussi, on a aussi un diplôme… ce qui permet d'intégrer une autre formation dans la région de Québec notamment.[31]

Benefit to the school. Some students considered the academic courses as a favour they were doing for the school. These students did not feel that administrators inherently value academic course-work, but that if the students 'fail' a course the school will 'fail' in the eyes of

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[29] There are those for whom education, the diploma is going to be important because they want to cover their bases, they want it for later, maybe, if things don't work out as an artist, "at least I have a diploma"... So, for some it doesn't hold any importance. So depending a little on where they're coming from, there's pressure from parents, "it might be nice to know you have a degree at graduation rather than have nothing on the other side"... also ... a little, like in the general population, there are people who give importance to a degree, there are some who don't

[30] Administrator 2: Our DEC, to have taken circus history, to have done all these classes, For example a student recently injured his back, and now can't really ... but began to go back to university, but tthey had acquired all these basics at school, so it is an essential for, yeah, we aren't talking about a profession as an artist, but sometimes we have no choice, as soon as you go there you go there, well, you can have the academic classes and say, "at least I have something to back me up..."

[31] Administrator 7: They also get the academic knowledge that allows them to continue, because the career of circus artist is a career at risk on the one hand, on the other hand it is a relatively short career. So if you have to change your career, you have to change your career, but you can easily change your career because you are unique too, you also have a diploma ... which allows you to enter another training program, especially in the Quebec region.

the government. In that way, they almost seemed to be in on an open secret with (their perception of) the administrators, if they fail a class, the school will have to prevent them from graduating. Instructors and administrators at the ECQ notice a similar attitude, where some students perceive academics as the 'price' for free tuition. Because some students were taking advantage of the free admission through the DEC degree but not completing their required courses in order to earn a diploma, rules had to be introduced ensuring completion of academic courses before a student was permitted to present their épreuve synthèse.

Another common view held by many students and instructors was that the DEC program exists only because it facilitates government funding for the schools. Participating in academic courses therefore becomes a way of supporting the systems that finance the programs. Participants at both schools took a moment to mention that their school would not exist without funding from the government, funding provided because students are receiving a college diploma.

> Instructor 6: Mais, ça l'aidait l'école, parce que l'école vivrait pas si…[32]
>
> Instructor 3: If we didn't have [the DEC], the school wouldn't exist, because we are heavily funded by the minister of education.
>
> Student 7: I agree to that, it's not academic things [that make] the artist, but I think they put that in the school because of something, and maybe it's to open our mind? I don't know…
> Student 11: But don't you think it's just because they're required classes by the government, so they get funding?
>
> Interviewer: Does the DEE have the same objective?
> Student 10: Yeah. Just … the government doesn't give them money, (laughter from others, agreement), in my opinion that's the only difference.

In addition, some students believed that the school was also required to take students who were not adequately qualified in order to maintain their status and thereby maintain their funding. For

[32] Instructor 6: But, it helped the school, because the school would not exist if ...

these students, the degree-granting aspect of the DEC is an ultimatum that the government holds over the circus school.

> Student 5: Même si c'est pas nécessairement ce que l'école veut, c'est qu'elle est obligée de faire ça, pour… juste… survivre. C'est pas nécessairement qu'ils veulent prendre plus de Québécois, c'est que… faut qu'ils prennent plus de Québécois pour que le DEC puisse survivre.[33]

General knowledge. A few participants felt that academics were important contributors to overall human development. Because each course will bring something to at least one student, each course is relevant. From this angle, circus artists should not be deprived of an opportunity for general education. Moreover, people who want to become circus artists should not be deprived of educational opportunities; they should be able to pursue circus arts and receive a general education.

> Administrator 8: Je crois profondément à l'importance de continuer l'instruction académique au niveau collégiale. Au niveau secondaire, c'est essentiel parce que c'est le futur, c'est le développent. C'est la même chose que la flexibilité qui permet d'atteindre… mais il y a un niveau de technique dans la spécialisation autant, une instruction vaste complète la personne, ça permet à la personne d'évoluée, ça ouvre des portes, ça ouvre les sources d'inspiration au niveau de l'ensemble de toutes les connaissances, t'sais? C'est essentiel que la personne évolue. Donc, moi, je dirais que les matières théoriques ont une place très pertinente et très importante dans la formation et elles sont essentielles.[34]

Creative process. Academic teachers advocated for the core courses as contributors to the artistic process. They felt academic courses enable the students to reflect on what type of artist they want to be by engaging with other artistic visions and learning about how other artists have navigated the creative process. Students also learn openness through introduction to other

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[33] Student 5: Even if it's not really what the school wants, it's forced to do that, just ... just ... to survive. It is not necessarily that they want to take more Quebeckers, it's that ... they must take more Quebeckers, so that the DEC can survive.

[34] Administrator 8: I strongly believe that it is important to continue academic education at the college level, at the secondary level, it is essential because it they are the future, it's development, it is the same thing, as much as flexibility brings... but there is a level of technique in specialization as much as, a vast instruction, it makes a person complete, it helps a person evolve, it opens doors, it opens sources of inspiration across the whole body of knowledge, you know? It is essential that each person evolves. So I would say that the theory subjects have a very pertinent and very strong place in the training program, and they are essential.

cultures, modes of thought and languages. Teachers felt that the mental tools formed through academic inquiry and critical thinking help students find their voice and illuminate possible pathways towards artistic expression and engagement. Discovery of which subjects interest them enables them to build bridges with people who are not circus artists and also nourish their individual artistic goals and identity.

Some students noticed that certain academic courses helped them gain perspective on the world beyond school and helped them to reflect on their artistic process and goals. For some, the most 'important' course was whichever was providing inspiration at the moment, including academic courses, and the most valuable courses were the ones that challenged them the most. Although students resisted certain courses, they reflected that those courses eventually led to an evolved understanding of who they were as artists.

> Student 9: Pour moi, chaque cours a son importance… dans le sens que même le français, même la philo, ça apporte a chacun une ouverture quand même sur qu'est-ce qu'on lit, qu'est-ce qu'il y a en dehors de l'école aussi, comment apprendre à réfléchir, comment aborder le monde extérieur aussi… [35]

Although this was the least common response, it most closely resembles the learning experiences in the program descriptions; and the attitude hoped for by administrators.

The hierarchy of relevance. Some students iterated that all academic courses were important, yet none were as important as specialty courses. They emphasized that no student attends circus school *for* the academic requirements and so felt that academic courses could not be described as *essential* to the program.

> Student 10: I don't think I would gain a lot from doing the English course and the…. philosophy course… I think I'm ok not doing that. (laughter from others)
>
> Student 11: That's how I feel about that (too)
>
> Student 10: That's not why I came here.
>
> Student 11: I don't think that's why anyone came here.

One description was that the academic courses are generic, whereas circus courses are personal. One student proposed a hierarchy of course categories, using hand gestures to place the most important courses on top. Although the other students in the group agreed with this assessment,

[35] Student 9: For me, each course has its importance ... in the sense that, even French, even philosophy, bring perspective on what you read, also what kinds of things are happening outside the school, how to learn to think, how to approach the outside world too ...

none could entirely agree on the number of categories or which courses belonged to which category. The primary discipline was on the highest level and academic courses were on the lowest level.

> Student 8: On va quand même pas mettre la classe de français au même niveau que… la classe de spécialité, par exemple. (General agreement). Genre, il y a des paliers à faire, et puis chacun, je pense, a ses niveaux différents… comme, moi, je sais que je placerai ma spécialité [et] mes cours complémentaires plus hauts que ma classe de français ou de philo, par exemple…même que… oui, c'est après la danse, le *jeu*, l'acrobatie qui viendrait à autre niveau et toutes les classes comme maquillage, gestion de carrière, tout ça serait un petit peu en-dessous… oui, sous la danse et le théâtre.… puis après acrobatie c'est philo.[36]

Speaking intelligently. Students in Quebec City contributed a unique perspective. For them, it is a circus artist's responsibility to know about their industry, and be able to speak intelligently and knowledgeably about circus history, biomechanics, equipment and contemporary performance internationally. From experience, they expect to be frequently asked about circus arts. Being able to respond intelligently is a means of increasing professionalism and furthering the development of circus arts. These students had specific gratitude for circus history because it provided a global knowledge of circus arts.

> Student 2: I see it with my family, or my friends that don't do circus, and they will come and ask "hey, what is circus, where do you come from, or what does this come from," and, I don't feel that its really professional of me of being like, "I do circus" and then they are like, "yeah, so, what are the biggest circus in the world" and I'm not capable of responding [to] that, it's like, "well, you do circus, why you don't know about it?" …and like, little details like that, or like, injuries, "do you know how to treat yourself? Do you know how to take care of yourself?" If you are not capable of responding [to] that I do not feel you are complete as a circus performer.

[36] We wouldn't put French class on the same level as… specialty class, for example. (General agreement). Like, there are levels, and everyone has their own definitions, … like, for myself, I would put my specialty and my complementary course higher than my French or Philosophy courses, for example … even though (considers the order) … yeah, it's after dance, jeu, acrobatics which would be on another level, and all the classes like makeup, career management, all of that would be a little bit under, yeah, under dance and theater, … and after acrobatics is philosophy.

Social skills. The teachers believed that academic core courses are a critical asset of the DEC program, in part because many students feel inferior in academic tasks, which was also observed by Langlois (2014). Teachers noticed that students have difficulty writing, have poor knowledge of circus arts, aren't able to articulate their artistic visions and feel unprepared to converse with those outside of circus or in the professional realm. The academic courses provide students with opportunities to practice essential tools for their professional life, like languages for networking, research methods to enable discovery of tools and sources for their practice, and build the confidence to write and speak about subjects important to them. While a lot of individual attention is focused on students during their training, during the academic courses students work as part of a group and cultivate skills like listening, conversation and teamwork. In these classes, they are challenged to leave their 'ego bubble' behind and focus on something outside their career objectives.

Critique of DEC requirements. Several critiques of the DEC program were mentioned, usually in comparison with the DEE program.

Too much information. Some students felt that there was too much information to retain in the DEC program. This came, in part, from a discussion wherein students forgot content from their previous school year. They indicated that there were simply too many things to remember, and that retaining information is difficult when they only receive the material once. Within this group, there was a lengthy discussion about whether or not certain content had already been learned.

> Student 9: I feel like, you come out of your third year and you're just, the first thing you do is forget everything about anatomy cuz…just so much…
>
> Student 10: (speculating to self) "so, what's the first thing I'm gonna forget…" (laughter from others)
>
> [Another student describes course content from the previous year]
>
> Student 8: Ah oui! Oui, mais, tu vois, ça m'a pas tellement marqué tant que ça… c'était un cours parmi tant d'autres, tu sais?[37]

All of the educators remarked that the student schedules are remarkably full. Some administrators also felt that there was too much content in the curriculum overall. A comparison was made to dance schools (which do not teach theatre or acrobatics). Additionally, students

[37] Student 8: Oh yeah. Yes, but, you see, it didn't stick so much, it was one course in ... many, you know?

currently learn content from other professions, like costuming and lighting. The administrators are still evaluating their course content, however less content would enable students to focus on specific goals.

Problems with academic structure. Scheduling problems were frequently attributed to the forced inclusion of an academic structure, which by default also impacts the DEE course delivery. Many participants felt that formatting circus training into academic credit-hours creates a schedule removed from ideal circus training periodization. For instance, Montreal instructors' dislike of the logistical separation of 'technical' and artistic specialty courses. These categories arise from the rules governing CEGEP credit-hours, but have influenced how courses and instructors are seen. In Quebec City, administrators were interested in changing the school-year schedule in order to better reflect physical training needs, for instance by reducing the number of seasonal vacation days in order to increase training time and optimize periodization.

Critique of the division of academic and 'circus' courses was levelled at both the NCS's temporal separation and the ECQ's spatial separation. Because the academic classes happen at a CEGEP in Quebec City, the circus courses must accommodate a pre-existing schedule. Students felt that this broke apart their training schedule and limited their ability to progress physically. Because CEGEP classes happen early in the morning and are not in the circus school building, students were more likely to skip academic classes than classes at the circus school. Everyone in Quebec City also took exception to the CEGEP PE requirement, which has redundant learning objectives to those more thoroughly explored in circus courses. However, administrators explained systemic reasons why the PE course is included and how they have negotiated with the CEGEP for a course schedule that reduces transit time.

Unification of circus learning objectives and academic descriptions also poses problems, however. For instance, learning objective descriptions on the ECQ website appear to float loosely on top of the circus content. The technique classes are labeled progressively yet often share generic descriptions; "Primary Discipline 1," through "Primary Discipline 4," all redundantly aim to "perfect technique in primary discipline" (Québec, n.d.). These vague descriptions serve multiple purposes. They are ascribed the weight of 'legitimate' knowledge by resembling the specific and detailed learning objectives of the CÉGEP courses while also allowing a unique trajectory for each student. Precise learning objectives are difficult to predict when the course content is dictated by individual differentiation, so broad descriptions allow for

innovation. Finally, they also obscure the exact nature of the technical and/or creative progression from public gaze, protecting the individuality of the training program and pedagogical methods.

Academics should be quality. Students felt that, beyond content, course quality was a factor in their engagement. Courses which were "planned out" were considered more highly than courses where "stuff that was kind of random and didn't fit together" (Student 10). Students from both schools had the experience of anticipating a particular course and then being disappointed because the teacher was less knowledgeable or less engaging than they had hoped, or the content was cursory and undeveloped. Generally, students felt that if they were required to take a class, it should be worth their time and energy. Circus history was especially fraught: Students from both programs left with unmet expectations and a feeling of wasted time where they had hoped for greater knowledge with their profession. Their readiness to delve into extensive material was frustrated by a superficial examination of the rich international circus history that exists, and some explicitly desired more comprehensive and in-depth course while some suggested removing the course entirely. Because this is spread across students from both programs at both schools, it might be worth investigating what students hope to learn from circus history. With known expectations, perhaps educators will be better able to demonstrate how the proffered material responds to these expectations. Conversely, if knowledge of contemporary circus and circus history is expected of students, perhaps to contextualize their artistic research, courses like this would carry enhanced importance in the experience of the curriculum. Students told instructors that some academic teachers were not experts in the subject matter, engaging for the students, or did not seem to engage with the material themselves. It was suggested that students respect teachers who are able to engage them.

Academic and kinaesthetic personalities are incompatible. In discussion, the instructors placed more value on academic content if it directly related to circus activity. Instructor, teacher and administrator commentary overall also seemed to uphold a physical/intellectual division, indicating that highly physical students can't be (or aren't) held to the same standards as less physical students. Academic teachers reiterated these student categories, defining opposing physically-driven and intellectually-minded students, and believed that part of the work they have to do to combat disinterest is due to the students being 'physically driven,' and therefore lacking pre-existing positive academic experiences. Engagement in academic coursework was

explained as a personality trait, while those who were not engaged were described as more physical. This seems to be a self-fulfilling false dichotomy, where students who are considered 'physical' are not pushed to acquire skills pertinent to their professional careers such as writing about their artistic projects for grant proposals. Both types of students were potentially 'artistic,' however, which underscores the socially perceived mind-body split being reiterated in practice.

The role of teachers. Teachers saw their role as providing the students with a broad intellectual and critical thinking platform to better help them discover their path. They push students to think more deeply and support them in their overall creative process by helping them develop an artistic identity and learn cultural knowledge. Because their primary source of information is the student body, they were keenly aware of student concerns about their professional future, artistry and self-hood. Specific connections with students happen when teachers can "engage their creative faculties" and result from the students' interest in "links between knowledge, practice and internal connection to society,"[38] while positive connections with other circus educators come about because they feel others go out of their way to assist teachers.

Through discussion with students, teachers believe students experience a learning atmosphere unusually focused on the individual, due to the number of solo and small-group courses that students take. Academic courses are a rare moment when students are expected to practice and exhibit group communication skills. Within the academic classes, they see students' desire to find their individual path and voice in the professional work and an opportunity to work on skills outside their comfort zone.

As becomes apparent with the academic courses as a whole, the role of academic teachers was not clearly understood in the context of the circus school. Students, instructors, teachers and administrators did not articulate how the process of learning experiences in academic courses might contribute to the overall learning objectives. In fact, it seems that the academic teachers are not being mined as a resource. Important learning experiences in the academic classes include practicing the values of openness, communication, collaboration, critical and creative thinking, and problem discovery and solutions which were named by all participants as important attributes associated with long-term success.

[38] "Parce qu'ils sont intéressés par les liens entre les connaissances, la pratique et les connexions possibles envers la société intérieure."

Chapter Six: Conclusions

Accredited circus programs face a very unique set of curricular objectives: their programs must support discovery and development of individual talents across a spectrum of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary techniques while simultaneously meeting the structural standards demanded by an academic system initially designed to minimize individuality and habituate students to a rigid working life. The theoretical frameworks of hidden, null, implicit and explicit curricula provide a strong platform for investigating how circus schools communicate institutional values of subjects, student behaviour and career preparation. What stands out most is the consensus from all participant groups regarding the value and purpose of vocational content, compared with the diversity of perceptions regarding academic content. The resistance to academic content seems to be aligned with the feeling that an academic structure is antagonistic to circus education, a perspective which is understandable but incomplete. From the perspective of the participating Quebec circus education community, the reasons for academic certification of circus programming are unclear and seem unrelated to the primary educational objective. From the focus group discussions, many participants feel that circus arts have been crammed into a "legitimate knowledge" framework which compromises an "ideal" education with a single goal of becoming a circus performer. However, that view neglects the artistic, creative and innovative ramifications of circus schools.

Furthermore, one participant in this study also spoke about how receiving a circus arts degree lends credibility to circus as an art form and puts it in the same educational category of other fine arts. Circus schools "legitimize" circus techniques by replicating and integrating the "traditions and normative 'content' … construed as school knowledge," indicating to those outside the circus the level of intensity a graduate has achieved (Apple & King, 1983, p. 83). The preponderance of circus performers who do not come from circus families choosing a circus career through conventional education networks means that their social networks remain unchanged. Whereas reputation and family name represented the necessary information regarding expertise for the traditional circus performer within the traditional circus community, the 'degree' is a signifier of worth for the non-circus population. Rantisi and Leslie also conclude that "accreditation [in this case the ability to provide a diploma] confers legitimacy on the circus arts as an artistic – as well as a commercial – enterprise," which in turn "benefits the school in its efforts to attract both government funding and students" (Rantisi & Leslie, 2013, p. 414).

Institutional Circus Education Supports Artistic Development

This "speculative" education provides students and circus educators a crucible of experimentation where ideas and techniques from many disciplines can be incubated. This incubation and experimentation time was clearly understood and valued by students, who indicated that circus programs have value primarily because of elements outside circus technique. Students at the NCS mentioned that the structure of the school enabled them to focus on their artistic development rather than spending energy on devising a training schedule. They felt able to make mistakes and discover, without the pressure of being solely responsible for every aspect of the project. This creative safety net is essential for artistic exploration and creation, and perhaps the most compelling argument in favour of structured circus education.

> Student 9: Je pense que la structure… la façon très structurée, l'organisation structurée du DEC, comme les cours vraiment très carrés, des cours tout planifiés…personnellement, ça me permet vraiment de faire des horaires et de pouvoir me reposer sur ça aussi pour me tromper, puis re-rentrer, sans avoir à compter juste sur moi. Je prends ça aussi pour me construire en ce moment.[39]

At the ECQ, the students entered into an enthusiastic discussion about all of the things they learned in the courses outside of training. They were ebullient about their career management courses and felt that academic courses related to circus were a primary reason for attending circus school. Student enthusiasm for non-physical course-work runs counter to the narrative espoused by most circus educators (and other students) regarding student engagement. Yet students were most moved by courses which expanded their knowledge of the circus profession and the world.

> Student 6: On donne des petits trucs comme la prévention des blessures pis gestion de carrière. C'est des trucs qui appartiennent vraiment aux programmes de cirque, qu'on ferait pas en dehors parce que moi en dehors de l'école, dès que je vais avoir de l'argent, je le mets sur un coach artistique ou sur des stages de danse ou de *jeu* …mais, « c'est quoi le cours le plus important? » On pense tout de suite à qu'est-ce qu'on serait si on

[39] Student 9: I think the structure ... the structured method, the way the DEC is structured, like, the courses are very clear, all of the courses are planned... personally, it enables me to create schedules and to be able to lean on that to make mistakes, then go back into it, without having to rely just on myself. I am using it to construct myself here.

> avait pas le programme. C'est quand t'es tout seul que tu crois que le cours le plus important c'est un coach technique, à l'école c'est quand même acquis.[40]

> Student 2: … there's a lot of classes that I questioned when I started looking at them? Like, maybe because I was bored? Or, I don't know, worried about being closed or something? But when I took my time to actually see what the class was about I found that even in that little way it helped me, and I found something that … that there was a reason why they choose this class and at the end, I got knowledge out of it and it helped me to actually have more, like, an open mind about circus and that is not just my training ... [names classes that changed their opinion] there's many of the classes that I thought, like, "oh, this is really annoying," but at the same time it was super helpful.

The perspective that academic courses are "irrelevant" does not take into account that an artist is nourished by diverse knowledge bases, including political, economic, historical and philosophical. In fact, academic courses provide formal learning environments that directly teach many of the qualities that participants named as essential for becoming an artist: openness, collaboration, curiosity, evolution of thought, and being personable. Beyond academic content, courses offer students opportunities for discussion, refinement of their ideas, and discovery of past and present creative environments. A curriculum that favours development of a circus "artist" will go beyond the technical, beyond the artistic and the creative, and include conceptual and intellectual challenges. If Circus Arts wishes to be considered among other fine arts, circus artists must be able to reflect and interpret cultural and emotional experiences, they must be able to speak verbally and symbolically to those outside of circus arts. For this to happen, the inclusion of academic content during the educational process is essential. Core knowledge "requirements" connect circus artists to human history, culture, and contemporary knowledge. They become Circus Artists *because* of these curricular elements, not in spite of them; critical reflection is an essential, not parallel, pursuit.

Most participants saw the integration of academic elements as serving a purpose outside of the key program objectives, justifying student disinterest. Some instructors also expressed

[40] Student 6: They teach us some stuff, like injury prevention and career management, things that really belong in the circus program, things we wouldn't learn outside, because for myself, outside of school, if I have money, I will put it towards an artistic coach or dance or theatre courses ... but, "What is the most important course? ", We think immediately about what we would not get if we did not have it in the program. When you're by yourself, you think the most important course is a technique coach, but at school that's already accounted for.

their own disinclination towards academic courses when they were in CEGEP, which reinforced their belief that academic courses were not pertinent for circus students. Additionally, students from both schools believe that their peers do not enjoy academic courses, indicate social and cultural reinforcement of academic "irrelevance." If academic courses are to be understood and valued in the context of the circus DEC, these atmospheric impressions will need to shift. If school cultures shift to understand the explicit and implicit value of academic content to the program objectives, students will become more engaged in core requirements and cross-curricular integration of knowledge will be facilitated.

Limitations

One of the limiting factors of this research was participant availability. The diversity of instructor experience and background could not be adequately recorded with the small group discussions. Additionally, the lack of third-years students from the Montreal program significantly influences the content discussed during the focus groups. In Montreal, the first-year students have only scratched the surface of working with an artistic advisor and just begun to form a relationship to their primary instructor. While all of the issues they raised are important to them, they are unlikely to be representative of the third-year student perspective. However, inclusion of first-year students may also make this research more robust because it describes student experiences across multiple stages of the educational experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several important areas of consideration were unable to be addressed in this study. Necessarily, there is significant work to be done with regard to the process of artistic education. Comparative strategies in arts education across circus arts, performing arts, and visual arts might reveal what types of implicit knowledge are gained through the current curricula. Additional work discovering cross-curricular methods for fostering creativity and artistic vision in both physical and academic domains could provide guidance for nourishing the artistic voice of circus students. Furthermore, investigating the impact of architecture and physical environment on the teaching and creation process could shed more light on what students experience. These spaces may also influence motivation, creativity, and the value of learning that happens within them.

Very few studies exist examining curricular integration in circus schools. Within that, there are even fewer studies on circus curriculum. This study contributes to both bodies of knowledge. Understanding how students and faculty experience the importance of current

curricular content gives an insight into how these schools are solving opposing yet complementary curricular objectives. Because the curriculum of physical circus skills is individualized for each student depending upon his or her performance objectives, course scheduling maintains a flexibility unlike most post-secondary institutions.

There remains much work to be done investigating knowledge transmission in circus schools. Questions of gender representation and gender-stereotyped circus apparatus have only been scratched. Because transmission models are both explicit and implicit, circus programs might find active ways to challenge gender assumptions held by both students and instructors. Another possible domain is relationship between circus students and their primary coaches, which is both professional and personal. The nature of the relationship is at the heart of knowledge transmission and yet informal – in what ways does a cohesive or abrasive relationship change the learning experience for circus students? Furthermore, is there an instructor leadership model which circus artists prefer? In addition, the instructor helps students working in pairs or troupes to build trust, become cohesive and develop training hygiene strategies for their future work, all of which also pose intriguing sites of inquiry.

A Final Word

Aoki (2005) describes "curriculum-as-plan" as being a "fiction of sameness … possible only by wresting out the unique" (p. 161). This fiction is apparent in the curricula of circus schools, where the academic format floats around the profoundly individual work of becoming a circus artist. Yet Aoki also reminds us that despite the challenges, this type of tensionality can be positively "challenging and stimulating, evoking hopefulness for venturing forth" (p. 162). This research shows that tension exists not only between the vocational and academic aspects of the Quebec circus curriculum, but also a tension between how curricular elements provide the type of learning experiences that will lead to artistic development. Although these circus schools believe in circus arts and aspire to supporting the development of circus artists, they still struggle to extend the same value towards curricular components that do not directly result in a higher technical ability. For instance, circus-specific creative opportunities were valued but activities which enhance development and realization of an artistic voice in the broader culture, like Literature and Philosophy, were not understood as critical opportunities for supporting the autonomy and individuality described as essential to succeeding as an artist. Part of this struggle may the rapidly shifting context of circus arts. Circus schools in Quebec, invested in success for

their students, may be trying to provide them with every conceivable tool they might use in the developing field of circus arts performance. What if, instead, they propose strong internal definitions of circus arts and circus artists to guide the distribution of learning objectives across their curricula? Where do academic and physical components mutually support artistic discovery and creation? How could the components be re-envisioned, re-distributed and re-integrated to cohesively support both the person and the artist? And, if those changes took place, how would that impact evaluations, presentations, and the diversity of performance offerings by graduating students? These are questions for reflection, and the answers may be different for every program.

Through the fusion of physical and academic curricular goals that are present in professional circus training programs, there may be a possibility to value multiple types of knowledge, and even take that knowledge back to traditional frameworks. Circus schools may be able to effect this transformation through judicious reflection on the values they project through their implicit and explicit curricula, as well as through the subjects they exclude and the way they present their institutions. Where will circus education go from here? We are in a rich transition period where circus arts are constantly redefining themselves. Circus is a fertile ground for many types of knowledge. Deepening cross-curricular integration of kinaesthetic and academic objectives will lead to further artistic innovation in the art form, development of deeper artistic identities among graduates, and, perhaps, rethinking curriculum models.

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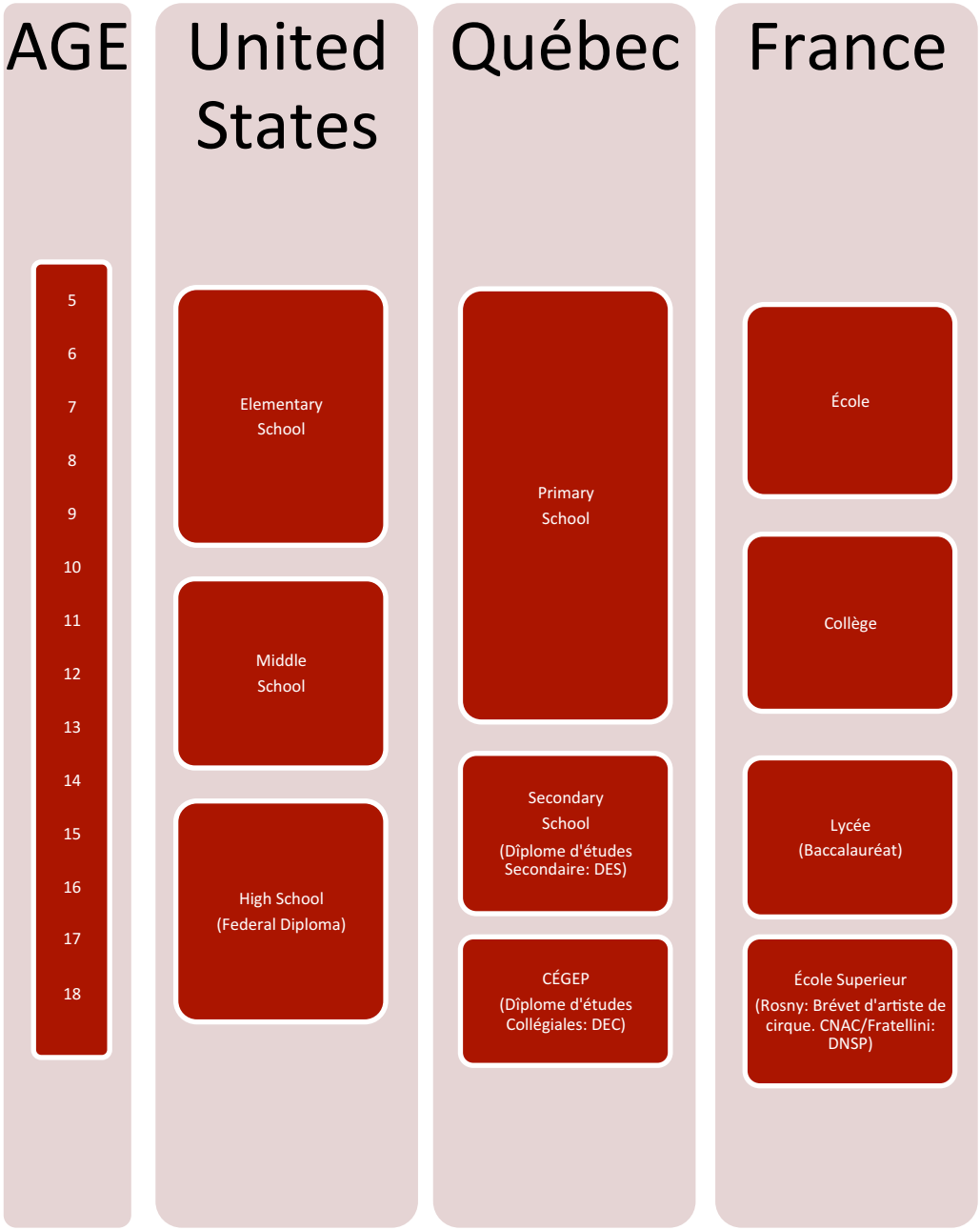
Appendices

Appendix A

Comparison of educational pathways in the United States, Québec and France.



Appendix B

Invitation letter for focus group participants

Dear (Participant),

My name is Alisan Funk and I am a Masters student at Concordia University in Montreal. My studies explore the relationship between the different curricular elements that are part of circus education in Quebec.

I am writing to ask if you would participate in my research. If you agree, you will be asked to attend a session that lasts two hours. During that two hours, you will be asked to fill out a three questionnaires: 1) an anonymous demographic questionnaire with approximately 10 single sentence background questions and 20 questions Likert-scale (circle a number from 1-5) questions; 2) an anonymous list of the 5 classes you think are most important and then circling multiple choice reasons why you find them important to you; 3) an anonymous VARK (Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, Kinaesthetic) survey of your learning style consisting of 20 multiple choice questions.

You will then participate in a focus group discussion with your peers that will last approximately 1-½ hours. The focus group will be both audio and video recorded.

You may withdraw at any time. There is no obligation to complete all of the questions, nor penalization for incomplete surveys. The data will be presented in the form of a Masters thesis, and be read by the thesis advisory committee, the institutions where the research took place, and the participants, if interested.

Participants:
I am inviting participants in four different categories from both the National Circus School and the École de Cirque de Québec: 1) students, 2) coaches, 3) academic teachers, 4) administrators. The focus group you participate in will ONLY have peers from your school and ONLY participants from the same category.

Disclosure:
I teach and create circus as a contract worker. Some of the contract work I do is for the NCS, where I have taught courses, directed shows and worked in the research department. Within the context of my Masters degree, I am a research assistant for two projects in collaboration with the NCS: one focused on youth circus and the other circus dramaturgy.

Informed Consent:
If you agree to participate in my project, you will receive a consent form and be asked to fill out a Doodle form to determine the date of the focus group. The raw data from this research will not be disseminated. The polished data from this research may be used in other contexts, including my personal research reports, published articles or forthcoming thesis. The data will not be used to rank circus education or circus programs.

If you agree to participate in this survey, please respond to this email by **April 15th.**

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact myself, or my advisor Patrick Leroux: patrick.leroux@concordia.ca.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Alisan Funk

Appendix C

Student Demographic Survey

Age:	Gender:
Country of Origin:	Highest Degree Completed:
Maternal Language:	Mother's Highest Education:
Other Languages:	Father's Highest Education:

I attended high school/ secondary school at a:

Traditional high school – **or** – sport-études program – **or** – arts-études program

I am currently registered in the:

DEC Program (college credit) – **or** – DEE program (certificate of completion)

Please complete the following short sentences.

I think that the purpose of the DEC/ DEE program is to:

I will have achieved my goals in the program when I:

When I leave this program, I hope to:

This program is connected to my future goals because:

I do –**or-** do not think a college degree is important. Why?

Please list Primary and Secondary circus disciplines of study:

Appendix D

Circus School Values Survey: Students

For each item identified below, circle the number
to the right that best corresponds to your relationship with the statement

Circus School Values Survey: Students Designed by Alisan Funk 2016	**Scale**				
	Disagree				**Agree**
1. I enjoyed Math in secondary school	1	2	3	4	5
2. I enjoyed Language in secondary school	1	2	3	4	5
3. I enjoyed Science in secondary school	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoyed Humanities (psychology, social science etc.) in secondary school	1	2	3	4	5
5. My secondary school teachers valued academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
6. My secondary school peers valued academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
7. My family values academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
8. I value academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
9. Before arriving at school, my coaches valued daily circus (dance gymnastics) training	1	2	3	4	5
10. Before arriving at school, my family valued daily training	1	2	3	4	5
11. Before arriving at school, my peers valued daily training	1	2	3	4	5
12. Before arriving at school, I valued daily training	1	2	3	4	5
13. I enjoy my technique classes at this school	1	2	3	4	5
14. I enjoy my academic classes at this school	1	2	3	4	5
15. I enjoy my creation classes at this school (dance, *jeu*, voice, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
16. My friends enjoy their technique classes at this school	1	2	3	4	5
17. My friends enjoy their academic classes at this school	1	2	3	4	5
18. My friends enjoy their creation classes at this school	1	2	3	4	5
19. Many of my friends are in circus	1	2	3	4	5

20. Many of my friends are not in circus	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E

Staff Demographic Survey

Age:	Gender:
Country of Origin:	Highest Degree Completed:
Maternal Language:	Mother's Highest Education:
Other Languages:	Father's Highest Education:
# Years working in your discipline	Do you work elsewhere (Y/N)

I attended high school/ secondary school at a:

Traditional high school – **or** – sport-études program – **or** – arts-études program

Please complete the following short sentences.

I think the purpose of the DEC program is to:

I think the students will have succeeded in the program when they:

I think when they leave this program, the students will pursue:

I was educated / trained for my career by:

I think the knowledge (or learning outcomes) most valued at the school are:

I do – **or** – do not feel supported in my profession by the school. Why?

I get along well with the circus coaches - the academic teachers - the administrators. Why? (Circle all that apply)

The type of work I do for the school is (Please specify):

Appendix F

Circus school values survey: Instructors, teachers and administrators

For each item identified below, circle the number
to the right that best corresponds to your relationship with the statement.

Circus School Values Survey: Staff **Designed by Alisan Funk 2016**	**Scale**				
	Disagree				**Agree**
1. I value academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
2. My family values academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
3. My peers value academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
4. I enjoyed academics in school	1	2	3	4	5
5. I enjoy the work I do at this school	1	2	3	4	5
6. My peers enjoy the work they do for this school	1	2	3	4	5
7. Before working at this school, I valued rigorous (circus, dance, gymnastics) training	1	2	3	4	5
8. I value rigorous training	1	2	3	4	5
9. I enjoy/enjoyed rigorous training	1	2	3	4	5
10. My peers value rigorous training	1	2	3	4	5
11. Students are motivated in my class	1	2	3	4	5
12. Students value my class	1	2	3	4	5
13. My class is important for success in the DEC/DEE program	1	2	3	4	5
14. My class is important for success after the DEC/DEE program	1	2	3	4	5
15. Students are engaged with their technique classes at this school	1	2	3	4	5
16. Students are engaged with their academic classes at this school	1	2	3	4	5
17. Students are engaged with their creation classes at this school	1	2	3	4	5
18. Many of my friends are in circus	1	2	3	4	5
19. Many of my friends are not in circus	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix G

Importance of course type questionnaire: Instructors, teachers and administrators

Please list the five courses that are most important to you in the DEC/DEE program. Check all categories that you think pertain to that course. You may add categories or commentary.

1)_____ is important to me because it develops:

Present:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

Future:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

2)_____ is important to me because it develops:

Present:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

Future:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

3)_____ is important to me because it develops:

Present:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

Future:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

4)_____ is important to me because it develops:

Present:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

Future:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

5)_____ is important to me because it develops:

Present:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

Future:
____social life/ network
____creative process
____technical strength
____artistic skill set
____knowledge as a circus artist
____knowledge as a person
____other (list):
____Not important

Appendix H

The VARK Questionnaire (Version 7.8) How Do I Learn Best?

Choose the answer which best explains your preference and circle the letter(s) next to it. Please circle more than one if a single answer does not match your perception. Leave blank any question that does not apply.

. You are helping someone who wants to go to your airport, the center of town or railway station. You would:

a. go with her.
b. tell her the directions.
c. write down the directions.
d. draw, or show her a map, or give her a map.

. A website has a video showing how to make a special graph. There is a person speaking, some lists and words describing what to do and some diagrams. You would learn most from:

a. seeing the diagrams.
b. listening.
c. reading the words.
d. watching the actions.

. You are planning a vacation for a group. You want some feedback from them about the plan. You would:

a. describe some of the highlights they will experience.
b. use a map to show them the places.
c. give them a copy of the printed itinerary.
d. phone, text or email them.

. You are going to cook something as a special treat. You would:

a. cook something you know without the need for instructions.
b. ask friends for suggestions.
c. look on the Internet or in some cookbooks for ideas from the pictures.
d. use a good recipe.

. A group of tourists want to learn about the parks or wildlife reserves in your area. You would:

a. talk about, or arrange a talk for them about parks or wildlife reserves.
b. show them maps and internet pictures.
c. take them to a park or wildlife reserve and walk with them.

d. give them a book or pamphlets about the parks or wildlife reserves.

. You are about to purchase a digital camera or mobile phone. Other than price, what would most influence your decision?

a. Trying or testing it.
b. Reading the details or checking its features online.
c. It is a modern design and looks good.
d. The salesperson telling me about its features.

. Remember a time when you learned how to do something new. Avoid choosing a physical skill, eg. riding a bike. You learned best by:

a. watching a demonstration.
b. listening to somebody explaining it and asking questions.
c. diagrams, maps, and charts - visual clues.
d. written instructions – e.g. a manual or book.

8. You have a problem with your heart. You would prefer that the doctor:

a. gave you a something to read to explain what was wrong.
b. used a plastic model to show what was wrong.
c. described what was wrong.
d. showed you a diagram of what was wrong.

9. You want to learn a new program, skill or game on a computer. You would:

a. read the written instructions that came with the program.
b. talk with people who know about the program.
c. use the controls or keyboard.
d. follow the diagrams in the book that came with it.

10. I like websites that have:

a. things I can click on, shift or try.
b. interesting design and visual features.
c. interesting written descriptions, lists and explanations.
d. audio channels where I can hear music, radio programs or interviews.

11. Other than price, what would most influence your decision to buy a new non-fiction book?

a. The way it looks is appealing.
b. Quickly reading parts of it.
c. A friend talks about it and recommends it.
d. It has real-life stories, experiences and examples.

12. You are using a book, CD or website to learn how to take photos with your new digital camera. You would like to have:
    a. a chance to ask questions and talk about the camera and its features.
    b. clear written instructions with lists and bullet points about what to do.
    c. diagrams showing the camera and what each part does.
    d. many examples of good and poor photos and how to improve them.

13. Do you prefer a teacher or a presenter who uses:
    a. demonstrations, models or practical sessions.
    b. question and answer, talk, group discussion, or guest speakers.
    c. handouts, books, or readings.
    d. diagrams, charts or graphs.

14. You have finished a competition or test and would like some feedback. You would like to have feedback:
    a. using examples from what you have done.
    b. using a written description of your results.
    c. from somebody who talks it through with you.
    d. using graphs showing what you had achieved.

15. You are going to choose food at a restaurant or cafe. You would:
    a. choose something that you have had there before.
    b. listen to the waiter or ask friends to recommend choices.
    c. choose from the descriptions in the menu.
    d. look at what others are eating or look at pictures of each dish.

16. You have to make an important speech at a conference or special occasion. You would:
    a. make diagrams or get graphs to help explain things.
    b. write a few key words and practice saying your speech over and over.
    c. write out your speech and learn from reading it over several times.
    d. gather many examples and stories to make the talk real and practical.

Appendix I

Interview guide for focus groups

Questions	Anticipated Themes	New Themes
What do students think is the objective of the DEC program? The DEE program? What do teachers think? What kinds of courses do students think are necessary to attain that learning objective? What do teachers think? What does the school think? Are there other courses that students would like in curriculum? Other courses teachers would like? • Did they expect to learn something that is not part of school? What are the attributes of a successful graduate of this program according to students? Do teachers think the same thing? Does the administration? • What will they have learned from the program? • What kind of work will they be doing? • What kind of person are they? Do people think the college degree an important part of this program? Who thinks it is important? • Did it influence your choice to participate in this program?	Technique, classes related to career Circus technique, creation classes Professional artist	

Appendix J

Introduction for Focus Groups

Hello everybody,
Thank you for participating in this study. My name is Alisan Funk and I am a Masters student at Concordia where I study circus education. I attended circus school at the EQC and completed my teacher certification at the NCS, where I have since taught. Your thoughts and opinions are very valuable. Very little has been researched about circus education, so your ideas, impressions, the things you like and the things you think could be improved are all important. Because you are representative of your peers, you can also consider other opinions you have heard and bring them into our discussion.

First, I will begin by laying out some ground rules. The surveys you have completed will be anonymous. Please place them in this folder so that I cannot connect you to them. This session will be audio and video recorded. Once I have transcribed this session and eliminated identifying data (like name, circus disciplines, language), both the audio and video will be destroyed so that your responses will remain anonymous in the future.

Many of you may be in agreement about certain idea, but if you know of other perceptions among your peers, please share them here.

Lets quickly go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please state your name, major discipline (or: the discipline you coach, the subject you teach, your responsibilities), and how long you have been affiliated with this school.

(Introductions)

Now we will start with a question about the overall DEC program, so think of all three years.

Appendix K

Consent Form

INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Study Title: Student Engagement with Curriculum in Circus Schools: Circus Education in Québec
Researcher: Alisan Funk
Researcher's Contact Information:
Faculty Supervisor: Patrick Leroux
Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information:
Source of funding for the study: N/A

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE
The purpose of the research is to explore the relationship between the different curricular elements that are part of circus education in Quebec.

B. PROCEDURES
If you participate, you will be asked to fill out three separate anonymous questionnaires and participate in a focus group with several of your peers. Your total involvement time will be two hours.
An anonymous demographic questionnaire with approximately 10 single sentence background questions and twenty questions Likert-scale (circle a number from 1-5) questions.
An anonymous list of the 5 classes you think are most important and multiple-choice reasons why you find them important to you.
An anonymous VARK (Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, Kinaesthetic) survey of your learning style consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions.
Participating in a focus group discussion with your peers for 1-½ hours. The focus group will be both audio and video recorded.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS
You might or might not personally benefit from participating in this research.
Benefits:
It is possible that the individual participants will benefit from the introspection inspired by the questions and have an opportunity to reflect upon their own opinions and pre-judgements about the merits of various curricular choices. For some, the opportunity to have their voices heard

may also be perceived as a benefit. The institutions themselves could benefit by showing an investment in evaluation and analysis of their DEC programs, something the Québec government encourages and expects.

Risks:
There are no risks to the participants. The study does not involve deception, presents no physical, personal or reputational ethical concerns and will adhere strictly to ethical standards of educational research.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: Data that you provide on the questionnaires, your responses during the focus group, and publicly available information from the websites of the NCS and the ECQ.

We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

To verify that the research is being conducted properly, supervising professors might examine the information gathered. By participating, you agree to let these authorities have access to the information.

The information gathered will be anonymous (all identifying data will be removed, including my name, discipline/ job, language and anything else that could be used to identify you).

This research will be presented in the form of a Masters thesis, to be read by the thesis advisory committee (above), the institutions where the research took place, and the participants if interested. The results of this research may also be presented in workshops or conferences related to circus, education, performing arts and other pertinent subject areas.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher before January 31st, 2017. There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

[ ] I agree to be audio and video recorded during the focus group session
[ ] I understand that my responses will be made anonymous during the transcription process

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION
I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. You may also contact their faculty supervisor. Their contact information is on page 1.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix L

Mission Statements

Both of these mission statements have been copied directly from the websites of each Québec circus school. Both schools present their websites in French and English, therefore both versions of the mission statement are included.

L'École de cirque de Québec:

L'École de cirque de Québec's function is educative and community oriented. Its mission is to promote the circus arts, and to stimulate the emergence of a new generation of artists. By its diversity and the quality of its equipment and trainers, École de cirque de Québec is a unique space in Eastern Québec.
http://www.ecoledecirque.com/en/institution/

Fondée en 1995, l'École de cirque de Québec a pour mission de promouvoir le cirque et de stimuler l'émergence d'une nouvelle génération d'artistes. Par la diversité de ses activités, la qualité de ses équipements et le professionnalisme de ses formateurs, l'ÉCQ est un espace unique dans l'est du Québec.
http://www.ecoledecirque.com/institution/

L'École nationale de cirque:

International in scope, the École nationale de cirque (National Circus School) is a higher-education institution for the arts providing programs at the high school and post-secondary levels. It is dedicated to the education and training of professional circus artists, as well as to research and innovation in the circus arts and their pedagogy.
http://ecolenationaledecirque.ca/en/school

D'envergure internationale, l'École nationale de cirque est une école supérieure d'art de niveaux secondaire et postsecondaire, dédiée à l'éducation et la formation d'artistes de cirque professionnels, ainsi qu'à la recherche et à l'innovation dans les arts du cirque et leur pédagogie.
http://ecolenationaledecirque.ca/fr/lecole