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"Ballerinas on the Dole:" Dance and the U.S. Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), 1974–1982

Colleen Hooper

In 1978, Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) designer Richard W. Kerry constructed paper costumes for choreographer Trisha Brown's trio *Splang* during an eight-week residency, but Brown decided not to use the costumes owing to their delicacy and propensity for ripping (Rosenberg 2017, 200; "Final Disposition Form 1978"). In the late 1970s, ODC Dance's[1] artistic director Brenda Way received CETA funding to pay the salaries of twelve dancers who performed and served as administrators for her company. Way credits CETA for funding the expansion of her organization, and ODC Dance has grown into a $5.4 million dollar organization that includes two buildings, eight studios, and three performance venues (Way 2014).[2] In these two examples, both choreographers benefitted from CETA funding. However, it is less clear how these two instances served the broader public. All CETA employees were contracted to provide public service, and one could make a case that expanding ODC Dance benefitted the public, but it is less clear how the public benefitted from Brown's experimental collaboration with a CETA designer. Choreographers utilized CETA government funding in an effort to professionalize their companies in the 1970s, and they faced criticism for accessing employment funding that was intended to assist the disadvantaged.

During the economic downturn of the 1970s, the US government instituted CETA as a job-training program that included significant funding for public service employment (PSE). These jobs were full-time positions designed to train the unemployed and also provide a public service. While CETA was not intended to support the arts, artists and performers were among the workers who benefitted from this federal employment program because city officials across the country framed the arts as public service. Dancers with CETA positions negotiated government bureaucracy to perform and teach in a variety of public service sites. During the 1970s, many choreographers formed nonprofit organizations to support their artistic work, and they utilized CETA funding in various ways to support their professional goals. This move toward professionalization required dancers to grapple with what it meant to perform community engagement work in settings such as schools, senior centers, public parks, and prisons. As dance companies increasingly became nonprofit institutions receiving government funding, company directors were forced to contend with how to pursue their artistic goals while simultaneously defining and providing public service.

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This is the first academic article that focuses on dancers who participated in the CETA program,[3] and the purpose of this article is twofold: it describes this important source of government funding for dance and the arts that has been largely overlooked in scholarship, and it details one New York City CETA dance community performance site to reveal the tension present in the construct of "dance as public service." I utilize a combination of interviews, archival research, and secondary literature to address these topics. I conducted in-depth, semistructured interviews with dancers and administrators based on established qualitative methodology. In-depth interviews focus on the research topic but develop in a conversational format. Most important, this interviewing format relies upon "individual lived experience" and "the primary strategy is to capture the deep meaning of experience in the participants' own words" (Marshall and Rossman 2011, 93). When I interviewed dancers, we discussed dance practices, performances, and movement investigations facilitated through their CETA public service employment. With administrators, I focused on their role in the CETA arts program and on how they viewed art as public service.[4]

In the first section of this article, I explicate how public policy expert John Kreidler introduced the concept of art as "public service" in relation to CETA. Next, I detail how Kreidler made a case for artists and performers to receive unemployment assistance. As a result of Kreidler's work, CETA arts programs were federally funded and locally conceived. On the local level, individual CETA arts programs determined what constituted public service and defined the communities they sought to serve. In the second section, I present the New York City CETA arts program as an exemplar of how the largest CETA arts program in the United States served a wide range of artists and communities. Through an analysis of two CETA dance performances at the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility in New York City, I question who was served by dance as public service.

Dance as Public Service and "Ballerinas on the Dole"

CETA passed in 1973 during Richard Nixon's[5] presidential administration, and when the unemployment rate increased from 5 percent to 9 percent from 1974 to 1975, both Democrats and Republicans "called for federal action to ease unemployment" (Baumer and Van Horn 1985, 64). Nixon's successor Gerald Ford significantly expanded CETA,[6] and President Jimmy Carter's Department of Labor encouraged states to employ artists through CETA from 1977 to 1980.[7] CETA government funding supported approximately 22,000 arts and humanities workers from 1977 to 1980, and while it was a large and heavily funded program, it has often been relegated to footnotes in art and performance scholarship (Startzel and Walker 1981, ix). CETA arts programs reenacted Works Progress Administration (WPA)[8] arts programs from the 1930s, and government administrators adapted the idea of art as public service to the post-Fordist, service economy of the United States in the 1970s.

Geographer and social theorist, David Harvey, explains how the liberal-dominated[9] intellectual climate following World War II led Americans to accept an activist government as the norm: "States actively intervened in industrial policy and moved to set standards for the social wage by constructing a variety of welfare systems (health care, education, and the like)" (2005, 10–11). CETA was a product of this activist government, and it directly addressed the unemployment rate. However, as historian Bruce Schulman explains, Nixon "… did not attack liberal programs or the agencies and political networks that undergirded them. Rather, he subtly, cunningly undermined them. Nixon wanted to destroy the liberal establishment by stripping it of its bases of support and its sources of funds" (Schulman 2001, 27). In order to deconstruct government programming, Nixon designed CETA as a decentralized program with limited federal oversight. Once CETA passed in 1973, it replaced over a dozen programs that had operated under the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA) and the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) (Weir 1992, 118). Nixon cut back on Labor Department programs, and the federal government did not oversee the CETA mandates. CETA's legislation outlined a sizeable role for the federal government, but the Nixon

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administration eliminated that federal budget allocation (Weir 1992, 122). Democrats wanted strict "entrance standards" for CETA enrollment to ensure that the poor benefitted most, but Republicans fought for more lenient standards. According to public policy scholars Donald C. Baumer and Carl E. Van Horn, "Title I, which initially contained the bulk of the funds, required that a person be unemployed for just seven days to be eligible for assistance" (1985, 62). Local officials appreciated CETA's lenient standards and decentralized structure because they could use public service employment (PSE) money freely. As noted by former Department of Labor employee George Koch, it was very difficult to track decentralized CETA programs because local jurisdictions often gave funds to nonprofits and other organizations, and the Department of Labor only received basic title information about the CETA projects after their completion (Koch 2014). In this model, the federal government would offer technical assistance and no meaningful supervision (Hargrove 1980, 130). Decentralization, lack of accountability, and perceived political favoritism led to CETA spending controversies.

John Kreidler wrote the first successful proposal allocating CETA money for artists in 1974, and he did so by framing the arts as public service: artists and performers would gain income and financial stability from CETA, and municipalities would benefit from increased arts activity (Kreidler 1974, 3). Through framing "performance as public service," Kreidler redefined how performers and artists were viewed as workers by the US government. Kreidler's writing negotiated precarious relationships between labor, art, and public service. Through extensive analysis of the US census, Kreidler substantiated his claim that artists and performers were workers who deserved federal assistance during the economic downturn in the 1970s. Kreidler's background in the federal government and arts policy uniquely situated him to make this claim. After completing a 1968 master's thesis at the University of California at Berkeley that focused on artists funded by the WPA in the 1930s, he moved to Washington, D.C., and served as a policy analyst at the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on US Labor and Manpower programs for five years (Kreidler 2014). During his time in Washington, he learned about the CETA program, and then returned to California to attend an arts administration master's degree program at University of California, Los Angeles. He wrote his CETA artists proposal in 1974 while working as an intern at the San Francisco Neighborhood Arts Program. In this proposal, he approached the problem of high unemployment among artists with a novel proposal to utilize government funding.

Kreidler proposed to employ twenty-four visual and performing artists through the Neighborhood Arts Program to "increase the flow of free artistic services throughout San Francisco" (Kreidler 1974, 2). The San Francisco Neighborhood Arts Program already assisted artists and communities through loaning equipment and providing consultations. Expanding the program to include CETA resident artists was a logical development that deepened its community involvement. Kreidler proposed that visual artists could conduct classes in senior centers, photographers could document street festivals, and performers could be featured in citywide celebrations. His proposal was grounded in four basic tenets that applied to visual and performing artists: there was a surplus of artistic labor; "ineffective mechanisms" failed to match artists with jobs; artists received low wages due to lack of technological innovations; and artists were subject to seasonal employment (Kreidler 1974, 2). Another strong aspect of Kreidler's proposal was his analysis of 1970 Census Bureau labor statistics. He concisely described how the census grouped perennially unemployed groups, such as visual artists and dancers, in the same category as professional athletes and designers. This census category "writers, artists, and entertainers" was quite broad, but it was still marked by high unemployment. Given the trend toward high unemployment in the best of circumstances, "writers, artists, and entertainers" suffered even more joblessness during recessions. Even though the census figures indicated this category was dominated by white workers, Kreidler's experience working in San Francisco led him to believe that there were large numbers of African American and "Latina/o" workers who were not accounted for in the census. In this article, I use performance studies scholar Ramón H. Rivera-Servera's term "Latino/a," which "refers to populations of Latin American descent born, currently residing, or with a history of residence in the United States"

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(2012, 21). Minorities had higher unemployment rates than whites, and Kreidler proposed that the unemployment rate among artists was far worse than the figures indicated (Kreidler 1974, 2). Since most artists were well trained, they did not require additional training programs, and they had skills that could be utilized for public service to improve cultural life for city residents. CETA was conceived as a job-training program, and government officials' willingness to employ artists who did not require training reflects how flexible the program guidelines were in local situations. Kreidler was careful to point out that the CETA-funded Neighborhood Arts Program artistic activities would not interfere with private sector arts programs.

He received support from Martin Snipper, the San Francisco director for cultural affairs, in part because Snipper had been part of the WPA as a painter, and he understood Kreidler's approach to art as public service.[10] Snipper passed Kreidler's CETA proposal to the San Francisco mayor's office for approval in October 1974, and it was funded in December of the same year. More than 1400 visual and performing artists applied to become CETA artists in San Francisco. In response, the city went beyond Kreidler's original request for twenty-four artists and created 130 positions to employ dancers, puppeteers, muralists, gardeners, writers, architects, circus performers, photographers, and actors in community settings (Kreidler 1975, 1). An unanticipated result of his success in San Francisco was that Kreidler became a spokesperson and promoter for CETA artist programs. When the California Arts Council received inquiries about how to utilize CETA money for the arts, they hired Kreidler to travel throughout the state to consult with local organizations. Nationally, he received inquiries from programs in various states, and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) also began to send Kreidler nationwide to conferences to promote CETA-funded art projects. These were city, state, and county conferences about CETA, and Kreidler would explain how visual and performing artists could be valuable CETA employees.

An idea that started with Kreidler's 1974 proposal for twenty-four artists in San Francisco led to a national movement that employed approximately 22,000 arts and humanities workers from 1977 to 1980 (Startzel and Walker 1981, ix). CETA public service jobs reached a high of 725,000 in 1978, and those 22,000 artists, performers, museum, library, and humanities workers only comprised approximately 3 percent of the public service jobs overall (Baumer and Van Horn 1985, 91). However, employing 22,000 arts and humanities workers made a large impact on disciplinary fields, and it reignited the conversation about artists as public servants. By funding dance as public service, CETA arts programs staged a macroeconomic intervention into the dance field that redefined dance as public service.

CETA adopted a broad concept of what could be categorized as public service, and this open definition provoked debates among politicians and the press. CETA money could employ trash collectors, police personnel, or dancers as long as the individuals met the unemployment guidelines. Roslyn Bernstein's 1978 *New York* magazine article "Artists on Salary: Funds for the Starving Class" presented a nuanced analysis of how CETA artists "made a difference in [New York City's] art, music, dance, and poetry" (45). She explained that artists were not the intended recipients of CETA funding, but she believed that city residents benefitted from CETA artists' work. However, Ralph Kinney Bennett's widely circulated 1978 *Reader's Digest* article "CETA: $11 Billion Boondoggle" stated:

> CETA "arts" programs are funding at least 10,000 men and women—many of whom have left jobs in the private economy—to paint, sculpt, make movies, create street theater, play guitar, weave and make pottery at the public expense of more than $75 million a year. It seems that CETA money is waiting for anyone resourceful enough to tap into it in the name of performing "public service." (Bennett 1978, 75)

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While Bennett's evaluation discredits art and performance as public service, he does offer a valid criticism of how CETA helped some privileged individuals who may not have been in need of government aid. I will address how these concerns pertained to the New York City CETA arts program later in the section that follows. Bennett infers that CETA jobs were hurting the private economy, but CETA employment legally could not interfere with union contracts or "normal government operations" (Rose 1993, 332). The class element of this comment is also important: learning that middle-class artists were benefitting from a program designed for the poor raised questions about who deserved federal funding. Bennett complained that CETA "payrolls [were] clogged with would-be artists, political activists and college educated professionals, [and] the program has degenerated into a joke on the genuinely disadvantaged" (1978, 73). His article exposed a conflict surrounding who was considered a professional artist, and whether it was ethical for well-educated individuals with access to financial resources to benefit from a public program for the disadvantaged. Schulman discussed how public confidence in government programs had steadily decreased since the protests and civil unrest of the 1960s, and he stated that the Watergate scandal and Nixon's subsequent 1974 resignation, "only intensified Americans' alienation from public life: their contempt for the secrecy, inefficiency, and failures of 'big government'" (2001, 42). In addition to the distrust in government programs, the rise of neoliberal thought and privatization contributed to negative public perceptions regarding CETA's effectiveness as a government program. Historian Thomas Borstelmann explains that in the 1970s the private sector became "associated primarily with virtue and efficiency while the public sector of government continually had to defend itself and its budgets. Long gone were the New Deal order of the 1930s to the 1960s and its confident use of an activist federal government" (2012, 5). Bennett's article appealed to members of the public who did not trust that CETA could have a meaningful impact on unemployment. While Bennett criticized government programs and their beneficiaries, he also presented veiled criticism of two important artistic trends at this time: culturally diverse arts programming and expanding regional arts centers.

Bennett was correct in his assertion that CETA arts programs took place during a time of artistic expansion in the United States; in an interview with the author, former executive director of the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) Ted Berger explained that many arts organizations were founded in the 1960s and 1970s (Berger 2014). State Arts Councils were emerging nationwide, and according to Berger, "the public moneys gave rise . . . to a whole bunch of new voices . . . lots of people saying 'I'm an artist'; lots of people in local arts councils. The whole system that we kind of now take for granted was being born during this time" (Berger 2014). This proliferation of new voices began in the 1960s when African Americans, Latina/os, and women were gaining more mainstream attention for their cultural contributions (Binkiewicz 2004, 122). During the Black Arts Movement, primarily defined as the decade from 1964 to 1974,[11] African American performers and writers produced a range of experimental work that addressed their cultural identity (Benston 2000). Bennett's criticism was in part aimed at this burgeoning movement of African American, Latina/o, and feminist art that was increasingly visible and received government support.

The dance field had professionalized rapidly in the ten years preceding CETA: according to Douglas Sonntag from the National Endowment for the Arts, the number of professional dance companies grew from thirty-seven in 1965 to one hundred fifty-seven in 1975 (Sonntag 2008, 182). During this upsurge in funding, dancers were increasingly viewed as professional workers with access to a growing number of career opportunities. This shift toward viewing dancers as professional workers made dancers stronger candidates for CETA employment because CETA was a short-term program designed to assist the unemployed during an economic downturn. This growth in the dance field meant that more dancers could expect to have professional dance careers, and CETA could provide additional support for an already expanding art form.

Bennett described CETA dancers in 1978 in Montgomery County, Maryland, as unprofessional "ballerinas on the dole" because they were paid by the government to take ballet classes "full

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Photo 1. "The Bronx Is Dancing" poster. Courtesy NYC Municipal Archives.

time" and gave "occasional benefit performances for county residents" (1978, 75). In this passage, Bennett dismissed the professionalism of a regional dance company that served audiences outside of major metropolitan areas. As a Eurocentric art form, ballet has historically been held in high regard, but Bennett demonstrated a bias against a smaller dance company that received CETA funding. He also exhibited a fundamental misunderstanding about dancers' need for classes and the number of classes and rehearsals required to present professional performances. In addition, Bennett employed sexist language in his dismissal of ballet dance as a frivolous, feminine pastime, as opposed to a viable career. Bennett was rightly concerned about middle class artists taking resources from the disadvantaged, and this was a legitimate issue regarding how the arts community instrumentalized government funding to professionalize the arts. However, Bennett also ridiculed artistic and cultural forms that he deemed unworthy of public support, and this indicated cultural intolerance and revealed his prejudice against local arts groups.

CETA was the last labor program that created PSE jobs for US citizens. Because Nixon eliminated meaningful federal CETA oversight and placed CETA supervision on the local level, it was structurally impossible to evaluate whether CETA succeeded or failed (Weir 1992, 122). When Carter increased CETA funding in 1977, CETA's decentralized administrative structure could not effectively manage this expansion (Weir 1992, 125). By the time the federal government recentralized jurisdiction over CETA in 1978, the program had largely lost political support (Mucciaroni 1990, 4). Studies by the National Academy of Sciences and Johns Hopkins Health Services Research and Development Center proved CETA positively impacted participants, but PSE was viewed as a failed labor policy (Mucciaroni 1990, 11). Despite CETA's status as a political failure, CETA arts programs staged a macroeconomic intervention that meaningfully shifted financial resources to artists and strengthened the artistic labor market. Critics like Bennett were rightly concerned that middle-class artists utilized a program designed for the disadvantaged, but lawmakers intentionally created lenient employment standards, and artists complied with these requirements. Journalist Roslyn Bernstein suggested that CETA arts programs could " … point the way to the development of a federally funded national arts policy in which the government accepts fundamental responsibility for nurturing American artists in the same manner that it protects American farmers with a price-support system and American manufacturers with tariffs" (Bernstein 1978, n.p.). While the type of policy Bernstein suggests did not come to pass, New York Representative Ted Weiss proposed a Federal Artists Program Bill inspired by the CETA arts programs in 1979 (Weiss 1979). Weiss's bill did not come to vote, but his arts advocacy led to increased funding of the NEA Challenge Grant program in 1980 (Weiss ca. 1980). CETA arts programs led to increased federal funding for the arts, and there is evidence that they benefitted the employed artists: the larger question is how much CETA benefitted the multiple publics that it claimed to serve.

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New York City CETA Cultural Council Foundation/Artists Project (CCF/AP)

In this article, I specifically analyze the New York City CETA Cultural Council Foundation/Artists' Project (CCF/AP), which was one of over 450 CETA programs across the country.[12] I chose to focus on the CETA CCF/AP because it was the largest CETA arts program and there is an extensive archive that documents the duration of the program. New York City's program became operational in January 1978, three years after San Francisco's inaugural program, and the CETA CCF/AP administrators learned from San Francisco and other CETA arts programs across the country (Berger 2014). NEA chairman Livingston Biddle spoke at the opening of the New York City CETA CCF/AP program on January 4, 1978: he declared that the continued funding of CETA arts programs since 1975 was evidence of "a higher sense of priority for the arts," and he described New York's CETA CCF/AP as the "largest and most comprehensive" of the national projects, positioned on "the vanguard of this new movement in artists employment" ("Cultural Council Foundation: CETA Artists Project" 1978). The New York City CETA CCF/AP screened almost four thousand applicants to select three hundred artists in 1977 (Cummings 1977), and the program expanded to three hundred twenty-five artists from 1979 to 1980, with approximately forty dancers in the program each year ("Cultural Council Foundation 1979–80 Artists Project" 1979). From January 1978 through February 1979, CCF disbursed $4 million of CETA Title VI money for artist employment, and in the second year of the project, its allocation was increased to $5.9 million ("CETA Artists Project: History" 1978). The CETA CCF/AP was designed to address "both the economic plight of the artist and the interests and needs of community and arts organizations" ("Cultural Council Foundation: CETA Artists Project" 1978). While I have addressed how artists and performers benefitted from CETA CCF/AP, it is less clear how these programs responded to the thoughts and desires of local arts organizations. I assert that CETA CCF/AP was more successful in addressing artists' needs than the "interests and needs of community and arts organizations" ("Cultural Council Foundation: CETA Artists Project" 1978).

CETA employment was a rare situation that offered artists both increased exposure and meaningful material support in the form of a full-time salary, health insurance, and disability insurance. CETA CCF/AP director Rochelle Slovin recognized that many of the artists in her program were middle-class young adults with low incomes who received some financial support from their parents (Slovin 2014). Because CETA was designed to benefit the disadvantaged, giving privileged, educated artists CETA jobs was in conflict with the programs' original intentions. Slovin felt that utilizing CETA funding for arts programming was "somewhat of a distortion of the initial … meaning of

Photo 2. Group picture, The New York City CETA CCF/AP staff. Photograph by George Malave. Courtesy NYC Municipal Archives.

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the legislation" (Slovin 2014). Reflecting on the role of CETA arts from a federal perspective, Slovin stated:

> What is that money supposed to do, and who is that money supposed to go to? When Gerald Ford signed that legislation, he had in his mind's eye somebody he thought was going to benefit from that, and that was not these middle-class kids who already had their MFAs and were not necessarily being supported by their parents, but who had the safety net always of their parents. (Slovin 2014)

She is clear that the parental support was "indirect," so it was not considered salary. This raises the question about whether the artists who participated were truly disadvantaged, or if they were misusing a federal program to pursue creative agendas. As previously noted, Republicans fought to have lenient requirements for CETA employment, so while artist employment was not the intention of the program, it fit within the regulations of the law. Each artist had to prove financial eligibility for the program, and the applicants had to be unemployed for fifteen consecutive weeks and their previous year's income could not exceed poverty level ($2590 for a family of one, $4240 for a family of two) (Blair 1978).

CETA CCF/AP was primarily concerned with using federal funding to support talented artists. According to Berger, he felt that CETA was an excellent example of "using money that was designed for another purpose to help our [art] community" (Berger 2014). While there were significant issues surrounding artists' income eligibility and their undocumented access to financial support, Berger asserted that artists were workers who deserved federal employment assistance. The government had determined a policy to combat high unemployment and an economic recession, and CETA CCF/AP funded artists because there were insufficient systems in place to benefit unemployed or underemployed artists. Arts administrators expanded and transformed CETA's mandates to include artists by using the precedent of the WPA, and they made the case that artists' work would be beneficial to the public. The remainder of this article will be devoted to examining this claim of public benefit.

Photo 3. CETA CCF/AP project director Rochelle Slovin being interviewed. Cooper Hewitt Museum, Manhattan, NY. Photograph by Sarah Wells. Courtesy NYC Municipal Archives.

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Photo 4. Kenneth King and Rosalind Newman performing outside Cooper Hewitt Museum, Manhattan, NY. Photograph by Sarah Wells. Courtesy NYC Municipal Archives.

CETA CCF/AP artists and performers conducted workshops and gave performances at "community sponsor" organizations throughout the five boroughs. The guidelines for artist community sponsors were as follows: they were required to be a nonprofit arts or social service organization, CETA employees could not be involved in any fundraising, and performances and programs were free to the public ("Community Sponsor Application" 1978). In 1978, Staten Island's Arthur Kill Correctional Facility became a CETA CCF/AP community sponsor and hosted a series of dance performances. On November 3, 1978, Rachel Lampert and Dancers performed a series of "dramatic dance" pieces that were akin to musical theater performances at Arthur Kill (Conley 1978). This concert was well-received and it led to a second dance concert being scheduled: on December 16, 1978, three dance companies comprised of dancers Kathryn Bernson, Martha Bowers, Charles "Cookie" Cook, Jane Goldberg, Stormy Mullis, and Mitchell Rose performed for an audience of inmates (Mullis 1978). During my interview process, Bowers, Goldberg, and Rose each had strong recollections of performing at Arthur Kill because it stood apart from other performance experiences in their memory. Though Arthur Kill was a somewhat unique community sponsor site, it is valuable to analyze dancers' reactions to this experience in an effort to investigate the goals of performing dance as public service.

These performances occurred during a time when inmates were increasingly publishing, performing, and creating their own artistic work. African American activist George Jackson published *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* in 1970; Jackson's series of letters denounced white racism and inequities in the criminal justice system. While incarcerated activists such as Jackson sought revolutionary change, a cohort of criminal justice professionals advocated for 1970s prison reform. This reform brought an unprecedented number of educational and creative arts programs into US prisons, and inmates gained permission to form organizations and unions (Bernstein 2010, 4). Arts and education programs in prison were discredited by the publication of two key writings that "announced the failure of reform:" Robert Martinson's "What Works?" (1974) and neoconservative James Q. Wilson's *Thinking About Crime* (1975) (Bernstein 2010, 155). Martinson's influential text concluded that nothing could stop criminals from committing crimes and that treatment programs and rehabilitation were not effective (Hinton 2016, 243).

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These sociologists were emblematic of a cultural shift toward increased incarceration in the United States that began with President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Crime" and "War on Poverty" in 1965 (Hinton 2016, 1–2).

In the midst of these changing views on reform programs, CETA CCF/AP dancers performed a range of dance styles as public service at the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility. For the "Entertainment" section of what appears to be a Department of Corrections newsletter, Gordon Conley wrote an article entitled "Broadway Comes to Arthur Kill," and he explained Lampert's dance style: "The Rachael [*sic*] Lampert and Dancers Company does 'Dramatic Dancing.' Dramatic Dancing is creative movement. It incorporates singing, dialogue and the dance to express emotions and physical actions to act out a given situation" (1978). Rachel Lampert and Dancers' performance on November 3, 1978, consisted of five women and two men, which included two CETA dancers and one CETA stage manager. The reference to Broadway, singing, and dialogue connected Lampert's performance to musical theater, and many inmates may have seen or in some way experienced this popular theatrical form. Broadway also had specific associations with value: musical theater performances on Broadway were expensive; they were considered to be of a high theatrical caliber, and they were designed to be entertaining. As an established commercial theater genre, Broadway musicals had a wider appeal than experimental or avant-garde modern dance. Conley further described the dances that Lampert presented:

> The company did four routines for us: "Traffic," with the whole company; "Issue," a family situation with Rachael [sic], Holly and Carl; "Home," an innovative version of a Baseball game in dance form with the whole company; and "The Frog Princess", the story of a Plain Jane high-school girl of the "50s," who couldn't get the Class President to notice and love her. (Conley 1978)

By focusing on family, baseball, and high school dating, Lampert presented narrative themes that related to popular culture. She also employed spoken dialogue that developed a narrative and provided another way for the audience to access and understand the performance.

Conley asked Lampert about her experience performing at Arthur Kill, and she responded, "This is our first time in a prison setting, but the men seemed interested and attentive. We enjoyed ourselves. Yes! We would like to come back and perform again!" Conley explained, "This [response] was greeted by a host of cheers" (1978). In the facility's CETA Arts Application, the Arthur Kills Penitentiary reported that of its six hundred fifty male inmates, 65 percent were African American, 20 percent Hispanic, and 15 percent white ("Arthur Kills Correctional Facility CETA Arts Application" 1978). This diverse group of inmates appreciated Lampert's performance, and the latter was so successful that it was featured in a *New York Times* article in June 1979. Lampert described her performance at Arthur Kill to reporter Barry Laine:

> "It was the most exciting performance we've ever given," Rachel Lampert exclaims about her modern dance company's CETA-sponsored appearance last year at Arthur Kill Correctional Facility on Staten Island. "There were 600 men in the gymnasium. The most dangerous criminals were placed in the front row. But we danced better than we'd ever danced before." (Laine 1979)

In this interview, Lampert places her experience at Arthur Kill *above* and *beyond* all of her previous performance experiences. She also reveals a sense of fear and tension. Being in physical proximity to "the most dangerous criminals" motivated her to perform more fully. She may have sensed that this audience was cynical and difficult to impress. This audience actively expressed their appreciation for what she did, and she also *benefitted* from this performance by reaching a new level of performance.

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The second performance, which followed on December 16, 1978, received mixed reviews from the three performers whom I interviewed. The performance took place in a gymnasium, and there were bleachers on three sides (Rose 2015). Bernson and Mullis performed first while Rose, Bowers, Cook, and Goldberg waited in another room. Bernson and Mullis were young white women who had founded a duet dance company in 1972; they focused on movement invention within the context of abstract modern dance, and they characterized their work as "modern dance [that] brings into focus the juxtaposition of the awkward with the graceful, high dynamics, humor, and the unexpected daringness of unconventional lifts and movement" ("CCF AP January 1980 Dancers' Directory" 1980). Dancer and critic Wendy Perron described Bernson and Mullis's work as "the thrill of utter unpredictability" ("Dances by Kathryn Bernson and Stormy Mullis" ca. 1977). The *Soho Weekly News* explained "the dancing itself is about dancing, about pure movement and the juxtaposition of movement nonsequiturs [*sic*]" ("Dances by Kathryn Bernson and Stormy Mullis" c. 1977). Historian Thomas Borstelmann describes how "Postmodernism emerged in the 1970s as a mood and a sensibility, a stance against the certainties of modern life, whether of the Left or Right, of religion or socialism, of progress or reason, of any coherent narrative of history leading anywhere forseeable" (2012, 11). Bernson and Mullis could be viewed as part of this broader movement to reject narrative and embrace uncertainty; the archives reveal that Bernson and Mullis shared a penchant for abstraction and movement invention.

When Bernson and Mullis finished performing for the audience at Arthur Kill and returned to the room with the other dancers, Rose explained that they had "tears streaming down their face[s]" (Rose 2015). In our interview, Rose elaborated:

> It was really difficult because they were just getting catcalled constantly. It was just twenty minutes of harassment, you know because they were these two white chicks who were just doing postmodern dance. . . . I don't even know if [any prisoner at Arthur Kill] is going to be able to relate to that.

Here, Rose is making a faulty assumption, based on race and aesthetics, that the prisoners could not relate to Bernson and Mullis's work. Bernson and Mullis did not respond to interview requests, and I am unable to speak to the inmates who were in the audience, so it is impossible to know what occurred during their performance. This account reveals how difficult it is to determine the goals of dance as public service while evaluating how a performance benefitted a given community. According to Rose, Bernson and Mullis's performance elicited "catcalls," which infers that the inmates were remarking about the dancers' bodies and making sexual comments. However, Rose did not witness this event, and the dancers were not available for comment. He did see Bernson and Mullis visibly upset after the performance, and his impression was that the dancers were harassed. Their abstract movements provoked a verbal exchange with the audience, perhaps referencing the dancers' bodies and sexuality. While harassment of performers is abusive, it is also possible that Bernson and Mullis became upset after the audience members expressed their preferences or opinions about the performance.

There was also a political element to the inmate's participation because they took a risk to verbally assert their opinions, aesthetics, and judgments in a situation where they could be violently punished for disobeying rules of conduct. Bernson and Mullis dealt with audience feedback in other outdoor, public spaces, but the audience at Arthur Kill had a different set of restrictions and disciplinary measures in place. The audience at Arthur Kill was a captive public, required to sit for the duration of the performance, under the threat of violence from the institution. The inmates' verbal response to the performance could be read as a means of actively engaging with the performance and as an expression of personal aesthetics. Bernson and Mullis had other public performances that were well received; CETA dance coordinator Anthony La Giglia observed one of their duets at Union Square's Sweet 14 Series, and in his evaluation he wrote: "they performed beautifully and held a rather difficult audience amazingly well. Was particularly struck by their choreographic

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ability to abstract images and ideas into structured, inventive and poetic dances" (La Giglia 1979). As a dancer himself, La Giglia was sensitive to idioms of movement abstraction, and he understood trends in modern and postmodern dance. Another key aspect in performance reception is that the audience in Union Square *had a choice* about whether to stay and watch the performance. Onlookers at Union Square could watch or walk away, but the inmates at Arthur Kill were required to stay seated. Bernson yearned to maintain an audience's interest: *New York Times* reporter Barry Laine explained "At Union Square, where the lunchtime crowd usually features a regular attendance of drug-dealers and prostitutes, dancer Kathryn Bernson recalls with pride that 'the hookers were telling the hecklers to shut up'" (1979). In Union Square, the public verbally debated the value of Bernson and Mullis's dance, and the onlookers were watching according to their free will. At Arthur Kill, the audience was captive, but the inmates could choose how they reacted to the performance.

When it was time for Rose and Bowers to perform at Arthur Kill, Rose was apprehensive because Bernson and Mullis were visibly upset about the audience's reaction to their work. Once Rose and Bowers began dancing, Rose described receiving constant feedback from the audience throughout the course of their performance: " . . . rather than get a critique at the end of each piece, you get a critique at the end of each movement. It's like "Yeah! Boo! Yeah! Booooo! Yeah! Booo!" you know, constantly [laughter], particularly like whenever Martha *raised a leg*, that would meet with tremendous approval" (Rose 2015). The audience members expressed discord, and it was a dialogical performance of aesthetic preferences and personal opinion. For Rose, the audience's reactions were distractions that he needed to ignore, and he recalled that this performance made him "tough." Facing this boisterous crowd, Rose declared to himself, "I'm just going to do my job. I'm here to perform these pieces, and I'm just going to do it. And nothing is going to dissuade me from doing that, I'm not going to lose my concentration" (Rose 2015). From Rose's perspective, the audience was verbally expressing approval or disapproval of each movement, and this did not reflect upon the *value* of his dance. His dance had comedic elements, and he felt that the audience could relate to elements of his choreography. Rose and Bowers were both young, white, recent college graduates who performed modern dance with tongue-in-cheek humor. Dance critic Jennifer Dunning lauded Rose as "the dance world's Woody Allen with more than a dash of Abbie Hoffman thrown in" (Dunning 1978, 13). Bowers was "attractively dour-faced" according to the *Washington Post*'s Alan Kriegsman, and she provided a foil for Rose's comedy (Kriegsman 1979, C11). Performing at Arthur Kill made Rose more determined, and he became unflappable in the face of mixed reactions from the audience. However, he did not experience the sexual comments that Bowers encountered. He recognized how Bowers's body elicited cheers from the audience, but he determined that reaction was not about his choreography.

When I interviewed Bowers, she did not recall Bernson and Mullis's performance, but she remembered receiving a mixed response from the audience during her dance performance with Rose. According to Bowers (2014), one movement changed the audience's engagement with the dance: "I was wearing a dress in a piece, and I did somersault and my underpants showed, and the place went crazy. I realized in that moment, "Hey, these guys don't care about the piece. They just care about women, seeing women. I'm nothing more than an object here and the art doesn't matter at all." In retrospect, she believed the dance she and Rose performed was "inappropriate" for the setting. Prior to that moment, her dance education at Sarah Lawrence College had focused on "work[ing] hard at [her] craft" while studying with renowned composition teacher Bessie Schönberg. (Bowers 2014). However, her time as a CETA employee shifted her mindset about how dance and art exist as part of a "bigger picture" with broader social and political implications (Bowers 2014). She described herself as coming from a place of privilege, and this was her first time in a prison. According to Bowers, the inmates were disinterested in the content of her performance until they saw her underpants. Given the audience's reaction to her body, she did not feel comfortable performing this dance in this setting.

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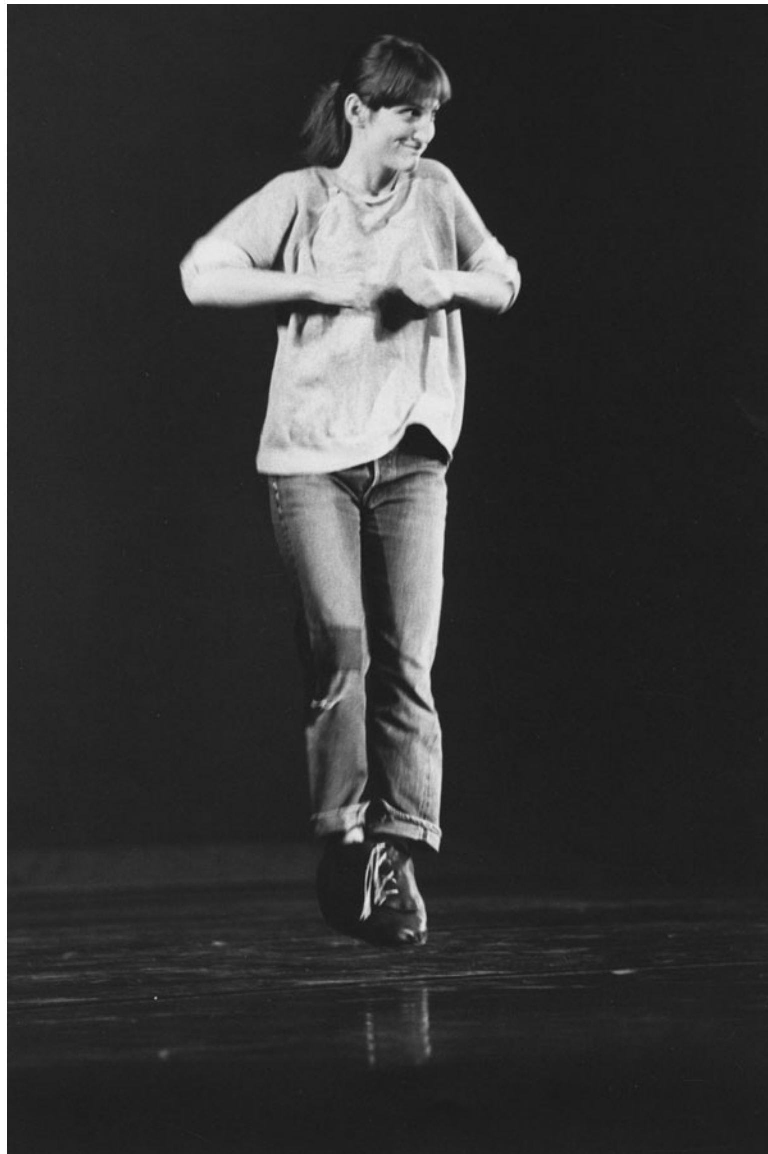

Photo 5. Martha Bowers dancing in the Celebrate Dance program, Queensborough Community College, Queens, NY. Photograph by Ann Marie Rousseau. Courtesy NYC Municipal Archives.

During my interview with Bowers, she mentioned how much the audience enjoyed Cook and Goldberg's tap dance performance that followed. Goldberg and Cook were a tap dance duo: Cook was an African American man in his sixties who was well-known in vaudeville and on Broadway, and Goldberg was his student, a young, white, Jewish woman who produced performances that brought tap dance into the realm of formal concert dance. According to Goldberg, the inmates appreciated her performance with Cook because "the admiration of tap often comes from the way people break up time," and "if anybody knew about time, these guys did" (Goldberg 2014). Here Goldberg avoided essentializing tap as a predominantly African American dance form that would appeal to a mostly African American audience, and she delved into the shared experience of how inmates and tap dancers contemplate time.[13] In my interview with Goldberg, she focused on how the inmates connected to tap dance's technique and philosophy. Tap dance blends African American and Irish dance traditions,[14] and this American vernacular

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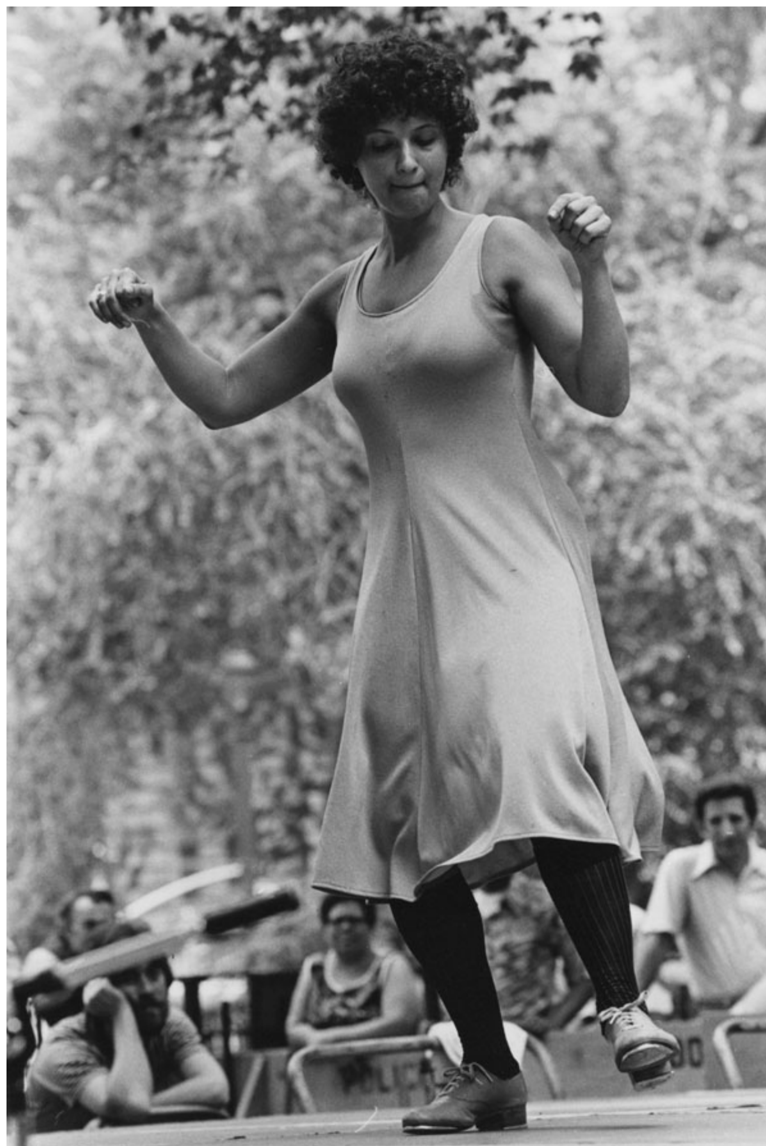
form reflects Africanist aesthetics, including polyrhythm and ephebism. Dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild explains that polyrhythmic dance maintains two or more rhythms simultaneously, while her concept of ephebism is associated with speed, youthfulness, and dynamic changes (Dixon Gottschild 1996, 14–16). The majority of inmates were African Americans and Latinos, and according to both Bowers's and Goldberg's accounts, they related strongly to Goldberg and Cook's performance. This positive reception was in part due to tap dance's embodied Africanist aesthetics, but it also may have reflected how tap dance parses time in an institution designed for temporal punishment.

Bowers described how Cook "knew [the inmates]" and "spoke their language," working in an art form they "understood" (Bowers 2014). In this case, language could be interpreted as how Cook spoke or as how he danced. As an African American man, Cook held cultural capital with an audience of men, the majority of whom were African American. Experience also mattered. Cook had

Photo 6. Jane Goldberg dancing in Union Square, Manhattan, NY. Photograph by George Malave. Courtesy NYC Municipal Archives.



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begun performing vaudeville as a child, and he rose to prominence in 1930 as a member of the two-man comedy tap team Cook and Brown (Dunning 1991). Cook had over five decades of performance experience and the skills to read his audience, improvise, and perform to a crowd. In terms of "understanding" dance, the enthusiasm surrounding the tap dance performance could also be linked to tap's prevalence in television, film, and popular entertainment. Most prisoners had probably seen tap dance in either in a live or recorded format.[15]

For Goldberg, performing at Arthur Kill Correctional Facility confirmed her identity as a successful tap dancer who could "perform time" in a manner that engaged her audience. She was a white woman succeeding in a vernacular dance form under the tutelage of an African American master dancer whom she deeply admired. For Lampert, it was a peak performance experience that validated her "dramatic dance" form that was influenced by musical theater. For Bernson and Mullis, Rose reported that it was a difficult experience. According to Rose, the inmates reacted to their dance performance in a manner that was upsetting. For Rose, that performance was a chance to focus on performing despite distractions from the audience. It increased his resilience as a performer and also made him aware of how women's bodies can be viewed on stage. For Bowers, this performance made her contemplate what her body communicated in different circumstances. Her performance was not viewed as an ironic, comic commentary on male-female relationships. She was a woman performing a somersault who revealed her buttocks in a male correctional institution. In Bowers's own words, "The place went crazy." This jarring experience forced Bowers to reconsider what her body represented on stage. She could no longer view stages as neutral spaces to present her "craft" to a receptive public. These performances reveal the complex issues of embodiment, aesthetics, and audience at play in the CETA CCF/AP dance program.

While these CETA CCF/AP performances are only two instances of the wide variety of dance work that took place nationwide, they reveal issues that were relevant to CETA dance projects on the whole. The degree to which CCF/AP addressed "the interests and needs of community and arts organizations" varied ("Cultural Council Foundation: CETA Artists Project" 1978). In some cases, the dance performances at Arthur Kill were well received and the audience appreciated the dancers' work. In other cases, the dances were not well suited for the setting of a men's prison. This variation demonstrates how CETA CCF/AP enacted a trial and error approach to community-based teaching, performance, and choreography by placing dozens of dancers in community settings across the five boroughs.

Conclusion

Though CETA was largely considered a political failure,[16] CETA arts programs created a macroeconomic intervention in the arts and culture sector and increased the prevalence of art as public service. John Kreidler framed the arts as public service in order to make artists eligible for CETA employment, and he drew upon the WPA history of artist employment during the 1930s to support his claim that the arts benefitted the general public. The concept of public service came directly from the CETA legislation: all CETA jobs were designated as Public Service Employment (PSE). Kreidler utilized his Department of Labor expertise, census analysis, and historical precedents to assert that artists and performers could offer meaningful public service in a variety of communities. As evidenced by the examples of Trisha Brown and Brenda Way in the introduction, there was a broad range in the amount of support and the purposes of the funding. CETA funding provided professional support in an era when many dance companies became nonprofit corporations. As nonprofits, dance companies were required to perform public service, and CETA arts programs were a testing ground for exploring how dance could provide public service. CETA funding was instrumental in professionalizing the dance field, and it provided support for dancers' salaries, artistic experimentation, and administrative work.

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In dance studies, it is increasingly important to investigate both the artistic work and how the artistic work is funded. By examining government support and funding practices, my research on CETA reveals aspects of the financial and bureaucratic structures that supported dancers and choreographers. This funding impacts the financial sustainability of pursuing a career in dance. It can determine who has work and has visibility, and who does not. It is also important to note the degree to which government funding upholds existing social inequities. There were tensions present in this concept of dance as public service: One of CETA CCF/AP's key weaknesses was importing state-sanctioned culture to "culturally deprived" locations. Many of the service sites were minority and low-income communities, and this "import" process upheld and propagated existing cultural hierarchies. This strategy devalued the art and performance already taking place in the communities that dancers served. For example, the Arthur Kill performances gave the inmates a chance to watch professional dancers, but they did not have the opportunity to participate in dancing themselves. In 2008, Janice Ross focused on recent dance-in-prison programs that "grew into a forum for the kind of physical and emotional expression the inmates wanted" (271). This is an example of how dance programs can provide inmates with opportunities for self-expression and artistic engagement. That being said, CETA CCF/AP contended with the ethics surrounding artists and performers working in community settings.

My research on the CETA CCF/AP in New York City supports the claim that artists benefitted from CETA employment, and the dancers I interviewed each reported positive growth during their CETA employment. For the dancers featured in this article, performing outside of the proscenium stage in a penitentiary setting caused them to rethink their performance practice. The Arthur Kill audience responded differently to each performance, but the question remains whether dance functioned as public service in this case. In reflecting on the possible goals for the Arthur Kill performances, the broader aims of CETA CCF/AP were to "create a demand for artistic services that will continue after the Project has been completed" while reaching "audiences not normally served by an artistic activity," utilizing artists' skills, and monitoring the artist's work for the duration of the project ("Community Sponsor Application" 1978). From these guidelines, it is clear that CETA CCF/AP wanted to reach new audiences at Arthur Kill. Dancers' skills were utilized, and prison employees monitored both the dancers and the audience. It is questionable whether this performance created an increased demand for artistic services. These performances were an attempt to edify audiences that did not have "access to art" with art forms that were deemed valuable. Putting dancers into "community sponsor" settings reinforced a hierarchy of artistic practices, placing the CETA CCF/AP dancers' performance above other classical, popular, or cultural dance traditions that community members may have practiced. In the case of the performance at Arthur Kill, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the audience members were incarcerated by the state. While this case study does not reflect the entirety of the CETA CCF/AP dance program, it does reveal how positioning "dance as public service" reinforces some cultural values over others. Tension exists around the concept of public service because, as evidenced in the "culture wars" of the 1990s, politicians are apt to cut federal art funding when they perceive that art no longer benefits the public (Bolton 1992). With federal money comes the assumption of public benefit, and CETA dance programs were instrumental in carrying this idea of dance as public service forward into the 1980s.

Notes

1. Brenda Way founded the Oberlin Dance Collective (ODC) in 1971 at Oberlin College. In 1976, Way relocated the company to San Francisco, California, where it continues to operate to this day; see https://www.odc.dance for more details.

2. All interviews are listed by date and occurred between the author and the interviewee indicated. This project has approval from the Temple University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research with human subjects. The dancers interviewed in this article are Martha Bowers, Jane

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Goldberg, Mitchell Rose, and Brenda Way; the administrator interviews included are with Ted Berger, George Koch, John Kreidler, and Rochelle Slovin.

3. Steven Dubin's monograph on the CETA Artists-in-Residence (AIR) Program in Chicago was published in 1987. As a sociologist, he sought to understand how CETA's cultural and organizational structure impacted artists. He conducted fieldwork in Chicago's AIR program from 1978 to1980, and he was employed in the CETA program as a research coordinator. Dubin acted as a "participant observer" (186), and he was critical of how CETA's bureaucratic structure impinged upon artists' freedom of expression. Dubin focuses on how artists became "boosters" for the city of Chicago in exchange for financial support, and he contends this program did not make use of the artists' skills (177). This is currently the only widely available monograph that addresses CETA arts programs in depth, and therefore his negative view of the CETA AIR program in Chicago has influenced general perceptions about CETA arts programs. In reality, Dubin's analysis is specific to the Chicago program, and other programs across the country had drastically different structures, purposes, and outcomes. In 2006, economist Tyler Cowen declared that the CETA arts program "brought few notable artistic successes and showed no signs of having replicated the peaks of the WPA. The roster of unemployed creators in the 1970s was not as impressive as it had been forty years earlier. The world now is wealthier, the Great Depression is long over, and artistic institutions do a better job of spotting talent early" (73). I disagree with Cowen's statements regarding CETA arts programs because he fails to take into account the degree of variation in local programs. See endnote 8 for notable CETA artists who are not generally associated with the program.

4. As stipulated by Temple University's IRB human subjects protocol, I explained my research rationale and secured verbal and written permission from participants to record our conversation and include our discussion in my research. I provided each subject with a full transcript for his or her review, and subjects had the opportunity to reflect upon their language and make adjustments as they saw fit. One subject elected to retract the majority of her interview because she did not feel comfortable sharing her experience in my research. This example demonstrates that my study design allowed subjects sufficient opportunities to revoke any portion of their interview responses.

5. The Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) passed under President Richard Nixon in 1973 as an answer to Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty programs, primarily designed to help the "unemployed, underemployed and economically disadvantaged" (Baumer and Van Horn 1985, 63). In his State of the Union speech on January 8, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared a "War on Poverty." This initiative is most closely linked to the passage of the 1965 Economic Opportunity Act, which provided employment training, education opportunities, financial support, and funded Community Action Programs (CAPs) for the poor (Zarefsky 1986, xiii).

6. Title VI in the 1974 the Emergency Jobs and Unemployment Assistance Act provided an additional $2.5 billion for interim employment and increased federal unemployment insurance (Baumer and Van Horn 1985, 65).

7. The Department of Labor utilized written and video materials to promote CETA arts programs (Koch interview, August 25, 2014). See Startzel and Walker (1981) for an in-depth independent analysis of CETA arts and humanities programs from 1977–81. This report was commissioned by the US Labor Department and compiled by Morgan Management Systems, Inc.

8. CETA artist employment was modeled after the 1930s Works Progress Administration (WPA) art and theater programs that emphasized creativity and public service (Kreidler interview, March 31, 2014). The WPA had a strong reputation for supporting many important artists and performers, but CETA is generally not credited with making a lasting contribution to professional art and performance communities due to its decentralized nature (Cowen 2006, 73). For example, it is well known that the WPA funded writers and theater artists Orson Welles, Arthur Miller, and Richard Wright (Quinn 2008, 281–82) along with dancers Katherine Dunham (Schwartz 2003, 161) and Helen Tamiris (McPherson 2012, 2). My research indicates that CETA made a significant contribution to artists and performers because it provided stable employment and training opportunities in their respective fields. Well-known individuals who benefitted from CETA include performer Bill Irwin (Nolan 2008), playwright August Wilson (Hill and Barnett 2008, 39), and choreographer Joan Myers Brown (Dixon Gottschild 2012, 285). Though these individuals received

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CETA support, they are not widely known as "CETA artists." In contrast, WPA artists are often closely associated with the depression era government relief programs that funded their creative work.

9. Historian Daniel Geary defines American post-World War II liberalism as "a political ideology committed to reducing social and economic inequality within a capitalist, formally democratic system and to securing rights for ethnoracial minorities" (2015, 8). Geary explains how liberals, many of whom were associated with the Democratic Party, "dominated mid-century intellectual discourse" (2015, 8).

10. See Lagos (2009) for Martin Snipper's obituary and biographical details.

11. Kimberly Benston describes "the era known, after Larry Neal, as The Black Arts Movement, the period extending somewhat beyond the defining decade of 1964 (the year of Malcolm X's rupture with the Nation of Islam) to 1974 (the year of [Amiri] Baraka's renunciation of absolute black nationalism), during which the category of 'blackness' served as the dominant sign of African-American cultural activity" (2000, 3).

12. According to Baumer and Van Horn (1985), CETA shifted job training completely from the federal government to the control of local municipalities, and 450 "prime sponsors" were formed to administrate CETA programs across the United States. Prime sponsors were defined as "usually state or local governments with at least 100,000 residents, [that] could establish new programs falling into one of five categories: classroom training, on-the-job training, work experience, public service employment, or supportive services, such as transportation to and from work" (Baumer and Van Horn 1985, 62). CETA artists were part of the "public service employment" (PSE) portion of CETA, and PSE jobs were full-time positions that were fully funded by the federal government.

13. Thank you to Rachel Carrico for this insight.

14. For more on the origins of tap dance and its development as an American form, see Valis Hill (2010).

15. Tap dance was regularly featured on television in the 1950s and 60s (Valis Hill 2010, 178–79, 207–209).

16. Political Scientist Gary Mucciaroni asserts that CETA's decentralized structure was formulated for political failure: it became an emblem of defeat for "positive government interventions" (1990, 14).

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