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"That's What Makes Somebody Circus": The Collaborative Process of Transforming the Meaning of Pain Through Discourse in Circus Organizations

LAURA V. MARTINEZ
Communication Studies, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, US

Drawing from a larger, in-depth qualitative study of thirteen circus acrobats, this study analyzes four excerpts with underlying narratives regarding pain in performing aerial acrobatics. Using Labov and Waletzky's (1967) guiding framework for narrative analysis and Jeffersonian (2004) transcription, this analysis situates aerial acrobats as belonging to a community of practice in which pain is discursively constructed as a feature of membership and normalized in developing the aerialist identity. How these discourses influence and are reproduced by members' discussions suggests that pain is expected, accepted and embraced to achieve the skill sets necessary for the performance and fulfillment of their occupational roles. Importantly, this study finds that the meaning of pain is transformed collaboratively through shared pain narratives. These findings suggest that pain fulfills multiple roles and purposes in circus performance that merit further exploration.

En partant d'une étude qualitative et approfondie à plus grande échelle menée sur treize acrobates de cirque, cette étude examine quatre extraits aux récits sous-jacents en rapport avec la douleur associée aux acrobaties aériennes. À l'aide du cadre directeur de Labov et Waletzky (1967) sur l'analyse narrative et de la transcription de Jefferson (2004), cette étude considère que les acrobates aérien·ne·s appartiennent à une communauté de pratique au sein de laquelle la douleur est construite dans le discours comme un trait d'appartenance et normalisée dans le développement de l'identité des acrobates. La manière dont ces discours exercent une influence et sont repris dans les discussions entre les membres suggère que la douleur est inévitable, acceptée et intégrée en vue d'atteindre le niveau d'aptitude nécessaire pour assurer la

Contact: Laura V. Martinez <laura.martinez@unlv.edu>

performance et remplir son rôle professionnel. Surtout, cette étude révèle que le sens du mot « douleur » est transformé collectivement à travers le partage de récits sur la douleur. Ces conclusions font penser que la douleur joue différents rôles et vise des objectifs multiples dans le spectacle circassien qui mériteraient des recherches plus approfondies.

Keywords: narrative analysis, discourse analysis, pain, circus, aerial acrobatics, community of practice, analyse narrative, analyse du discours, douleur, cirque, acrobaties aériennes, communauté de pratique

Circus has continued to reinvent and transform itself throughout the entirety of its history. Traditional, or classical, circuses operated under a signature "big top" tent and featured wild animal acts, jugglers, clowns and tightrope acrobats (Jacob 150; Wall 5). These circuses were operated by circus families, who passed down their skills through generations of performers and orchestrated elaborate parades to announce their arrival upon travelling by train (Jacob 158; Tait and Lavers 2). Although an estimated thirty travelling shows continue to operate in the United States, economic crises, reduced train travel and alternative entertainment options have contributed to dwindling ticket sales for traditional circuses (Khan 2017). Moreover, operating costs and ecological factors (i.e., increased attention to endangered species and calls by animal welfare activists challenging circus owners) brought about the disappearance of animal acts from most circus productions (Leroux 264; Maleval 62).

The late twentieth century brought about a new iteration of circus known as New Circus or *Nouveau Cirque* (Lavers et al. 3; Maleval 50). Various independent circus companies (e.g., Cirque Baroque, Cirque Plume, Arachaos) brought about a kind of "anti-circus circus" movement that deviated from conventional circus entertainment, marking a shift in circus history (Maleval 53). One of the key markers of New Circus was the inclusion of performers who did not come from circus families, as well as "a wide range of people with differing body types and a range of physical abilities" (Lavers et al. 104). Indeed, some of these artists developed their skill sets through emerging circus schools accessible to amateur and professional circus performers (Maleval 61). Moreover, New Circus introduced narrative and musicality and brought about a more elaborate aesthetic than had previously been present in traditional circus.

Following the progressive ideals of New Circus, Contemporary Circus brought about a metamorphosis of previous iterations of circus, blending narrative, characters, aesthetics and original music (Lavers et al. 3; Leroux 263). Although Contemporary Circus has brought about a new age of circus style, one element that has transcended through classic circus, New Circus and Contemporary Circus is the aerial acrobat (i.e., acrobats who perform gymnastic feats in the air) (Tait 9). In traditional circus, aerialists were often described as "superhuman"

or "aristocrats" and lauded for their artistic-athletic prowess (Lavers et al. 103). These performers appear to dance through the sky seamlessly and effortlessly while suspended from a variety of apparatuses by nothing other than their own strength (Tait 9). Given the "bird-like" exuberance of aerial acrobatics, the audience is unlikely to see a performer wince in pain or break character when an apparatus is wound too tightly around their body, constraining their movement or tearing through flesh (Ross and Shapiro 116). By blending "athleticism and art" (Ross and Shapiro 115), aerial acrobats project remarkable technical ability and skill. In more recent years, however, Contemporary Circus scholars have contested the display of aerial acrobatics in traditional circus as feats of superhuman prowess construed as "easy" (Lavers et al. 105). Rather, Contemporary Circus has shifted from the aforementioned perspective to one of acknowledging and presenting the humanness, effort and skill development of the aerial acrobat. Lavers et al. argue that "many Contemporary Circus creators reject the presentation of circus performers as superbeings, stars, or aristocrats, with a large number of companies aiming to present performers as ordinary people similar to members of the audience" (104). Today, as circus training and technique are commonly developed through formal circus schools, Contemporary Circus has also opened the conversation to important characteristics of aerial artistry—the pain, risk and propensity for injury among aerial acrobats.

Injury, pain and risk in aerial acrobatics

Concerning the high demands on the bodies of aerial acrobats, this section provides an overview of existing literature related to the stressors that encompass training and repeated performance of aerialists. Consequently, the daily practices of aerialists often result in injury and the ubiquity of pain. For example, an analysis of five years of data provided by Cirque du Soleil revealed 18,336 injury reports from 1,376 artists (i.e., acrobats who performed "acts requiring gymnastics, diving, martial arts, aerial movements") (Shrier et al. 1144). Moreover, research on this demographic suggests that aerialists may be more prone to sustaining injury than professional athletes (Berzon and Maremont 2015; Stubbe et al. 4). Compared to ground disciplines, Greenspan and Stuckey (6) reported higher rates of injury in aerial performance with ground elements and aerial performance alone. In their study on circus arts students, 100% of participants reported some kind of health problem related to circus acrobatics (Stubbe et al. 1). Similar incidences of injury appear in numerous medical journals. For example, data collected from an Australian circus school over one academic year revealed 351 injuries among sixty-three circus students (Munro 237). In 2012, the

Wall Street Journal reported that Cirque du Soleil's show *KÀ* had a higher injury rate than other top injury-prone occupations, including police protection, fire protection and construction work (Berzon and Maremont 2015). Although few studies have focused on injuries specific to aerial acrobats and instead report on circus arts in general (cf. Greenspan and Stuckey 1; McBlaine and Davis 45; Walby and Stuart 7), the data is valuable in providing a holistic view of injury rates and patterns in circus performance.

Contributing to the high incidence of injury among aerial acrobats are the nature of the aerialists' work itself and the demands of the occupation on aerialists' bodies, including contextual (e.g., preprofessional versus professional, discipline, diet) physiological (e.g., age, medical history) and psychological factors (e.g., mental health) (Greenspan and Stuckey 8). However, aerial acrobats sustain significant injury patterns across their discipline. Using self-reported data, McBlaine and Davis (49) found that aerialists reported an injury rate of 13.70 injuries per 1,000 mean hours. Moreover, it is important to provide the specific types of injuries that aerialists sustain in order to grasp the demands on their bodies and the areas most affected by aerial activity. For example, aerialists are prone to lower back pain, which is aggravated by continuous training and can be career-ending for the performer (Chimenti et al. 185). Other common ailments include knee injuries (Long et al. 203), injury to soft tissues (Wolfenden and Angioi 56), wrist injuries (Stubbe et al. 3) and ankle, lumbar spine, shoulder and hip injuries (Munro 237). Although the bulk of these injuries are minor, repeated training and minimal recovery times aggravate injuries and increase the risk of injuries developing into more significant chronic impairments (Shrier et al. 1145).

Aerial acrobatics is a highly technical athletic activity that requires the artist to "coordinate their body movements with tremendous precision" (Cossin et al., *Repeatability of force signals* 185). In their study of thirty-one Canadian circus artists, Walby and Stuart note that "the shocks absorbed by the aerialists' bodies flying high above crowds would rupture most humans," accentuating the juxtaposition between their "graceful display" and intense physicality and endurance (7). Wanke et al. (158) found that injuries often result from a combination of aerialists' workloads and the challenging movements and effort necessary to stabilize muscles and joints (Ganderton et al. 254). For example, aerialists are required to engage maximum strength at highly flexible positions and high rates of repetition (Huberman et al. 146). In addition, Cossin et al. measured the dynamic tension force of various aerial circus apparatuses and found that performers "generated a tension force many times their bodyweight [*sic*] at the hanging point" (*Making single-point Aerial Circus Disciplines Safer* 26), with maximal force occurring during free falls and while swinging.

Moreover, Hakim et al. (154) conducted a biomechanical analysis to identify the types of movements aerial acrobats should avoid to minimize the risk of injury. Their findings support previous literature identifying physiological factors and complexity of movement as key contributors to injury. They also found that poor preparation for aerial acrobatic activity (e.g., passive long-term stretching compared to active muscle-strengthening exercises) often exacerbated the propensity for injury. Further, circus acrobats also suffer from mental health problems related to "sleep quality, mental energy, feelings and emotions, [and] satisfaction with rehearsals and performances" (Stubbe et al. 2). Aerialists in particular report higher levels of depression than floor acrobats, but lower levels than object manipulators (Van Rens and Heritage 5). As psychological factors are prone to exacerbating injury, performers may also be plagued by low self-efficacy, negative self-talk, anxiety and stress after sustaining an injury, as well as generalized anxiety and fatigue during periods of intense training and performance (Donohue et al. 314; Ross and Shapiro 118).

A general acceptance of occupational risk, injury and the possibility of death may contribute to psychological and physiological ailments among aerial acrobats. An exploration of Cirque du Soleil states that "the viability of [the circus] business is rooted in the willingness of a core group of performers to risk their lives on a daily basis" (Gross 2015). In addition, research on circus performers has identified them as precarious workers who are not adequately compensated for their labour (Walby and Stuart 15). A qualitative exploration of socialization processes among circus acrobats revealed an unspoken rule in their circus school to not speak of injuries or experiencing pain with other peers or coaches (Legendre 129). If risk is embedded into the aerialist occupation, talking about fear of injury or pain may be perceived by members as defying occupational norms. Therefore, "it is better to hide your pain, minimize your injuries, not talk about your fears" (Legendre 129).

Taken together, the existing literature on general circus arts and aerialists indicates a high level of injury incidence that may cause the artist to live with chronic pain and/or force career termination. The high bodily demands and risk factors inherent to the aerialist occupation are key contributors to injury and pain; however, further research focusing specifically on aerial acrobats is needed to support these claims. Therefore, this study aims to shed light on the ubiquity of pain and injury in aerial acrobatic performance. By focusing on how aerialists talk about pain and injury, we may uncover critical understandings of why pain and injury are readily accepted in this line of performance. To fulfill these aims, a more in-depth look into the membership of the aerialist community and the shared discourse constructed to create these collective narratives of pain and injury is necessary. As such, the following section analyzes circus membership through the lens of a community of practice.

Aerialists as a community of practice

To understand how pain and injury are discursively constructed as features of aerial acrobats' identities and subsequent membership as circus performers, it may be well suited to establish that various communities of practice exist within the circus. Paltridge uses the term "community of practice" to identify "a group of people who share some kind of activity [. . .] have particular ways of communicating with each other [. . .] [and] generally have shared goals and may have shared values and beliefs" (16). Further, Wenger et al. define communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (4). Given these definitions, circus performers seemingly qualify as belonging to similar communities of practice. For example, collaborations between circus artists require "trust, respect, and effective communication" (Donohue et al. 2). Moreover, an ethnography of circus artists in Argentina characterizes circus as breaking boundaries, and having dedication to the craft means that "there is always something else to be achieved" (Infantino 4). In her research of contemporary circus, Ryd labels circus as "clearly a community of practice, involving people who train, perform, and share knowledge about circus" (431). Therefore, circus artists can be categorized as belonging to various intersecting communities of practice, given their shared knowledge, behaviours, goals and values. However, the entity of the circus is a wide-ranging global institution with varied iterations and goals.

As such, circus communities across the globe likely exhibit varied values, practices and approaches to their training, and it would be a disservice to generalize the practices of performers (Wacquant 38). Indeed, it is important to denote the sociocultural factors that form these communities of practice (Banton, *The International Politics of Race* 9; Banton, *Max Weber on "ethnic communities"* 19). For example, this study included both amateur and professional aerialists, given that the ability to practice aerial acrobatics is accessible in North America but not globally. However, identifying as a member of the circus community (at any level) may result in having shared ideals of what circus performance should encompass. Tait describes circus performance as follows: "Circus performance presents artistic and physical displays of skillful action by highly rehearsed bodies that also perform cultural ideas: of identity, spectacle, danger, transgression—in sum, of circus" (6). As presented by Tait (2), circus performance reifies the larger cultural ideas of circus. Therefore, although it would be a generalization to identify circus as one community of practice, there are underlying common characteristics of circus that performers may choose to subscribe to and enact (i.e., shared values, goals, practices, etc.). This study aims to understand whether, in developing their social identity as aerialists (Stets and Burke 224), the way these artists talk about pain and injury may be mobilized to demonstrate commitment and membership

to different types of circus cultures. For example, aerial acrobats may bolster their level of affiliation to circus via the extent to which they transform their perception of pain and collectively reproduce pain and injury narratives.

As a subgroup of circus performers (Greenspan and Stuckey 2), aerialists may share similar practices, values and beliefs about their occupational identity. These may be inculcated at different levels of membership (e.g., amateur, pre-professional, professional). Moreover, existing literature indicates that aerial acrobats across different levels of membership are subject to similar types of injury (Cossin et al., *Making single-point aerial circus disciplines safer* 3). Therefore, the perspectives of aerial acrobats at varying levels of their careers are valuable contributions to understanding a particularly noteworthy narrative in this community—the discursive construction of pain and injury among aerial acrobats. That is, how aerialists talk about pain and injury can shape how these issues are perceived in their communities and how these narratives influence member behaviours and attitudes. Through a narrative analysis lens (Paltridge 90), this article explores how individual experiences of pain become collective socializing narratives that transform how members perceive pain and injury in circus performance. Furthermore, as the author identifies as an aerial acrobat and has observed shared practices and conversations around pain and injury in multiple circus organizations, this research is also guided by her own experience in the community. With these objectives and contexts in mind, the research question guiding this study is, "How do individual experiences of pain among aerial acrobats transform the meaning of pain in circus organizations?"

Methods

To navigate how the meaning of pain is discursively transformed by aerial acrobats within their communities of practice, this study applies discourse analysis to unpack how aerialists talk about pain and how pain constitutes identity as a circus artist. Norton (4) argues that identity is discursively constructed, and identity and language are thus constitutive of each other: "discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objective knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people" (Fairclough 259). Further, language can be a tool to express affiliation with a particular group (Gee 60). A framework of identity as forged by discourse (Paltridge 15) is, therefore, a useful tool for understanding how the way aerial acrobats talk about pain is constitutive of their circus identity.

In addition, a narrative lens can illuminate how the speaker evaluates key events. Based on Labov and Waletzky's model of narrative (12), this analysis uses circus artists' reflections on injury and training to highlight how the *evaluation*

(i.e., how speakers feel about the event), *resolution* (i.e., how the event unfolded) and *coda* (i.e., morals or lessons learned from the speaker) schemas of the framework are relayed in their narratives (Lambrou 33). This article applies a narrative model to analyze aerial acrobats' mentions of pain and related constructs linked to training, injury, membership and identity.

The author of this study is an active member of a circus arts organization in the southwestern United States. She started as a student without any circus arts or performance background, received coaching from established circus schools, and has since grown into a professional circus artist and coach. Her membership in aerialist communities of practice at both amateur and professional levels has allowed for the manifestation of *self-reflexivity*, or the inclusion of the researcher's own experiences and viewpoints (Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods* 156). Having access to this population as an ingroup member, the author implements the use of *verstehen*, which focuses on the "study of groups on their own terms and from their own point of view" (Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods* 52). However, some qualitative methodologists would argue that the interviewer-interviewee interaction necessitates "enough distance to ask real questions and to explore, not share, assumptions" (Merriam and Tisdell 113). Understanding the complexities of the researcher-participant relationship, Tracy (*Qualitative Quality* 842; *Qualitative Research Methods* 156) argues that self-reflexivity, especially in scenarios where the researcher is an ingroup member, can be a marker of qualitative rigour so long as the researcher is transparent about their impetus and notes the limitations of their biases. Moreover, having a shared association allows for a more conversational dynamic between interviewer and participant that would likely not emerge naturally otherwise, as it may evoke participant reflexivity (i.e., dialogic interviewing, Way et al. 723).

Procedures

The data presented in this analysis are part of a larger study in which the author interviewed thirteen aerial acrobats from two circus arts studios in the southwestern United States. Interviews were conducted both in person and through video calls. Participants included active members from either organization ranging from beginner to professional levels of experience. The author used a semi-structured interview guide during the data collection process, which included items such as "How did you get involved in circus arts," "What are your biggest safety concerns" and "What measures do you take to prevent injury?" The four excerpts of this analysis were lifted from four different participant interviews; these excerpts were chosen because they predominantly highlighted discourse related to pain in aerial acrobatics. The interview questions participants responded to in the analyzed excerpts include "What is your

motivation to train," "How important is aerial to you" and "What makes someone a real circus artist?"

The interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai transcription software and then polished by the author through repeated listening. To extract the excerpts that would be particularly useful for this analysis, the author analyzed all thirteen interviews and searched for the following keywords: *pain*, *hurt*, *injury* and any reference to physical stress (i.e., *peeling*, *bruises*, *burns*). After identifying the excerpts that referenced the keywords, she analyzed each excerpt to extract the longest continuous sequence in conversation that would best reflect a full narrative (Labov and Waletzky 12). As a result, the author chose four excerpts from four different interviews—two excerpts from professional aerial acrobats and coaches, and two from amateur aerial acrobats. Although the sample is limited, the variety of these excerpts allows for a balanced representation of aerialists at different stages of their careers and different levels of affiliation with circus arts.

Through repeated listening, the author used Jefferson's (13) glossary of transcript symbols to polish each transcript. First, she listened to the audio from each excerpt and marked brief and more pronounced pauses. Then, she marked points of overlap, emphasis, laughter while speaking, prolongation of sounds and shifts in pitch, intonation, volume and speed compared to the surrounding talk. While doing so, she also marked audible inbreath and outbreath, as well as cut-off sounds. Each excerpt was reviewed six to eight times in its entirety to produce the most polished transcription possible. A detailed version of each transcript is available in the Appendix.

Given the author's role as a member of the ingroup of the aerialist population, she actively shaped the data collected via the questions she posed and the underlying tacit knowledge she has with community members. Although interviews provide a structured approach to conversations between researcher and participant—and thus cannot be considered organic conversation—the author's unique position as both researcher and member allowed each interview to flow using circus-specific terminology (e.g., types of apparatuses, move sets, skills training), shared jargon and naturally occurring wording throughout. In addition, through the author's shared tacit knowledge with participants, the discourse can be expected to resemble an organic exchange between two circus artists. In her ethnographic research of a circus in Switzerland, Offen notes that linguistic accommodation is often necessary when directions and conversations are given to outgroup members. However, "among friends or equals in the circus" (480), making accommodations for language is often rendered unnecessary, as artists are well-versed in the community's jargon.

Consequently, interviewee responses were analyzed through the lens of naturally occurring casual conversations between two members of the circus with similar assumptions, contextual perceptions and worldviews. Given the

underlying assumption of shared meaning, interviewees did not need to provide detailed specific explanations that would be useful for an outsider to capture the intended meaning. This key distinction invites discussion of pain and discomfort as a constructed discourse belonging to a co-constructed cultural narrative within the aerialist community (i.e., where pain is normalized). Had interviews occurred with a member of the outgroup in a setting where pain may be rejected, interviewees would have further explained their statements on pain to provide the listener with a more accurate description. Therefore, the aerial acrobatics community of practice creates a distinction with regard to how pain is understood; there is the public's general understanding of pain, and then there is *circus pain*.

Data analysis

The following analysis includes four excerpts that highlight narratives related to how pain and injury are described, experienced and attributed value in developing the aerialist identity. The excerpts are presented in an edited transcript format for reading fluidity alongside their analysis. The complete Jeffersonian transcriptions for each excerpt are provided in the Appendix at the end of this manuscript. Together, these narratives provide an understanding of the collective discursive construction of pain and injury as experienced in aerial acrobatics.

The first excerpt from Amanda (age thirty-two, professional circus performer and coach) includes her response and subsequent discussion to the inquiry on injuries sustained from circus arts training. She shares a narrative of sustaining a shoulder injury while trying a new aerial skill, as well as the subsequent treatment and healing process:

Amanda: I've had a couple minor injuries. Probably one of the scariest was missing a leg hook in a drop. So I pretty much free fell from the silks, but I caught it on the way down. So I didn't fall onto the ground. But, I did injure my shoulder because of how I fell with it, because it's a lot of—it's a lot of pressure (laughs) and strain on your arm when you fall out of something [. . .] Um, that particular drop was an open drop, so it's a little bit higher level of danger for sure, and risk. I learned from that one that I do (laughs) need to slow down with certain things because I was like, "Oh, like I'm gonna try and make this catch," and this was pretty early on in aerial, and I didn't quite take the time that I needed to focus on the steps in the drop. So while I was working on it, I had missed something on the wrap that probably could have caught me, and I wouldn't have missed it completely if I had paid attention to it. So yeah, it's definitely taught me to learn the ins and outs of things before just going for them (laughs).

Interviewer: Did you seek out treatment or just nurse it on your own?

Amanda: Um, I did. I saw a physical therapist for a few weeks to make sure that I had healed my shoulder correctly, but didn't just let it sit 'cause I knew it wasn't too happy with me (laughs).

Interviewer: And did you train during that time?

Amanda: I did, yes. I just took it easy with certain things and with putting strain on that shoulder in particular, but I did train, and I cross trained to heal it as well.

Interviewer: What advice would you give to a new member of circus or someone who's trying circus for the first time?

Amanda: Take your time [. . .] Patience is probably the biggest thing. And do it because you love it. That's the—yeah (laughs), patience, and do it because you love it.

Interviewer: What about, in terms what can they expect in terms of discomfort or pain?

Amanda: Um, circus does come with a certain level of discomfort for sure. And it kinda depends on what you're willing to do, deal with. You know, why are you doing circus to begin with? You know, if you love it so much, so it doesn't matter what bruises and stuff you get, you're in the right place. If you don't want any bruises or anything showing, this probably isn't for you (laughs) because you will get bruises and burns and you're going to be sore and tired and probably cranky from certain things, but it just depends on what you're looking for from aerial (laughs).

In her excerpt, Amanda describes the incident as "one of the scariest" (*evaluation*) in her career, for which she sought physical therapy and engaged in careful training of the joint (*resolution*). The *coda* in her narrative is two-fold. She mentions learning from the incident to "slow down" and "take the time" to perfect a skill. She also advises new members not to rush into new skills and to have patience and a dedicated passion for circus. Further, she discursively constructs pain as necessary to becoming a circus artist. She notes that bruises, burns, soreness and fatigue *will* happen in circus, and that these are indicative of the notion that "you're in the right place."

The second excerpt from Alyssa (age thirty, amateur circus performer and student) details her response to a query regarding her motivation to engage in circus arts training. In her narrative, Alyssa explains her motivation to train consistently in circus, and how circus has been transformative for her identity:

Alyssa: It's really hard. It's not easy. I actually struggle a lot with motivation. I think just because on certain days, like contortion days, that's maybe four hours plus of working out all in one session, and then contortion itself is

just emotionally taxing. It's tough when I'll have a really long day and I know that I'm going to be sore the next day, and I know I have to get up and do something else, and it's hard, but I actually tend to—it seems funny to say, but I use social media [. . .] I have this list of people that I check in on in the morning. I want to see what they're up to, and I see that they're working out, and I see they're training, I see that they're doing something, I'm like, okay, alright girl, they're doing it, you need to get up and do it. It doesn't get me down. I love watching people train, and I love watching other people do their thing. It never makes me feel inadequate or jealous [. . .] I see them doing the damn thing and I'm like, "I WANT THAT," right? Isn't that what I want?

Interviewer: How important is aerial to you?

Alyssa: It's everything. It changed my life completely. It just changed everything for me. Training is hard, and circus is hard and it hurts, and I've gotten injured a lot and the rehab is tough, but I would not trade it for anything else [. . .] So I would gladly take the injuries and having to go get dry-needled and painful massage (laughs), all the stuff you have to constantly do. I wouldn't trade it. I'll tell people and they're like, "Wow, that's a lot of work." Like, yeah, but you don't know how hard it was before.

In her transcript, Alyssa evaluates her training as "emotionally taxing" and "tough" (*evaluation*). However, she draws motivation and drive from following other circus artists on social media (*resolution*). The *coda* in her narrative is that rather than feeling "inadequate or jealous," she can look at these artists to inspire her to continue her training, as she shares similar goals with them.

Alyssa discursively constructs circus as transformative and pain as an instrumental feature of that transformation. She outlines that "training is hard and circus is hard and it hurts," yet she would "gladly take the injuries" that accompany the transformation into a circus artist. When asked about the importance of circus training in her life, she responds that circus is "everything" and "changed [her] life completely."

The third excerpt from Steven (age forty-two, professional circus performer and coach) includes his response to a query on his motivation to engage in circus arts training. Steven discusses his motivation to train and the payoff from dedicated training:

Steven: To get strong (laughs). I mean everything's easier, so the more flexible you are and the stronger you are, I think everything is just simpler, and so that's a big motivation [. . .] Seeing these guys get their roll ups the other day, it was really exciting motivation to work on that [. . .] To be able to do circus every day, you really need to be up to like forty hours a week, where

> it's just every day all day [. . .] So that's one motivation, to keep excelling and pushing myself. I think the other big motivation is like [. . .] every time you learn a new skill, what's the drive? Right? Like you want to perfect the skill, you want to really get it good and dialed, you want to clean up the lines, extend the toe point, fix the reach with the hand [. . .] So I think part of the training helps build confidence, and some part of the training helps build muscle memory, but also every time you get a little stronger there's this objective to try to get to the next level, to try the next harder skill. And I think that that drive alone, it's really rewarding, because it's all progress and progression [. . .] If you're just trying to be a better version of yourself versus against everybody else, then there's no comparison. You can be motivated by everybody else's inspiration. You can be inspired by their hard work [. . .] But those moments are what make it worth all the hard work. You know, the peeling calluses, the ripped skin, the pulled tendons and muscles and everything else. It's all worth it when you have that perfect day of training or performance.

Echoing Alyssa's transcript, Steven relays how he relies on others for motivation versus intimidation. He evaluates his training as exhausting but necessary to achieve a higher level of skill (*evaluation*). The outcomes of dedicated training are increased confidence, muscle memory and strength (*resolution*). The *coda* of Steven's narrative simultaneously describes his discursive construction of pain as a feature of being a circus artist. He notes that "the hard work [. . .] the peeling calluses, the ripped skin, the pulled tendons and muscles" are "all worth it when you have that perfect day of training or performance."

The fourth excerpt from Andrea (age forty-three, amateur circus performer and student) is taken in response to the question about her motivation to engage in circus arts training:

Andrea: My motivation? It's just, it makes me feel alive. It just makes everything better.

Interviewer: How important is aerial to you?

Andrea: Very important. I couldn't live without it [. . .] I guess I feel like it's somewhere and something where I belong [. . .] In circus everybody's a little strange, which is really cool. And then because everybody's strange, everybody is very accepting of other people's weirdness, and we embrace the weirdness I think. That's why, you know the circus freak, it like [. . .] it goes together.

Interviewer: What do you think makes someone a real circus artist?

Andrea: Someone who is willing to put their body through the pain and hurt and sacrifice and all the odds against you to succeed. You put your body

through so much just to make people happy. If that's what drives you and you like that, you're able to do that—that's what makes somebody circus.

Interviewer: How has being a part of this community influenced the way you see yourself?

Andrea: Um, tremendously. Confidence, a lot more confidence. Definitely.

Interviewer: What do you think it is about aerial that brings out the confidence?

Andrea: Because aerial is not—it's not for anybody, like you have to work so hard, and you have to have a certain amount of strength that most people don't have. If you push yourself and you achieve things that are so beyond anything you ever thought you could do. And when you're able to do that, you get out of there in such a high that you feel like you can do anything.

Because Andrea's excerpt does not narrate a particular occurrence, the transcript was not analyzed through the narrative model framework. However, her excerpt highlights the discursive construction of the circus artist's identity as related to pain. She describes a prototypical circus artist as "someone who is willing to put their body through the pain and hurt and sacrifice" for the purpose of performing and connecting to the audience. She enacts her identity as a member of circus by establishing that circus is "not for everybody" and requires a level of strength and endurance "that most people don't have."

Discussion

To answer the proposed research question, the narrative analyses of Amanda's, Alyssa's and Steven's excerpts highlight how dedicated training transforms into self-efficacy for circus artists, even when this training is fraught with pain. All four excerpts convey that some degree of pain is expected for members of the circus, and that it is through painstaking and emotionally taxing dedication that one builds an identity as an aerialist. These findings support literature on the bodily demands of aerial artistry given the necessary precision (Cossin et al., *Repeatability of force signals* 3), challenging movements, shocks absorbed (Walby and Stuart 7) and demanding workloads (Wanke et al. 158). In aerial artistry, any degree of pain is overshadowed by the desire to belong to the community of practice. Unsurprisingly, the repeated mentions of *strength* and *confidence* further support the active role that pain plays in the aerialist community and discursively construct pain as the pathway through which strength and confidence are attained. The findings of this study add a nuanced layer to how pain can be a channel for aerial artistic performance.

Furthermore, as evidenced by the analysis of the four excerpts above, there is a multi-layered relationship between pain and being a circus artist; the aerialist community of practice has constructed a particular discourse in which pain is embodied, discursive, embedded and instrumental to the community. The excerpts above indicate an expectation of pain that goes hand in hand with doing circus arts. While the scope of this study focuses on the discursive construction of pain, it is important to note that there may be an element of sacrifice alongside pain that is required of circus performers at both amateur and professional levels. Future research should analyze how much pain performers are willing to endure toward which goals. If pain and/or sacrifice are preliminary conditions for practicing aerial acrobatics, circus schools should engage in more transparent and open conversations about the demands on the body required by this line of performance. For example, the presence of pain may initially dissuade new members from continuing the practice if they are not willing to embrace pain as part of circus generally and aerial artistry specifically. Thus, pain becomes a filter that may operate as inclusion criteria for membership (Legendre 119). Amanda's excerpt, for example, indicates that a lack of regard for bruises is necessary to progress as a circus artist. She claims that "If you don't want any bruises or anything showing, this probably isn't for you because you will get bruises and burns" (Transcript 1). Andrea echoes a similar sentiment in describing a *real* circus artist as someone "willing to put their body through the pain and hurt and sacrifice" (Transcript 4) to succeed as an aerial acrobat, thus rendering *pain* and *hurt* as necessary features of circus membership.

Additionally, this analysis sheds light on aerialists' attitudes toward pain as a feature of circus membership. During the transcription process, the author noted that laughter was present in almost all mentions of pain and physical ailment. For example, Amanda (Transcript 1) laughed when talking about the pressure and strain she put on her shoulder, the danger of a particular move, the pain she felt in her shoulder and the discomfort that new circus members should expect. Alyssa (Transcript 2) laughed when talking about painful treatment of injuries. Steven (Transcript 3) laughed as he vividly detailed the number of seemingly common injuries he has sustained throughout his training.

Literature on laughter and dialogue suggests that unilateral laughter can be used to manage ambiguity and tension, especially when the laughter is present alongside information that is not particularly funny (Adelsward 107). In their review of laughter in conversation, Ginzburg et al. (139) identify this phenomenon as *incongruous laughter* (i.e., laughter that clashes with the subject of conversation). The presence of incongruous laughter in these excerpts—surfacing throughout discussions of pain, danger and injury—may reveal a level of self-awareness among circus artists regarding how they discursively construct

pain and how this construction contrasts with outsiders' perceptions of pain. Further exploration of laughter in circus artists' narratives would yield a more descriptive understanding of *how* laughter is operationalized.

Moving forward, the author proposes the following areas of study: (1) continued in-depth research on the discursive construction of pain (i.e., pain talk) in circus arts communities; (2) an intricate analysis of language choices, both discursive and embodied, related to pain and injury and how these constitute membership; and (3) an exploration into the different roles of pain as discursively constructed by aerialist communities of practice.

Firstly, this article provides a snapshot of the relationship between pain and the aerial acrobat identity. One limitation of this study is the small sample size, which features aerialists at different levels and types of membership (i.e., amateur and professional). For a more holistic understanding of the discursive construction of pain, future research should apply an ethnographic approach in which the researcher enters the field and is able to observe and capture the raw language as it naturally occurs within this context first-hand. Such access can uncover deeper insights into the relationship between pain and artistic expression that is only hinted at in the above excerpts. If pain is necessary to become an aerial acrobat, then pain becomes normalized in this setting; the different ways pain is discursively constructed as normal, expected and embraced provide a crystallized view into the juxtaposition of pain and beauty that is present in this community.

Secondly, future research in this context should look more closely at the language choices related to pain and injury used by members of the aerialist community. *How* pain is discussed can further illuminate the relationship between pain and membership. As previously mentioned, pain can filter out those whose pain threshold is incongruent with becoming an aerial acrobat. The current analysis suggests that pain is not only expected but eventually accepted and embraced. Moreover, pain appears to be instrumental in fostering membership and thereby cementing identity saliency; for example, Steven's excerpt hints at the evolution of the meaning of pain as discursively constructed by noting that "the peeling calluses, the ripped skin, the pulled tendons and muscles and everything else. It's all worth it when you have that perfect day of training or performance" (Transcript 3). How members talk about pain indicates their level of affiliation and membership. These findings differ from existing literature on how discussion of pain is approached in circus schools (Legendre 121); while previous scholarship suggests that performers should hide and minimize pain, injuries and fears (Legendre 119), this study's findings suggest that *talking* about pain is akin to identity building and not in defiance of occupational norms. Furthermore, a practical implication of this study is to reinforce discussions of pain, injury, risk-taking and fear in open communication within aerialist communities of practice. In doing so, this

approach better aligns with contemporary circus scholarship that promotes discussion of aerial acrobats as "ordinary people" (Lavers et al. 104) and helps in the fulfillment of the Contemporary Circus presentation of performers.

Lastly, the discursive construction of pain indicates that it fulfills multiple roles for community membership. As the aerialist identity becomes more salient, discourse around pain within the community transforms members' orientation toward pain. While members may have started with an aversion to or rejection of pain, the meaning of pain transforms into "pain is a feature of membership and identity." As aerialists progress in their craft, pain talk denotes membership, skill level and experience. Further, *circus pain* has a purpose. Donohue et al. (320) suggest that as aerial acrobats enhance both their cognitive and physical skills, these can simultaneously enhance their creativity and performance. An analysis of expert professional performers from Cirque du Soleil and the National Circus School in Montreal reveals that skill mastery is fundamental to developing the circus artist identity and moulding a mindset of discipline and fearlessness (Filho et al. 68). Mastering these skills, however, requires that aerial acrobats perform on surfaces made of hard metal, rope and fabric, among others, that leave the body "often marked, calloused, and scarred by the interaction" (Lavers et al. 7), thereby situating pain as a formative part of skill mastery. In short, circus pain feeds circus ability and skill. However, encouraging discussion of pain and injury can result in a more humane approach to coaching circus skills without taking away from the technical prowess expected of performers.

Conclusion

Through their pain narratives, aerial acrobats construct pain as a feature of community membership and an instrument to develop identity. Pain in aerialist communities of practice is transformative and necessary for membership, functioning in part as inclusion criteria for becoming an aerial acrobat. The analysis presented in this article indicates that pain fulfills several roles for aerial acrobats, including bolstering their identity as aerialists and serving as an impetus for motivation. For example, as Andrea notes, "You put your body through so much just to make people happy [. . .] If that's what drives you and you like that, you're able to do that—that's what makes somebody circus" (Transcript 4). Although preliminary, this study carries important implications for understanding how pain discourse among members both influences and is reproduced through member behaviours within their community of practice. Given the prevalence of ailments and injury among these performers, however, the

way pain is discursively constructed may contribute to creating toxic, unproductive and unhealthy attitudes toward navigating membership and identity. This study recommends that future research efforts in this context attend to developing and implementing interventions that transform the existing pain discourse into one that better serves and protects aerial acrobats from repeated injury.

Statements and Declarations

The author reports that there are no competing interests to declare.

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Appendix

Transcript 1. Amanda

01	I:	Have you gotten injured before from aerial?
02	A:	Yes.
03	I:	Can you tell me a little bit about how that happened (.) or
04		what happened?
05	A:	Yeah, it wa:s a- I've had a ↑couple minor injuries. Probably
06		one of the sc<u>a</u>riest ones was <u>missing</u> a:: ↑leg hook in a
07		drop. So I pretty much freefell from the silks, but I
08		ca:ught it on the way ↓down. So I didn't fall onto the
09		grou:nd. But, I <u>did</u> injure my shoulder because of how I
10		↑fell with it because it's a lot of- it's a lot of pressure
11		(haha) and strain on your arm when you >fall out of
12		something,< °kinda catch° (without feet) or anything like
13		↓that. Um, (1.85) <u>that</u> particular drop was, >it was an open
14		drop<, so: it's a little bit <higher level of> dang(h)er for
15		↑sure and risk. But um,(.) I learned ↑from that one that I <u>do</u>
16		(haha) that I do >need to slow down< with certain things
17		because I was like, ↑oh, like I'm ↑gonna try and make this
18		catch and this was pretty early on in aerial and I <didn't
19		<u>quite</u> (.) take the time that I needed to:> focus on the
20		steps in the ↑drop. So while I was working on it, I had
21		missed somethi:ng on the wrap that probably could have
22		↑caught me and I wouldn't have missed it completely (.) if
23		I- had I paid attention to it. So: yeah, it's definitely
24		taught me to learn the ins and outs for <u>sure</u> of things
25		before just going for them (haha).
26	I:	That's- that's scary. Umm, did you recover quickly from that?
27	A:	[Yep, (hahaha) I di(h)d.]
28	I:	Did you seek out treatment or just nurse it on your own?
29	A:	Um, I did. I saw a physical therapist fo:r a few weeks to
30		make sure that I had healed my shoulder ↓correctly, but

31		didn't just let it sit 'cause I knew it wasn't too↑happy
32		with me (haha).
33	I:	And did you train during that time?
34	A:	I di:d, yes. I just took it easy with: certain things a:nd
35		umm with putti:ng strain on that shoulder in particular,
36		but I did train and I cross trained to >heal it as well.<
37	I:	Umm, what↑advice would you give to a new member of circus
38		or someone who's trying circus for the first time?
39	A:	Umm, take your time. Don't rush into things.. hhh Be
40		patient with it. Patience. Patience is >probably the biggest
41		thing.< And (.) do it because you love it. That's °the°, yeah
42		(haha), patience, and do it because you love it.
43	I:	What about umm, in terms of what can they expect in terms of
44		discomfort or pain?
45	A:	Um, circus <u>does</u> come with a certain lev(h)el of
46		dis(h)comfort for <u>su:re</u>. A::nd it kinda depends o:n (.) what
47		you're willing to: deal with. You know what-↑why are you
48		doing circus to↑begin with? You know, if, <u>if</u> (.) you love
49		it so much so it doesn't↑matter what bruises and >stuff you
50		get,< you're in the right place. If you don't want any
51		↑bruises or anything showing, you prob- this probably isn't
52		for you (haha) because you will get↓bruises and↓burns a:nd
53		you're going to be↑sore and tired and probably cranky: from
54		certain things, but it just depends on what you're looking
55		for from aer(h)ial (haha).

Transcript 2: Alyssa

01	I:	Okay. I'm going to↑move into a different section no::w.
02		What is your motivation to↑train, espe(h)cially twelve to
03		fifteen ho(h)urs a week?
04	A:	[It's really ha:rd.] Um ((clears throat))
05		It's <u>not</u> easy:. I actually struggle a lot with↑motivation
06		(.) Um, I think just↑because o:n certain days like

(*Continued*)

Transcript 2. (Continued)

07		contortion days, you know, >that's °like maybe°< four hours
08		↑plus of working out like just >all in one session< and then
09		contortion↑ itself is just emotionally↑ taxing. Um, so: it,
10		it's, it's tough >when I'll have a really long day< and I
11		know that (.) I'm going to be↑ sore the next↑ day and I know
12		I have to get up and do something else (.) and it's↑ hard,
13		but I- I >actually tend to,< (haha) it seems funny to say,
14		but I, I use social↑ media:. I'm really, I'm really
15		selective with who I↑ follow because I want that to↓ be like
16		my motivation. Um, so I try and I have like this list of
17		people that I kind of check in on the morning. >I want to
18		See what they're doing,< I want to see what they're↑ up to
19		And I see that they're working↑ out and I see they're
20		↓training, I see that they're doing something, I'm like,
21		↑oka::y, ((claps)) alright girl like (.) they're↑ doing it,
22		like you need to get up and↓ do it. So: that's, I mean that
23		↑seems to work for↓ me. It doesn't get me↑ down. °Like I°,
24		I try not to use it for much more than that other than (.)
25		°motivation°. I- I love watching people train °though° and I
26		↑love watching other people do their↓ °thing°. Like it↑ never
27		makes me: feel inadequate or °jealous°. Like I just °love
28		watching it°. I just, I really enjoy performers (.) so I
29		think↑ that helps the most because↑ otherwise it's like I
30		don't, I don't know, I feel like if I don't have someone
31		else to look up to: and see that the:y're >doing the
32		thing,< hhh it's like so hard for↓ me to get it↓ together.
33		↓Yeah (haha).
34	I:	I might steal that, that's so great. It's so hard to stay
35		↓motivated. Especially, even- >what makes it more frustrating
36		is that< it's something that you love. It's not that it's
37		even something that you don't want to do:.
38	A:	↑Yeah. Well it's like I see them (.) do:ing, >like I said<

39		like doing the damn thing and I'm like, ↑I WANT THAT right?
40		Like isn't that what I ↑want? ↑And, and so it doesn't, I- I
41		don't ↑know, like it works for me. It ↑doesn't work for
42		everybody because I know for a(h) lot of people like they go
43		on social media and >like it just makes them feel wo:rse.<
44		But yeah, I'm like, it gives me motivation. So ↑that's what
45		helps, ↑yeah >you can give it a ↓shot<.
46	I:	How important would you say aerial is to you?
47	A:	↑Oh, it's, it- it's everythi:ng. It ↑changed my ↑life
48		completely. Um, I (.) would, I was just telling Becky
49		↑yesterday that I >would always hear so:ngs< umm <that I
50		really> would feel something for and I would get the:se
51		ideas in my head like a ↑music video, like, and I would wish
52		that I could perform ↑that. >And I always remember thinking
53		like, well then< ↑how would I ever do that? Like, >I could
54		never do that.< Can't be, (.) >I can never be, um, a< music
55		artist like that at that level where you make ↑video:s, but
56		°man, I wish I could do ↑something like that°. And whe(h)n I
57		found ↑aerial and I'm like, ↑ ↑HO::LY CRAP, like that's what
58		you can do: like you could make a ↑job out of ↑this? It just,
59		I mean, it just changed everything for ↓me:. It's, ↑yes,
60		training is ↑hard and ↑circus is ↑hard and it ↓hurts and
61		(.) I've gotten injured a ↑lo:t a:nd the rehab is ↑tough, but
62		I would not trade it for >anything else<. Would not trade it
63		for (.) the life I had before ever in a million years. So I
64		would gla:dly ↑take, the injuri:es and >having to go get<
65		↑dry needled and (.) my massage, like, it's not, not a ↑nice
66		massage, like a ↑painful massa::ge (hahaha), like ↑all the
67		stuff you have to constantly do:. It gets- I- I wouldn't
68		trade it. >Like I'll tell people< and they're like, ↑WOW,
69		that's a lot of work, you know ↑WOW WOW. Like, ↓yeah but you
70		don't know °how hard it was before.° So (2.22) ↑yeah.

Transcript 3. Steven

01	I:	What do you feel is your biggest motivation to train?
02	S:	hhh to get↑stro:ng (hahaha) I mean. hhh everything's
03		easi:er, you know, so >the more flexible you↑are< and the
04		stronger °you are°, I think everything is just °simpler° and
05		so that's a big motivation but (.) you know, um, like seeing
06		these guys get their roll ups the other da:y you know it was
07		really exciting motivation to work on↑tha:t. You know when
08		I was doing privates with Bo: I mean I'd literally be he:re,
09		you know Monday night for a couple of hour- or Monday I was
10		always o:ff. I'd be here Tuesday nights to teach, and try to
11		stay↑after and work on stuff. I'd come in Wednesday night
12		to work on what I had to for my Thursday night↓priva:te.
13		I'd stay↑after the private to work on whatever I could
14		i(h)f I wasn't exha:usted. And then Friday night open gy:m,
15		Saturday classes and then Sunday:, you know, to do my own
16		training if I↓can, you know. And so then Sunday, Monday
17		were sort of that like partial day off, but if I'm the other
18		days a week three↑ho:urs, that's fifteen without even
19		trying, (hahaha) you know it's like, oh my↑God. >So to be
20		able to have that< much endurance took ye:ars to get↑there.
21		Umm, but to >be able to do circus every da:y<, you really
22		need to be up to like forty hours a↑week (.) where it's
23		just like everyday all da:y. It's like Bo teaching circus
24		and then training↑pilates and then training like body↑lab
25		stuff a:nd training↑yoga and↑pole and then circus on↑all
26		of his spare↑ti:me. You know, I mean, that's one of the
27		reasons why he's at the level he's at you know it just takes
28		that much↑effort. Um, so that's↑one motivation is to like
29		keep excelling and pushing↓myself. I think the other big
30		motivation i:s like every time you learn a new skill, what's
31		the↑drive? Right? Like you want to perfect the ski:ll, >you
32		want to really get it good and dialed, you want to clean up
33		the li:nes, extend the toe °poi:nt°, you know, fix the reach
34		with the ha:nd and like not have that weird↑like, >you know

35		what I↑mean?< like all those↑wind issu:es?↑Yeah. And so
36		when you see that in the video and you're filming↑it and
37		you keep >running it and running it and running it and
38		running it<, that muscle memory then applies to the next
39		skill you↓learn. And so: by getting certain things dialed
40		↑i:n, you know, like how to gazelle properly and↑exit,
41		right? Well↑that changes↑everything because like >look at
42		the drops you did in your hammock routine,< (.) right? If
43		you didn't have a good knee hook, could you do any of that?
44		No, because you'd be↑terrifi:ed the entire time right? So I
45		think↑part of the training helps build confidence and some
46		part of the training helps build up muscle memory:, but also
47		it's just (.) every time you get a little↑stronger there's
48		this objective to like try to get to the next level to try
49		the next harder↓skill. And I think that that drive↑alo:ne,
50		you know, is really↓rewarding, you know, because it's all
51		↑progress and progression no:t, you know, I, I, I know it's a
52		cliché: to be like progress, not perfection, but, if you're
53		just trying to be a better version of yourself versus
54		against everybody↑else, then, there's no compariso:n. You
55		can be↑motivated by everybody else's inspiration. You can
56		be inspi:red, you know by their hard↓work. You can um, make
57		a comparison of like,↑oh, I'll never have↓legs like that.
58		But if you do↑that, who loses? Only you because you're
59		comparing yourself to someone °else° that has different
60		ta:lents and different natural ability. Right? So I just
61		stay focused on my own ability (heh) and where↓that can
62		°go to°.
63	I:	Yeah. And it's pretty amazing when you do something >like I
64		tried the double star< the other day I hadn't done it in a
65		↑whi:le and it just felt so smooth and controlled and I
66		Ne::ver thought I would get there.
67	S:	[And the way that the, silk spiraled] around↑you:, like that
68		was a stunning photo:. But those↑mo:ments are what <↓make it

(*Continued*)

Transcript 3. (Continued)

69		worth> all the hard ↑ wo:rk. You know, the peeling ↑ calluses,
70		the ripped ski:n, the pu(h)lled tendons and mu(h)scles and
71		everything ↑ else. It's all worth ↑ it when you: just have that
72		like >perfect day of training< or performance, you know.

Transcript 4. Andrea

01	I:	↑ What is your motivation to train?
02	A:	(4.21) My motivation? It's just, (2.13) it ↑ makes me (.)
03		>feel alive.< (1.52) It just ma:kes (.) everything ↑ better.
04	I:	How important is aerial to you?
05	A:	Very important. ↑ I couldn't live without it.
06	I:	Why do you think that is?
07	A:	(6.38) hhh it's hard to ↓ explain. It's very hard to explain.
08	I:	There's no wrong answers °so° whatever you say is ↓ °okay°.
09	A:	Um, why do I think that ↑ is? (.) >I don't ↑ know I ju- I
10		guess< I feel like it's <somewhere and something> like where
11		I ↑ belo:ng.
12	I:	Some people would say that circus is more uni:que than other
13		sports, like soccer or running. >What do you think about
14		that?<
15	A:	I think it's tru:e because in circus it's like everybody's a
16		little (1.74) ↓ stra:nge, which is really ↓ co:ol. And then
17		because everybody's stra:nge, everybody is very accepting of
18		(.) other people's ↑ weirdness (2.29) and we ↑ embra:ce the
19		weirdness °I think°. That's why, °you know° the circus ↑ freak
20		it, i- it like it goes ↑ togethe:r.
21	I:	Um, what do you think makes someone a ↑ real circus artist?
22	A:	Someone who is willing (.) <to put their body through the:>
23		↑ pa::in and ↑ hu:rt and ↑ sacrifi:ce and like all the ↑ odds
24		against you to succeed. You put your body ↓ through <so much>
25		just to make people happy. If ↑ that's what ↑ drives you and you
26		like that, you're able to do that- that's, that's what makes

27		somebody circus.
28	I:	Do you consider yourself a circus artist?
29	A:	In a ↑way ye:ah. I'm not a ↑profe:ssional circus artist, but
30		(.) in my heart I am.
31	I:	Yeah, how has being a part of this community: influenced the
32		way you see yourself?
33	A:	Um, tremendously. Yeah. ↑Co:nfidence, a lot more
34		°confidence°. ↑Definitely.
35	I:	What do you think it is about aerial that brings out the
36		confidence?
37	A:	Because umm aerial °is not°, it's not for- it's not for
38		↑any:body like you have to work so ↓hard and you have to get
39		to be:, to ↑have a certain amount of ↓strength that most
40		people don't ↑have. If you push yourself and you achieve
41		things that are so, like ↑beyo:nd anything you ever thought
42		you could ↑do:. And when you're able to do tha:t, like
43		you get out of there in such a ↑hi:gh °that° you feel like
44		you can do ↑any:thing.