Inclusion and Intersectionality Symposium Report

By Chloe Hillyar, Jade Ward and Louisa Petts

On 19th & 20th November 2021, the Society for Dance Research, joined by Candoco Dance Company and C-DaRE (Centre for Dance Research, Coventry University), presented the Inclusion and Intersectionality Symposium. The two-day event curated panels that interrogated the extent to which narratives, practices and policies of inclusion exist within the UK professional dance sector and queried how dance research in the academy might overcome intersectional limitations.

The symposium explored methods of research that empirically support dance dialogues. Participants discussed how these traditional infrastructures that exclusively benefit the otherwise-privileged members of that group can be re-envisioned (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectional reasoning dominated the discourse, with researchers reconsidering how such structures can integrate and include a more diverse community to harness the rich perspectives the dance sector might currently be lacking.

The panellists, speakers and participants shared, responded to, and voiced their experiences, opinions and positionalities with honesty inciting energy and hope for the dance landscape. These hopes and energies were not only borne from the discussions and questions posed during the symposium but from an age of discrimination, inequality and oppression. The array of determined voices from the event were necessary in communicating the transparent, authentic, and progressive dialogues the symposium aimed to bring to the forefront of current dance priorities.

Perhaps the most inspiring revelation of the symposium was the global reach from international researchers. The continuing and growing appreciation of researchers from different academic disciplines came together in the name of inclusion and intersectionality, to pave the way for strengthened international and interdisciplinary relationships for years to come.

Practitioner Perspectives

The day began with Society for Dance Research Chair Lise Uytterhoeven introducing the first panel, entitled *Practitioner Perspectives*, where panellist's spoke about inclusion and intersectionality in interdisciplinary dance practice.

The first panellists Ruth Spencer and Jane McLean shared their developing ideas and methodologies around dance practice with and for adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (PIMD) and the development of the 'Wanna Dance' programme. Their practice enables individuals with complex needs to engage with dance programmes that are personal and meaningful to them, meets their unique needs and ensures their creative voices are heard, amplified, and shared within their dance experience. They began by noting that dance and disability research methodologies, practice and policy opens a myriad of questions concerning inclusion, access, and ownership.

Ruth and Jane spoke predominantly about the process of incorporating four areas of knowledge and development in their workshops occurring over the past 18 months. The first was ensuring dance is a person-centred practice, incorporating elements of improvisation, touch, and presence. When deconstructing what happens during improvisation practice with someone living with PIMD, Jane highlighted

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as key elements that occur throughout the interaction. Jane and Ruth's touch-based practices strongly influenced their work, where connecting through touch shifts from passive to active engagement. A sensitive, focused approach to dance practice incorporating 'moment-by-moment consent' was described as foundational for their touch-based practice, especially in a non-verbal context. This led to Ruth and Jane examining their consent protocols by querying how they can ensure consent has been given by the participant in a day care context, and how this has implications on their practice. Thus, as the second point of development, the ethical challenges of ensuring consent were crucially and critically engaged with to involve people with PIMD in their continual engagement with dance practice. Ruth and Jane noted they have incorporated the process consent approach from Jan Dewing (2002) to recognise that consent is situational and variable.

Ruth and Jane also spoke about the Hanging Out Programme (HOP) by Sheridan Forster (2008), which stresses the importance of spending 10 minutes interacting with a person, giving them 100% of one's attention. This programme has informed their dance engagement is meaningful and individualistic. As such, the experience people with PIMD have in the world is likely to be entirely unique. The speakers noted they are continually unpacking and demystifying their dance practice, working to ensure any assumption or imposition of ways of being are avoided, to advocate for any lived experience of dance as valid and valuable.

The second presentation was by Kiri Avelar, who spoke about her lived experience as an interdisciplinary artist, educator, and scholar working to embody, represent, honour, question, and challenge space for Latinx identities. She spoke about how screen dance can capture the complexity of Latinx identities through the fluid approach interdisciplinarity provides. As such, screen dance holds multiple ways to either layer or extract from art in creative practice, which speaks to the complex layers found in many identities.

Kiri presented her screen dance Mestiza Consciousness (2019) which explores the intersection of the body, food and rhythm layered through gestures, symbols, and sounds that speak to the in-between spaces. Kiri notes that the film challenges the welcoming and disinviting, the loving and violence through which the mestiza's body becomes known. The film showed images of white birds, red shoes dancing on a wooden floor, a woman moving on a riverbank amongst grass, people dancing and cooking together in a kitchen, the slicing of limes, cilantro, tomatoes, a woman moving throughout a supermarket aisle. At the beginning of the film, the words from Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera, The New Mestiza, 'Because I, a mestiza, continually walk out of one culture and into another' appear on screen.

Kiri then proceeded to talk through multiple images in reference to her own reflective artistry. She spoke about how she layers images over others, namely the image of hands making,

reforming, shaping, labouring, gesturing dough, layered under an image of a barrel with an imprinted slogan ‘Don’t Mess with Texas.’ She questions, ‘Who is that slogan for? Who is it representing? Who is that including and who is that excluding?’ She further spoke about live performances, where this screendance film is projected onto a live performer. Each image projected onto the performer's body is echoed by the gestural and bodily movement. Kiri also notes that the live performances are multi-sensorial, where performers are handing out chips and salsa; smelling when the food is being prepared in the room, viewing and hearing the rhythmic preparation of the food in the film, tasting the food when it is received during the performance. She concludes by stating that her artistic process consists of extracting from screendance and then layering through an interactive experience, immersing audiences to explore the themes of intersectionality, migration, ruido, mestiza consciousness, and Latinidades.

The final part of this panel was a filmed interview between Erin Sanchez and Stuart Waters, who spoke about Stuart’s experiences of intersectionality within performing and teaching dance alongside biographical art making. Stuart spoke about his intersectional identity as a queer, neurodiverse, dyslexic, disabled artist living with ADHD and mental health access needs. These elements of this lived experience, he notes, weave and bounce off each other in his artistic practice. He identified his ability to adapt and transform complex, powerful, emotional, biographical aspects, speaking to them through dance practice in an abstract or literal way to influence conversation and change.

Intersectionality, he says, has really highlighted the need for care and communication prior to creativity, within creativity and post creativity. In his own words he states there needs to be, ‘…a way in, a way through it, and a way out’ of these creative dance spaces. Through process, intersectional needs are honoured and acknowledged, where hierarchies between creators are dismantled or developed to encompass a humanistic approach. As such, Stuart still leads dance practice clearly, consensually, and safely to ensure underrepresented, marginalised, and muted voices can come through by allowing a space for no, maybe and compromise. Nonverbal or verbal checking in or checking out has real value in creative professional sectors and is exceedingly necessary. For the future, he hopes the dance sector becomes generally more empathetic, skilled, and knowledgeable about all intersectional identities. He also hopes the dance space allows more space and time for process, as the speed, the immediacy of delivery for performance product on neuro-normative timelines is unsustainable. More open conversation in the sector about neurodiversity and mental health as an access need and what it means for each individual is necessary.

Candoco Dance Company at 30

Candoco Dance Company describe themselves as a world-leading contemporary dance company for disabled and non-disabled performers and dancers. The *Candoco Dance Company at 30* panel was chaired by Charlotte Waelde who was joined by panellists Charlotte Darbyshire, Kimberley Harvey, and Jo Bannon, who discussed how Candoco expand perceptions of dance and occupy an important space internationally.

Charlotte Darbyshire began by stressing that Candoco Dance Company were an evolving, in-process organisation who are always learning and, in turn, influencing conversations

about dance and disability in their 30th year. Kimberley noted her use of an inclusive approach in their teaching practice but often questions what she truly knows from a space of vulnerability. Charlotte acknowledged, as Candoco's Artistic Director, how she felt they were not as widely representative as they would like to be, and that there was no room to be complacent.

Jo then shared her own vulnerability through a piece of new work in collaboration with Candoco. The project Feeling Thing is a dance film that organically started through a curiosity of relationships to objects and things informed by the experience of being in the world as someone with a visual impairment. Choreographically, the film consisted of a woman moving and interacting with a metal fan on top of a mattress. The audio captions described the sounds of a car passing by, of the compression of the mattress, the wooden bed frame creaking. In another clip, a man moves with a wooden ladder. In another, a woman moves with a hoover and its wires. Jo describes what opportunities the choreographic process provides for vulnerability and expertise, finding a tension, a stickiness, a messiness, and an awkwardness in making dance art or film with fellow dancers. Jo also notes a phrase that she has coined for herself, 'access is a better artist than you are,' which Jo uses as a way of checking their predetermined idea of how an image should be read, understood or the meaning made from it. She explains how, through her choreographic practice working with Candoco, she has found a process of prioritising who's in the room, to ensure that access is a creative material to help shape the work.

In response to an audience question, stimulated by Erin Sanchez and Stuart Waters' discussion about the fast-paced nature of dance making, the panellists spoke about their commitment to dance making in-process. Jo noted that a product-focused working environment is often inaccessible and exclusive, and Kimberley discussed how in Candoco she feels they share the load together, all the while challenging the perceptions of productivity and success within the dance world. In relation to company dynamics and staff turnover, Charlotte also noted that building understanding and trust takes time similarly to the creative process, where learning from our own experiences needs to be balanced with making space for new input, ideas, and intersectional perspectives.

Broadening Opportunities

The second panel of the day, *Broadening Opportunities*, chaired by Kathryn Stamp, saw two papers negotiate inclusive and intersectional matters within two specific contexts: (1) Dance Training and Psycho-Social Counselling and (2) how notions of exclusivity are prevalent in site-specific spaces.

Firstly, Darrel Toulon and Peace Otuko gave a thought-provoking presentation on providing visibility for a marginalised and silenced population from Uganda: Children Born in Captivity. This international, intersectoral docu dance-theatre project demonstrated how the collaboration of dance training and psycho-social counselling created a trauma-transformation and holistic personal growth for children who were born in the bush to mothers who were abducted as teenage girls during the LRA war. Prior to the project, these children grew up on the fringes of society and had experienced rejection, discrimination and stigma in the earliest part of their lives. Darrel and Peace hypothesised that performance art

can provide an opportunity for healing and building peace in post-conflict situations. The project saw the children reconcile with their backgrounds and surface sensitive issues through artistic creative activities.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the project was the collaboration between dance and psychology. To begin with, Darrel described how Peace's presence was a transient one; initially she was supposed to provide supplementary counselling to the children so dance could be the dominant vehicle for reconciliation. However, it was soon discovered that psycho-social counselling was necessary for the dance aspect to progress. Consequently, Peace and Darrel attended both the dance sessions and counselling with the children every day, where their combined presence enabled reflexivity, resolution and bridged thought and feeling experienced in both the dance studio space and counselling room.

The presence of both Darrel and Peace in both the therapeutic and artistic environments meant that the children had consistent, transparent and reliable role models for their psychological and creative needs. Not only did this presentation work with participants and their intersectional identities, experiences and emotions, but it also highlighted another facet of intersectionality: the intersection of dance and the psycho-social. Further, the socio-political milieu establishes the interface between performance, politically relevant theatre, academic research and advocacy.

The second half of the panel saw Virginia Farman's research addressing travel and accessibility for the blind and visually impaired population. Her research drew upon Joseph Campbell's analysis of the mythic journey presented in The Hero With a Thousand Faces (1949) to structure a site-specific dance production, entitled *Bicycle Ballet*, performed by an integrated cast of six dancers. Virginia presented a docu-dance film that demonstrated the interplay between visually impaired and sighted dancers, choreographers, and audience members working with tandem bicycles. Somatics and dance, non-sight based spatial navigation methods, one-to-one interviews, storytelling, audio description, and touch based engagement practice all facilitated effective collaboration were all used to facilitate effective collaboration. The choreographic research was accompanied by an outreach programme of cycling events for the visually impaired and blind people. The choreographic research resulted in a unique outdoor dance theatre production performed by an integrated company of visually impaired and sighted performers. The production was, of course, made accessible for visually impaired and blind audiences by providing an audio programme text.

The presentation not only challenged the notion of dance being a primarily visual art form, but also demonstrated the parameters of inclusivity. The project is illustrative of the richness there is to be gained by broadening the participation from the disabled to the non-disabled. One of the main takeaways from the project was how one can make dance more immersive and engaging for non-sighted performance and thus fed back into the theme of the panel: broadening opportunities.

Decolonial Dance Narratives

The third panel, *Decolonial Dance Narratives*, chaired by Mercy Nabirye and Jane Carr, opened with an introduction from Mercy who gave a brief outline of her work as an artist, researcher, consultant, and creative producer for African Diaspora arts. Mercy then

introduced the first presentation entitled: *Brazilian black dancers' researches: the concept of intersectionality between north and south through dance practices*, presented by Suzane Weber da Silva with Anielle Lemos, Claudia Sachs, Luciano Tavares, Manoel Gildo Alves and Monica Dantas. The presentation detailed the three research projects developed at the Post Graduation Program in Performing Arts at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Anielle Lemos investigated the representativeness of black Brazilian dancers in terms of initiation, insertion, and permanence in professional companies. Luciano Tavares proposed a study of black masculinities in dance, and Manoel Gildo Alves analysed the trajectory of the Brazilian black choreographer and dancer Lara Deodoro). All three research projects were underpinned by the investigation of contrasting terms of intersectionality between American and Brazilian authors, with a particular focus on the black philosopher Lelia Gonzalez. Gonzalez was an icon of black feminism and activism in Brazil whose work predominantly focused on recognising racial inequalities in the field of dance. However, Claudia reminded us that none of this was new ground; Gonzalez had been speaking about feminist intersectionality long before it was coined or became a mainstream term. Considering this, Claudia proposed that perhaps we are simply listening in the wrong places, noting that listening and learning should be taking place in the communities where the inequalities exist and not in the institutions where the majority of people have no or little lived experience of the intersectionality they write about.

Intersectionality is a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool, rooted in Black feminism and Critical Race Theory (Cho et al, 2013), that allows us to study the representation and visibility of different races, classes, and gender. It allows us to peel back the thin, yet complex and interwoven layers of categorisation and labelling to reveal a clearer picture of access, opportunity, and inclusion. Claudia concluded her presentation suggesting that through adjustments in response to access needs and placing people with multiple intersections in more visible and prominent positions, we can become more understanding in our approach to dance practices. The presentation was powerful and provoking, ending with a clear message of resistance and liberation through social transformation uncompromised by aspects of reality that only favour the privileged.

The second presentation was led by Sandie Bourne, entitled: *Decolonising African Diasporic Narratives in Ballet* and was inspired by her chapter 'Portrayals of Black people in Western narrative ballets', in Adesola Akinleye's *(Re:) Claiming Ballet* (2021). The paper explored the intersectionality of narrative ballet classics such as, Le Corsaire (1856), The Pharaoh's Daughter (1862), La Bayadère (1877), Cléopâtra (1909), Petroushka (1911) and Schéhérazade (1910), and analyses how Black people from the African Diaspora were characterised. This enabled Sandie to explore issues such as the representation of Black characters as slaves, white dancers Blacking-up, racialised depictions of eroticism, exoticism, sexism and why stereotypes are still perpetuated on the ballet stage today.

Similar patterns of discourse from the day emerged with Sandie immediately noting the complexity of intersectionality and asking whether we need to instead focus on specific individual instances of racism, ageism, sexism and other forms of discrimination and oppression, rather than bulking the conversations under one or two generic, homogeneous themes. With this, Sandie showed various images and video clips that were awkward and uncomfortable to watch, yet necessary and poignant explorations of the representation of black people in the early ballet repertoire. Sandie clearly highlighted the lack of genuine and

authentic change within dominant cultures regarding the persisting connotations of racial stereotypes. Sandie took us even deeper, focusing in on the complexity of intersectionality with an example of colourism, a theory concerning the intersection of racist discrimination based on a person's colour or shade of skin (Hunter, 2007). Sandie showed a video clip from La Bayadére where the lead dancer had a much lighter skin tone than the accompanying black dancers. It was clear from the photographs and video clips that, although there have been positive advancements, systemic racism still exists and not enough has been done to challenge what we see, hear, talk about, and create. Sandie concluded by noting that the cultural lens in which we scrutinise the black dancing body *must* change.

The final presentation in this panel was led by Anna Kirakowska entitled Amazingly Awkward: Let's Talk About Race. In the presentation Anna spoke about her research project which culminated in an interview-based documentary that exposed communication difficulties between staff, co-students, and interviewees. The interviews focused on postgraduate and undergraduate dance training in the UK, as well as highlighting a perceived lack of curiosity about culture and 'race' leading students to accept representational imbalances within their studies. The project had been inspired by Anna's own experiences entering UK dance training from Ireland and the assumptions, misunderstandings, and miscommunications she experienced, including the invisibility of her own culture from the studies.

In a clip from Anna's documentary, we met a black dance student who talked openly and honestly about his own experiences within academia, clearly confused and frustrated by the lack of diverse representation. The student vividly recalls attending his Horton technique class for three years, unable to ever relate, understand or feel that he belonged, stating that 'I just never got it,' with Josephine Baker being the only reference in his studies who he felt he could relate to. In his mind this reinforced the notion of black dancers as invisible artists and felt personally impacted by the internalised messaging that the lack of representation presents. Anna echoed these frustrations and concerns stating that whilst studying many other students were unable to access non-white pastoral care, suggesting that cultural appropriateness is perhaps being overlooked as a potential barrier to inclusion. From seemingly minor exclusionary instances of institutions and organisations mislabelling dance genres or inaccurately grouping dance styles, to the complex topic of non-diverse classroom cultures, Anna concluded her presentation with a reminder that talking about race, just like a dancer training a muscle, should not be avoided and requires focused attention and practice.

Centring and Intersectionality: Black Perspectives in Dance Research

The Decolonial Dance Narrative panel was then followed by a provocation and discussion entitled *Centring and Intersectionality: Black Perspectives in Dance Research*, led by Mercy with Dr 'Funmi Adewole, and Duane Cyrus. Mercy introduced the panellists, explaining that they would discuss the panel theme from their own personal perspectives, with an open discussion at the end. The aim of the session was to explore the way black dancers and black academics might practice a sense of belonging and centring of blackness, in a way that is not solely contrasted with whiteness and that considers how artists, academics, curators, producers and educators can create spaces where a range of black voices can be heard.

Mercy began the panel by exploring the notion of complexity in our individual intersectionality that was emerging from the day's panel discussions. Speaking of her own intersections as a black female artist, a leader and manager living in London, being raised in Uganda, with a Jamaican husband and black British son, Mercy stated that before we even get into bodies of work we are exposed to a variety of complex intersections that have a multitude of implications. 'Funmi expanded on this by detailing two scenarios when she had been questioned about her own intersections, with one academic calling one of her performances inauthentic as, according to him, it needed to be more traditional. This caused 'Funmi to ask 'in what context can black people produce knowledge, and be taken seriously, and why is the African dance debate predominately framed in comparison with white dance?' 'Funmi stated that these questions can be addressed through the centring of black voices within the modern context of the dance studio. Inclusion is not adding two black dancers to a company or making a black dancer the face of a marketing campaign, noting that these types of 'inclusive' actions are nothing but tokenistic gestures. 'Funmi continued with this emerging theme of disingenuity, speaking about a 6-month project that she led on which received only two lines of reference in the final published report, whilst other projects received much greater coverage.

Duane picked up on the theme of creating space and questions around the different spaces that we occupy, asking how we create space for the voices of others. As a young dancer Duane discovered that he could not find images of people like him, perhaps only occasionally in the back of books, and still questions the volume of space created for blackness. Duane posed further questions asking how loud does blackness need to be and to what end? Duane then presented a reel of artists with multiple intersections, highlighting the importance of creating space as a key for agency. Mercy interjected at this point suggesting that black dancers need to be enabled to take up more space. Jane Carr responded to this by asking whether those spaces need to have a certain form and structure to assist with the conceptual shift needed to achieve authentic inclusion. 'Funmi remarked stating that without a conceptual shift inclusion will not happen. She suggested that the conceptual shift will happen through black dancers documenting their work and through more diverse research agendas. 'Funmi then responded to a question regarding the development of inclusion from a non-white perspective stating that the multitude of narratives and legacies need to pulled into their individual intersections rather than being lumped together as one thing. 'Funmi encouraged black dancers to make themselves more visible by taking photographs and documenting the journey of their creations. Duane challenged this notion of visibility and asked, 'who is the documentation for', suggesting that perhaps this obsession with documentation and visibility was perhaps another tool of the coloniser. The questions and conversations turned towards higher education and the work that could be done to support and encourage students to work in collaboration with dancers, researchers, and academics, giving even more people greater opportunities to be a part of the conversations and transformations in dance practice and production.

C-DaRE: What can dance do for inclusion and intersectionality? A conversation on process and practice

This panel from the Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE) at Coventry University was chaired by Vipavinee Artpradid and Kate Marsh who were in conversation with Sarah Whatley and Rosa Cisneros. Kate noted how this interaction was unrehearsed and that she

hoped it would facilitate open and honest insight into what dance practice and research can do for inclusion and intersectionality.

Kate began by stating that it is important to acknowledge that multiple and changing ways of experiencing intersectionality; modalities and individualities are not fixed, but shift within the embeddedness of personal, research and practice realms. Kate disclosed that she identifies as a disabled, 'Crip' researcher, acknowledging the complexity, power, and politicalness these terms hold (Bone, 2017). Vipavinee then questioned where they position themselves within a fluctuating paradox of dance and movement as a way of knowing. As people, we are enmeshed spaces, placed within social categories which may not always acknowledge or allow for every element of our overlapping and interdependent intersectional identities.

After the introductions, a dance film directed by Rosa Cisneros, choreographed by Trish Martin, and edited by Raluca Maria was shown as a stimulus for the conversation. The film depicted a white woman barefoot wearing a long, flowing purple skirt, moving whilst seated on a wooden chair in front of a red brick wall with an accompaniment consisting of xylophone sounds, operatic singing, breathing and spoken word. The creation of this dance film, Rosa explained, explored identity, labels, culture and the 'ghosts' we have, whereby dance can take control of the representation of semiotic identity in practice. The panellists then explored the somewhat messy process of dance research, in both written and practice-based outputs, and asked how dance spaces incorporate inclusion and intersectionality at its core? Sarah spoke about the responsibility one has in interpreting and making sense of dance work and then questioned how our own experience, bias or judgement can impact our own viewership.

Kate then poignantly asked, 'Who is allowed to speak about identity and intersectionality? Can we only speak about our own? Who can speak for who? How is that permission given?'. Dance research offers a space for those uncomfortable, honest, open conversations as it draws focus to where identity sits within the body corporeally.

'How do you experience, witness, observe, feel, understand intersectionality in your practice and in your research?' Kate asks. Language was the dominant topic within the panellist's conversation, described as an enabler and a barrier by Sarah, which can both facilitate and limit dance work. She acknowledges that dance is a site where appropriate, meaningful, and supportive language can be negotiated, despite it not always seeming so necessary when moving within space.

Further, Sarah spoke about how privileged working with dance at a university is, where dance can work to challenge and disrupt as an influence for change, to enable everybody to voice their experiences and identities. The notion of 'safe spaces', where said voices can be included, was discussed and yet Kate noted that there is no space that all feel safe in and that inclusion is a problematic term, where she asks, 'included in what?'. However, this imperfectness of such spaces and terms were not viewed as condemnation, but as points of departure for future development and change. Dance does not, cannot and should not have one sole defined identity of which people need to be included in, but instead acts as a self-critical and self-reflective space that allows for vulnerability. As such, dance allows people to connect and asks how, who, where and why in its iterative process. The panellists continually stressed that inclusion and intersectionality in dance stems from personal, lived experiences that do not occur in isolation from social, political, and cultural components

whether it be in research or studio environments. It is thus clear that each one of our intersectional identities cannot be isolated from dance practice, and it is imperative to acknowledge this should we, as a dancing community, ever hope to be truly inclusive.

Society for Dance Research Panel

The panel curated by the Society for Dance Research saw three stimulating presentations from three transatlantic and trans-Pacific PhD candidates: Marion Quesne, Thea Stanton and Angela Conquet.

Marion Quesne is a PhD student at the Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (UVSQ). Her research is entitled 'Navigating between an empowering practice and a normative frame: the example of Lindy Hop'. Marion provided a slick and fascinating demonstration of her research to date. It was extremely refreshing to hear about a dance genre not normally at the focus of mainstream professional dancing in the Global North. Lindy Hop, considered as an empowering art form in relation to race, gender and class, was created by the African American community at the end of the 1920s. Notably, Lindy Hop defied segregationist laws as it occupied the first racially integrated ballroom in the United States: The Savoy Ballroom. Marion demonstrated how Lindy Hop has since been appropriated and populated by whiteness and straightness which imposed gender normative values on the partner dance limiting who occupied the role of the 'lead' and 'follow'. Interestingly, Lindy Hop was an artform shared between family and friends, rather than an inherent performative one, and didn't conform to gender, heteronormative stereotypes: men could be follows, women could be leads, and same sex partners were acceptable. This suggests that, as an artform, Lindy Hop was inclusive and ahead of its time, but could also suggest that we, as a society, have regressed, moving further from these principles since the 1920s. Retrospectively, Marion questioned: does the Lindy Hop have a gender-democratic concept of partnering or is it conditioned to abiding by pre-existing, heteronormative gender rules? Marion answers: Lindy Hop is traditionally a transgressive and empowering practice. However, under the influence of the White Jitterbug variation, Lindy Hop has generally reproduced social and cultural constructions of normative characteristics.

Thea Stanton, a PhD candidate at the University of Chichester, is a choreographer, lecturer and communications manager at the Independent Theatre Council. Decolonisation and equality of experience form the central concerns of her research and physical practice. Thea's research, entitled Choreographing Immersion: Negotiating Boundaries, Difference and Power, primarily looks at 'Immersive performances' and asks: is immersive theatre growing up or growing too big, too quickly?. To answer, Thea drew upon her own indigenous heritage and informed indigenous discourses to offer a reframing of immersion as a dynamic, fluid and relational process. During her presentation, she illustrated that choreographic approaches can be used as a vehicle for ethical care, equality and respect of different bodies. Thea's particularly captivating presentation evoked emotional engagement from the scholarly audience by linking her research to her roots. As an adopted child, her discussion around identity was especially poignant as she investigated the intersections that built up her persona in an honest depiction of identity. Her research draws upon ideas of psychological and historical contextual human experience which are amalgamated into the culture of immersive performance. Thea's vulnerable, transparent and personable

demeanour encouraged the audience to forge connections with her presentation and projected a meta-presentation of sorts as this too was emotionally immersive.

The final speaker, Angela Conquet, critically examined dance-specific curatorial practices and how it contributes to othering certain bodies that fail to meet the prerequisite criteria of Western beauty. It was posited that this propagates euro-centric bodily imaginaries by anchoring their curatorial choices in a Western interpretation of the 'contemporary'. Angela is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. Her research is entitled: *Un-othering the contemporary when curating dance*. Prior to her research, Angela worked as a dance curator, consultant and editor working across two continents: Europe and Australasia. In her presentation, Angela illustrated the underlying politics behind choosing which bodies get to be seen on stage. She argued that by favouring the conceptual over the representational, dance presenters relegate the realm of tradition and contribute to de-territorialising the corporeity of contemporary dance. By inviting 'unorthodox' bodies to be seen and heard on contemporary stages, different modes of inter-corporeal inter-reality can be achieved. Angela pays homage to Donna Haraway by conducting an inquiry that will help reclaim an 'embodied gaze' as opposed to an outside 'conquering gaze from nowhere' (which is often western-centric, patriarchal, male and white). Ultimately, her presentation stimulated criticality about what politically responsible, situated and sustainable curatorial practices in dance might look like.

Age and Inclusion

The *Age and Inclusion* panel was chaired by Bethany Whiteside entitled Age and Inclusion, with PhD researchers Louisa Petts, Chloe Hillyar, and Aline Nogueira Haas. This panel focused on the experiences and needs of older dancers and dancers experiencing pregnancy and motherhood. Although the panellists were clear in articulating the issues of age and inclusion in their fields of research, there was a collective sense of exploring, uncovering, and sharing potential solutions to many of the problems which had been echoed and reverberated throughout the two-day symposium. New ways of working, producing, researching, discussing and disseminating dance were collectively considered as potential answers to many of the exclusionary issues we currently face.

The panel began with a presentation from Louisa Petts, a PhD candidate at the Centre for Dance Research (CDaRE) at Coventry University, who, through semi-structured interviews, observations and diaries with participants and dance artists, explores the experience of older adults engaging in dance practice. Louisa's transdisciplinary, person-centred approach to her research aims to foster inclusionary attitudes for older dancers and improve access to dance that aids wellbeing. Her mixed methods approach to data collection reflects her commitment to a more holistic research design and a commitment to honouring peoples lived, intersectional experience instead of making generalised, homogenous conclusions.

Louisa began her presentation by drawing our attention to the prevailing ageist attitudes in dance practice and suggested that inclusive practises may counteract the hegemonic forms of dance and in turn propel the anti-ageist agenda. Louisa explores the different terminology used to describe, label, and categorise older people. She detailed her approach to language by asking participants how they self-identify and what language they normally use when discussing age and growing older. This focus on language was also considered when using

the words ‘belonging’ and ‘wellbeing’, and even extended to the difference between participatory dance and community dance. Louisa highlighted the potential benefits of exploring the inclusivity of community dance in combating ageist thinking. Louisa concluded her presentation suggesting that, from her preliminary findings, much more work is needed to explore, expand on, and disseminate the potential for dance as a place to learn and nurture inclusive dance practises. In particular, she referred to the importance of exploring multiple genres, pedagogical practises, class structures and socially prescribed dance in order to better facilitate access to dance for people of all ages.

The second presentation was delivered by Chloe Hillyar, a PhD student at Queen’s University Belfast, entitled ‘Maternity, Inclusivity & Intersectionality’. Applying feminist theories, Chloe’s research focuses on the intersection of dance and maternity to understand and overcome the potential barriers that pregnant dancers face with the aim of developing the limited knowledge that currently exists within this field.

Firstly, Chloe highlighted a prevailing paradox: there is a disproportionate amount of literature illustrating the benefits of physical activity (PA) during pregnancy compared with the amount of high-level evidence on effects of high intensity PA which excludes the unique physiological needs of pregnant dancers. Furthermore, until as late as 2002, definitive clinical recommendations that encouraged previously sedentary and active pregnant women had ceased to exist which has further delayed more specific guidelines for elite exercisers. Chloe continued, stating that although dance and pregnancy are not explicitly or publicly separated, through her experiences and research findings, she revealed that this was in fact the common understanding. Chloe equates this common understanding to the fact that she did not see pregnant dancers, nor did she learn about dance and pregnancy through any training or academic studies. Chloe suggests that this lack of representation perpetuates and sustains a culture of young, non-disabled bodies within dance and suggests a need for increased support for pregnant dancers as a potential solution.

Chloe drew from a previous research project funded by Arts Council England entitled The Pregnant Dancer. This project aimed to create a dedicated system of training that catered to the dancer’s maternal body and sought to support employment opportunities. Amongst other insightful statistics, the project found that almost 50% of dancers felt that they couldn’t return to dance after they became a parent. The project revealed 3 main areas of maternal care the dance sector is lacking in: (1) a lack of maternity pay for self-employed dancers, (2) physiological rehabilitation that accommodates every variation of delivery, and (3) flexible rehearsal and touring schedules that work around nursery and school times. In response to this, the research outputs included maternal dance classes created specifically for pregnant dancers, which Chloe stated as being a UK sector first. The project was used as a vehicle to gain insight and begin to understand and unpick sector failings regarding pregnant dancers. Chloe concluded her presentation by highlighting the importance of intersectional thinking in the field of women's maternal health. She postulated how one goes about including a group that has been historically marginalised, suggesting that an increase in representation and the creation of dedicated guidelines for pregnant dancers would greatly improve maternity support and inclusivity within the sector. Implementing relatively simple solutions to improving inclusivity could take us beyond the comprehension of intersectionality and into the realms of action and transformation (Cho et al., 2013).

The third and final presentation was delivered from Brazil by Aline Nogueira Haas and Gebriela Maria Lima Santos entitled ‘Dancing remotely in the playful living project: promotion of social and racial equity through an intergenerational approach with cognitively diverse older adults’, with post and undergraduate students Lenisa Brandão, Carla Vendramin, Kaueh Gomes Bastos, Eliamary Cristiane Teixeira da Silva, and Raquel da Silva Silveira.

Aline began the presentation by giving context to the Playful Living project as an interdisciplinary community outreach project that emerged in the beginning of the pandemic due to the urgent need for collaboration with different Brazilian Universities and the social care sector. According to the presenters, structural racism in Brazil keeps black and indigenous people in vulnerability, implying lower access to the health system and to social support opportunities that require digital inclusion, which was a main theme discussed in panel three Decolonial Dance Narratives Aline highlighted the increased inequalities borne from the pandemic, including social isolation, and explained how the project aimed to promote social and racial equity through playful embodied activities with cognitively diverse older adults. Online dance sessions combined with clowning and storytelling were offered to 24 older adult participants by a team of 20 undergraduate students, 2 postgraduate students, 6 university teachers and 2 health care professionals from the arts and health areas. The sessions, methods and dance activities were structured to support communication, memory, and imagination, underpinned by an intergenerational approach which naturally occurred by incorporating students, lectures and older people. Gebriela showed a short film from the project which was bursting with smiles, movements, and connections across, through and alongside the participants being restricted to the digital realm. However, Aline explained that technological accessibility and digital inclusion was one of the greatest challenges to the project, with many participants lacking the necessary exposure to skills and support when using and engaging with technology. Many of their findings were in line with current literature on successful digital inclusion experiences of older adults and recommend further investigations and studies into the feasibility and acceptability of live-streamed group activities with older adults living with cognitive impairments. Aline concluded with final thoughts from the project stating that the intergenerational interactions between the professionals, students and participants led to enriched communications and feelings of belonging, respect, and recognition.

Bethany opened the conversation to the floor and picked up on the comments and discussions that had arose during the presentations. Kate Marsh commented on her own intersections with Chloe adding that perhaps, as ‘Funmi had suggested in her presentation, our multiple intersections need to be honoured, explored and given more space and attention, one at a time, if we are to gain greater insights and develop genuine and authentic inclusivity in the dance sector.

Accessibility in Academic Language: Reflections on the Conference and Organisation

As the Symposium drew to a close, the final item provided a forward-looking discussion that utilised retrospection as a vehicle for progression. The discussion on accessibility was reactively scheduled in response to a comment made about the allegedly inaccessible way the Society of Dance Research formatted their call for papers. Chaired by Jane Carr, the

reflections on the conference and organisation panel invited the owner of the comment: Angeline Lucas to kick-off a dialogue on accessibility. A neuro-divergent, disabled, arts advocate with 20 years' experience in the creative industries, Angeline began the session with a refreshingly constructive challenge that was first presented to the Society about the use of academic language on their website. But, as the discussion went on, it became evident that the issue of inaccessible language for neuro-divergent readers is rife within the wider academy.

Similarly, many parts of the academy are generating a positive influx of academic discussions examining inclusivity across the academy is reportedly exclusive. Angeline highlighted that whilst the endeavour to be inclusive signifies progress and change, in practice inclusivity is not always being achieved. In her view, the Inclusion and Intersectionality Symposium was no exception. The main issue debated was the topic of academic language. Therefore, the final section of this report will address accessibility around academic language from a neuro-divergent perspective.

Academic language is simply defined as the language of education (Grigorenko, 2015). More specifically, Cummins (1981; 1984) made the following distinction: "basic interpersonal communicative skills" (BICS) are the language skills needed for casual face-to-face communication, and "cognitive/academic language proficiency" (CALP) refers to the specific literary language that is required in academic settings. Naturally, CALP is more cognitively demanding as it is decontextualized and few contextual cues (Grigorenko, 2015).

It may be surmised from Cummins' definition that academic language holds value in aiding cognitive proficiency and therefore has a place in academia, much like colloquial language has its place in day-to-day pedestrian communication where personable skills are more advantageous than academic skills. During the final panel discussion, there was a dialogue about when, where and how best academic language is used to nurture inclusive practices. Some suggestions during the discussion stated that academic language should be simplified, while others postulated that there was no place for academic language at all; layman language would be an inclusive way forward. However, much like Cummins, some believed that academic language has a purpose; it is a vehicle that verbalises subject specialities to other academics in the field. Some words simply cannot be replaced. All words have their own novel and unique definition that inflect specific intentions and meanings. It may also be the case that certain phenomena are far too intricate and complex to be verbalised in any way other than academic terminology. It was appreciated that academic language might require hard work to penetrate for neuro-divergent readers (including one of the writers of this report), one might challenge that converting all academic speak into a simplified version is not the answer. Converting all academic speech into a simplified vocabulary might lose some of the lexical breadth of cognitive vocabulary that is steeped in centuries of complex philosophising. It's a verbal skill of word play that embellishes eloquence in a somewhat interpretive and equivocal fashion. Equally, it should be a skill that is accessible for all to acquire.

However, literature admits that 'there is a need for practical advice and ideas on how to make academia more accessible' (Brown & Thompson, 2018). This may be because the academy is lacking in neuro-diverse and disabled academics who need a more inclusive approach to terminology. Or it may be that there are many disabled academics within the

academy that perhaps do not disclose their disability. From anecdotal experience, it is unusual in academia to admit personal disadvantage or disability. Considering the increasingly competitive academic arena, academics living with invisible disabilities may choose not to declare their conditions in fear of jeopardising University employment where opportunities are scarce and applications must be flawless. The stigma of disability sows a fertile ground from which an ableist academic society has prospered.

We may recognise ableism as “a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produce a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human” (Campbell, 2001). By Campbell’s account, the corporeal standard in academic writing desires perfection. But perfection ignores the fortitude, perseverance and struggle of disability and thus ignores the richness of experience that lies in the crux of many ground-breaking works. Refreshingly, researchers who did not have a disability to declare were in the minority at the Inclusion and Intersectionality Symposium.

There was an interesting discussion around when and where it is appropriate, or advantageous even, to practice accessibility. Do we attend to access requirements because of the people in the room, or should we do it for the people we want in the room? Or should we practice inclusivity because it is simply good practice? These questions stimulated the idea that inclusivity should be something practiced even when there may not be need for it in that particular context. By cultivating a culture of inclusivity that openly welcomes difference, researchers from all intersectional identities might feel more welcome and respected as an established member of the academy. Further, researchers from within the academy might feel able to disclose their disability and thus shift the culture around disability from the inside out.

In summary, the symposium represented the many different facets held within the definition of ‘intersectionality’. It was wholly inclusive with each discussion commencing with an audio description of the presenters on screen, notwithstanding the meta-analysis of what it is to be inclusive during the final discussion. The two days brimmed with rich discussion of how to better diversify and increase inclusion dance research. Researchers, attendees and collaborators were afforded 48-hours to philosophise, reflect and inspire; such time is precious and rare in a field that is often under-funded, peripheralized and overlooked. We leave you with two questions posed by the symposium organisers at the end of the event, looking ahead: **How can we provoke and question, whilst being sensitive and mindful? And, how can we move the conversation on?**

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