University of Alberta

(Dis)Quiet in the Peanut Gallery:
A Transformative Performance Ethnography on Integrated Dance

by

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Abstract

Disability is one of a myriad of ways in which difference, marginalization, and solidarity shape integrated dance communities, and their art. Dance can layer our understandings of the emotional and political impacts of these experiences and practices, in ways that words alone cannot. In this thesis, I trace how twelve dancers explore social justice through a co-constructed integrated dance. I introduce integrated dance, the transformative paradigm, arts-based research, performance ethnography, and our dance community (Chapter 1 & 2). This community practices social justice through check-ins, consensus, and care-sharing processes (Chapter 3). From these processes, we developed a performance: *(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery* (Chapter 4). I draw together focus group discussions and critical disability theory to examine this performance in relation to social (in)justice (Chapter 5). For this group, integrated dance is a form of critique, a strategy for survival and activism, and a way to enact complex utopias.

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Chapter 1: Introducing the Practice and Performance of Social Justice in Integrated Dance

"Art should more than mirror society; it should
question the contradictions and injustices of it."
(Briggs, 2004, p. 19)

In the majority of dance communities, there is little or no space for people who experience disability (Benjamin, 2002; Cooper Albright, 1997; Smith, 2005). In response to this structural exclusion, alternative disability dance spaces have emerged over the last thirty years. Most of the literature on these dance movements focus either on segregated disability-based approaches (Goodwin, Krohn, & Kuhnle, 2004; Payne, 2006; Roswal, Sherrill, & Roswal, 1988) or on individual disability-identified performance artists (Kuppers, 2004; Kuppers & Marcus, 2009; Parker-Starbuck, 2005). Very few scholars have studied integrated dance, sometimes called mixed-ability dance, which includes dancers "with and without" disability (Irving & Giles, 2011, p. 373).

Integrated dance, inclusive of those who experience disability[1] and those who do not, is a physical art form where people of a wide range of embodiments explore, create, rehearse and perform dance together (Benjamin, 2002). In the thirty year history of the integrated dance movement, integrated dance companies have been established throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, South America and Africa

[1] I use the term *disability*, and often the phrase 'person experiencing disability,' (Peers, 2009 p.657) throughout this paper, in reference to the wide variety of perspectives, experiences, identities, bodily impacts and social structures that constitute our dancers' varied understandings of the term.

(Benjamin, 2002; Herman & Chatfeild, 2011). In Canada, the integrated dance movement has lagged significantly behind (Forte, 2009), developing only a handful of integrated artists and collaborations, and slowly growing five integrated dance companies over the last decade. One of these bourgeoning dance companies is iDANCE Edmonton Integrated Dance, the company that I worked with throughout my Master's research.

The few existing publications on integrated dance tend to focus specifically on it's relationship to disability. These publications explore: disability inclusive dance pedagogy and choreography (Benjamin, 2002; Davis, 2008; Herman & Chatfield, 2010; Whatley, 2007; Zitomer & Reid, 2011); company descriptions that define diversity in relation to disability (Bisson, 2005; Johnston, 2008); audience attitudes and reactions towards disability in dance (Davis, 2008; Gregory, 1998; Whatley, 2007); reading integrated dance as a cultural text of disability (Cooper Albright, 1997; Kuppers, 2004; Sherlock, 1996; Smith, 2005); shifting the aesthetic of dance through inclusion of bodies that are easily readable as experiencing disability (Cooper Albright, 1997; Davis, 2008; Sherlock, 1996; Smith, 2005); and, in one case, an ethnography on how dancers with disabilities navigate dominant discourses of disability and dance (Irving & Giles, 2011).

Scholars of integrated dance very rarely engage deeply and explicitly with how multiple identities or other experiences of marginalization interact within an integrated dance setting. In these cases, the focus is almost always on the interaction of gender and disability within the bodies of dancers that

experience disability (Cooper Albright, 1997; Davis, 2008; Sherlock, 1996). Within the published research on integrated dance, authors have all but ignored the experiences, interactions and cultural work of dancers without visibly disabled bodies; ignoring those who may not directly experience disability, as well as those who experience forms of less visible disability that result, for example, from social expectations around emotional stability or intellectual and energetic capacities.

The one potential exception to this lacuna is Irving and Giles (2011), who present the only ethnographic study that includes all members of one integrated dance company. In this Foucauldian-informed ethnographic analysis of competing discourses within contemporary dance, the authors explore the impacts of these discourses on the actions and beliefs of the dancers involved in one integrated dance group, specifically highlighting the uniqueness of including contributions from individuals with sensory or developmental disability within their study (Irving and Giles, 2011). The authors delineate between integrated and inclusive physical activity, articulating an integrated activity as one that incorporates an individual into an already formed group, and inclusive activity as one where an individual is a part of the group from the beginning (Irving & Giles, 2011). The authors use the term 'integrated dance' because it was the preferred descriptor by the group involved in the study, but tend to articulate the groups interactions as inclusive in nature. Irving and Giles (2011) found these integrated dancers resisted the dominant discourses in contemporary dance, and experienced tensions in relation to choreography that

could either enforce or resist these discourse. Interestingly, these authors note that the dancers rarely mentioned disability or ability within their interviews, and suggests that disability is only one of a range of human experiences. At the same time, almost every quotation included is accompanied by a description of the dancers as physically or developmentally disabled. The vast majority of the dancers in this group, according to the authors, "had physical and/or developmental disabilities, activity limitations and participation restrictions as defined by the World Health Organization" (p.374). As this article, as well as the others published on integrated dance, demonstrate, disability is a central focus of integrated dance, although it may not be experienced by all dancers.

My proposed research project differs from the existing literature in the field, because, although I do focus heavily on the experience of disability, I examine disability as only one of a myriad of ways in which difference, marginalization, and solidarity shape integrated dance communities, their politics, and their art. In this Master's study, I include a broad cross-section of integrated dancers, and engage with the wide range of embodiments, experiences, identities and interactions that these dancers bring to their integrated dance community. Disability remains a crucial focus of this study, just as it is a crucial focus of the community I research with. At the same time, as I will discuss below, I understand disability as often intertwined with other overlapping structures of oppression. In light of this, I have chosen to frame my research using the *transformative paradigm*, because it explicitly engages with the multiple and diverse structural forms of oppression, experiences and

subjectivities of community members, such as the dancers within this integrated dance community (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011).

Social Justice and Transformative Resistance

The reviewed literature overwhelmingly articulates that integrated dance is important because of its potential to increase the opportunities for, and shift attitudes towards, those experiencing disability (Benjamin, 2002; Cooper Albright, 1997; Davis, 2008; Gregory, 1998; Smith, 2005; Zitomer & Reid, 2011). Benjamin (2002) argues that while professional level integrated dance performance, "is clearly not of a therapeutic nature, the power of the work and its ability to integrate the public mind (of the audience) and the personal body (of the performer) allows a subtle form of healing to take place on a societal level" (p. 64). While noting the potential of integrated dance to impact upon issues of social justice, such as access and disabling attitudes, scholars have yet to explore integrated dancers' understandings, experiences and practices of social justice within integrated dance creation and performance. My research seeks to address this gap by exploring dancers' experiences and understandings of social justice within an integrated dance creation and performance context.

Social justice, like justice, is a complex, dynamic, pluralistic, context-dependent concept relating to theories and feelings of good or bad, fair or unfair, right or wrong (Boudon & Betton, 1999; Miller 1999). According to Miller (1999), social justice can be understood as:

> ...how the good and bad things in life should be distributed among the members of a human society. When, more concretely, we attack some

> policy or some state of affairs as socially unjust, we are claiming that a person, or more usually a category of persons, enjoys fewer advantages than that person or group of persons ought to enjoy (or bears more of the burdens than they ought to bear), given how other members of society in question are faring. (p. 1)

Social justice movements involve the active pursuit of equality, and of access to resources and opportunities, on behalf of a group of marginalized individuals. “Activists involved in social justice movements,” argue Loewen and Pollard (2010), “believe that oppressed people have a right to fair treatment and a share of the benefits of society based on their human rights and equality of all people” (p.5). People who engage in the pursuit of social justice seem to do so with a wide variety of understandings of what social justice entails, and how it can be achieved. My research interests focus on multiple, intersecting axes of experience and oppression, and thus align with “transformational” understandings of social justice (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011; Spade, 2011).

Spade (2011) argues for the practice of “transformative resistance” wherein social justice is a community-based *process* that engages multiple structures of oppression simultaneously (p. 180). That is, Spade engages not with the ways various identities intersect in one person, but rather with the ways that various institutionalized systems of oppression (e.g., ableist immigration laws, racist prison industrial complex) mutually sustain one another, and come to marginalize particular groups of people in complex and compounding ways.

He puts forth a series of principles, based on Foucauldian theory and critical trans politics, that can guide organizations and social movements in the practice of anti-oppressive social justice action. These transformative principles include: fore-fronting leadership from those most impacted by injustice; engaging an intersectional approach to "understanding the multiple vectors of vulnerability converging in the harms members face" (pp. 188-189); working in ways that model the change that is desired in the world; focusing more on reflective process than on outcomes; developing new leaders and members who are directly impacted by injustice; recognizing that meaningful social change often arises from community relationships and action, rather than from policy and legislation; practicing accountable and transparent organization; and finally, "recognizing relationships as the underlying support system of the work and the change we seek and need and focusing resources on strengthening and building relationships" (p. 189). Spade's principles for transformative resistance resonate strongly with the transformative paradigm, which, as I will describe more in Chapter 2, guides my research on social justice and integrated dance.

Transformative Paradigm

Mertens, Sullivan and Stace (2011) advocate for the use of the transformative research paradigm for engaging social justice research with disability communities. The transformative paradigm emerged from authors engaged explicitly in feminist and other social justice-based research (Heimtun & Morgan, 2012; Mertens, 2009, 2010, 2012; Thornton Dill & Kohlman, 2012; Verjee, 2010) but has thus far only been applied in limited ways to research with

disability communities[2] (Mertens & Hopson, 2006; Mertens, Sullivan and Stace, 2011). Research within the transformative paradigm entails actively involving members of marginalized communities, such as disability communities, directly at all levels in the development, conduct, and dissemination of research regarding their communities (Mertens, 2009; Mertens, Sulllivan & Stace, 2011). The transformative paradigm utilizes a team approach of partnership formation and capacity building, engages multiple and mixed methods that are respectful of culture and diverse needs, and recognizes the "need to work together to challenge oppressive structures" (p. 231).

Not unlike Spade (2011), Mertens, Sullivan and Stace (2011) argue that transformative research must recognize the multiplicity of experiences of injustice, as well as the diversity inherent, within any disability community:

> The transformative paradigm provides a framework for research in the disability community that is more attuned to handling diversity within communities, aims to build on strengths within communities, develops solidarity with other groups that are marginalized, and changes identity politics to a socio-cultural perspective. (p. 230)

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[2] I consider the term disability community as inclusive of people who identify as experiencing disability, as well as those aligned as strong and active allies who activate with to those experiencing disability, such as the allies within this integrated dance community who do not identify as experiencing disability directly.

These authors argue that the transformative paradigm can assist researchers in addressing some of the most widely circulated critical disability studies critiques. These critiques suggest it is necessary to move beyond the "binary way of thinking about disability" in order to explore disability "in terms of intersectionality…[o]r in other words, an account of disability that is embodied, gendered, raced, classed and sexed" (p. 230). Within this integrated dance community, the transformative paradigm allows for a more diverse reading of the experiences, relationships and collaborative activist efforts of all of the dancers involved, whether or not they identify as experiencing disability. In other words, the transformative paradigm encourages a more complex and nuanced reading of the ways that varied systems of oppression impact differentially upon individuals within a given disability community. It is for this reason, according to Mertens, Sullivan and Stace (2011), that the transformative paradigm for research with disability communities is based upon a post-structuralist, rather than a medical or social, reading of disability.

Positivist medical disability models situate the 'problem' of disability as a biological fact within the body or mind of an individual (Benjamin, 2002; Shakespeare, 2006; Withers, 2012). Further, medical models position doctors, researchers, and other professionals as the experts who can objectively know the truth of disability, and positions people experiencing disability as the often-passive recipients of their expertise. This model has led to an engagement with disability as an isolated non-intersecting and apolitical phenomenon, and has led to many forms of research that have perpetuated or actively perpetrated social

injustice (Charlton, 1998; Oliver, 1996). Social models of disability are based on the (largely neo-Marxist or rights-based) understanding that "the problems disabled peoples face are the result of social oppression and exclusion, not their individual deficits," where these deficits are sometimes understood as "impairments" (Shakespeare, 2006, p.199; see also Charlton, 1998; Oliver, 1996). Within social models, disability is considered to be constructed as the result of cultural discrimination based on impairment, while at the same time, impairment is considered essentialist (Oliver, 1996). It is the essentialism of impairment that has tended to be the basis for an identity-based activism within disability movements (Davis, 2002; Tremain, 2005). In contrast to expert medical researchers, social models articulate disabled identity as a critical source of disability expertise, and "demand… disabled people's leadership in anything having to do with disability" (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005, p. 7; see also Charlton, 1998). Emancipatory disability research, such as participatory action research, often aligns with social models of disability (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011; Oliver, 1997). Although much politically important research has resulted from this paradigm, a number of scholars have argued that research within the social model of disability has tended to regard the disability community as a homogenous (largely physically disabled, white and heterosexual) entity with a shared identity: thereby collapsing the complexity of diverse communities and effacing those individuals who experience multiple forms of oppression (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011; Withers, 2012).

The transformative paradigm, by contrast, aligns with more post-structuralist understandings of disability. Post-structuralist disability scholars and activists problematize the fixed and homogenous identity category of disability, by borrowing heavily from Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and Michel Foucault's theories of power, knowledge, and the subject (Kuppers, 2004; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005; Tremain, 2005, 2006). A post-structuralist reading of disability questions a number of the tenants upheld by the medical and social models of disability. Most notably, it posits that impairment, identity and disability are culturally produced effects of power, not essentialist characteristics or experiences. Tremain (2006) argues:

> As effects of an historically specific political discourse… impairments are materialized as universal attributes (properties) of subjects through the iteration and reiteration of rather culturally specific regulatory norms and ideals about (for example) human function and structure, competency, intelligence, and ability. (p.192)

In other words, Tremain argues that impairment is not a bodily fact that is linked, in a binary fashion, with socially created disability, but rather that both disability and impairment (or deficit) are culturally produced. Both the concept of physiological 'impairment' and the social structures of disability are perpetually reproduced, she goes on to argue, because they serve to mutually reaffirm each other, as well as reproducing and reifying the discourses and power relations that produced them in the first place. As a researcher within the integrated dance community involved in this study, the notion that both

disability and impairment are continually produced and reproduced is reflective of my understanding that bodies and experiences of disability are fluid, fluctuating, dynamic, complex, and constituted by the ideas, environments, and power relations around us.

While the social models of disability tend to regard power "in terms of domination and subordination, superiority and inferiority... Those with power control; those without power lack control" (Charlton, 2006, p. 222), post-structuralist readings of power tend to regard power as more relational (Tremain, 2006). Foucault (2003) understands power as existing in relationships between people, and as being exercised through people acting in ways that facilitate or limit (or limit by facilitating) the possible actions of others. Tremain (2006) suggests that this understanding of power enables us to appreciate how people experiencing disability can exercise power through a range of possible actions that are more or less constrained by those individuals or systems with which they relate. It also helps us to appreciate how a person may be constrained or enabled by a variety of power relations that may or may not have to do directly with disability (Spade, 2011). Within the transformative paradigm the social justice issues under study are recognized as stemming from complex and varied power relations. Within this paradigm, the power relations between researchers and participants are also explicitly acknowledged, and reflexivity

regarding these relationships is understood as central to the practice of socially just research[3] (Mertens, 2009; Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011).

Axiology, Ontology, Epistemology and Terms of Reference

Within the transformative paradigm, the axiological assumption is fore-fronted, and it provides guidance for the ontological and epistemological assumptions that follow (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). Axiology refers to one's philosophical understanding about what ethics are, and how ethics are enacted in our research (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). The axiological assumption that guided this project was that of the transformative paradigm: "that ethics is defined in terms of the furtherance of human rights, the pursuit of social justice, the importance of cultural respect, and the need for reciprocity in the researcher-participant relationship" (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011, p. 231). Ontology relates to what we can know about our world, and details a viewpoint on the nature of reality (Mayan, 2009). Mertens, Sullivan and Stace (2011) suggest that within the transformative paradigm, "there may be one reality about which there are many different opinions and that differential access to power influences which version of reality is given privilege" (p. 231). The researcher must demonstrate competence in the cultural context that is being studied in order to effectively explore the "various versions of reality and

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[3] See the section entitled "Situating Myself and Ethical Consideration" in Chapter 2 for a discussion of power relations in this project. Also, see Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion of how the transformative paradigm is enacted within this research project.

interrogate them to determine which version is most in accord with furthering social justice and human rights" (p. 231). This ontological assumption of the transformative paradigm, therefore, leads to the epistemological assumption that researchers must display cultural competence and an understanding of diversity. Epistemology relates to how we can know about our world, and articulates the relationship between a researcher and the subject(s) of their research (Mayan, 2009). Within the transformative paradigm, "researchers strive for a level of cultural competency by building rapport despite differences, gaining trust of community members, and reflecting upon and recognizing their own biases" (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011, p. 231-232). A researcher must therefore be significantly attuned to the community culture as well as to possible sites of oppression, in order to produce research that is relevant, credible, meaningful, and useful to that community.

The transformative research paradigm engages "multiple theories, methods, and techniques" to conduct inquiry (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011, p. 233). However, it is important to make methodological decisions "with a conscious awareness of contextual and historical factors, especially as they relate to discrimination and oppression" (p.233), and to make decisions that place partnership with the disability community at the forefront of inquiry. Based on the assumptions and intentions listed above, Mertens and colleagues articulate six disability terms of reference for conducting research within disability communities, which I will describe in detail and draw heavily upon in my discussion of our research process in Chapter 3. In their terms of reference,

Mertens, Sullivan and Stace (2011) implore researchers to collectively negotiate the design and implementation of their study with the community involved in the study, and require researchers to fore-front the knowledge, values, and needs of the community within the research. It is this community-derived and community-engaged foundation of transformative research that led me to select a methodology that reflected the ways in which integrated dance companies already engage performance as a means of knowledge generation and expression: the methodology of performance ethnography.

Performance Ethnography

Performance ethnography, Denzin (2003) argues, is transformational in that it has the potential to break through normative traditions that create and perpetuate inequalities. Performance ethnography is an arts-based research methodology that engages creative embodied enactments through performance as a way of generating, analyzing, critiquing and sharing knowledge (Alexander, 2005; Conquergood, 1998, 2003; Denzin, 2003; Hamera, 2011). It draws from theatre and performance studies, dance, music, anthropology and communication, and is an interdisciplinary and polydisciplinary research practice “because performance itself demands it” (Hamera, 2011, p. 318).

Dance performance ethnography has been explored by very few authors within academic literature, but when it has been explored, it has been with explicitly political intention. For example, Markula (2006) discusses the transformational potential of dance performance ethnography by cross-reading Denzin’s perspective of performance ethnography and social change, Deleuze

and Guattari's conceptualization of art as a sensory way of knowing, and Massumi's construction of the body as a concept in art. Markula posits that the transformational potential of dance performance ethnography (albeit tenuous) is that it can forefront and engage the body and movement to create social change. Hastings (2009) takes a different, yet equally politicized, approach by arguing that the film *Rize* (about Krump dance in the United States of America) is a critical performance ethnography that engages in performative decolonization. Hastings (2009) argues that within *Rize,* a body that is subject to marginalizing social constructions can be also be engaged through dance as an implement of resistance. In Barbour's (2012) performance auto-ethnography, she melds autoethnographic writing, movement and creative writing activity descriptions, and solo dance performance to explore dance as a politicized, embodied methodology for female artist-academics. Barbour (2012) argues that the ways the body knows can be transformational, and open spaces for understanding belonging and the other otherwise. These dance-based studies all seem to answer Denzin's (2003) call to engage this methodology as a socio-political act.

Performance ethnographies that deal with disability, on the other hand, tend to engage overtly politicized inquiry far less. Of four performance ethnographies that refer explicitly to disability, three take place within therapeutic (i.e., medical model) contexts. Smith and Gallo (2007), for example, created a performance text for professional education and practice in nursing, based on interviews conducted with parents of 'children with genetic conditions' (Smith & Gallo, 2007). Snow, Snow & D'Amico (2008) created an ethnodrama

in an art-therapy context, which involved adults deemed to have developmental disability, and which looked at the therapeutic effect on one participant-performer. The third disability-related performance ethnography explored the collaborative creation (between expert researchers and professional dancers) of a dance derived from interviews about pathways to healthcare for individuals experiencing their first episode of psychosis (Boydell, 2008). I discuss this article in greater detail in Chapter 2, in order to problematize the lack of creative input and expression offered to interviewees. The last disability-related performance ethnography was conducted in the context of early childhood education, with parents of children 'with and without disabilities' (Maude et al., 2011). Although this performance ethnography was created in educational, rather than therapeutic contexts, it still engages disability primarily through a more medical than social justice lens. While each of these four studies makes varying attempts at positively affecting the lives of the people experiencing disability within the research, the treatment of disability in each study is largely depoliticized as a medical problem. None of these studies engage with disability primarily as a social justice issue, let alone as a social justice issue structured in a complex relationship with other forms of oppression.

In what remains of this chapter, I will review Hamera's (2011) four key terms for performance ethnography through the lens of post-structuralist theories of disability and marginalization. These terms are ethnography, performance, performativity, and aesthetics (p. 319). I will perform this reading in order to demonstrate the potential for, and my intention to create, a transformative

performance ethnography that engages with disability and diversity within a community of integrated dance.

Ethnography

Ethnography, within the practice of performance ethnography, is where "'participant observation' meets 'performance' on the terrain of expression" (Hamera, 2011, p. 320). It is the study of expression, both about and within, a culture. This description of ethnography aligns with the transformative paradigm's imperative to conduct research that is derived from the community engaged in the research, wherein the community's expression, both about and within their culture, is fore-fronted (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011). As I have argued earlier in this chapter, there has been a great deal of research that has ignored, perpetuated, or perpetrated the violence[4] experienced by members of disability communities (Charlton, 1998; Oliver, 1996), as well as by members of other marginalized, colonized, and oppressed communities (Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke, & Sabhlok, 2011). As such, it is crucial within the ethnographic research practices with marginalized communities that great attention and care be given to conducting research not only about and within, but also with communities of disability and other forms of oppression. Because the particular community involved in this study was one that coalesces around

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[4] Violence, here, refers to a wide range of actions, including: non-consensual medical procedures (for example, forced sterilization), bodily harm (for example, the high prevalence of physical and sexual abuse), as well as less obviously physical forms of violence (such as poverty, exclusion, institutionalization and neglect). See Snyder & Mitchell (2006), the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (2003) and Withers (2012) for a more detailed discussion of some of these violences.

the performance of integrated dance, it is fitting that the expression of this research is aligned with this culture's valued forms of expression: that is, I desired this research to be an expression about, within, through, by and with this performance community.

Performance

Performance is an enactment, an event and an opportunity for discovery (Hamera, 2011). "Performance makes and does things: materially, affectively, imaginatively...the researcher gives focused attention to the denotative, sensory elements of the event: how it looks, sounds, smells, shifts over time" (p. 319). Performance has affect, which is co-created and shaped by the researcher and the communities engaged in the research. This affect, in turn, can serve to destabilize and alter these communities. Finley (2011) argues:

> Performance creates specialized (open and dialogic) space that is simultaneously asserted for inquiry and expression. In this liminal space, distinctions are made between private and public spheres, thereby rendering personal identity, culture, and social order unstable, indeterminate, inchoate, and amenable to change. (p. 443)

This performance-produced space of unstable personal identity, culture and social order holds many possibilities for confronting and disrupting current conceptions of disability, race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender.

Critical disability researchers and artists have explored dance, and other forms of performance art, as a means of interrogating both disability and normativity (Cooper Albright, 1997; Kuppers, 2007, 2008; Kuppers & Marcus,

2009; Parker-Starbuck, 2005; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005; Smith, 2005). Kuppers (2004), a disability scholar and artist, argues, "disability performance can begin to enact the clashing of stereotypes and knowledge, certainty and openness, at the moment that a breath moves us" (p. 11). Following Kuppers, I believe that disability performance, through its affects that 'move us' emotionally and physically, has the potential to also move, or shift, our understandings and actions off-stage. By interrogating disability and normativity through performance, such as integrated dance, alternative understandings of disability and Otherness may arise that have the potential to decrease marginalization and increase opportunity and diversity within a given community.

Performativity

Performativity is "one way that performance makes and does something. Performative utterances make interventions in the world as they are spoken (sic)" (Hamera, 2011, p. 320). Performativity can be understood as the constitution and reconstitution of one's self through repetitive, and more or less constrained, action. Drawing on Butler's notion of 'performativity,' and Goffman's 'performance of everyday life,' disability scholars Sandahl and Auslander (2005) note that "the notion that disability, too, is performed (like gender, sex, sexuality, race, and ethnicity) and not a static "fact" of the body is not widely acknowledged or theorized" (p. 2; See also Kuppers, 2004; McRuer, 2006a, 2006b; Tremain, 2006). The ways in which subjectivities, such as

disability, are performed at home, on the street, and onstage has an impact on the ways we come to know each other and ourselves. Kuppers (2004) writes:

> Each living movement of this individual body as it knows itself and moves itself, re-produces, 'performs', reinscribes this system [the society of normalization] by living this moment as a gendered, racialized, disabled/nondisabled entity. There is no 'outside' to this system, but moments of openness and difference can be found within it as part of its living, changing nature: knowledge is always in flux and process. 'Performativity' as a term points to the embodied, living quality of knowledge, and its continuous production of truth. (p.6)

In my performance ethnography, the dancers' and I attempt to extend moments of openness and difference, hopefully allowing for an expanded knowledge or new production of truths regarding disability to develop both for dancers and for the audience. Kuppers (2004) argues that it is possible to perform subjectivities, such as disability, in a way that challenges dominant social perceptions. Sandahl and Auslander (2005) go further to suggest that while in performativity, the performance of subjectivities is a relatively unconscious process, disability subjectivity is often performed consciously and theatrically, with the potential to challenge stereotypes and transform stigma to empowerment. This would suggest that it is possible to create a research and performance space where alternative performativities are enabled: performativities that revel in bodily difference while challenge the overwhelmingly dominant language of impairment, dependence and lack that surrounds disability.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics, according to Hamera (2011), “are the criteria and implicit social contracts that shape how performance and performative repetitions are perceived and understood” (p. 320). Aesthetics are culturally and contextually situated; they are intricately woven in our everyday lives; they can be “sets of interpretive and expressive strategies to be interrogated, deployed or resisted” (p. 320). Artists and activists within disability communities are creating spaces in and through artistic practice that reject aesthetics of normativity and celebrate aesthetics of alterity (Kuppers, 2004; McRuer, 2006a, 2006b; Peers, Brittain & McRuer, 2012; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). McRuer (2006b), for example, writes about the development of a “crip” aesthetic and politics:

> Certainly, disabled activists, artists, and others who have come out crip have done so in response to systemic ablebodied subordination and oppression. Stigmatized in and by a culture that will not or cannot accommodate their presence, crip performers... have proudly and collectively shaped stigmaphilic alternatives in, through, and around that abjection. (p. 35-36)

For McRuer, art and cultural performances are crucial sites of resistance in the face of dominant normative aesthetics that are reproduced through the interlocking forces of compulsory able-bodiedness, compulsory heterosexuality, white supremacy and imperialism. Echoing this sentiment, Kuppers (2008) writes: “In dance and photography we enact transformations that know the abjection our bodies are placed in, but also know the pleasures our bodies open

up to us" (p. 175). For me, a disability aesthetic equates to a rejection of normative bodies and movements as the only aesthetic possibility. It translates into a desire to co-construct dance performances with communities of difference: performances that celebrate non-normative bodies and movement qualities, and performances that revel in the distinctiveness, difficulty, beauty, and pleasure of different ways of being and being together.

Within this thesis, I engage with the methodology of performance ethnography because of the transformative potential of doing ethnography, performance, performativity and aesthetics otherwise. Markula (2006) is cautiously optimistic that dance performance ethnography, with its foregrounding of sensation-creation and the body as a concept as well as raw material for art, has the potential to create transformational social change. Through performance ethnography, this study will embrace "the idea of performance to tease apart phenomena not normally thought of in these terms" (Hamera, 2011, p. 318): that is, to tease apart the practices and performance of social justice within one integrated dance community. Performance ethnography may open new worlds of dialogue and understanding regarding the complexities, hardships and strengths of integrated dance communities, and hopefully will inspire socially just action because of its transformational potential.

In the following chapter I discuss the methodology, and specific methods, of my performance ethnography in greater detail. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research and performance creation process through the lens of the transformative paradigm. Chapter 4 is a video of the final co-created

performance of this performance ethnography, and can be accessed either by DVD or through the web address: http://www.cripsie.ca/disquiet. In Chapter 5, I unpack and theorize the collaboratively developed performance by putting the choreography in conversation with focus group transcripts and critical disability theory. I conclude this thesis with a brief discussion of the impact and potential future directions of this research both for the community and for myself as a researcher and community leader.

Chapter 2: Doing Performance Ethnography

Twelve dancers, myself included, embarked on a nineteen-week performance-based research process, with a commitment *to collaboratively explore the practice and performance of social justice through integrated dance*. Not only did this process result in a fourteen-minute social-justice-based integrated dance performance entitled "(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery," it also illuminated how we enact social justice everyday in our integrated dance practice. In this chapter, I will explore our methods, and how these methods dovetailed with our everyday processes of integrated dance and social justice within iDANCE Edmonton Integrated Dance[5]. I begin by briefly discussing performance ethnography. I follow by introducing the dancers who were involved in the study, and the program in which they dance. I then discuss how we did performance ethnography: how group communication and performance creation were forms of data collection and analysis, and how the multiple performances of "(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery" were forms of knowledge translation. Research quality criteria are reviewed in relation to this project. I end by situating myself in the research process and the group, and by sharing some ethical considerations I wrestled with throughout this research process.

Methodology and Methods

I used Arts-based research (ABR), particularly an ABR methodology called performance ethnography, to structure my inquiry with one group of

[5] iDANCE Edmonton Integrated Dance is a program of The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement. Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta.

integrated dancers in Edmonton. ABR is noted to be “one of the tools a community can use in the performance of community-based activism” (Finley, 2011, p. 436). This work is decidedly political and makes “no claims to truth, but clearly work[s] to represent reflective dialogue and explorations of futuristic possibilities (Finley, 2011, p. 436). Finley (2011) articulates some of the benefits of an arts-based inquiry: “arts-based inquiry can encourage participants’ shared articulation of the experiences of living together, in harmony and in conflict” (p. 436); and that “arts inquiry holds promise for an emerging research tradition that is post-colonial, pluralistic, ethical, and transformative in positive ways” (p. 437).

Performance ethnography is one form of ABR methodology that engages creative, embodied enactments such as dance, theatre, and performance art as a way of generating, analyzing, critiquing and sharing knowledge (Alexander, 2005; Conquergood, 1998, 2003; Denzin, 2003; Hamera, 2011). Ethnography is “the science of contextualization” (Greenhouse, 2009, p. 2). Performance ethnography is a means of “exploring the expressive elements of a culture, [with] a focus on embodiment as a crucial component of cultural analysis and a tool for representing scholarly engagement, and a critical, interventionist commitment to theory in/as practice” (Hamera, 2011, p. 318). Through performance ethnography, the researcher embraces “the idea of performance to tease apart phenomena not normally thought of in these terms” (Hamera, 2011, p. 318). This methodology employs the messy, liminal, participatory, multi-voiced nature of performance to confront audiences and engage them in

conversation with the possibilities for social change (Conquergood, 2003; Conrad, 2004). Performance ethnography is transformational in that it has the potential to break through normative traditions that create and perpetuate inequalities (Denzin, 2003). This methodology opens new possibilities for dialogue and understanding between performers, as well as between the performers and the audience. As such performance ethnography holds transformational potential for dancers and audience members' to experience disability and integration differently.

Despite a substantial literature base in performance ethnography as a methodology, I had a difficult time finding texts that spelled out its specific methods, that is, exactly how to do performance ethnography. Hamera (2011) suggests that, "there are no prescriptions for operationalizing performance ethnography. The complexities of each site, each location in place and history demands its own unique negotiations. But this does not mean... naive reinvention of good research practices" (p. 322). This lack of a formula points specifically to the ethical imperative to engage directly with, as a co-performer, the culture and group one is researching with, in ways that are meaningful to them (Denzin, 2003; Hamera, 2011). My research practice, therefore, did not follow a set of prescriptive steps, but rather, was informed by the writing of various experienced academics who engage the methodology and politics of performance ethnography (Alexander, 2004; Conrad, 2004; Hamera, 2011). Guided by these authors, as well as the ethical and aesthetic commitments put forth by Denzin (2003) and Conquergood (1998; 2003), I engaged methods that

were as closely aligned as possible to the ongoing practices of the group involved in the study. The following sections will detail these methods.

Ethics Review

Ethics approval for conducting ethnographic-style research with human participants was received from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board prior to commencing contact with participants regarding this research project. Beyond this institutional ethics approval process, a discussion of the specific ethical practices that were engaged to conduct this research is included in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Dancers

Sampling in qualitative research is aimed at including individuals who could provide the most information rich cases for investigation based on their experience (Mayan, 2009). I invited participants for this research project specifically because of their ongoing involved with an integrated dance performance group, based on a purposive sampling method (Mayan, 2009). Fourteen dancers who participated for at least one full year with the iDANCE performance group, and who continue to dance with the program, were invited to participate. Eleven dancers agreed to participate. Two dancers, Roxanne[6] and Claire, who participated in the focus group and rehearsal process were not able to perform due to health reasons, but desired to remain in the study.

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[6] [6] Please see discussion on page 54 about the dancers' choice to decline anonymity and have their spoken words represented alongside their names in this written text.

These eleven dancers provided written informed consent and completed a demographics form that requested basic information about: age, gender identification (male, female, or other), education, work, preferred communication methods, and identification as a member of a visible minority or First Nations community. These dancers were between 19 and 61 years old. Nine dancers identified as female, and two dancers identified as male. Nine of eleven dancers had received college or university level education. Three dancers did not have current paid employment[7] (all of whom identified as experiencing disability). Other dancers were employed across a range of occupations: occupational therapist, teacher, administrator, writer/author, grocery clerk, graphic designer, sales clerk, and consumer mediation officer. Nine of the dancers did not identify as a member of a visible minority or First Nations community. One dancer noted disability as a visible minority.

Additionally, the dancers were asked if they identified as experiencing disability, and if they would be willing to explain. These were their responses: Alex experiences "a brain syndrome"; Alison experiences "physical disability, dermatomyositis - arthritis"; Kelsie and Kaylee do not identify as experiencing disability; Claire experiences being "on dialysis"; Ian experiences "right side hemiparesis and left side TBI"[8]; Iris experiences "wheelchair – M.S."[9]; Kasia experiences "disability created by society"; Laurel experiences "bad knees, bad back, and anxiety"; Roxanne experiences "a congenital condition called Spina

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[7] I use this term to acknowledge that the dancers are often involved in valuable work that does not offer them monitory support.
[8] Traumatic Brain Injury
[9] Multiple Sclerosis

Bifida"; Anna declined to respond to either the disability or visible minority question, as she articulated that the answer would be too complex and extensive to detail.[10]

I participated alongside these eleven dancers, as both a dancer and a researcher[11]. Within performance ethnography, the researcher is a co-performer in the construction and performance of the research content (Denzin, 2008; Hamera, 2011). I would articulate myself as a 29-year-old queer female grad student and occupational therapist. I am diagnosed with bipolar II, and I experience disability when faced with structural oppression resulting from mental illness. When I write about 'dancers' from now on, I intend this as inclusive of all eleven participants as well as myself, unless otherwise specified.

iDANCE Edmonton Integrated Dance

iDANCE Edmonton Integrated Dance was founded in 2008, as a result of the melding of a wheelchair dance group and a small pilot research project on ability, disability and integration in dance. The decision to expand from wheelchair dance to integrated dance came from within the dance group, spearheaded by two of the members of the wheelchair dance group who were also a part of the pilot project on integrated dance. I have been working with iDANCE since its inception. Roxanne Ulanicki and I co-developed the programming structure and processes alongside a leadership team that is

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[10] Throughout the remainder of this thesis, I will use the term dancers who experience disability to account for the dancers' multiple and differential identifications with the term disability.

[11] For more discussion regarding my multiple roles as dancer and researcher within this study, see the section below about situating myself and ethical considerations.

inclusive of dancers who experience disability. iDANCE emerged from the recognition that disability was excluded from the Edmonton dance community. Over time, we increasingly became aware of the complexities of our iDANCE group, and we desired to enact inclusion in dance along multiple axes of oppression (as discussed below).

At the time of this research project, iDANCE was running recreational community classes as well as a pre-professional performance group. Dancers who had taken one year of recreational classes, and desired to commit more time and effort to integrated dance performance, could audition for the performance group. The selection criteria for the performance group included: demonstration of commitment to the program (community class attendance, volunteering, positive attitude, skill development); demonstration of skills in giving and receiving feedback/constructive criticism; demonstration of appropriate behavior within groups; demonstration of self-inclusion; and demonstration of respect for others. These selection criteria were not intended to identify dancers based on highest skill level, but were intended to afford opportunity to dancers who wished to develop their craft as dance artists.

The iDANCE program has eight main goals that structure program activities and influence this arts-informed research: (a) to increase the accessibility of dance for dancers of all abilities: physically, socially, organizationally, and financially; (b) to create a nurturing place for dancers experiencing disabilities to explore movement arts which have traditionally been exclusive of diverse embodiments; (c) to offer opportunities for creativity,

artistic expression, and community connection to people of all abilities; (d) to develop a movement vocabulary by and for dancers of all abilities - thereby creating a language of belonging and inclusion; (e) to advocate for recognition, interdependence, and breadth of physical activity pursuits; (f) to educate patrons of the arts about disability, inclusion, anti-oppression and integrated dance; (g) to choreograph integrated dance performance that is inspired by movement vocabularies that celebrate the uniqueness and poetry of all bodies; and (h) to perform integrated dance art work for public audiences. This research sought to honour the community's values by recognizing these goals throughout the process.

Group Communication and Performance Creation (Data Creation and Synthesis)

Performance ethnographers deploy many of the methods available to all ethnographers (Pelias, 2007). What makes performance ethnography distinct is its engagement of performance as both a way of generating knowledge, and as a mode of representation (Pelias, 2007). I contend that in-print representations are insufficient to represent integrated dance experiences. Hamera (2011) and Denzin (2003) both argue that embodied enactment through performance serves to evoke the feelings and thinking of others, so as to bring about cognitive and spiritual enlightenment, and empathetic engagement. In order to urge the audience to create a more just world, as Pelias (2007) proposes performance ethnography can do, I chose the creation of an integrated dance as one of the

modes of data collection, and chose the performance of this dance as one mode of research representation.

One important, ethically-oriented, choice that I made within this research project was to have the dancers who contributed knowledge to the research project also perform this knowledge. This choice was in part sparked by Boydell's (2011) arts-informed inquiry. In her research on the co-creation of a dance based on "pathways to care for youth experiencing first episode of psychosis," Boydell chose to make a distinct separation between the "scientists (researcher and investigation team) and artists (choreographer, musician and dancers)" (p. 2). The intention of this work was to interpret and embody interview transcripts using dance, in order to encourage knowledge translation through a public performance that would be accessible to wider audiences beyond academia. However, neither the artistic nor research teams had lived experience of the first episode of psychosis. From a critical disability studies perspective, this is problematic because it contradicts one of the most crucial slogans of the disabled people's movement: "nothing about us without us" (Charlton, 1998). It is also problematic because it plays into a long history of invisibilizing disabled people through disabled roles always being acted out by non-disabled actors (Davis, 2012). Within our study, it was important to me that there was no separation between the "scientists," the "interviewees" and the "artists." The dancers, therefore, both co-created and co-performed the knowledge that they generated.

While the research process was deeply collaborative, for this inquiry to occur one person needed to bring structure to the creation and documentation of shared ideas. As the dancers were fully aware that this research project was in support of my Masters' thesis, it made logistical sense that I take on this responsibility. Throughout this performance ethnography research process, I conducted data collection via focus groups, rehearsals, reflective field notes, performances, and dancers' participation in audience discussions. The group was also engaged in the collaborative creation of a research-based dance, which served to further collect, analyze and synthesize data. In order to gain access to the cultural elements of integrated dance from the perspective of integrated dancers, and to prepare a performance ethnography, I conducted eleven two-hour rehearsals and five one-hour focus groups over the course of five months. Focus groups were held one hour before rehearsals, and were typically two weeks apart. One or two dancers were missing at a number of the rehearsals and focus groups, due to illness or other commitments. A few rehearsals were cancelled or rescheduled as a result of collective negotiation. The dancers also performed in a works-in-progress showing, after having conducted six rehearsals and three focus groups. We concluded the research project with two final performances of the research-based integrated dance. This research-based dance was performed as a means of representing the findings of this study to audiences beyond academia. Upon completion of the written text included in this thesis, dancers were also asked to member-check the three substantive chapters that included transcript content, to ensure that they were comfortable

with how their experience and voices were represented. This process of member-checking will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

It is important to articulate that data collection and analysis cannot be separated so neatly within the practice of this performance ethnography, as it was a non-linear, cyclical and dialogical process that spanned five months. The overarching process included sharing life experiences and ideas, brainstorming, improvisation, and choreography, but not in consecutive or discrete stages. The dancers were continuously informed by experiences of focus groups and rehearsals, words and movement, as well as the reflections that I brought back to the group based on past discussions and observations. We collectively and collaboratively synthesized this 'data' into performance content, which then fed back into conversations and improvisations, further choreography, and more discussion. The focus groups and rehearsal processes were synergetic and mutually informative.

I chose to conduct focus groups, as opposed to individual interviews. Friedenberg (1998) has suggested that ethnographic study should solicit feedback from the research group "using techniques that minimize the researcher's control of the interview situation and enhance intellectual dialogue" (quoted in Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011, p. 467). Focus groups provided an excellent opportunity to engage the group in discussion about relevant issues, in a context with which they are familiar, and in ways that are representative of our regular practice. As Kamerelis & Dimitriadis (2011) argue:

> Focus groups allow people to speak in both collective and individual voices - creating space for traditionally marginalized groups to articulate their particular experiences while allowing people to argue and disagree... allow[ing] participants to coalesce around key issues, coproducing knowledges and strategies for transcending their circumstances. (p. 552-553)

The description of focus groups dovetails with the tenets of the transformative paradigm, wherein a researcher can explore the collective negotiation of actions for social change without collapsing the complexities of a group of diverse individuals (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). Considering that the collaborative exploration of the practice and performance of social justice through integrated dance was the intention of this research project, focus groups seemed an appropriate choice. The focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

A typical focus group was conducted one hour before rehearsal and began with a check-in, wherein dancers shared anything about their lives that they desired (the process of check-ins will be described in more detail in the following chapter). Dancers set up the room in a circle, which included gaps between chairs to ensure there were ample choices for accessible seating. We all went around the circle and offered anything we wanted to share. The check-in process often provided prompts for relevant discussion of social justice, and the role of integrated dance. While all of the focus groups were extremely open-ended, the dancers, of their own accord, collectively engaged with the topic of

social justice. I infrequently drove the conversation, aside from opening and concluding the focus group and offering my reflections on what had been done and shared so far. Occasionally, I would pose a question to the group, such as, “What does social justice mean to you?” or “What does integrated dance do?” and invited comments from anyone in the group. Conversation would ensue as a result of check-ins, my research reflections, or questions. Occasionally I would ask that individuals who had not spoken were given the opportunity to offer their opinion. This is the one time I was more active in driving the conversation, as I attempted to make more space for perspectives of those more marginalized by structures of oppression such as ableism, sexism and ethnocentrism, based on our ongoing process and struggle to enact a radical politics of inclusion (Maharawal, 2013).

The rehearsal also provided an ideal context in which to observe the ways that dancers interacted with each other while creating integrated dance performance. As the lead performance ethnographer, and based on my extended investment and participation within this group over the past five years as instructor, choreographer and artistic director, I recorded extensive field notes on how I made sense of what I experienced and danced. These field notes were recorded weekly post-rehearsal, first by hand writing processes and reflections into notebooks, and subsequently reading through these hand written notes, and reflecting further within an ongoing electronic log. The purpose of these documented observations was not to glean objective data, but to collaborate and interact with the research group (see Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). As such,

salient ideas or moments were brought back to the research group to reflect on, clarify, complicate, and develop further. Dancers were also invited to share any reflections they had from rehearsals in following focus groups or rehearsals if they so desired, and they often did. With verbal consent of the dancers, I made one additional impromptu audio recording during one rehearsal, in order to capture the particularly personal and political nature of the content that was shared within that rehearsal. I also made two short video recordings during rehearsals, mainly to document the performance as it developed, and to engage dancer feedback on sections of the dance that they were not able to observe because they were performing.

Our rehearsals consisted of a development spiral of discussion (check-in or focus group), selection of ideas or themes to explore through movement, improvisation, discussion, structured improvisation, discussion, setting choreographed movement, discussion, fine tuning, discussion, repetition, and more discussion. Often multiple spirals would exist within the same rehearsal, in relation to different themes or parts of the performance we were creating. On days that we did not hold a focus group, we would begin our rehearsal with a check-in, which varied in length from fifteen minutes to one hour, depending on the issues occurring in the dancers lives.

At each focus group or rehearsal, all dancers were invited to suggest performance themes and offer reflections on our previous interactions. My own reflections on focus group transcripts and rehearsal observations were reported back to the group at each following rehearsal and focus group. However,

thematic selection and refinement was collaboratively driven. Themes were generated based on a number of elements: the extent of dialogue on a particular topic; topics that were recurrent; topics that resonated with many or all of the dancers; topics that sparked significant conversation or debate; and particularly in relation to the final chapter, topics that the group felt important enough to include within the final performance. I engaged in an ongoing dynamic of reflecting the research content and themes back to the dancers, and committed diligently to receiving dancer feedback throughout the process. Then, based on the content of our discussion, we would explore a movement improvisation.

We generated improvised movement based on themes such as isolation, masks, mirrors, accessibility, body image, immigration, darkness, anger and rage, and collective action. Often dancers presented these themes to the group in the form of a question or problem: "How do we demonstrate inaccessibility?" "How do we show collective action?" We would then move in response to these questions. Snowber (2002) argues that, "dance improvisation is the art of working and playing with movement. It is a way of discovering that which we know and that which we do not know" (p. 24). Our improvisation itself was creating new ways of knowing about the questions and themes we were exploring. After moving together as a whole group, or in smaller groups with other dancers observing, we would all engage in discussion, reflecting what we noticed about the movement choices of the group. We would share about how the improvisation felt, what dancers experienced by moving, what observers

experienced by watching, and what we liked and did not like about the movements explored.

Often our conversations would delineate a loose structure for another follow-up improvisation, in which dancers would explore ideas through movement, and examine how our movements relate to social justice. We would then improvise within a loose choreographic structure. Dancers would make suggestions about what movement we should keep and what we should discard, and we would negotiate these suggestions with a mind to our larger purpose of examining social justice. We asked ourselves, and each other, what certain movements communicated to the audience. We questioned how the movements we favoured (and the bodies we favoured doing particular movements) may either support or undermine a politics of disability pride, anti-oppression, and inclusive community development: politics fore-fronted by the dancers during our focus groups.

After structured improvisation and discussion, I often provided initial suggestions for how we might translate our improvisation movement into a more set choreographic structure. These suggestions were sometimes taken up for exploration by the dancers, sometimes rejected, or sometimes forgotten in the ensuing conversation. Alternatively, other dancers provided suggestions for a choreographic structure we could explore, and the group discussed these suggestions. After more discussion, we played with space, relationship, and intention. Armed with the shared experience of the focus groups, the dancers used the rehearsal space as a testing ground for the themes that were relevant to

the group. Through collaborative decision-making (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter), the dancers selected movements and ordered them based on aesthetics, as well as their relevance to the messaging being developed. We then discussed the developing choreography and decided on areas for refinement. We danced the choreography in light of these discussion points, and then finalized sections, which were then rehearsed through repetition. The performance itself was developed in a semi-chronological fashion, in that some of the earlier parts of the dance were developed first.

Based on the desires of the group, the dancers participated in a public works-in-progress showing after having conducted 6 rehearsals and 3 focus groups. At this showing, an incomplete version of the dance was performed for an audience of approximately 50 people. This showing was not specifically organized for the purpose of this research project, but was a community event wherein artists were invited to perform and receive feedback on their work. Intentionally seeking feedback and engagement from an audience outside of our group was meaningful to the dancers, and much of the feedback was incorporated into the final performance. Hence, this works-in-progress showing became a part of the research process. After this performance dancers engaged in a discussion with the audience about their perceptions and reactions to the dance, which was audio recorded and transcribed. Content from audience comments was not transcribed or included in the data, but briefly paraphrased to ensure dancers responses were comprehensible in context. An additional impromptu audio recording was made after this works-in-progress performance,

due to a dancer discussion about the feedback received from the audience. This showing provided invaluable information about the audience's perceptions of the performance in its early phase. The dancers were given an opportunity to refine their performance in light of the audience feedback, and this opportunity sparked the dancers to make choices that both aligned with the audiences' desires, as well as choices that railed against them (these choices will be discussed more in the final chapter).

The Multiple Performances of *(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery* (Knowledge Translation)

The research concluded in a collectively developed performance entitled "(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery," which represented our shared and differing experiences of integrated dance, of disability, and of social justice. The research project was performed twice in July of 2012: once at the University of Alberta Arts Based Research Studio, and once at the Alberta Dance Alliance's FEATS Festival of Dance. The performance at the Arts Based Research Studio was attended by approximately 20 people. It was video recorded, and the dancers' responses during the following audience discussion were transcribed verbatim. The dancers performed at the FEATS Festival of Dance *Made in Alberta* professional showcase, alongside approximately ten other dances, for an audience of over 300 people. This performance was also video recorded.

The written text that resulted from this performance ethnography is also a performance in and of itself (see Denzin, 2008; Hamera, 2011). This was deliberately made evident through the photos and video stills, and the

performative writing style of Chapter 5, which explicitly examines the performance in detail. The photos selected are based on the collectively developed themes that make up this performance. Kuppers (2008) includes photos and video stills as a part of her essay, suggesting they are "neither illustrative of [the] text, nor described in the essay; they carry their own rhetorical weight in this meditation on performance processes and embodiment" (p. 174). I draw from Kuppers in that the photos and stills themselves are not unpacked at length, but are intended to "carry their own rhetorical weight" in the context of that chapter (p. 174).

I have edited a video version of the last performance from the FEATS Festival, and it is included within this thesis (Chapter 4). The video is posted online (www.cripsie.ca/disquiet). A video of the performance, while lacking important qualities of a live experience, has the capacity to communicate vital aspects of this research project that are ephemeral, liminal, and impossible to experience in writing such as energy, weight, force, space, connection, and relationships. Further, it extends the reach of this research project beyond the temporal and geographical limitations of live performance, and also beyond the academic limits of written text, therefore increasing the accessibility of this research project.

Research Quality

Denzin & Lincoln (2011) put forth alternative means of evaluating the quality of postmodern[12] research, including "verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring, political praxis, multivoiced texts, dialogues with subjects, and so on" (p. 9). In this research project I have borrowed some of these postmodern evaluative criteria to assess the quality of my work: its political commitment; verisimilitude; an ethic of caring; and multivoiced texts.

Political commitment, in poststructuralist research, is considered to be central to both the process and possibilities of the research act. Denzin (1997) suggests that, "a good text exposes how race, class, and gender work their ways into the concrete lives of interacting individuals" (p. 10). Undoubtedly, disability should be considered alongside these political dimensions. Political commitment is also defined by the "degree to which a given research project

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[12] Often postmodernism and poststructuralism are conflated, and are occasionally used interchangeably (Rail, 2002). Poststructuralism may be considered a specific form of critique arising from the postmodern turn, in which language (or discourse) is one of the ways that some frameworks and structures of modernity are questioned and challenged (Best & Kellner, 1997). While many of the authors I draw from would be considered poststructuralist (for example, Snyder & Mitchell, 2006; Spade, 2011; Sullivan, 2005; Tremain, 2005) the postmodernist challenges to research quality would likely resonate strongly with the works of these authors.

empowers and emancipates a research community" (Lather, 1986, as quoted by Denzin, 1997, p. 10). This political commitment dovetails well with the transformative paradigm for research in disability communities (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011), which was the governing paradigm of my research, and which I discuss in great detail in chapter three of this thesis. To paraphrase my use of this paradigm, the disability community with which I researched was actively involved in negotiating nearly every aspect of the research process and its resultant performance. Further, the intimate interplay of multiple axes of oppression remained a strong focus throughout the research process and within the performance and written text.

Verisimilitude is akin to "literary standards of truthfulness in storytelling [which] replace those of social scientific truth" (Ellis, 2004, as quoted in Ellingson, 2011, p. 599). While Ellis, as quoted by Ellingson, writes of verisimilitude in relation to literature, Barone & Eisner (1997) extend this understanding of verisimilitude to the creation of art more broadly. These authors suggest verisimilitude is the capacity of a text or artwork to communicate with a reader such that this reader can "recognize some of the portrayed qualities from his or her own experiences and is thereby able to believe in the possibility – the credibility – of the virtual world as an analogue to the 'real' one" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 74). The quality of the work resides in its ability to communicate with an audience (reader, viewer) elements of shared experience, such that elements that are not shared are believable as well. The post-performance discussions at both the works-in-progress showing and

Arts Based Research Studio performances provided some very positive feedback about the degree to which audiences felt a shared experience with our dancers. Within this thesis, I have worked to include rich description, and tried to share a sense of dancer personalities and group dynamics through extensive transcript excerpts, in order to enable readers who have not experienced integrated dance or disability to feel like they can relate. The focus on audience engagement had to be carefully balanced against the transformative imperative for the performance to ring true for the performers themselves (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011). As demonstrated by dancers' member-checking feedback and comments from dancers in the post-performance discussions, dancers felt a deep sense of resonance with the performance and their contributions to it. For example, Ian stated, "Hey Lins, on your trail blazing and forging of new paths, thanks for giving us space and a voice in that of creating a brave new world." The dancers recognize their own truths (varied as they are) in the dance they co-created.

An ethic of care in research demands that, "ethical decisions are made on the basis of care, compassion, and a desire to act in ways that benefit the individual or group that is the focus of research" (Prosser, 2011, p. 494). An ethic of care is possible when collaborative relationships are upheld and universalist principles of research are replaced with consideration of the local, specific needs of the community engaged in research (Prosser, 2011). The described research methods and the following discussion of our process attest to my commitment as a researcher to enacting an ethic of care.

Multivoiced texts demonstrate a commitment to the co-constructed nature of the research, and to ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups are not silenced in the process (Christians, 2011). These texts consider that perspectives within a group may differ, and that these differences are of value to elucidating the research subject. In other words, just because this research explores disability, for example, it does not mean it is possible, or desirable, to detail a grand narrative of disability for all dancers involved. I have tried to tease out moments, within the following chapters, where dancers approach issues from varied perspectives. Also, in an effort to honor multiple voices, I make use of extensive transcript conversations to demonstrate the complexities and contradictions within our group. Focus group transcripts were used to flesh out, support, and translate into text the themes generated by the dancers throughout the research-based performance process. I also used large excerpts from the transcripts to demonstrate the dynamic and multi-voiced process of theme generation and collaborative knowledge-making.

Situating Myself and Ethical Considerations

In this section, I will explore my positions within this research project and my ongoing practices of reflexivity. I will also detail some of the ethical considerations and choices that I made throughout the research project, including informed consent, dancers as knowledge generators and performers, acknowledging dancers contributions, anonymity, member-checking, paying dancers for their participation, and authorship.

I have a complex relationship with iDANCE and this research project: one that involves multiple roles and differential relationships of power. My roles include co-founder, dancer, choreographer, instructor, and artistic director of iDANCE. Along with being the researcher in the study, I am also a person who experiences invisible disability. Further, I maintain ongoing friendships with the dancers who participated. These different relationships - between myself and other dancers, and between each of us and the systems of oppression that impact our lives - necessarily create unequal relationships of power within our community. As discussed in my introduction, power for Foucault (2003) is not something that someone possesses, but rather it is exercised in relationships between people or groups of people. Unequal power relations, for Foucault, are defined by the capacity of one party "to structure the possible field of actions of others" in ways that are neither reciprocal nor easily altered (p. 138). For example, as the leader of the only integrated dance program in Edmonton, certain dancers may feel that they cannot disagree with or upset me, because by doing so I may limit their future opportunities to access dance. As a result of this unequal relation of power, dancers may limit their own actions in relation to me (for example, they may be less likely to challenge my opinions or my interactions within the group).

There are benefits and limitations to the multi-layered dancer-researcher position that I held within this inquiry, as I am a central figure within the group with which I study (see Mayan, 2009). One potential limitation of my multi-layered position within this study was that dancers may have been reluctant to

discuss sensitive information, or felt uncomfortable about being forthcoming for fear of potential implications to their dance participation as mentioned above (even though they were assured it would not limit their capacity to dance with the group). Alternately, having already established rapport and an understanding of the integrated dance culture, I was in a unique position to report on the experience with depth and complexity. Undoubtedly, my perception of disability, as informed by my personal experiences and my academic research, has altered the ways that the group discusses and represents disability in practice and performances. I was deeply invested in this research on a number of fronts, and I could not be bracketed out of it, or remain 'objective' in relation to it.

To negotiate my own investments within this research process, I engaged in ongoing reflection with Conquergood's (2003) "ethical pitfalls, performative stances towards the other that are morally problematic" (p. 4). Conquergood cautions against extremes of either identification with, or differentiation from, the Other. He further cautions against extremes of either detachment or commitment. Conquergood argues for "dialogical performance" as the balanced negotiation of these tensions, as:

> …a way of having intimate conversation with other people and cultures. Instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them. The sensuous immediacy and empathic leap demanded by performance is an occasion for orchestrating two [or more] voices, for bringing together two [or more] sensibilities. At the same time, the conspicuous artifice of

> performance is a vivid reminder that each voice has its own integrity. (p. 10)

My own ethical research practice, in light of the various and differing power relations between myself and the dancers involved, was guided in part by Conquergood's dialogical performance, in part by ongoing discussion with the dancers, and in part by a reflexive engagement with my own ethics and politics.

My own practices of research reflexivity involved deep discomfort: I experienced intense anxiety that often racked me after each rehearsal. I would return home and begin writing field notes and, upon reflection, become sick at all of the times where I realized I might have acted unethically, inserted myself too much, discounted someone's contributions, or influenced the experience of the dancers in ways that I was not proud of (or more dangerously, in ways that I was proud of). In a field note after the second rehearsal I reflected:

> There are multiple ways I exist in the research process (focus group): as facilitator (time keeper, ensuring everyone speaks and is heard); reflector (summarize, paraphrase, reflect back); and as participant (actively engaging in conversation, idea production, sharing or challenging). How does choosing to be only one or two of these roles (facilitator and reflector) change the dynamic of how we as a group typically engage with each other? Does taking up space by engaging all three of these roles shut down some people from engaging, or does it in fact make space for people to engage? Would someone else take over the space I am taking, possibly in effect shutting down others' engagement? Does

> my intellectualization or sharing of academic theory intimidate or make others less inclined towards sharing than they may have been otherwise? Alternatively, is it a way to share some of the ideas that might frame the research and have the group reflect on whether they agree or disagree with my impression? It appears the group is often in agreement, but is this because those who might dissent are silenced by my contribution?

I ended up with a plethora of questions, and so many fewer answers. I would share these questions and experiences with the dancers, and ask for their feedback. I would inquire if they had experienced what I was worried about in the rehearsal. Many dancers articulated our process as one of collaboration and co-creation. At the same time, I often played the role of distilling conversation and improvisation exercises into possible choreographic structures. Upon reflecting on this tendency, I requested a group discussion about me taking a leadership role in setting choreography. A number of dancers expressed that a leader was necessary, and that my leadership did not preclude our capacity to create collaboratively. However, I continued to feel anxiety about my role.

This is not unlike my ongoing, non-research, leadership practices with the group, but my anxiety was heightened by the research aspect of this project. I shared my anxiety to assuage my anxiety, but then became anxious that I was assuaging my anxiety by sharing, and that this might be unethical too. I got a wake-up call from members of the group during one focus group that occurred after our works-in-progress performance. We were discussing how I came to be the dancer in our performance who used a laser pointer to symbolize the

enactment of structural violence, and I shared my anxiety over the impacts that my role as a leader had on our choreography:

Lindsay: I feel like I kinda just ended up with the role of being the laser pointer, but because I'm the choreographer, did I insert myself into that role inappropriately? And how does that reflect on the fact that this is a research project, and being honest, it's serving my thesis. And yet we're trying to do a collective process and I'm not sure that that came across. And is it dangerous if I am in that role? So I wanted to see what people felt about that. Maybe I'm just off on a total rampage that isn't really relevant to people, but I really wanted to check in on it because I think it can represent us or our process in a way that maybe we want to show, but I think if we don't consciously think about how those decisions were made, then that can be really dangerous.

Roxanne: Mmhmm.

Kaylee: Mmhmm.

Lindsay: If we decide that we're happy with it, but we actually addressed it as a group, then that means that our process, I guess, is, like...

Roxanne: Kaylee could be the one doing the laser, but then is it going to go with everything else?

Kaylee: Yeah, that's true

Roxanne: Or, whoever, but, does it have to be Lindsay? Although, I kind of like the little irony of her being the researcher, and being put in that position.

Iris: Yep!

Roxanne: Like, so you can see it both ways, right?...

Lindsay: And, Laurel, do you want to be the role that I am, or is there somebody else that should be in the role that I am in? Or, is everybody happy with that role, but that we've made that conscious choice, rather than it just kind of evolving without thinking it through.

Roxanne: Yeah, cause you and Laurel could switch quite easily, into each other's

Lindsay: Yeah, although, we were saying we love the way that you [Laurel] protect Kasia

Roxanne: Oh yeah!! Yeah!

Laurel: Or, would we be changing because you're feeling uncomfortable? Cause you'd want to change because we were feeling uncomfortable!

Lindsay: Yes.

Laurel: Right, so, if we're just changing because you feel uncomfortable, let's just say that we say, 'it doesn't matter to me that you're the laser pointer.'

Lindsay: Yeah, yeah.

Laurel: Then we shouldn't change it.

Lindsay: Yeah, no, I agree! I totally agree.

Roxanne: Yeah

Laurel: In any collective, there still has to be some leadership.

Lindsay: Mmhmm.

Roxanne: Yep.

Laurel: And,

Lindsay: I want to make sure I am negotiating that well with the group, though.

Roxanne: Well and I think you're right in that it was pragmatic, because we were down to the wire and we were just trying to get it together. But, yeah, I think it's important, I'm glad you brought it up because now we can think it through a little more.

Laurel's comments about changing choreography for my discomfort about the dancers' discomfort, and about requiring leadership even within a collective, were important to snapping me out of my spiral of self-doubt and

keeping me in a respectful relationship with the group. The dancers knew me, and had called me out before when something in our choreography or our interaction was politically problematic. I was being paternalistic in expecting that the dancers wouldn't call out something that they found problematic, as they did here! They continually chose to engage in our group with me as one of the leaders; they were deeply aware of my process and my personality. The dancers agreed to perform in this project because, at least in part, they were invested in creating art examining social justice and disability just as much as I was. At the same time, my anxiety was necessary. It was important for keeping me alerted to the ways that I was impacting the research process. It was important for ensuring that practices I may have taken for granted in our previous interactions were available to critique within our project.

Another commitment to engaging ethically in research with this group involved asking the dancers if they would like to be acknowledged for their research contributions by including their real names. This was an ethically-based decision to honor the knowledge contributions of people who have been systemically objectified and anonymized by medical and non-medical research over the past century (Charlton, 1998; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Many dancers were excited about the possibility of being represented as knowledge contributors. At the same time, this was not obligatory. The dancers were offered the opportunity to use a pseudonym instead, either for the whole project, or for any specific aspect thereof. They were informed that they could change their mind up until member-checking was completed. Two of the eleven dancers

desired to use a pseudonym for the entire project: one for reasons of anonymity, and one because she wanted to use her stage name. A third dancer chose to have one of her quotations made anonymous, while she was happy to use her real name for the remainder of the project. The remaining eight dancers desired to have their real names included throughout.

While anonymity is (more or less) possible within the context of the written text, the performance of this research was another story. Dancers were made aware at the beginning of the project that by virtue of the nature of performance, they could not be guaranteed anonymity on stage or in the video. In the performance publicity (posters and dance programs handed out the audience members, as well as video credits), one dancer was represented by a pseudonym, but anyone from the dance community in Edmonton who knows our dancers may have been able to identify this dancer. This was something that each dancer understood and agreed to.

The dancers were given the opportunity to member-check the transcripts, the written text in Chapter 2, 3, and 5, and the photographs included therein. Dancers were invited to provide feedback; offer suggestions; make additions, edits or deletions; or alter their choice for anonymity. Member-checking was completed mainly by email, but also by phone, text messaging, and in person, depending on the dancer's preference. No dancer made comments about the transcripts themselves, but ten of eleven dancers commented on the written chapters. Two dancers made additions to the text. A couple of dancers provided excellent copy editing! No dancers desired content deletions. As discussed

above, one dancer chose to change her anonymity level on one particular quote, during member-checking. Additionally, in discussing member-checking with Alex and his mother, his mom suggested that Alex may want to member-check with a non-researcher member of the group, as she was concerned about researcher bias if I was to member-check with him. Alex requested to complete member-checking with Kelsie, who agreed. Because of various economic and cognitive accessibility issues, it was important to offer unique solutions to ensure that each dancer was comfortable with their contributions.

Upon completion of this research project, dancers were given a $100 pre-paid credit card to honour their time, energy, creativity, knowledge, and performance contributions. While minuscule in comparison to the effort and engagement offered, it was nonetheless an important ethical act to acknowledge the dancers financially, to the extent of my capacity to do so. Many people who experience disability are either unemployed, or underemployed in jobs that minimally compensate them financially for their contributions (often being paid far below minimum wage) (Withers, 2012). Furthermore some dancers have their finances controlled through restricted government income or through guardianship. In light of this, it was an important commitment to offer monetary recognition for dancers' labour, and moreover, to offer compensation that did not restrict how or where the money could be spent. To further recognize their contributions, the dancers are considered co-authors and co-choreographers of the final performance (included, in DVD format, as Chapter 4). Although my name is listed as the author of the written component of this thesis, I gratefully

acknowledge the deeply theoretical and artistic work that was collaboratively created by this group of dancers.

Chapter 3: "We All Carry Each Other, Sometimes": Practicing Social Justice Through Integrated Dance

Researchers often imagine disability, as an object that can be captured through academic research methods (Charlton, 1998; Oliver, 1996). Engaging the transformative paradigm challenges researchers to respect and acknowledge that disability communities already have their own processes of meaning making and knowledge creation (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011). I argue herein that my research has become enriched and expanded through engaging with the existing meaning-making processes of iDANCE community.

The transformative paradigm of research in disability communities, as articulated by Mertens, Sullivan, and Stace (2011), entails actively involving members of disability communities directly at all levels in the development, conduct and dissemination of research regarding people experiencing disability and their communities. Community, within this paradigm, is a crucial, flexible and ephemeral term. It is used to denote a group of individuals with a common identity, interest, or experience of oppression that nonetheless constitutes an immensely diverse group with differential experiences of their commonality, as well as varying relationships to other forms of privilege and oppression. Within this study, I refer to community with regards to larger, more general disability communities, and also to the specific community of integrated dancers involved in iDANCE. Disability communities refer to a whole range of self-identified groupings of incredibly diverse people who experience disability (for example, the Edmonton spina bifida community, the national disability arts community).

The iDANCE community refers to a very specific grouping of both past and present integrated dancers in Edmonton, as well as those allies who actively support and closely engage with this integrated dance program (often referred to as "our" community). I use the concept of community because it is central to the transformative paradigm, and also, in keeping with this paradigm, because the term is frequently used by the dancers within this study.

Mertens, Sullivan and Stace (2011) put forth six "disability terms of reference" that guide methodological engagement in disability communities, and that have guided my engagement with the iDANCE community dancers within this study (p. 232). The first term of reference is that "the authority for the construction of meanings and knowledge...rests with the community members" (p. 232). Second, researchers should honour community members' "right to have those things that they value to be fully considered in all interactions" (p. 232). Third, researchers should constantly be attending to the community's worldviews. Fourth, one must recognize the diversity and complexity within the community. Fifth, the community should validate and evaluate whether the research adheres to these terms of reference. Finally, the sixth term of reference put forth is that researchers and community members should collectively negotiate the research processes and the criteria for meeting the community's needs.

In this chapter, I use the above transformative paradigm terms of reference to discuss several strategies of knowledge generation and community building which were pivotal to both this research process and to the iDANCE

community's daily enactment of social justice. I often quote focus group transcripts at length, in this chapter, in order to demonstrate the richness, diversity and dynamic nature of the dancers' engagement with each of these strategies. The strategies I will discuss herein are check-ins, collaborative process and consent/sus making, and care-sharing.

Check-In

At the beginning of every focus group interaction and nearly every rehearsal, and at the beginning of some of the iDANCE recreational classes, we engaged in a practice we called "check-in." The check-in was a simple practice, wherein each member took the time needed to talk with the group about whatever aspects of life that he or she felt was important or meaningful. Outside of the context of this research project, check-ins were initiated by the request of any iDANCE community member, often because dancers desired to share exciting or difficult experiences or emotions with the group. Occasionally I would ask if people would like to check in, and sometimes dancers desired to get dancing instead. Within the research project, the dancers and I negotiated the research process and collaboratively chose to keep the community-initiated practice of check-ins at the beginning of focus groups and rehearsals, which resonates with the sixth term of reference for transformative research (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). We made check-ins central to our research process because it was a process that both illuminated and exercised some fundamental community needs.

A typical check-in within one focus group included sharing about: a dance performance some of us took part in; my cat puking up a head band and needing surgery; me feeling nervous about whether our process is going well for everyone; Kelsie's perspective of changes in the yoga world; Kelsie traveling to Tofino for a commitment ceremony; fighting off colds; Kelsie's date over the weekend; Alex's new work schedule; how Alex loves everybody; Roxanne developing a new coffee shop that employs people experiencing disability; Roxanne's experience at the Women of Vision luncheon, and various dancers' general distain for award ceremonies; Iris' mom breaking her hip and wanting to die; Iris' family fighting about elder care; Ian leaving the Self-Advocacy Federation; dancers missing each other; Anna arriving late due to a fender bender with a drunk driver; Anna's wedding plans; Alison feeling unwell, but excited to dance; Kaylee's frustration with wedding season; and the upcoming performance of Kaylee's musical theatre troupe "The Kazoodles." These tangents, asides, angry tirades, intensely vulnerable openings, and basic offerings are all critical to our movement practice and to our understanding of the beauty and hardship within our community.

Being present and engaged in even the simplest, most banal aspects of each of our dancer's lives, I argue, is a practice of social justice. We enacted the second transformative term of reference by not only regarding check-ins as a practice of "value to be fully considered in all interactions," but also by gleaning from check-ins precisely that which is valued most by the community (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011, p. 232). Through this process we are checking in, not

out, of our community and each other. Nothing was too big or small to be given some time and space. Through check-in we learned about the complexities of disability, social (in)justice, and ourselves. Check-ins brought us joy and heartbreak, because they let us into the emotional lives of our fellow dancers. We learned about each other, in all our goofiness, frustration, pride, fear, loneliness, and excitement. We became invested in each other's lives, passions, and struggles. This investment was exemplified in a check-in discussion led by Alex, who is a consummate comedian, and who often astutely reflects the emotional state of the group through his comments. After a check-in by Roxanne about fighting for accessibility at a local cafe, Alex shared:

Alex: Let's be happy, not just struggling, just be happy. We are family.

Lindsay: Do you think that is easy or difficult?

Alex: Easy, if Lindsay is in my life.

Lindsay: Yeah?!

Alex: And easy for Kels, and Laurel, and Iris and Rox. What's wrong with being in a wheelchair? What's wrong with that!

Lindsay: Agreed! What makes it easy for you?

Alex: Well, I think like, Kelsie (Group giggles). It's just trying to get along and not blame each other, and help others (Group agrees). It's just, I'm not trying to be a psychic, I'm not psychic! (Group giggles)

Roxanne: Good to know!

Alex: I just want to be open mind. Right? To be more... Be nice to see more justice. I am, I have Downs' Syndrome, I am Downs' Syndrome, I am a Downs' Syndrome myself, Roxanne told me that. (Group laughs loudly)

Roxanne: Okay, that's where it came from! I said to him I have never heard you tell me you have Downs' Syndrome, he did this last week, and, (turns to Alex) I didn't tell you that! You told me you had a brain syndrome, and I said okay!

Alex: I had it all my life (nodding).

Roxanne: Yes (giggles)

Alex: I just want to get along as a dancer. Cause I don't know about blame... we need more support, right?

Laurel: Absolutely.

Alex: I don't want Roxanne to be left out cause she's in a wheelchair, why not!?

Lindsay: Yeah. (Group giggles)

Roxanne: Thank you Alex! I wouldn't want to be left out because of the wheelchair either.

Alex: Because she is so strong, she is going to fly off the stage! (Group giggles)

Alex valued the opportunity to share about his joy, love of dance, and the ways he understood himself (e.g., as a dancer). He also tied this into a valuing of other dancers' joys and struggles. His words demonstrate how he ponders the treatment of Roxanne when she uses her wheelchair, and he articulated how powerful she is onstage. As this dialogue with Alex also demonstrates, our sharing often sparks continued conversation, wherein dancers asked each other questions, reflected on their own experiences in relation to others' sharing, pushed or challenged the assumptions that underlie some shared statements, and applied shared experiences to what they wanted to represent in upcoming performances.

While check-ins certainly provide the time and space for tangents and asides, they also often include our community's experiences of our most pressing social (in)justice issues. Through this practice, we adhere to the third transformative term of reference by honouring and exploring our community's worldviews (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). Whereas many people tend to view disability as a problem of the body, disability communities have also developed worldviews that are critical of the social structures that impose disability and other forms of oppression (Clare, 1999; Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011; Withers, 2012). Members of our group understand disability in relation to issues of social justice, and they demonstrate these alternative worldviews through check-in conversations. Social (in)justice issues discussed by our community during check-in included:

excess
racism
sexism
bullying
isolation
capitalism
deportation
immigrant exploitation
discrimination
welfare and disability funding
educational access
un(der)employment
administrative barriers
financial inaccessibility
ableist attitudes and assumptions
social marginalization
hierarchies of disability
unrealistic body shape expectations
control over dying and euthanasia
physical (in)accessibility
colonialism
poverty

It was from these conversations about social (in)justice, initiated by our check-in process and developed through our rehearsal process, that the themes within our final performance emerged. These themes are outlined and explored in detail in Chapter 5. In check-in, we develop our personal and political perspectives by exploring the differing oppressions experienced by members of our community, and we begin the process of translating our perspectives into dance. We know more about the world, and dance differently within it, because of knowing more about each other.

Check-ins spark some of the most politically charged and vulnerable moments of our rehearsals, and they often lead to the very politically charged and vulnerable movement choices that we stage in performances. For example, within the same check-in detailed above, alongside cat puking and the Kazoodles musical, Kasia shared the following:

> So this week was kind of tough, and inspiring at the same time. My mom, she has an English test in two weeks. She's doing her best to study as much as she can, I'm helping her. Some of my friends are coming over to help her with studying, but she's very exhausted after work, all she wants to do is just go to sleep. And it's a horrible work place. Honestly, it's, ARGGGGHHH! After we got our permanent resident card, I'm gonna go and report them. If I can. So, there is a lot of issues going on right now with immigration, and it's going to be our last time when we can get our study permits and work permits, it's the last time

> we can do it, and if we don't get the permanent resident card, we might be deported. so, that's kinda sad.

The dancers interject:

Roxanne: We're not going to let that happen.

Kelsie: No. I'll marry you Kasia.

Group: Yeah!

Roxanne: That's how we'll deal with it!

Kasia continues:

> It's very unfortunate, but we keep on fighting, and I am planning to go to school in September, I don't have money, I don't have anything, but I'm just praying that some kind of miracle will happen and I'm doing everything I can to get back to school. Because it's been too long, and as an English, a second language person I'm loosing a lot of English skills and I'm getting out of the habit of studying, so it's not good at all.

We began exploring immigration as a group as a result of Kasia's check-ins. This exploration became a crucial point of expansion in our commitment to social justice, complicating and layering our understanding of oppression across multiple overlapping axes (as detailed in the following chapter).

Within check-in, the group often moved back and forth between the plainly mundane and the obviously political. Importantly, however, plainly mundane check-in content (and practice) can quickly and unexpectedly transform into intensely and overtly political conversation. In this group, I did my best not to shut down even the most seemingly irrelevant conversation,

because the group will extract incredibly insightful and deeply political meanings out of these instances of apparent irrelevance. This commitment is in keeping with the first transformative term of reference, wherein the capacity and authority for meaning making lies within the community itself (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011). For example, at the end of one check-in, Kasia introduced a conversation that, through group discussion and collective meaning-making, morphed from the totally tangential to the extremely political. Kasia had been volunteering at a friend's farm, and recounted a story of a chick she had taken home:

Kasia: [A friend] had this one chick, and it was crippled, right? Like its leg was on the side, and other chicks started to peck it (the group gasps), it was supposed to die because it's crippled, nobody cares about it. So I was like, no! I can't look at this. So I took it home (the group laughs raucously). So now I have this chick... and what happened to its leg? It was just on the side, it was dragging it, and other chicks wanted to kill it, pick it to death pretty much. And, I figured out it was just its brain pattern, and it can learn how to walk (group laughs hard). So what I am doing with the chick,

Laurel: Its rehabilitation therapy! (Group laughs)

Kasia: I am doing physio with it, every single day (group laughs intensely). And I am putting athletic tape between its legs, so I am teaching it how to walk forward and I can see so much improvement. (Group laughs)

Kaylee: Oh my god!

Kasia: It's jumping out of the box, and it's a spoiled rotten chick. (Group laughs) ... she got it illegally from the USA, she got the eggs. (Group laughs)

Roxanne: Which is here illegally from the US!!!! (laughs) An illegal immigrant!!! (Group laughs deeply) ...

Kasia: Yeah. Other chicks, they were walking on it, you know, I am so happy it doesn't happen in real life. Well, sometimes people behave this way, but still. It shouldn't be this way. So, I took it home and I'm doing physio.

Roxanne: You are awesome!

Kasia: The chick...

Kaylee: This is such like a metaphor for why we are here!

Kasia: I know, I know... and its name is Crispy Fred. (Group laughs, shouts 'oh my god!'). And it's the strongest chick ever! Come on!

Kaylee: Oh my god!

Laurel: Kasia, you are foreshadowing his future!

Kasia: And it was fighting for its dignity, others stepping on it, I had to take it home.

Kaylee: Kasia, please marry me!

Kasia: That will solve all of my problems!

Kaylee: And you could stay here forever and we'll be married. (Group laughs, proclaims 'yes!'). It'll solve everything!

Laurel: But marriage won't guarantee it.

Kaylee: We'll raise a rooster!!! (Group laughs). And we'll be happy, dammit!!!

Kasia: Now I might be deported with my rooster (group laughs). No it wasn't smuggled, it was born here!!! (Group laughs in an inaudibly raucous uproar)

Kasia's adventures with her baby chick, 'Crispy Fred,' stuck with us throughout the rehearsal process, such that some group members fondly referred to the performance as "The Rooster Dance." At the following focus group, Kasia's update was met with gales of laughter: "Okay, apparently there was issues re-

integrating the chicken." A few weeks later, she somberly reported that Crispy Fred had been eaten by a fox. We were devastated: for Crispy Fred, for Kasia, and for the political struggles he represented.

The group's riotous laughter, and subsequent devastation, about Crispy Fred was not only in sympathy with Kasia's eccentric and beautiful sense of justice, but it was also an active process of group meaning-making. Through humour, the group explicitly connects and invests Kasia's story with their own social justice struggles, or those of their fellow dancers. It is Roxanne, for example, who embeds Kasia's immigration struggles within the story by pointing to Crispy Fred's illegal status, which is then taken up by Kaylee, and then by Kasia. The group creates meaning about what social justice is for Crispy Fred, and goes further by brainstorming solutions to the social injustices that extend beyond the chick to Kasia as well. For example, the dancers offer to marry Kasia (quite regularly, in fact!) to keep her, and then her chick, from being deported. These offers, although comedic, are signaling deep concern for her struggles and a genuine intention to find a solution to her injustice, however possible.

The complexities of the comedy that arise from stories like Kasia's may not be so easily readable by an outsider, but it is an example of how humour is often used by the group to critique forces of social injustice that impact heavily on the dancers' daily lives. Kasia's story enabled the group to engage in a critique of rehabilitation, alongside the recognition that rehabilitation is sometimes the only viable option. In a parallel reflection of our dominant ways

of treating disability, when Kasia could not imagine how to enact change on a social level, she resorted to individualized rehabilitative intervention. She could not rehabilitate the attitudes of the other chickens. She could not intervene socially in the chicken coop, as we attempt to do in our communities. She reflected, “other chicks, they were walking on it, you know, I am like, I am so happy it doesn’t happen in real life. Well, sometimes people behave this way, but still. It shouldn’t be this way.” Members of our group knew that it was this way for many disabled people, and that is precisely why we were trying to create a different community through dance. We laughed, specifically because she chose to rehabilitate the individual chick, to change its body, to enforce normalized movement patterns on it in hopes that the chick would survive in its social environment. Even still, Kasia returned to the social nature of disability with her later comment: “Okay, apparently there was issues re-integrating the chicken.” Her reconnection to the social nature of disability demonstrates the ways in which her worldview is shifted by her connection to the communities of disability and integrated dance. It is precisely out of the process of check-in, and its related commitment to not only know, but to understand, each other’s worlds, that we come to create shared, politically explicit, meanings out of our seemingly tangential and banal experiences.

Negotiation and Consent/sus

In addition to collective meaning-making, our group was committed to the explicit negotiation of our process. Kelsie noted her excitement about this

commitment after a lengthy group discussion about whether or not we should say the word "bullshit" in our performance:

> I'm very excited to watch that negotiation process actually... You know, cause other places I've been involved with, [saying] bullshit [in a performance] would not be an issue...the point is to create discomfort, particularly in the audience, and to challenge their boundaries. But I'm fascinated by the idea... that the primary thing in doing this is negotiating our boundaries, as opposed to dealing with the audience's boundaries. I like that emphasis...especially when I first came into this process and working with iDANCE, I really like your guys' emphasis on disability [leadership], working in a space where I need to negotiate my own privilege, and not jump in and silence people.

In the above quotation, Kelsie fore-fronted some important political and pragmatic practices within the group that influenced both our research process and our performance creation. Specifically, she reflected the group's collective commitment to the sixth disability term of reference: that the research process and criteria for meeting community needs are explicitly and continually negotiated by the group (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). For example, in the following exchange, the group collectively negotiated how to enable Claire's participation after she had missed a series of rehearsals due to illness:

Lindsay: So, we have something to chat about.

Alex: Go ahead my dear.

Lindsay: Um, Ms. Claire is back with us.

Group: Yay!

Lindsay: and, I am cautious about

Alex: About what?

Lindsay: About whether or not, I am questioning whether or not we can figure out a way for Claire to be a part of the piece, coming back in at this point. And, everything in my heart wants to figure out a way to do it, and we also have three rehearsals left. Which makes it really tough, because there's not.

Claire: Guys, I don't have to be in, I don't have to be in every piece to know that you guys care about me, so, I don't have to be in this one.

Roxanne: So, would you be willing to give us some feedback? Tell us what you think? Cause we really need that. We need somebody else's eyes.

Claire: Yeah, that would be my choice.

Lindsay: Claire, that's so huge.

Roxanne: You are lovely.

Kelsie: Yeah.

Lindsay: Really.

Roxanne: Yep.

Claire: Even though I was in the hospital, I don't care right now.

Lindsay: Well, and the hard part is, those are things that we can't control, in life, right,

Roxanne: Yeah...

Claire: I'd rather be helping you guys than anything else right now... I wanna see what's going on!

I was very uncomfortable during the above conversation because it felt like it would be a hurtful decision for Claire if she could not perform with us. I

imagined that the most important thing for Claire was that she performs. This highlights, for me, the importance of having Claire involved in this negotiation. Claire demonstrates her agency within group decision making by articulating her valuing of the group's care over her desire to perform. What this exchange also makes clear is that members of this group have their own set of values that do not necessarily forefront performance as the most important part of their integrated dance experience. Contrary to my assumption, Claire clearly articulates that the most important thing to her is that the group cares for her, and that she can reciprocate by helping the group, whether or not she performs. This group negotiation, driven by Claire, also resonates with the second disability term of reference, wherein the researcher recognizes and honors those things that are valued by the community members (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). Maybe, in this context, social justice for Claire means having a meaningful role in the research and performance process, having the capacity to negotiate this role, and having the ongoing opportunity to receive and reciprocate care within the group.

The above process of negotiation, and many others like it, did not include everyone's perspective equally. These are flawed, messy, and sometimes unfair processes that demonstrate our group's multiplicity, complexity, and fallibility. During the three months of research, some people shared more ideas than others, especially those dancers with louder personalities like Kaylee, Roxanne, and myself. Some people expressed more discomfort than others, like Roxanne, Ian, Alex, Alison and myself. Some people's ideas were

rejected more than others, and I cannot ignore that the ideas that were rejected most often came from male dancers who may be deemed to experience developmental disability. Specifically in regards to Alex, I exercised direct veto in relation to his suggestions a number of times, often with the support of some of the other dancers. While I was cautious and attempted to be reflexive about this choice, I nonetheless did it. Alex would often request to change choreography once it had been set, especially nearing the end of the rehearsal process. I often read these changes as distracting or irrelevant to the narratives we were constructing, but maybe they should have been included precisely because I read them that way. This is one of the points of reflexivity I failed to bring to the group during our process, and I continue to wrestle with it. When working as a collective, do we necessarily need to subsume the desires of the individual? How easily do we subsume the desires of some individuals over others? Cohen (2011) addresses this struggle as central to the anarchist activist commitment to consensus making:

> Balancing individual freedom with social solidarity will not follow from the eradication of state or capitalist structures but must be built, step-by-step, in the spaces of (unequal and sometimes incommensurable) interpersonal relationships. It reflects a liberal humanist insistence on the autonomy of all individuals, a socialist commitment to communal obligations, and a poststructuralist observation that power can never be eliminated but only ever managed, channeled, redirected, and shared. (p. 250)

As Cohen argues, we will inevitable fail at negotiating power imbalances perfectly and honoring everyone's contributions and desires equally, however, this should not detract from our vigilant attempts to do so. The dancers attempted to negotiate these power imbalances, most clearly, through two interrelated processes: consensus and consent.

Our group spent a great deal of time within rehearsals on the process of building consensus about what would be included in the final performance. Consensus-making within our group was a collective commitment to an ongoing and imperfect process of recognizing and mitigating hierarchical relationships within our decision-making (Cohen, 2011; Maharawal, 2013). Our consensus-making process emerged from within the iDANCE community. It was not formalized by structures, rules, or guidelines that are common to groups organizing with the explicit intention of engaging consensus-making processes (see Broner, Franczak, Dye, & McAllister, 2001; Cohen, 2011; Maharawal, 2013). Not unlike the activist process described by Cohen (2011) and Maharawal (2013), our process of consensus-making was aimed at consensual engagement, as well as including the perspectives of dancers who were differentially marginalized by various structures of oppression, such as ableism, sexism, and ethnocentrism. In our consensus-making process, we sought to recognize and respect the perspectives of all of the dancers, and to collectively develop action that all dancers were approving of and invested in. Maharawal (2013) details a consensus-making process that resonates strongly with what dancers seem to strive towards in our research and rehearsal processes: "a

radical politics of inclusion enacted through anti-oppressive practices in which ideals of inclusivity are understood as a process and a struggle" (p. 178). The commitment to consensus-making, the fore-fronting of process and the experience of struggle were absolutely evident throughout our research-based performance development. As Maharawal writes, formalized process-oriented consensus-making involves:

> …organizational forms [taking] seriously privilege and uneven power relations, wherein those involved were self-reflexive and deconstructed/dismantled their own forms of privilege and power, indeed, wherein the work of anti-oppression and dismantling privilege were considered fundamental political work. (p. 179)

While some of these aspects of consensus-making were clearly and explicitly engaged in by our group, we could certainly learn from many of the more formalized practices of consensus-making outlined by Maharawal (2013). We would always benefit from more tools to help us engage in anti-oppressive processes and to negotiate power imbalances, such as the power imbalances between Alex and I, described above.

Although lacking in formalized structure, our consensus-making efforts were collective, iterative and ongoing. Consensus-making processes would sometimes be sparked by one dancer's question, and other-times would gradually emerge in relation to a problem being wrestled with by multiple dancers. One example of a problem was the determination of which dancers should be the first ones on stage during the performance. Consensus-making

discussions would often start by dancers offering ideas to the group, often with a rationale for their choice. Someone put forth that the able-bodied dancers should enter first, as they tend to have access to most spaces, followed by a trickling in of dancers who might be read as disabled. Other dancers would build off of these initial ideas, describing their political and aesthetic read of the various choices. For example, it was suggested that Iris end up situated in the back, as this is often the only space open to wheelchair users at events, and our intention was to gesture towards inaccessibility from the beginning. The conversation then turned to Iris, with dancers checking with her about whether this was a choice she was interested in making within the dance. Iris was given room to express any discomfort she may have with the idea, as were any of the other dancers. Iris agreed that this was an apt choice for conveying our intention, and no other dancers expressed concern with or distaste for this choice. We then improvised the entrance to the space, and finally delineated an order that reflected our discussion.

Discomfort was often used by dancers to express concern with an idea or a movement choice posited by others. Generally speaking, ideas were rejected if there was extreme discomfort expressed by one person, that was echoed by at least one other, and if a solution amenable to everyone was not found. This does not mean that discomfort was avoided, but rather, moments of discomfort were explored as a group in order to unpack their meanings and to find collectively accepted resolution.

While discomfort was not always an expression of non-consent, it was often utilized as a gentle (and sometimes not so gentle) expression of dissent. An excellent example of discomfort as dissent arose out of an improvisation that was inspired by Alison's suggestion to explore masks in our early rehearsals. We were discussing moments when we, in Kaylee's words, "put on a happy face": for example, when attending disability-related events where speakers made claims about how accessible our world was, and these claims were far from our experiences:

Alison: If you had someone handing out masks, like if you had some people and they were all happy and doing their thing, and if someone came and gave them a mask, that would be very visible for the audience. Because you're imposing what you want that person to be on it, something that kind of covers the face. I was just thinking about that, because when you are out in public, everyone wears a mask of how you are expected to be.

Roxanne: Mmmhmm!

Alex: Mmmhhmmm!

Alison: And what society wants from you.

Lindsay: It's interesting. Do we want to look at making masks, or do we want to look at being masks for each other too? Like, do we want to have it be hands and bodies and arms

Kasia: That would be amazing!

Lindsay: In the movement we could either create masks together, that would be really rad, or we could create movement that made masks.

Alison: That would be cool.

Lindsay: Maybe that's what we could play with today too. It's really good.

Roxanne: Mmhmm.

Group: Yeah!

Lindsay: Yeah, that like, "Put on a happy face" kind of thing,

Alex: (to Roxanne) Ah, you're writing everything down, good for you. (Group laughs)

Roxanne: No! I just wrote mask down cause I thought that's a really cool idea.

The idea seemed to be exciting to the group, and after improvising movement based on this idea, an intensive conversation resulted about the ways dancers differentially regarded how they do (or do not) wear masks in everyday life.

A number of dancers experienced significant discomfort in relation to this exercise: Roxanne, Ian, Alex and Alison, in particular. Alison commented two weeks later:

> I really enjoyed last week, I thought it was amazing being able to collaborate, have everybody in it, I thought was amazing. The week before... with the masks, and that [improvisation] exercise, that was a little bit uncomfortable... The masks were a physical and tangible piece that some individuals feel are required by society. Everyone, to some extent, hides behind a mask at some point in their lives. We all show the world what is required, but underneath only we know the truth. A metaphor for a mask can be as simple a putting on make up before you leave the house or as detailed as covering scars with bandages or clothing to hide any traces of a health battle. The exercise brought me discomfort because in the group, I always felt like it was safe to be myself. A place without the expectation to hide the times when I felt

> vulnerable, or just so tired that to even keep up the healthy facade was more weight then my soul and body could withstand. In that improvisation, as everyone walked around the gym with the faces and masks that they used in the outside world, the connection and shared understanding had vanished. The energy required to keep up the illusion was a polar opposite from the positive recharging energy present in our regular group. And it's good to explore that, but it was a little... a little bit not so comfortable, which is, okay... and I was thinking about it, and the whole wheelchair lifting up thing, I might be okay with that, 'cause I trust you guys.

Alison expressed discomfort with wearing masks, and the improvisation exercise in particular, despite it being her idea in the first discussion. Roxanne, Ian and Alex vehemently articulated that they did not wear masks, and worked hard not to wear them. Kaylee, Anna, Kelsie and myself all freely and emphatically agreed that we assume different "masks" in different contexts. I was struck by the differential experiences of wearing masks by dancers who identify as experiencing more visible forms of disability, and those who did not. At the same time, as someone experiencing disability, Alison noted "I admired everyone who was able to not use a mask but for myself the mask kept me from being vulnerable and yet disconnected me from my humanity". Perhaps Iris' engagement with the idea of masks within one check-in is partially explanatory:

Iris: To go home and say my mom wants to die, and I can't do anything, either helping her die or helping her live, I can't do anything.

Laurel: Yeah.

Iris: Gee, that's hard.

Lindsay: So hard.

Iris: But... tomorrow is another day. (Group chuckle)

Lindsay: I love you!

Kelsie: Yeah. (Group laughs)

Lindsay: Tomorrow is another day! It's true

Iris: You want to see a mask? (She offers a strained smile, the group laughs). Cause I thought, you know what, after Anna talked last week, that we say that she's all these different people, but that's not a mask. I think a mask is what we wear when we are trying to hide ourselves. Trying to hide, not just part of ourselves, like, when I'm really mad at my DATS driver, (giggles), that's a mask!

Roxanne: I was thinking about masks this week too. (laughs) Like, oh!

Iris: Yeah...

Lindsay: Yeah. Smiling and hiding.

Iris: Yeah. And, and it's usually smiling and hiding a miserable face. Because, otherwise, I thought about it, and I really don't use masks either. I've quit that a long time ago.

Roxanne: Mmhmm.

Iris: I've become the masks I wore, I used to wear, I've become that person. So I don't need to wear a mask anymore.

Roxanne: Yeah.

Iris: Except when I'm mad! Then I do! (Roxanne and Iris laugh)

The discomfort shared around masks – around the experience of a mask-wearing improvisation, and around the many diverse experiences of mask wearing in dancers' daily lives – shifted our engagement with the idea of using masks in

our final performance. Because of this sharing of discomfort, we engaged further in conversation and movement exploration in order to transform some of the ideas behind the wearing of masks into the more widely agreed upon image of "the polite audience," which will be detailed in the next chapter.

Not all discomfort, however, led to changes in choreography. When dancers expressed discomfort with an idea or movement exploration that others wanted to include, and this discomfort was not abated by discussion, we collectively sought consent to engage in further exploration of these ideas or movements. For example, we were able to obtain Alex's consent in keeping the choreography the same as we had collectively agreed upon in previous rehearsals. Occasionally, I used persuasion of a "humor me and let's try this" variety, to get some dancers to consent to trying the exercises or choreography put forth by other dancers, despite their expressed discomfort. After trying these conditionally-consented-to activities we would often engage in an explicit sharing about everyone's comfort levels. If consensus, or at the very least consent, was not achieved after this exploration, we would make changes to the choreography or exercise.

The discomfort that dancers disclosed was as a barometer for how well we were negotiating as a group. Articulations of discomfort demonstrated the dancers' trust in each other. High levels of discomfort demonstrated that the group was dealing with difficult content, and that changes were likely needed. Abated discomfort levels demonstrated the group's capacity to negotiate both difficult feelings and sensitive political content. Attending to discomfort kept us

committed to developing a performance that everyone was invested in. The following concern brought forward by Iris highlights the desire of many dancers to create a boundary-pushing work of art, which sometimes also pushes our own boundaries. We began exploring the idea of "standing" for the national anthem, and wanted a way to signal our discomfort with ableism language, so we were tossing around the idea of creating a spoof of the anthem at one point in our performance audio track:

Iris: Okay... I'm excited about the piece, and what we're trying to say. Well, but, I find myself concerned about how it's presented.

Lindsay: Mmhmm.

Iris: Like, with the Canadian [anthem] thing, and all that. You know, you were concerned with the bullshit, but I can't think of any other word that would do! When everybody coughs (coughs), it's covered.

Roxanne: Well, and, to me, you don't have to say it.

Iris: no, and just hearing a portion of it, they get the meaning behind what you're saying.

Lindsay: Mmhmm.

Iris: But, I'm concerned about doing ourselves damage instead of good, cause if we push the wrong buttons we do damage.

Roxanne: I think part of it though, is that this would be outwardly stated as political.

Iris: Yeah?

Roxanne: Right?

Iris: Yeah.

Roxanne: So that nobody will be fooled, you know, coming in thinking they're gonna get a beautiful dance piece, you know what I mean?

Iris: Oh right, okay.

Roxanne: And that we're being explicitly political.

Iris: Political, right, yeah. Yeah.

Roxanne: We're not trying to fool anyone into coming to see, you know, we'll be very open about it.

Iris: Yeah. Yeah. I'm just thinking that maybe this is part of the problem with the situation that we're in, is that we're always worried about, we have to worry about everybody else.

Roxanne: Mmhmm!!

Iris: And maybe I'm doing that! But, I'm afraid to cross the line cause I don't want it to damage, to do something that's gonna harm us, harm the community, as opposed to promote the community.

Roxanne: And I think we've done that too much sometimes,

Iris: Yep.

Roxanne: Not spoken out.

Iris: Maybe.

Roxanne: Right?

Iris: Yeah, maybe, I think so.

Group: Mmhmm.

Lindsay: Well, and I think that your voice questioning, what are we doing? Is this really where we want to be going? Is important.

Roxanne: And, how?! Right?

Lindsay: Yeah.

Iris: Yep.

Roxanne: So, it's not that you're questioning we should speak out.

Iris: Yep!

Roxanne: It's just how. Let's make sure that we're cautious.

Iris: Yep, yeah.

Lindsay: Mmhmm.

Iris: I think I tend, even in the family, to try to make things happy for everyone, and I think that's one of my faults! (Group giggles)

Roxanne: We got your number now! (Group laughs)

Lindsay: That's a really important point, I think. It is going to be a really important tempering voice which I don't think will silence us, but I think will make us make choices that are thoughtful, and that everybody in the group can be well invested in. Cause I think if, if we make choices that people are totally uncomfortable with, and follow through with them without hearing that discomfort, then our performance isn't going to come off in the same way, cause people won't be committed, right?

Iris: Yeah, and I think, the [polite] audience thing, where we are all watching them and go, what? what? what? I think that is really powerful, it's giving the message right there, that, okay, yeah, they're saying this, but really?

Group: Mmhmm.

Claire: I think it's time that we need to stand up, for our rights and freedoms.

Iris: Yep.

Lindsay: Mmhmm.

Claire: Right now! And I think that's a great time, that we're doing this now.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Roxanne: But, Iris is very right, in that there's a good way and a bad way to go about it. And that's why we have to collaborate, right?

Group: Mmhmm.

Roxanne: Cause I agree, you and me, Claire, boy, we'd be on top of a rooftop, yelling!

Claire: Yeah!

Roxanne: Right! I know, but, that's not necessarily always the most effective way. (laughs)

As this discussion illuminates, our consensus-making process was not without persuasion, frustration, disagreement, anxiety and trepidation. The notion of consensus-making as "a process and a struggle" that is also rife with the potential to develop investment in those involved (Maharawal, 2013, p. 178), was highly reflective of the group's journey throughout this research project. It is precisely the commitment to collaboration and consensus that increased the likelihood that the dancers each felt regarded and respected throughout the process. Further, collaborative negotiation and consensus-seeking ensured that we were all reflected in the final performance in ways that the dancers were proud of for personal and political reasons.

As demonstrated in the examples above, negotiating choreography required that the group engage consent/sus as both a process and an outcome. In other matters, such as the ways dancers understood and spoke about disability, the group seemed to consent to a lack of consensus: a certain fluidity and plurality. For example, throughout check-ins and rehearsals, dancers (including myself) seemed to oscillate between expressions of disability as medical (i.e., bodily, individual and fixed) and as social (cultural, political and fluid). Alison shared about her pain and exhaustion limiting her capacity to rehearse, but also shared about disabling time-constraints allotted for university tests. I regularly

challenged the notion of disability as based in the body, and yet I once equated disability to a wheelchair. These shifting, contradictory, and complex relationships to disability, between and within dancers, were some of the many examples of the plurality of perspectives and experiences that were accepted within our community. As delineated by the fourth disability term of reference, acknowledging this plurality is central to research within the transformative paradigm because it represents the diversity of the community alongside their shared interests (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011).

Dancers also showed a plurality of ways to conceptualize structures of oppression that were not necessarily related to disability: sometimes collapsing one category of oppression so it encompassed everyone (e.g., everyone is disabled in some way); sometimes acknowledging the specificity of different experiences of oppression. The following excerpt shows an active negotiation of these ideas, as we brainstormed how we might act back to dominant narratives of disability within our performance:

Kelsie: (whispers) We can do the thing I've always wanted to do where we lift someone in a chair.

Kaylee: Yeah!

Kelsie: Like, sorry.

Roxanne: Don't look at me! No! (Group laughs and a cacophony of responses ensues)

Kelsie: You know, we've been talking about it for a while.

Roxanne: Pick her! (Roxanne points to Iris)

Lindsay: Who's up for lifting a powerchair?

Kelsie: I'm convinced it can be done! I'm convinced it can be done. With enough people.

Roxanne: Yeah, that would be cool.

Kelsie: Yeah. I think it makes a really powerful statement about the integration of chair and, this is your body.

Roxanne: Yeah.

Kelsie: And it should be treated as such.

Roxanne: You don't have to be taken out of the chair in order to be lifted.

Lindsay: Mmhmm.

Roxanne: Yeah, that's actually really…

Lindsay: You don't have to be separated, from disability, as it were.

Roxanne: But I also, just quickly, I want to make sure that we don't focus solely on disability. That we can bring gender or race or, you know, something, to support, because it's all the same, it doesn't matter what minority, right?

Lindsay: Now, we're all uber white, so,

Roxanne: I know, I know.

Lindsay: We may think it's all the same, but, like I think, there's something interesting to point out too,

Roxanne: At least to recognize somehow,

Lindsay: Yeah, totally!

Roxanne: It doesn't have to be a big part of what we do, but if we could create links to other minority.

Iris: I know what I found really impactful about [last year's] dance with Kasia in the middle. That when I explained to people, she has a disability, she's from Poland, she didn't speak English, she's an ESL. She's had to struggle with all kinds of things, and they "OH! wow! Wow, that's beautiful how she did that", that was the most impactful thing to me.

Lindsay: Mmhmm.

Iris: I thought that was great. And, so, something like that, you know, where it shows it's not just me who's disabled, it's that she could be disabled, you could be, everybody, everybody is disabled in some way.

Kasia: Everybody is disabled in some way.

Group: Yes.

Kaylee: We all struggle right?

Perhaps the articulation "everybody is disabled in some way" is a way of creating similarity out of difference: a way of pointing to differing forms of oppression as equally important and relevant as disability is in our performance. At the same time, some members of the group articulated that it could be dangerous to collapse the experiences and structures of different forms of oppression. Some people undoubtedly experience more intense or different forms of oppression than others: experiencing much more isolation, exclusion, lack of opportunity and violence, for example. Within our process of negotiation, this plurality enriched our understanding of each other and the world, and some dancers thought that it must not be flattened or forgotten. Through these complex and shifting negotiations of sameness and difference, dancers seemed to find connection and solidarity across many axes of oppression.

Care-Sharing

Much of this research process was made possible through, and purposefully drew on, the acts of care-sharing that were already circulating within the iDANCE community. Care sharing, I argue, is one of our

community's most important practices of social justice. Alison edited Laurel's thesis. Laurel brought a raised toilet seat to the theatre for Iris so she could use the washroom during our performance. Ian caught a ride with Laurel to rehearsals and in exchange provides her with companionship when entering an environment in which she felt anxiety. Iris and Claire kept each other company (sometimes for hours) while waiting for Disabled Adult Transport Services (DATS). In the past, Roxanne drove two other wheelchair users to classes so that they didn't have to take DATS. Kelsie taught us about political theatre techniques in exchange for an education on disability politics and culture. Kaylee brought gut-busting comic relief to the whole group, and in exchange, found a place to dance that felt safe. Alex perpetually showed deep care for other dancers' emotional well-being, and came to regard himself as a professional dancer through being trained by more experienced dancers. Various dancers moved chairs and tables in our meeting room so that everyone could comfortably enter the room and have choice in where they sit (i.e., not just at the back of the room), regardless of which mobility aid they used. These daily interventions, and the relationships that were developed through them, had massive effects on the lives of each of us. The specificities of our various embodiments did not determine who gives and who receives. It was not only care-giving. It was very distinctly an ethic of care sharing.

Care-sharing, I would argue, is different than care-giving. While care-giving is often practiced as a one-sided relationship of dependence, care-sharing is a mutual investment, and joy, in both giving and receiving care. Care-sharing

crosses (blurry) boundaries of bodily difference, socio-economic status, age, gender identity, ethnicity, and experienced forms of structural oppression. Dancers care-shared contextually: giving what is needed by another; offering skills and resources that one may have in abundance; and receiving, in turn, what they may need or desire. Care-sharing is one example of interdependent relationships, which have been celebrated by numerous authors (Austin, Bergum, & Dossetor, 2003; Goodwin, 2008). Goodwin writes:

> When contrasted against the medical and rehabilitation systems, interdependence focuses on capacities rather than deficits; stresses relationships rather than congregation; is driven by the person, not an expert; and promotes system change rather than change in the individual. (p. 178)

Interdependence was a critical and valued aspect of care-sharing in our group. The dancers explicitly tied their experiences of interdependence to their understanding and practice of social justice. When asked to describe social justice, for example, Ian responds:

> It goes from 'I' to 'we', but not, not from a dependence to an independence, which, I mean in most conversations I've had with people in various communities, especially in regards to disability, is they keep on jumping towards 'well we want to move towards independence', and that's the last thing I want to hear anybody talking about, because it's interdependence we want to work towards, it's not independence, because nobody is independent. There is not a person that is

> independent. It's a varying level of interdependence that we all have anyway.

Through the practice of care-sharing, some dancers recognized and celebrated interdependence as both a means to achieving greater social justice, and as an enactment of social justice in their everyday lives.

Interdependence, I argue, is key to engaging in care-sharing as an ethical practice. Scholars often discuss ethics around care within the context of hierarchical healthcare relationships between a caregiver and a care receiver (e.g., Austin, Bergum, & Dossetor, 2003; Hanford, 1993; Lachman, 2012). Barnes (2012) importantly pushes the notion of an ethic of care outside of traditional relationships that are defined by hierarchical care-giving, and into the realm of everyday life: in friendship, communities, civil society, and around the policy-making table. For me, the concept of care-sharing borrows strongly from Barnes' important work, in that it imagines relationships of care outside of professional hierarchical settings. However, "sharing care," (p. 18) for Barnes, does not refer to communities like ours. Barnes understands sharing care as an arrangement where multiple presumably-able-bodied caregivers share the labour of caring for a single disabled person That is, she articulates care-sharing as an important communal activity, but not a reciprocal one. Within this group, care-sharing takes this communal approach to care, alongside a reciprocal approach to care. Dancers who experience disability share care with each other, and they care for dancers who do not experience disability. As Alex stated "we could help all together, we can support each other. And when we care for each other it

opens up our hearts." Further, care is shared across and within multiple other axes of oppression in meaningful ways and to life-enhancing ends. Dancers find joy and meaning in the practice of reciprocal, non-hierarchical and communal care-sharing, and this practice strengthens our connections to each other.

Recognizing and acting within this community's relationships of care-sharing is in adherence with both the third and sixth disability terms of reference: it is a matter of attending to the community's worldviews, as well as a matter of collaboratively negotiating the research processes and the criteria for meeting the community's needs (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). The iDANCE community's processes and worldviews around care-sharing were negotiated into nearly every aspect of this research project: from Kelsie reviewing transcripts with Alex, to prioritizing a clothing swap that Anna organized during one of the focus groups. I conclude this chapter with the words of the dancers as they reflect upon this clothing swap. The clothing swap, as act of care-sharing, was a simple but critical moment in our research process that significantly shifted and expanded my understanding of social justice:

Lindsay: I love that we are doing a clothing swap (group giggles). But I actually think it's pointed.

Alex: Why?

Lindsay: It feels like a way of supporting each other in a really simple, maybe everyday kind of care, and exchange. We have resources that we are willing to share amongst each other, and that some of the things that we don't need any more are something that,

Roxanne: Somebody else needs.

Lindsay: Somebody else might. And that, just as a little side adventure to the day, that a clothing swap is part of that. There's something

really beautiful I think to that. And, we can talk about social justice and what does it mean on a really macro level, and federal and provincial, but, everyday or every week we can actual come together and,

Roxanne: Thank you. No, cause that's really interesting. Because since [my partner] and I split I had no money, and so I can't even think of buying clothes, and I haven't had to, and I never really thought about it but that's like social justice in a way, right? Cause I am able to get that from society,

Alex: I know

Roxanne: Without financial cost, just through friends and family, and you know

Alex: Loved ones.

Roxanne: Interesting, that is a nice way.

Laurel: Well and we love hand-me-downs cause you wear them and you think about that person every time you wear them...

Lindsay: And it feels like we do that as a group, like, somebody has a car and they can grab somebody else, and give them a ride to class, you know?

Roxanne: It's little things, like my birthday, [Lindsay] brought me a basket of groceries. That was the best present ever! And not only that, she knows exactly what I like! (Group laughs) But that is just so thoughtful, you know?

Alex: Really sweet.

Roxanne: Yeah, and it kind of understood where I was at, and what I actually needed. I needed food (laughs). I wasn't so desperate that I was gonna starve, right, but it's just, I thought it was very thoughtful.

Lindsay: It's just a little thing.

Roxanne: Like buying cookies or stuff I wouldn't necessarily buy. Yeah.

Alex: Well, we are family, because we all carry each other, sometimes.

As is often the case, Alex has beautifully and concisely paraphrased the complex dynamics that have taken me pages to articulate within this paper: “we all carry each other, sometimes.”

Chapter 4: *(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery*

Please watch the DVD or online video (http://www.cripsie.ca/disquiet) of the performance now.

I chose to create a video version of (Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery to document the performance, as well as to aid in the dissemination of this research project. The purpose of video in my research is that of documentation and representation, as opposed to data collection (White, 2009). I used video, rather than film, to record the various performances. White (2009) describes video thusly:

> "The term video (from the Latin 'I see') is used to describe the recording, storage and transmission of moving images and sound. Video refers most commonly to a storage format and the quality of video depends on the method of recording and on the storage format (analogue or digital). Compared to film, video equipment is more easily used in research (Collier and Collier 1986, 221); it is more portable, less expensive to buy and easier to operate." (p. 395).

As a result of its greater accessibility and lower expense, video enables one to take much more footage than with traditional film, thereby increasing the creative and interpretive labour, capacities and responsibilities of the editor, which I will discuss in greater detail below.

I chose to represent our live performance through video, not imagining that the effect would be the same as live performance, but in an attempt to hold onto some of the benefits of performance ethnography itself: the benefits of porosity, intimacy, immediacy, and non-verbal communication. White (2009) suggests that "watching digital video footage allows the reader to 'be there' as the research is conducted and presents multiple points of view and facilitates multiple readings" (p. 391). Digital video may provide similar openings and insertion points for it's audience as live performance can, and it can make space for non-verbal understandings to be communicated in research (MacDougall, 1997).

My process of video production began at the outset of the research project, believing that it would be useful to have a video copy of this performance for my final thesis. Further, in the past iDANCE has regularly documented our performances and posted them on the internet as a way for dancers to view and share their work. As such, video consent was obtained from all dancers as a part of the informed consent process. I arranged for an experienced volunteer videographer who was known to the dancers, Danielle Peers, to record both of the final performances. I also obtained a copy of the video that was recorded by the Alberta Dance Alliance at the FEATS Festival of Dance.

It is important to note that an edited video is by-no-means objective or intended to be reflective of a reality, or 'what really happened' in the performance. As White (2009) argues:

> "Central to using digital video technologies is the relationship between what we see and what was recorded. In other words asking the questions: who has selected, framed and edited what we see and how much can we trust of what we see of these digital video events? Reality is not observable and Flick's (1998) view of 'visual media for research purposes' as 'second hand observation' (151) is misleading because the process involves selection and interpretation. "(p. 396)

I am responsible for the selection and interpretation of the video that was collected throughout the editing process. Before even getting the raw footage, however, both videographers have selected and interpreted the images on stage, and focused on what they thought important to include. As such, this video is a representation, not a presentation, of the performance, overlaid with my interpretation of the intended affect of the performance.

I chose to cut together the two camera angles from the FEATS Festival performance, as this performance was in a bigger theatre with a professional lighting grid: the lighting choices for the piece, which were designed in collaboration with the dancers, added important dimension to the performance. My choice to cut together two different camera angles stems from a past dance that was recorded with multiple cameras and cut together. The aesthetic quality of this video far surpassed our previous archival documentation style of video recording, where a camera was placed at the back of the theatre on a tripod. The multiple cameras allowed for a wide, more stationary, shot, as well as a tighter, more mobile, shot. The wide shot meant that the video could include dimensions

of macro spacing and movement done by the full cast. The tighter shot offered intimacy and focus, and meant that the video could be cut together in such a way as to draw attention to particular aspects of the choreography, as your eye might do when watching a live performance.

The videographers used both digital and analogue video, and I edited the video into digital format using Final Cut Pro X. This was my fourth dance video editting project. Due to the precision and technological training required to do video editing on Final Cut Pro, dancers were not involved in the editing process. I uploaded the raw footage from the two cameras, and kept the audio from the wide shot camera as the audio track for the video. The tighter shot camera cut out four times throughout the duration of the performance, which meant the audio was not useable as a base track for the video. This camera malfunction also meant that four sections of choreography, between 5-45 seconds in length, were missing from this camera. In cutting together this video, the missing sections from the tighter camera meant that I was required to use footage from the wide shot for portions of the choreography that may have been more interesting or affective from the mobile camera. The tighter camera also was significantly poorer quality during the red and blue lit sections of the dance, as the lack of light meant that the footage was grainy and hard to make out. As such, during these sections, I relied more heavily on the wide shot, which was much higher quality. Fortunately, during the red- and blue-lit sections (described in more detail in Chapter 5), the dancers travelled through space with larger movements much more than in the yellow lit sections of the dance, making the

wide shot preferable. Conversely, in the yellow-lit sections of the dance, the dancers performed much more subtle and small movements, and largely remained stationary. As such, the tighter shot camera was more adept at capturing this movement more intimately, and this camera was relied upon more during these sections.

I chose to include the yellow balloon in the visual during the yellow-lit sections of the dance, overlaid in a circle in the upper left corner of the screen, in an attempt to draw attention to its purpose in the performance. The balloon represented the speaker, who provided a foil to the movement of the dancers. Unfortunately, there were not a lot of wide shots of this performance that included both the dancers and the balloon, which was present onstage throughout the entire performance in a spot light in the downstage left corner. While this choice may not have achieved the sense of omnipresence that the balloon had in the live performance, I chose to include it in the corner of these sections in the hopes that the presence of the balloon would be associated with the speech.

With agreement of the whole group, I uploaded the performance video online to allow dancers access to their work. Further, we hoped that making this video public would increase the pedagogical potential of this work, as well as give access to much wider audiences than those that were able to attend the live performance.

Chapter 5: "Come On People, Do Something!" [13]: Performing Social Justice Through Integrated Dance[14]

We huddle together, squished in the back corner of a crowded gym. A squeaky clean, athletic man with a McDonalds and Nike embossed shirt presses the eight of us closer to the bleachers to make room for Rick Hansen's arrival.[15] We are waiting to perform for the audience that has gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Rick Hansen's "Man in Motion" worldwide wheelchair tour. A twenty-person marching band in full attire marks his grand entrance.

One of our dancers is trapped on the outside. She shrinks in panic as the parade enters, surmising "I bet you anything, because I am sitting here and I'm in a wheelchair, and sure enough he turns around and I'm like 'oh!'" It feels like being exploited for a photo opportunity when Rick Hansen takes her hand and offers a syrupy and slightly patronizing "Thank you for coming out." She replies, "Oh no! Thank you!" before he rolls past her and into centre stage. She thinks "It's good you can't hear people's thoughts sometimes." Another dancer, enamored by one of our few disabled Canadian celebrities, gushes to her, "Ohhh, wasn't it great!" She thinks, "Well, it was somethin', but that probably

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[13] This was Alex's emphatic call to action, put forward to both the dancers and wider society, during a focus group.

[14] A version of this chapter has been conditionally accepted for publication. Eales (). "Come on people, do something!": Social justice and integrated dance performance. *Disability activism beyond the charter: Locating artistic and cultural interventions.* Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.

[15] This narrative was derived by paraphrasing field notes and focus group transcripts. Direct quotations attributed to dancers are taken from focus group transcripts. My quotations are taken from field notes.

wasn't my choice of words." She politely says nothing. We sit through numerous speeches by politicians and organizers.

Roxanne's mind reels:

> You get MPs and MLAs speaking, you know, getting up in front of a group of people with disabilities and telling them how great it is. Like, REALLY? I'm sorry, that just frustrates me. These people know. They live it everyday and you're up there saying everything's rosy. Come on, know your audience! You know that's not what they wanted to hear.

She grins through clenched teeth, and politely says nothing, keeping her thoughts to herself. At one point, I hear a speaker claim "You all could be next." A strange attempt at a veiled threat? Ian audibly scoffs. I turn to him and bark under my breath, "Zip your lip, we'll talk about this later." A wash of guilt and stomach-turning repulsion drowns me as soon as these words leave my mouth. I am the silencer. I reflect:

> We are glad only a few of us hear the Master of Ceremonies say right before our dance, that, although Rick was required at a media interview, the audience was privy to a wonderful dance performance to "waste time with" until Rick returned for autographs. After we perform, another of our dancers is approached by a male who addresses her by "Hey there gorgeous!" He proceeds to box her in from behind with his wheelchair, making it physically impossible for her to leave without addressing him back. She converses with our dancers sitting to her left and right instead.

Some of us leave in awe of the spectacle, the chance to see a Canadian icon. Many of us leave feeling dirty, violated and invisibilized.

(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery

The above experience represents one spark, of many, that ignited our creation of the research-based performance entitled (*Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery*. This experience occurred a week before the first focus group of our twelve-person collaborative performance ethnography research process. It marked an entry point for our exploration of social justice within integrated dance performance. This chapter explores this performance specifically, as well as the ways we enact social (in)justice, within and through integrated dance performance.

This chapter is a written text, based on a performance, which was derived from themes that emerged during this research. I write this text in six sections, each reflecting upon one of the six vignettes of our final performance, which are, in turn, based on six major themes that impact the lives of dancers within our integrated dance community. Each written section is named after its related theme, which are: the silencing of subtle, and not-so-subtle, violences; (in)accessibility; disability, able-bodiedness, and bodies of difference; immigration, citizenship and other structures of oppression; under threat; and deconstruction, loss of composure and utopia.

Each written section of this chapter begins by a quotation in italics. This quotation is taken from a collaboratively composed speech (discussed below), which plays during the performance. After this quotation, I represent the

choreographed movement of the performance vignette discussed in the section, through both prose and photographs. Finally, I use transcript and rehearsal content, as well as critical disability theory, to unpack the vignette in relation to the research theme upon which it is based.

The dancers collaboratively composed a speech, which served as part of the soundtrack to the performance. This speech is reminiscent of the speeches the dancers experienced at the Rick Hansen event, and other events like it. We created the speech out of focus group discussions and rehearsals, in which we brainstormed common phrases about disability, social justice, and citizenship that we wanted to question or challenge. The speech begins with the voice-over introduction of an esteemed speaker, who then spews common yet cutting remarks. The dancers initially react with requisite levels of polite composure. The speech is revealed in short bursts, sentences that cut in and out of comprehensibility. Often the speech fades into a squawking “wah wah wah wah wah,” recalling the teacher from Charlie Brown: a figure that speaks with authority, but says nothing of value to its audience. Within the dance, each comprehensible section of speech signals the thematic content of the following vignette. A record scratch is used to interrupt the speech, calling the dancers to disrupt and act against the content of the speech with their movement vignettes. These vignettes are collaboratively developed expressions of the impact of various social injustices that the dancers face. They offer collectively imagined possibilities of more socially just engagements. At the end of each vignette, the voice-over returns. With each return, fewer and fewer dancers “put on a happy

face"[16] and remain seated. Throughout the performance, each dancer performs devolving versions of the expected behaviors of reverence in the face of social injustice.

Please Stand?

> HELLO LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. PLEASE STAND AND WELCOME THE ESTEEMED {WAH, WAH, WAH, WAH, WAH} {RECORD SCRATCH}

The audience is met with an empty stage but for a set of 12 chairs; the 'polite audience', in rows on an angle in the back right corner of the stage[17]. A podium stands empty in the front left corner of the stage. Music begins and dancers slowly move from observer to performer as they trickle from amongst the observing audience and onto the stage. Sauntering, wheeling, foot propelling, hurrying, each moving differently but in pedestrian ways, the dancers find a place in the polite audience onstage. Iris, using her powerchair, pulls up near the back of the inaccessible seating arrangement. Others crawl over chairs and each other to sit in the middle of the polite audience. Alison wheels up to the front row. She is greeted by Ian, who moves a chair so that she can position herself in the middle of the row. All dancers face upstage left and await a speaker. A sickly sweet voice calls the dancers attention. Hello ladies and gentlemen. Please stand and welcome the esteemed {wah, wah, wah, wah,

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[16] Kaylee is quoted as saying "put on a happy face" in a focus group discussion.
[17] I use layman's terminology to describe the staging here so that it is readable by wider audiences. This stage location, for those familiar with theatre terminology, would be house view right.

wah}... Ian, Kaylee, Alex, Laurel, Kasia, Kelsie, and Anna stand on demand, until they notice that Iris and Alison remain seated in their wheelchairs. They awkwardly return to sitting. Everyone sits politely, straining to "put on a happy face," wringing their hands, suppressing grimaces, committing ever-greater efforts to present a publicly acceptable image.

Figure 1: The polite audience. Photo credit: Danielle Peers.

The Silencing of Subtle, and Not-so-Subtle, Violences

When a room full of wheelchair users is asked to "stand and welcome" an "esteemed" speaker, which bodies and ways of being in the world are invisibilized, devalued, and effaced? Should those of us who are not using wheelchairs stand, as is socially expected? Or should we remain seated in solidarity with those who do not stand? Throughout our early focus groups and rehearsals, we wrestled with the idea of performing "socially appropriate" behavior in spaces where many of us felt erased (much like we did during our

experience at the Rick Hansen event). We explored the ways that we silence ourselves, silence others, and are silenced by others. In response to the Rick Hansen experience described above, I reflected:

> I found myself biting my tongue, hyper-conscious of holding tight to my straight face, hoping it would not betray me and reveal my disgust. I was caught between desperately wanting to represent our group well and feeling extremely uncomfortable, politically outraged and angry. I knew my friends were being told that they live in an accessible, inclusive society, and that they distinctly knew and experienced otherwise. I knew I was being told this and didn't believe it. I was responsible for the decision to perform, and feel like I am at fault for participating in this violence. And I smiled... Or at least attempted a straight face.

I felt responsible for exposing our group to a series of subtle, and arguable not-so-subtle, violences. Roxanne had been adamant that it was not a good idea to perform, that these charity-based disability events do more damage than they do good (see Withers, 2012). She was right. I was also responsible for silencing myself and silencing others in our group, such as Ian, in an effort to compose[18] our group as respectful and reverent in spite of these violences.

Kaylee elaborated on the imperative to "put on a happy face" by suggesting, specifically in relation to people experiencing disability, that "we expect that they're going to do it, and we're going to do it too cause we're soooo

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[18] I am drawing from McRuer (2006b), who critiques how composing creative works can attempt to tidy and contain the messy processes and subjects involved in composition.

accepting, aren't we great for being soooo accepting." She was alluding to the expectation that disabled people demonstrate gratefulness for simply being tolerated. Kaylee's point calls into question the popular cultural belief that we live in a tolerant nation, and furthermore points to the impact of such benevolent tolerance on those we claim to tolerate.[19] Alison added:

> I'm so used to being used for everyone else's... you're 'oh cute and you're here for us because you're disabled', and I'm so used to it, but, when they said 'to waste your time' [by watching our performance] I was just thinking how much work went into it, and we all had stopped our lives entirely to be there on behalf... and we get there and they made us move off to the side because we were in the way, in a place where the disabled are supposed to be okay. And I don't know that I've ever felt so uncomfortable. At least people who are usually in normal society...they're either sympathetic or their looking at you like 'oh, she's pathetic,' but they're nice. At least they're not, do you know what I mean, this was very in-your-face. And it's...

"Condescending," Iris finished Alison's sentiment. Alison and Iris' frustration at being discarded as a waste of time and an obstruction left many dancers questioning whom this event was really for. Withers (2012) suggests that the charity model, "constructs an idea of disability that is designed to benefit those wanting to feel better about themselves" (p. 79). Snyder and Mitchell (2006) go further to argue that charity, and it's concomitant spectacles, are for the benefit

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[19] See Brown (2006) or Spade (2011) for a developed critique of tolerance.

of non-disabled people and are parasitic of those they claim to help: "debasement [is] an in-built feature of the charitable relationship in which the recipient degrades himself and the benefactor grows increasingly exalted" (p. 59). At an event that was promoted as an invitation to inspire "a new generation to be difference makers - to dream, to take action, to continue to change the world" (Rick Hansen Foundation, 2011a), many of us instead felt debased and silenced while Hansen, and his mostly non-disabled entourage of speakers, organizers, and sponsors, were exalted.

This debasement extends beyond charity events, into our daily lives. Many of our dancers consistently navigate difficult, and sometimes violating, situations in which they feel silenced and coerced to behave in a polite, grateful manner. Roxanne explained how during a significant health crisis, she was forced to follow the procedure of putting on a hospital gown, despite wearing street clothes that would give the doctors sufficient access to viewing her body. The requirement of changing into a hospital gown is a process that can threaten dignity for most people (Baillie, 2009; Baillie & Gallagher, 2012), and additionally is physically difficult, extremely energy consuming and often painful for Roxanne. She shared:

> When I first got there, they are like, 'you need to change into a gown' and I'm like, 'well no I don't, I've worn the right clothing,' they can see everything... (giggles). You know, uh uh, no way. Like, 'the doctor will not see you, he makes people with sinus infections change into a gown.'

> And so right then I just break right down. Like, I am crying, well, cause I wanted to kill her. And I don't do that anymore. (laughs)

Kaylee inserts, "we're very grateful for that!" (group laughs). Baillie (2009) argues that authoritarian staff in acute care settings are a significant threat to patient dignity. For Roxanne, an authoritarian doctor's demand, which did not consider her body or her needs, was a debasement that she was forced to endure if she wished to access health care in an emergency. Roxanne notes she used to get livid in these situations and storm out, but now she just cries, feeling "sadness that people have to do this to each other". This experience echoes Sullivan's (2005) exploration of how ongoing medical and rehabilitative practices, which are coercive and stripping of dignity, are designed to maximize patient docility. He demonstrates how patients learn to actively navigate these systems in order to get what they need "to survive, these subjects must continually be aware of keeping their bodies docile" (p. 42). Through a life time of experience with medical professionals, Roxanne has gained an awareness of what she needs to do to survive, and she chooses crying and putting on the robe over her anger at the violation of her dignity.

Baillie (2009) argues, patients who feel a lack of control, respect, value, and involvement within treatment settings may experience a loss of dignity. Dignity is "realized through individual freedom that is brought to bear in the course of the self's participation in meaningful decision making and exercise of individual responsibility" (Shannon, 2007, p. 17). For both Roxanne and Claire,

these treatment environments regularly and significantly violate their sense of dignity. Claire shared:

> One day I was at my mom's house and all of a sudden my heart was racing, and all of a sudden mom had to call 911.... They picked me up, no sirens, like. All they did was ask me questions like, do you know who you are? Do you know what's your name? Do you know what day it is? Do you know, where's your, are you losing your mind?... and then I got to the hospital and the same questions were asked. A million times.

Claire was extremely frustrated by this experience. She was confused by the way the staff asked so many questions without informing her of their intentions. She did not feel in control of her treatment or respected in the process.

Sullivan (2005) argues that individuals often find ways to resist within medical situations where they are offered very little control. In the face of medical debasement, a kind of silencing wherein desires are ignored or directly discounted, both Claire and Roxanne experienced sharing their stories as a form of resistance. Roxanne reflected, with the group, on sharing her above experience with Claire, who is on dialysis daily:

> Just being able to tell Claire how frustrated I was and that I cried, but in the end I had to suck it up, because I needed help. And that I had to do whatever they said to get help. And, I just felt like Claire needs to hear that because she goes through that so often. She's in these positions where she has no control, and ... they play power games with her, like.

> And that's what I felt that was, that was not about my health care, that was complete power and control.

By sharing their personal stories, both Roxanne and Claire came to recognize their experiences not as individual misfortune, but as shared social injustice.

Out of the sharing of these experiences, we created an explicitly political performance that acted back against silencing by others, silencing of ourselves, and silencing of each other. We designed a performance in which we behave socially "inappropriately" by pointing out how we experience oppression. We commit to not just smile and nod through invisibilization, devaluing or erasure. We develop a journey representing the audience we were in the first vignette (polite and docile, silenced and silencing) and the audience we would like to be in the last vignette (loud, riotous, actively supportive, challenging and dissenting). Through our own movement from the observing audience to the polite audience to the (dis)quieted audience, we implicate the observer as we implicate ourselves in our dangerous performance of politeness and passivity.

We begin enacting social justice in our performance, like we did in our focus groups, by creating a space to share our stories of injustice. Ian argued:

> That's what social justice kinda does. Is it just takes something where it's, you know, it affects a smaller part of the population, and it bridges that communication level so that it can actually be more cohesive for everybody to be able to understand what the issue is. And the, things like dance, give that, that message a bit of a leap forward.

As Ian suggested, one way that our dance performance engages social justice is by respecting and valuing those in our group who feel marginalized, honoring and politicizing each other's stories, and creating space to share those stories through movement. Through raucous sharing we become a peanut gallery that will no longer be quieted.

The dancers collaboratively chose the title (Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery. I put forward "The Peanut Gallery," which was only one of a variety of suggestions made to the group. Kelsie suggested "Quiet in the Peanut Gallery," referring to directives given to the rowdy, often lower class, crowds in the cheapest theatre seats.[20] This reading reflects the group's stated intention to be unruly and confrontational within this performance. Building on the interest a number of dancers showed for this title, Laurel put forth the idea of "Disquiet in the Peanut Gallery." Disquiet, I shared, means "to take away the peace and tranquility of: disturb, alarm" (Disquiet, n.d.). Linton (2006) argues that the prefix "dis" alludes to "separation, taking apart...undo, do the opposite of" (p. 171). It also draws on critical disability scholars' playful and critical use of 'dis' as a way to theorize broader social structures through a lens of disability (e.g., dismodernism (Davis, 2002); dis-location (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006); dis-solutions (Titchkosky, 2007)). The excitement around the title snowballed into a plan to have t-shirts made, with a picture of peanuts on the front with the quote

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[20] After a significant search of academic and non-academic sources, I found very little published reflection on the phrase or its etymology. Some information is available on Wikipedia, and other non-academic sites. It strikes me that the classed and likely racist and ableist history of the peanut gallery might have even deeper significance than this discussion accounts for.

"I'm nuts!" and our performance title on the back. As someone experiencing mental illness, I found this to be a celebratory act.

Building Accessible Infrastructure?

> One of the greatest catastrophes experienced by a human being[21] {wah, wah, wah}
> But even after tragic loss {wah, wah, wah, wah, wah}
> and the courage to overcome {wah, wah, wah, wah}
> We've come so far in building accessible infrastructure
> {record scratch}

A bright yellow helium-filled balloon with a smiley face is set down and floats eerily behind the podium, as a speech is broadcast overhead. The dancers react to this speech with subtle but increasing surprise and disillusionment. The "greatest catastrophe" references disability and sparks disappointment from Iris. The disability trope of "tragic loss" stirs confusion in Kelsie, and the statement "courage to overcome" engenders frustration in Alex. The suggestion that "we have come so far in building accessible infrastructure" evokes sadness, dissent, and a moment of connection between Ian and Alison.

A record scratch breaks up the polite audience for the first time. Red light washes over the stage. The dancers slide from their inaccessible seating

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[21] Based off a quote from the Rick Hansen Institute (2011): "One of the greatest survivable catastrophes experienced by a human being" (referring to spinal cord injury).

arrangement and into the centre of the floor. The second vignette begins with Kaylee, Kelsie, and Anna, who might be read as non-disabled, slinking off of their chairs and into a kneeling position. Their bodies stack next to each other to form a set of stairs. Kasia stands at the top end of the stairs and extends her arm up. She symbolically holds dignity, inclusion, and access in her hand. Alison sits at the bottom of the stairs. She stretches from her wheelchair towards Kasia, reaching for the promises Kasia holds, but Alison cannot traverse the stairs. Iris, contemplating the inaccessibility of the stairs, wheels around the back of the stage to approach the stairs from another angle. She pulls out a reacher and grabs onto Kasia's extended arm. Kasia collapses to the ground, as do the stairs. Iris drives directly into the bodies formerly known as stairs, and they are pushed, rolling along with her momentum. Bolstered by this success, Alison joins Iris. Together, they pull Kaylee, Kelsie, and Anna out of their way by alternately using of the reacher. With the stage cleared, Iris and Alison interlock their bodies and chairs and spin around each other in the newly accessible space. After their successful fight for accessibility, they refuse to rejoin the polite audience, wheeling themselves into the space along the back of the stage instead. From this position they build the beginnings of the (dis)quieted audience. They stare directly at the observing audience. They wait.

Figure 2: The stairs. Photo credit: Danielle Peers.

Figure 3: The deconstructed stairs. Photo credit: Danielle Peers.

(In)Accessibility

It was a consciously negotiated choice to begin with active agents of change who would be read as 'disabled' because of their wheelchair use. We began with the assumption that the audience would perceive our performers as disabled based on visible bodily differences, informed by the dominance of the medical models of disability. Medical models situate disability within the body,

and often consider it an individual tragedy (Linton, 1998; Shakespeare, 2006; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006; Withers, 2012). During our rehearsal process, medical models of disability were certainly one of the many ways that dancers understood disability, their bodies and their relationships to society (e.g., dancers sometimes expressed physical pain, frustration with certain bodily functions, and need for medical care). At the same time, many dancers expressed a desire to complicate and challenge the dominance of the medical model throughout our performance. In choosing to have dancers using wheelchairs as the focus of the second vignette, we discussed the concern that we might perpetuate body-based medical notions of disability. However, we decided to forefront and honor experiences of physical inaccessibility because they are daily realities that significantly limit the life opportunities for Roxanne, Iris and Alison.

Critical disability theory, ranging from social models (Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 2006) to cultural models (McRuer, 2006a, 2006b; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006), articulate the problem of disability not as a medical problem of individual bodies, but as a problem of social injustice. The mechanisms of injustice, and thus the means of achieving social justice, differ across various social and cultural models (Garland Thomson, 2002; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). All of these models, however, argue that social injustice is connected with social structures that marginalize disabled people, and that social justice action must include changes in architecture, policy, and attitudes (Shakespeare, 2006; Withers, 2012). Many cultural models additionally frame social injustice as

intricately connected to the reproduction of dominant cultural stories, identities, and processes that are naturalized and presumed as truth (McRuer, 2006; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006; Tremain, 2006). Within these models, social justice may be achieved, not only by creating accessible structures and policies, but also by deconstructing taken-for-granted assumptions that undergird and structure our ways of being in the world: assumptions that impact all individuals to varying degrees, and may also have significant and specific impacts upon people experiencing disability (Davis, 2002; McRuer, 2006a, 2006b).

The dancers' experiences and understandings of disability resonate with a range of social and cultural models. This second vignette was undoubtedly informed by social models (Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 2006). A number of our dancers are significantly affected by disabling social structures: some cannot enter a building because it has stairs; some cannot enter university because of the money required to get in; some cannot work a full-time job because the eight-hour days put too much strain on bodies and minds; some cannot earn money because of policies that limit basic benefits if recipients earn more than poverty-level wages. For many of us, the most basic supports and opportunities remain physically, socially and/or economically inaccessible.

Accessibility is a vital issue that structures the dance, social, health and political possibilities for many Canadians in their daily lives (Withers, 2012). Our second vignette examines (in)accessibility, because it was a major recurrent theme discussed in our focus groups and rehearsal process. We struggle to find accessible rehearsal space and theatres for performance. More critically, a

number of our dancers, especially those using wheelchairs, encounter inaccessible architecture that significantly limits their housing, employment, transportation, and social opportunities. Roxanne described her encounters when attempting to develop a community coffee shop that employed people experiencing disability:

> I made the deal, there was no ramp... [the] second day I was there, there was a ramp, third day he cut half the counter down. But, that's as far as it went. And, the owner of the building, like, earlier in the week is saying, 'So, are your people coming?' And, I'm like 'there's no washroom!' I am not inviting anybody who uses a wheelchair, actually, I'm not really inviting many of my people, cause this is embarrassing. I can't offer anything without a washroom. And the owner is like 'really? really? they'd be that picky?' (She slaps the table, the group laughs). We're talking about basic access!... what they don't understand is you need accessibility first (slaps table). Before anything else. You can't, we can't do anything without accessibility. But they think that somehow we're supposed to get around that, and eventually when we prove our worth, they'll put it in. Well, we need it in order to prove our worth.

Roxanne's story astutely describes the expectations and attitudes that underlie and perpetuate widespread physical inaccessibility (see Oliver, 1996; Titchkosky, 2008). People who experience disability often have to deal with non-disabled people's expectations that we should simply overcome barriers (even to the extreme of overcoming the need to use a washroom) in order to

include ourselves (Clare, 1999; Titchkosky, 2008). Few non-disabled people seem to recognize their role in perpetuating the inaccessible structures that drastically decrease the opportunities for many to engage in their communities. These attitudes are further elucidated by this later exchange recounted by Roxanne: “basically [he] told me that the ramp he built into the building, was a favor he did for me! Because he wasn’t required by law.” The idea that accessibility is a favor continues to place the responsibility of access upon the individual experiencing disability, disavowing non-disabled people from a responsibility to make structural change (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006; Linton, 2006).

Rather than disavowing the responsibility to build a more accessible world, dancers in our group who do not identify as experiencing disability have become increasingly aware of physically inaccessible environments, and increasingly motivated to make change. Kelsie detailed one of her tactics for negotiating accessibility for our performances:

> I tried to drop in as elegantly into the conversation as I could that it was kind of ironic that we had been invited to dance and that the stage was not accessible, so that we were dancing in front of it. And I saw her have that “aha” moment, um, and, I don’t know if that will change anything for us this year. I really, I hope at the very least there is a discussion where somebody sits down and says (whispering) “what about a ramp to the freaking stage?”

This awareness and recognition of physical inaccessibility extends beyond performance, into the daily lives of our dancers. While planning her wedding,

Anna ran into a common problem. She recalled that the building manager of her wedding venue "had told us originally that it was wheelchair accessible, and we learned that it is not. And so, um, we have to make it wheelchair accessible, because we have guests coming that will need to get in." Laurel jumped in, almost joking "but, what people think is accessible... they'll be like, 'oh, look, we have wider doors, wider doorways in the bathroom, in the hall ... that's two sets of twelve stairs down.'" Laurel giggled, but Anna inserted, defeated, "Ya... It's like twelve stairs." We spend a few minutes attempting to strategize about how to ramp twelve stairs: an absolute impossibility in this venue, but a necessity to her as Iris was a valued guest at her event. These examples of gross ignorance of accessibility are almost funny, until someone you love can't get into the building.

Throughout our major social institutions, such as post-secondary education, physical inaccessibility is compounded by other forms of inaccessibility, infringing upon the full participation of a wide range of our dancers. Roxanne, Kasia, Ian, Alison and I have all experienced varying degrees of educational inaccessibility. Roxanne had to change educational institutions because she could not make it between classes due to an inaccessible campus. Kasia could not access education because of prohibitively high costs for international students. Ian was required to withdraw from his program because the administrators could not imagine how he would complete the physical requirements of his coursework based on their assumptions of his physical capacity. Alison had to fight for extra time to write her exams. I petitioned the

occupational therapy department for part-time professional placements, and this was granted only after appeal. Our experiences of inaccessibility are impacted by physical space, financial barriers, citizenship and immigration policy, attitudes, physicality, mental well-being, duty to accommodate, course adaptations, as well as scheduling and temporal demands.

Within this vignette, the stairs that Iris and Alison collapse, taken most literally, are a representation of the physical inaccessibility some of our dancers experience. The stairs can also be understood as a symbol of the social, attitudinal and political inaccessibility that many of us experience. Radical access, Withers (2012) argues, is what we need to strive for. We need to create, and also seek change beyond, more accessible physical environments. He writes:

> Access needs to be addressed collectively, across bodies, boundaries and borders. Radical access means acknowledging systemic barriers that exclude people, particularly certain kinds of people with certain kinds of minds and/or bodies, and working to ensure not only the presence of those who have been left out, but also their comfort, participation and leadership. Spaces that need to incorporate radical access principles are organizational, they are educational and institutional, but they are also the spaces closest to us: our cafes, our offices, our homes and our hearts. (p. 118)

One can read the destruction of the stairs by Iris and Alison as an act of radical access, through dance. As Iris stated, “I wish I could throw those stairs out, and

if it has to be with dance, then so be it!" While not actually being able to remove all stairs from her world, dance can potentially affect larger social attitudes about inaccessibility and thus contribute to radical access. In addition, Iris' quote signals that dance is vital to her sense of participation and agency when faced with social injustice. Iris is moving in her conviction that through dance she gains a stage from which to challenge disabling spaces, attitudes, and experiences.

Many of our dancers echoed Iris' assertion that we do social justice work through dance: by sharing and politicizing injustices; by recognizing and attempting to shift inaccessible structures; by impacting disabling attitudes; and by collectively imagining (and shaping) our world otherwise. As a dance collective, we work to create radical access in "the spaces closest to us": our rehearsal spaces, our performances, our community and our hearts (Withers, 2012, p. 118).

You Could Live a Normal Life Too?

FOR ALL PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES {WAH, WAH, WAH, WAH}

YOU HAVE TO FIND STRENGTH IN ADVERSITY {WAH, WAH, WAH, WAH}

WITH OUR HEALTHY AND ACTIVE PROGRAMMING {WAH, WAH, WAH, WAH}

YOU COULD LIVE A NORMAL LIFE TOO

{RECORD SCRATCH}

Three dancers shake violently in reaction to the last sentence of this speech, and move out into the space using non-pedal locomotion (not walking on their feet). These dancers would be read as closely approximating able-bodiedness, yet each one fails in distinct but subtle ways.[22] Anna, slender and graceful, stands from her chair and walks on her toes, hips swaying, recalling Vanna White. She moves towards Kelsie, and abruptly manipulates Kelsie's limbs and torso, pushing out her ass[23] and presenting her breasts. Anna then moves to Kaylee, moulding her in a different sexualized pose. She finishes her tour by enforcing Ian into a wider stance and presenting his arms to show off muscles. Anna ends by striking a pose of presentation on the opposite side of the stage.

After being left in their newly manipulated positions, Kelsie, Kaylee and Ian struggle to maintain their poses, looking at each other furtively. Kelsie and Kaylee stumble on tip toe, and Ian's arm spasms, unraveling his hyper-masculinized muscle show. They then press and mould their own bodies, grabbing their thighs and arms, attempting to approximate Anna's imposed postures. Kelsie, Kaylee and Ian fall into each other, and shaking against each other's bodies, move into a series of complex, interdependent weight-sharing lifts and poses. As the three morph into connection and inter-relation, the solitary Anna begins moulding herself under the gaze of the observing audience. She moulds herself slowly at first and then with increasingly frantic efforts, self-

[22] See McRuer's (2006) work on compulsory able-bodiedness.
[23] This derogatory language is used purposefully in order to communicate the intention for these movements to illuminate and critique sexualization and objectification.

conscious of maintaining her ‘perfect’ body appearance. Kelsie lifts Ian while Kaylee reaches out to Anna and invites her away from her pedestaled self-manipulation. The four dancers then swing and roll around each other to sit next to Iris and Alison, extending along the backspace of the stage and away from the bank of chairs where the ‘polite’ dancers remain seated. A (dis)quieted counter-audience, sitting opposite the polite audience and facing directly towards the observing audience, is beginning to grow in numbers.

Figure 4: Moulding. Photo credit: Danielle Peers.

Figure 5: Weight-sharing. Photo credit: Tracy Kolenchuk.

Disability, Able-bodiedness, and Bodies of Difference

This third vignette springs from discussions on rehabilitation, and gender and body-shape expectations, as forces that alienate and reproduce normativities. It draws on critiques that affect bodies across identity categories, and is thus largely informed by cultural models of disability (McRuer, 2006a, 2006b; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). The movement interrogates and destabilizes dominant masculinities and dominant femininities, and seeks to challenge able-bodiedness and gender as stable, apolitical, natural embodiments (McRuer, 2006a[24]). We explore normalization as an oppressive force that all of our

[24] I shared McRuer's (2006a) concept of compulsory able-bodiedness during a focus group, in response to Kelsie, Kaylee and Ian's experiences of

dancers are subjected to in varying degrees (Davis, 1995, 2002, 2006; Shogan, 1998; Withers, 2012).

Having been 'rehabilitated' as a child, Ian shared his experience of being trained to walk normatively. He expressed feeling like it was a pointless venture, which he would inevitably fail. He shared how being (in)voluntarily encouraged to approximate able-bodiedness shaped his understanding of (and distain for) normalization. Ian's experiences resonated with various dancers within the group. Kelsie and Kaylee, for example, discussed their experiences of normalizing expectations around body size and body image within the dance environment as well as within life outside of dance:

Kelsie: I guess I notice in the body, coming back to iDANCE I was thinking about how… I've spent my entire dance career being the biggest woman in the room.

Roxanne: Really?!!?

Kelsie: Oh! god yes! Yeah

Roxanne: My god.

Kaylee: And you know, I do, I have this thing in my head when I go places, I'll be like, am I the biggest one here?

Roxanne: huh! really??! Oh! my god. I wouldn't have thought that of either of you.

Kaylee: And not even, not even dance classes. It's ridiculous.

Kelsie: Yeah

Kaylee: It's this thing in my head, cause I was bullied as a kid for that, right?

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normalization. Dancers seemed interested in the ideas and the ways that it might play out in their lives.

Roxanne: Are you serious?

Anna: Like, physically bigger? Is that what we're talking about??

Kaylee: Yeah, yeah, I'm, I was

Anna: I thought you meant like 'I'm the biggest woman in the room!' (Group laughs)

Kaylee: Well, that too! Maybe biggest personality, that's usually without a doubt, but no, everywhere I go it's like, 'am I the biggest? Oh! I am.' And then other times it's like 'Oh! No I'm not!' and I was like, why do I do this?

Kelsie: Yeah

Kaylee is marked by her experiences of bullying, and challenges herself with regards to why she polices her own body size: why is she so self-consciousness in regards to her weight, and why does she regularly compare her own body to those around her. Roxanne was dismayed by Kelsie and Kaylee's experiences. Their bodies seem to fit a beauty ideal against which bodies like hers are often measured. It was disheartening to her that these bodies, and these women, would be subject to such intense normalization and policing, by both themselves and others.

This sharing by Kelsie and Kaylee seemed to reframe discussions around normalization, extending our destabilization of bodies beyond those that are read as disabled. The dancers were really excited to include these experiences within the performance. Anna moved the discussion by offering her experience of being read as thin and feminine, which she felt impacted her negatively at her work, which is in a male dominated industry. She explained:

> You're frustrated because you just happen to look with, like what society expects, and because of that somebody's judging you. So, no matter what you look like you are never accepted.

Informed in part by Anna's comments, the vignette pokes at gender performance, dancing exaggerated stereotypes of femininity and masculinity imperfectly and with mocking. In a chapter on gender performance in contemporary dance, Cooper Albright (1997) suggests that dance can reinforce gender norms when normatively-read bodies perform gender normatively. However, she argues "there can be a disjunction between the dancer's physicality and what that movement represents" (p. 33). In other words, Ian's 'disabled' body or Kaylee and Kelsie's 'non-typical' female-dancer bodies performing normative gendered movement can create a "disjunction" which points to gender norms and opens up space for critique. At the same time, it was important for Anna's rather gender typical body to be included in this vignette because it points to a crucial understanding of gender norms; the intention was not to say that specific bodies do not fit the norm, but rather that everyone is subject to normalizing forces.

The vignette attempts to complicate gender and body size expectations, and to push against the normalizing forces that are represented by Anna's moulding of herself and others. This is symbolized by the dancers moving from a limited range of possible poses and postures, to expanding and deepening the ways that they interact with their own bodies and each other. The dancers expand from their hyper-gendered, individualistic movement and shift into more

collective, yet arguably, somewhat hyper-able movement: Kelsie flips herself upside down on a kneeling Kaylee; Ian braces her landing; Kelsie carries Ian; Kaylee swings Anna to the ground where Anna takes Kaylee's weight and springs her into the air. Cooper Albright (1997) cautions that favoring muscular hyperathleticism in contemporary dance may provide an alternative physicality to hyper-gendered femininity, but may also serve to "embody cultural anxiety about the inevitable fragility of human bodies" (p. 54). This anxiety of which Cooper Albright speaks, is reminiscent of the anxiety around disability and disabled bodies in general, and has been articulated as a root cause for ableism (Shildrick, 2005). What is interesting about Cooper Albright's critique (1997), then, is how gendered expectations and ableist expectations mutually inform each other (McRuer, 2006a, 2006b). Further, it points to how hard it may be to challenge gendered movements and embodiments without reinforcing ableist ideals (and, perhaps, vice versa; see Clare, 1999).

The complexity of the bodies on the stage during this vignette - bodies read as disabled, non-disabled, woman, man, fat and thin - may offer unique opportunities for simultaneous critique of gendered, sized, and (dis)ableist confines of movement and embodiment. The dancers negotiate this complexity, and grapple with the sometimes contradictory critiques, in part by creating collective rather than individual responses to them: highlighting collective action, relationships of care sharing, and interdependence as crucial tools in their social justice practice. In describing his participation in this vignette, Ian astutely points out the importance of collective care and action. He comments:

> Where we are trying to shape each other in trying to fit that mystique that we are all supposed to mold ourselves into, I mean I felt personally impacted by being in the second piece, simply because there was a lot of that where general society gives us an image that we're supposed to look like. An image where we're always trying to build ourselves into that shape, into what that ideal image is... it might not be the same problem, but we all have problems in relation with that, and we are all trying to take care of it in our own way. And that we shouldn't be ashamed, we should be working together to address that commonality.

Through reaching out to each other across difference, the dancers collectively demonstrate strength and care in their interconnected interactions: not without gendered movement or the occasional reveling in displays of hyper-ability, but with a mind to challenging appropriate(d) gender norms, assumed abilities, and normativity.

Many dancers articulated that their experiences of integrated dance within our community differed greatly from their other experiences in dance and in life, in large part due to the collective action that seeks to challenge normativities. Many dancers also articulated it as an environment that offers a sense of freedom from normalizing forces. Kelsie shared:

> I was thinking about coming here and suddenly I'm another dancing body, and I don't feel that apartness of weighing, you know, 30-40 lbs more than the average professional dancers... [and being told, in non-integrated dance that] because I have D-cups that my body is inherently

sexual. And everything I do I read sexual, no matter what I do about it. Sorry, and that was actually kind of deeply upsetting to me, obviously.

For Kelsie, the emotional weight of weighing more is lighter in our dance community. The shame of hyper-sexualization is less searing. Kaylee corroborates Kelsie's sentiment that the dance environment within our group differed from her experience in other dance classes by suggesting: "I go into a typical dance class, and the dancers there don't look like me. But what I love about iDANCE, is that we all just look like dancers." Kaylee alluded to the richness that a wide and diverse array of bodies brings to her experience of dance, as opposed to the alienation she experiences when she does not fit in with a group of similarly gendered, similarly able-bodied, similarly sized dancers in a typical dance class. I, and a number of other dancers it seems, experience our community as a safe space, or at least safer space, to explore our bodies and movement together with less (or maybe refreshingly different) pressure from normalizing forces.

Kelsie, Roxanne and Alison all described our integrated dance environment as a safe space,[25] at different points throughout the project. One can see this sense of safe space within our integrated dance community mirrored in the growing (dis)quieted audience. Within this audience, the dancers are increasingly free to react with collective distaste to the balloon speech. Cvetkovich (2007) writes[26] "performance makes it possible to experience what

[25] For more on cultivating safe space in performance, see Hunter (2008).
[26] Cvetkovich is drawing from a number of queer scholars, notably Jill Dolan who writes on queer performance.

utopia feels like because it creates a sense of community, however ephemeral, within the fragile but still visceral spaces of the live encounter" (p. 467). The dancers allude to this experience of safe space, in utopic terms, in their discussion of participating in this integrated dance community. Further, they create and communicate their own utopic reactions and connections on stage from within the (dis)quieted audience: collectively designing a performance that demonstrates in the "visceral spaces of the live encounter" the frustrations and strategies of resistance that their socially mandated politeness (when alone, off-stage) often veils (p. 467).

While honoring how this dance environment is a safer space for many of our dancers to explore embodiment, movement, and sociopolitical critique, I (perhaps among other dancers) am cautious of the claim of it being an entirely "safe" space. I do not believe any dance space can be completely free from difficult interpersonal exchanges or normalizing forces imposed by dance, myself as a leader, our peers, and our wider culture. Rather than claiming a space as inherently and entirely safe, I desire a constantly reflexive space where it is safe(r) to always be asking ourselves how we are (perhaps inadvertently) perpetuating the exclusion or derision of other ways of being in the world, and how we might do better. In this sense, "safe space" in our discussions, could be read less as an outcome and more as a process. Hunter (2008) suggests that creating artistic safe space is processual and involves risks and messy negotiations. Within the performance, the dancers' movement from the observing audience to the polite audience to the (dis)quieted audience may

represent a perpetual cycle of communal learning and action to create safer spaces: learning about what members of our group experience as oppressive or marginalizing (such as the discourses that make up the content of the speech), and implementing collective strategies that honor these experiences and strive for more just action within our community and beyond (such as exploring the effects of these discourses, recognizing their place within our own practice, and creating art that acts back in resistance of them).

Integral to our practice of social justice, as a group, is the attempt to enact safer spaces. This perpetual creation is necessarily imperfect, and yet is cherished by many of our group members. The ways our group members envision and enact safe space are varied. For Alex, safer, more socially just space is about "just trying to get along and not blame each other, and help each other." For Laurel, much like Hunter (2008) suggests, our safe(r) space is one in which "we're pushing our comfort zone, and ...doing things that you're not always comfortable with." Undoubtedly, the groups' understandings and practices of social justice are complicated by the complexity of our community, and their various experiences of oppression. With this complex understanding, the dancers actively challenge the construction of social justice as a practice enacted by one group of privileged 'helpers' upon another less fortunate group. Instead, the group strives to enact an always-ongoing practice of mutual sharing and support amongst diverse people who experience some similar struggles and some widely different ones. Alex beautifully shares this commitment to, and inevitable occasional failure of, creating safe space: "We do get evil, ugly too at

times, but we are family... Right? Evil and good side. We are family because we love each other."

This Land of Opportunity?

OUR WELCOMING AND MULTICULTURAL NATION {WAH WAH WAH}
AND IN THIS LAND OF OPPORTUNITY {WAH WAH WAH WAH}
FOLLOW YOUR PASSIONS, AND YOU WILL SUCCEED
{RECORD SCRATCH}

As the words "follow your passions, and you will succeed" boom overhead, Kasia unleashes her bottled frustration and kicks the chair out from in front of her. A cutting red beam from a laser pointer then trains on Kasia's guts. She notices and clutches her belly. Abruptly and nervously, she sits up straighter, fixes her hair and does her best to blend in. Nerves turn to panic as she recognizes a figure standing up slowly from the audience and beginning to walk towards her with the laser pointer. Lindsay moves with eerie vacancy onto the stage and towards the group. She represents the oppressive structures of the immigration system, and more broadly, systems that surveil other dancers. Lindsay stalks Kasia with disinterest: a banal task for Lindsay; a matter of life and death for Kasia. Laurel and Alex frantically move to shield Kasia from the beam, and Laurel removes a scarf under which Kasia hides. As Lindsay moves ever closer, Kasia breaks from the polite audience and runs desperately in circles, the whole time being seared by the laser. She finds the (dis)quieted audience spread across the back of the stage, and weaves between and behind

them to avoid the beam. As she is shielded, hidden, and collectively supported, each person on stage becomes a target in her wake. Everyone is implicated.

Lindsay stands centre stage vacantly following Kasia with the laser pointer. Alex approaches her from behind, takes her hand and turns it to direct the beam upon her own chest. She stumbles, and falls back into a chair that Laurel slides in behind her: the chair that was kicked out by Kasia. Ian approaches as Alex and Laurel sneak across the stage to join the rest of the (dis)quieted audience. Ian stands behind Lindsay, shaking the laser pointer from her hand. In much the same way that Anna moulded him, he manipulates Lindsay's body and head to face the balloon. He puppeteers her to sit up straight and polite, and to "put on a happy face." Lindsay strains to hold this position as Ian returns to the group. Kasia unfolds from her hiding position behind Kelsie, Anna and Kaylee, and reaches up towards the sky as her fellow dancers support her with their gaze.

Figure 6: The laser pointer. Photo credit: Danielle Peers

Figure 7 (left): Kasia unfolds. Photo credit: Tracy Kolenchuk.

Immigration, Citizenship, and Other Forms of Structural Oppression

In an audience question period after our first performance, Kasia reflected with some of the other dancers on the motivation for the fourth vignette. I quote this conversation at length, as I fear that to paraphrase this would flatten both the complexities of immigration, and the ways that we negotiate major structures of oppression.

Kasia: I would say that the laser definitely represents insecurity that I carry around with me every single day. Cause I don't know what's going to happen to me, like, I have my life here and my passion and dreams, but it seems like it's not enough.

Lindsay: It's something, I think, really critical to our whole group, that we go along the journey for Kasia in her fights to stay here, and

every time it's gut wrenching that it's more of a fight and there's more uncertainty

Kasia: Yeah and it's tough. Especially how I feel like I don't have any rights, I can't really stand up for myself, I can't really do anything, cause I don't have my papers, so I can't speak up for myself.

Kaylee: That's hard.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Kasia: And it's been a challenge. Like, for example living without Alberta Health Care for a year, with my family, or just the fear of being deported at all times, only because of the death of my step-father. That's why the government cancelled all the paperwork. Which doesn't make any sense, right? So when everything is going good, it's amazing, and you have money, you have this, but what if you get sick or something is going to go wrong? Who's gonna care for you? (silence)

Lindsay: Yeah. (Kasia & Lindsay hug)

Laurel: I'll protect you (she puts the scarf out in front of Kasia like she does in the dance)

Lindsay: Yeah, it's just hard, cause I don't know, we don't know what to do really. Other than just to be...

Kasia: The problem is that there is nothing we can do. Right?

Lindsay: Yeah, and I think for a lot of the things we are talking about, right, like, how do we change structural inaccessibility? How do you change immigration, as a group of dancers? Other than to be able to create art together that has some space for sharing that, and supporting each other.

Kasia spoke with heart wrenching honesty about the threat she experiences as a result of her tenuous immigration status, as well as the lack of control over her life and her lack of access to basic services. My responses to her sharing demonstrated how I often feel totally incapable of affecting any change in her life circumstance, and it is deeply frustrating.

We have danced with Kasia since she first came to Edmonton four years ago. When we came to understand her experience of Canada, I think many of us began to question what we have been taught about our nation. We are taught we are a welcoming, multi-cultural land: rich with diversity and opportunity. But for whom? Our dancers mostly identify as white, lower and middle class Canadians. Learning more about the daily impacts of racism, ethnocentrism and immigration from Kasia has challenged us to consider our nation and our own privilege more critically. Although it is vital that we combat ableism, Withers (2012) argues:

> One cannot choose to fight only []ableism, as most disabled people experience more than one form of marginalization, and, therefore, more than one form of oppression. This is why poverty, sexism, heterosexism/homophobia, transphobia, racism and ageism must be fought in tandem. (p. 107)

Informed by Kasia, the dancers echoed Withers' (2012) sentiment that while we may actively engage in social justice practices around disability, it is also crucial to engage with other forms of oppression. Personally, Kasia's experiences push me to reflect on who is not represented (or underrepresented) within our group: what attitudes and structures, within our group and in society at large, systemically exclude dancers from racialized, colonized, and queer communities, for example? It is in these moments of difficult and uncomfortable self-reflection that I feel implicated in the oppression of others; I feel the laser

pointer in my hand, it's sharp beam cutting as I wield it through my own apathy and ignorance even as it turns towards me.

Anna suggested that social injustice may stem largely from our ignorance of other's struggles. She stated:

> I think that with social injustice, the main issue is ignorance, and people just not knowing, and it's not that people don't want to know, it's just that they don't. Right? Um, and so, to fix that, you just have to engage people, and have them know, like, introduce it.

This view of social injustice, in many ways, is reflected through our group's increased engagement with citizenship and privilege since Kasia has joined us. Since learning of Kasia's struggles, we have no longer been able to claim ignorance around issues of immigration. Some dancers, however, believed that knowledge might not be enough. It felt to them as though there is often a gap between knowledge of a social problem, and action taken to remedy the problem. I, for one have been guilty of this: I knew, for example, that my voting station for the last election was not wheelchair accessible, and yet I did nothing.

Further, some knowledge about social injustice may actually perpetuate stereotypes or dangerous perspectives. Kelsie, spoke of this dynamic in relation to campaigns to 'save' African countries:

> I have deep issues with that sort of awareness because I think it reinforces parts of colonialism, of the west and white people as Africa's saviour, (Roxanne laughs) and ultimately, I, it's definitely not my business how to tell African people how to run their lives, or who should

> be in charge of them. In fact, I happily acknowledge my deep ignorance of all of that...

Kelsie's knowledge of these global awareness campaigns did not mitigate her admitted ignorance about the desires of the people these campaigns aim to serve. Her critique alluded to a favorite saying of Roxanne's, and a slogan of the disabled peoples' movement, "Nothing About Us Without Us" (Charlton, 1998). Roxanne has often stated that rather than focusing action on a global level, we need to make concerted efforts to increase social justice on a local level alongside the people directly affected by injustice. Her point is not that global interventions are bad, but that there is also much work to do close to home.

The structural inequality Kasia encounters, right here at home, deeply affects the collective understanding the dancers have about social justice. She runs around frantically, on stage as in life, trying to meet the demands of a system (which Lindsay and her laser pointer represent) that threatens to endanger her way of life. The frantic full-time job of protecting and assuring one's very (way of) life is a common, culturally produced experience among immigrants and other oppressed communities. According to Spade (2011), our culture's "shifting understandings of gender, ability, and migration - and the meanings attached to different populations through those shifts - determine who lives, for how long, and under what conditions" (p.26). In other words, being recognized and administratively categorized by one's supposed disability, citizenship, race or gender can have very real and dangerous consequences. The very systems that are purportedly structured to support groups that are

categorized as *vulnerable*, according to Spade, often serve to reproduce the unequal distribution of poverty, violence and early death. Importantly, the systems that govern citizenship and disability sometimes distribute these life chances in different ways. There are, however, some crucial overlaps between the two systems, in terms of the kinds of institutions, and institutionalized barriers, that impact upon the every-day lives of those whom these systems govern. Perhaps the most striking example of such overlaps include the ways that systems of immigration, education, and health care functioned in concert to administer eugenic sterilization programs on the bodies of people who had been categorized as disabled or racialized (Snyder & Mitchel 2006).

These same administrative systems of immigration, education, and health care overlap in the lives of our dancers. Many of our dancers know what it is like to try and access health care services that are not financially supported. Further, for dancers experiencing disability, accessing these healthcare services is required in order to access education accommodations in the university system. To access disability support services on a university campus, a number of our dancers were required to submit annual documentation from a doctor that categorized them as disabled, often garnered through a series of tests or visits, which they had to pay for out of pocket. Not dissimilarly, Kasia was required to navigate the immigration system constantly in her efforts to attend university. She has had to continually reapply for residency and challenge administrative decisions, at great personal expense (financial and otherwise). This

administration process has meant that she has had to postpone her education until she receives documentation of her permanent residency.

Many of our dancers are denied basic access to education, healthcare and meaningful citizenship[27] for a plethora of intersecting administrative reasons. Many of our dancers feel constantly surveilled by the very systems that purport to help them. Many of our dancers encounter seemingly banal administrative regulations that result in administrative violence and significantly limit their opportunities in life (Spade, 2011[28]). While the specificities of these regulations differ for different people, the loci of limitations are often the same: the healthcare system, the educational system, as well as the provincial and federal systems of social support and income assurance.

The administrative regulations that limit the life chances of certain people are further compounded when an individual is subject to multiple categorizations of Otherness (Spade, 2011). For example, if we examine the overlaps of immigration and disability in Canada, the "excessive demand" clause makes immigration impossible for people who experience disability (Peers, Brittain & McRuer, 2012; Withers, 2012). Many of our dancers acknowledge that, while there is significant hardship that arises from their varied experiences of Otherness and oppression, there is undoubtedly privilege

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[27] Although most of our dancers are legally considered Canadian citizens, Prince (2009) argues that Canadians with disabilities are still denied meaningful citizenship.

[28] I described Spade's (2011) concepts of administrative violence during one of the focus groups, and the dancers seemed to resonate with this idea.

that accompanies being a disabled citizen or a non-disabled immigrant, in light of these life limiting regulations.

Our dancers expressed, often adamantly, that the individuals working within these administrative systems of violence are not necessarily, in and of themselves, bad. Rather, the dancers thought it crucial to consider the systems, not the people, as oppressive. At the same time, Ian suggested:

> When Lindsay is holding the pointer, and Alex starts directing it towards her, it's kind of like Lindsay's character gets to realize what the power of having that little pointer thing on you really, like how much of an impact that can have on you. Um, which I mean when you are the person giving that pointer thing, you might not recognize how much of an impact that can actually have on you.

Ian pointed out that people act on behalf of oppressive systems in ways that negatively affect lives. Further, as demonstrated by Lindsay's role in our performance, I think there is an understanding that we may be more complicit than we like in some of the very social justice struggles that we take on. Within our group, there is a wide variety of understandings of what social justice is, and of how it can be achieved. Social justice action can include strategies of increasing awareness and knowledge, action on a local level, universal design alongside access to accommodation, and self-reflection about how one oppresses at the same time as being oppressed. Over time, the group has gained an increasing appreciation of how social injustice occurs along multiple axes of oppression. Most of our dancers value collective action, and all

expressed a belief in the power of art to enact social change. A pivotal philosophy that permeates the group is the importance of acting with, not for, those most impacted by the social injustices with which we engage. These varied approaches to social justice are demonstrated by how each dancer moves to protect Kasia in similar yet unique ways. Laurel hides her with a scarf, Alex reaches to block her, Iris offers her chair as a shield, Kaylee takes Kasia onto her lap, and Kelsie and Anna build a fort with their bodies. What is important about this exchange is that a diversity of socially just engagements broadens the range of ways that we can support each other through injustice, and the ways we can activate for change. We cannot do everything, but we can do something.

The Care We Need

> Our most vulnerable populations {Wah Wah Wah Wah}
>
> ensure your loved ones receive the care they need {Wah Wah Wah}
>
> donate today
>
> {Record Scratch}

The (dis)quieted audience is scattered across the back of the stage, bubbling with dissent and staring back into the observing audience. While Lindsay remains nervously seated, directly facing the lecturing happy-face balloon, the rest of the dancers turn their backs to it. They clutch their stomachs and heads in exasperation as the balloon squawks out promises of charitable salvation. The dancers use their hands to trace the effects these dominant

charitable messages have on their bodies, and the inconsequence that charity has in their lives. Their hands come to fists in front of their mouths. They bite hard on their fists in defiance: biting the proverbial (charitable) hand that purports to feed them; biting the metaphoric gag of prescribed indebtedness that silences them. Turning their heads away, they throw their palms up at Lindsay with a sharp exhale, as if to say talk to the hand. The dancers creep forward into the space on hands and wheels and hips and elbows. They grasp and swing chairs violently: deconstructing the inaccessibly orderly rows of chairs; dismantling the onstage audience. Gradually, out of purposeful chaos, chairs are laid against and upon Lindsay in the centre of the stage, creating a cage of metal and plastic that encloses her. As she reaches up out of the cage, a last chair is placed in her outstretched hand. She trembles and strains under the weight. She collapses. The cage tumbles down with her.

Alison, the smallest dancer on stage, slowly weaves her way through the mess of chairs strewn around Lindsay. She reaches down with care. Gently, Alison picks Lindsay off the ground, drawing her into the group for their final rebellion.

Figure 8: Deconstruction and loss of composure. Photo credit: Tracy Kolenchuk.

Under Threat

With the call to "donate today," as charities frequently implore, the dancers begin their outright rebellion in this fifth vignette. Critical disability and trans legal scholars have critiqued charities[29], and their role in the continued marginalization of those they claim to aid (Charlton, 1998; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006; Spade, 2011). As Withers (2012) argues:

> Rather than advocating for change, the charity model and the charity industry are typically invested in the status quo. As disability is [regarded as] an individual tragedy, solutions are based on eliminating or reducing disability rather than addressing social barriers. (p. 58)

The charity model's reproduction of disability as tragedy and its lack of effective social interventions in healthcare, accessibility and welfare, are issues

[29] I described Spade's (2011) critique of charities as part of the nonprofit industrial complex during one of the focus groups, and the dancers seemed to resonate with this critique.

that a number of our dancers, and thus the final performance, rails against. Roxanne echoed this sentiment acutely in her rejection of supporting charity:

> Well, we have to stop giving money to charities (the group laughs). I say that in all my speeches, 'don't give money to charities, make your next home accessible, put your money there, into the structure of our society.' Cause that will do as much good as any of these charities.

The dancers passionately bolstered this conversation by sharing how some of them had been either employees or supporters of charity. Kasia commented:

> I used to work for a charity, and... when I calculated everything I was getting $5 per hour... and then there is so much money that goes into the charity, not to the kids right?... and the president... he's a millionaire.

Iris shared her experience of donating money to a charity, and her distrust of where her money was actually going. She noted:

> They spend so much on administration, and they send out this glossy paper advertising, and, like 'look what we do, look what we do.' All I want to do is help some poor kid... not support some fancy advertising...or some rich exec.

Both Kasia and Iris quickly became disillusioned about the capacity of charities to affect significant change in the lives of those they were intending to support with their time and money. This sentiment is echoed, and built upon, by Withers (2012), in his chapter entitled For us, not with us:

> By and large, disabled people live in poverty while billions of dollars are funneled into the charity system every year. These funds are generally

> not used to provide housing, food, attendant care, health care or assistance devices to disabled people. Rather, the money largely goes to prevent the existence of future disabled people. (p. 59)

The ‘cure’ mandate that is promoted by many charities, such as the Rick Hansen Foundation (Rick Hansen Foundation, 2011a, 2011c), is essentially doing what Withers (2012) proposes: funneling large amounts of money to ensure that, in the future, disabled people do not exist. The dancers in our group shared a weariness of the notion of the cure, with a number of them articulating that they do not desire to be fixed. Critical disability scholars can help us further unpack this weariness. Garland Thomson (2002) argues that, “the emphasis on cure reduces the cultural tolerance for human variation and vulnerability” (p. 14). Withers (2012) offers, for very similar reasons, that such statements contain thinly veiled eugenic sentiments. He argues that a ‘cure’ for certain kinds of congenital impairment (for example, spina bifida or downs syndrome) is often enacted as preventative genetic screening and abortion. This kind of population-based ‘cure’ would mean that some of our dancers would not be alive, and, for obvious reasons, they take exception to this.

The following Rick Hansen Foundation (2011a) quotation exemplifies this underlying eugenic logic: “More needs to happen so that one day we can achieve a fully inclusive world where the wheelchair is obsolete.” This statement seemed curious and contradictory for us as we pondered its meanings. For many of our dancers, a wheelchair is vital to navigating their world, and a welcomed part of their lives. A cure for spinal cord injury, while undoubtedly

desired by some people, will not affect any of the dancers in this project. Yet a proposed world without wheelchairs would mean they could not live fully in their communities. It would mean a more normalizing world, where people are expected to access technologies that make them walk. More dangerously, perhaps, it is a potentially eugenic world, where our dancers who use wheelchairs are imagined not to be living at all. Necessarily, for our group, a world without wheelchairs is not a more inclusive world. In a world where the wheelchair is obsolete, the dancers who use wheelchairs, and all of our brilliantly different and non-normative bodies, are also obsolete. Our group expressed a desire to explicitly challenge this obsolescence.

By extension, the dancers desired to challenge the notion of 'vulnerable populations,' a euphemism for disability frequently used by speakers, and thereby spoken by the lecturing balloon. This was a term that did not resonate with their experience of themselves, and a term that some of them regarded as stripping them of agency. McGibbons (2012) suggests that labeling an individual or community as vulnerable has come to signify that they are inherently at a disadvantage. However she articulates an alternative intersectional conception of vulnerability, one that seems to resonate with perspectives of social justice that our performance puts forth:

> The discourse of health inequalities and inequities commonly refers to 'vulnerable people' in an attempt to identify those who are particularly 'at risk'. However, if we are committed to tackling oppression-related

> health outcomes, it is incumbent upon us to reframe the concept of vulnerable people to 'people under threat'. (p. 33)

Kasia is under threat from systems of immigration. Roxanne and Claire are under threat from our health care system. All of our bodies are under threat from normative forces in different ways. We are not vulnerable because we are inherently disadvantaged, but because many of us experience systemic oppression. Our performance was designed to highlight non-normative bodies and experiences as 'under threat,' and to challenge the imperative of eugenic sentiments, like the "cure," which narrow our ways of being in the world.

Deconstruction, Loss of Composure, and Utopia

Throughout the performance, the dancers each leave the domesticated space of passive compliance, rejecting the polite audience in order to create small bursts of deconstruction. These vignettes, almost daydreams, allow for the possibility of imagining their bodies, their worlds and their lives otherwise. Referring to both her de(con)struction of the human stairs in the vignette on accessibility, and the group's confrontation of Lindsay when she is hunting down Kasia, Iris reflected:

> The vignettes, and the lashing out at the man, as they say, was really freeing for me. It's like, I finally get to say it, I finally get to say 'I can't do those stairs!'... I wish I could throw all stairs out and throw them away! And, create the world that they say, that these 'wonderful' speakers say we have, that we don't have!

After these important day dream vignettes of activism, dancers, importantly, do not return to the polite audience: they each choose to join the (dis)quieted audience. They are moved, shifted by their defiant choice and their connection with each other. With every dancer that joins the (dis)quieted audience, the group increasingly seethes and bubbles with tension and disillusionment until they erupt into action, as though pulled by Alex's call from an earlier focus group: "Come on people, do something!" In this final vignette, deconstruction is not simply a space to visit, a dream world. Rather, the group collectively, and literally, permanently deconstructs and tears apart the inaccessible staging of their polite and passive listening space.

On stage, we can dance out against the hardest things that we face. When we are off stage, some of our greatest challenges, and most painful or uncontrollable circumstances, are not so easy to confront, to shift, to find a way to impact upon or even to cope with. One such re-occurring conversation in our group is about death and dying. Iris shared that she wishes she could have some control in the death of her mother, who is suffering greatly in an under-staffed long term care facility that is on strike. At the same time, over the course of our research project, as many as four of our dancers had to intimately face their own mortality. Claire is one of those dancers: while she was a part of the early research process, severe illness prevented her from performing the final dance. This is the third time she has rehearsed a work, only to have to pull out before we made it to the theatre.

Claire wished us to choreograph a performance of her death, dancing visceral images of blood and loss. We brainstormed a vignette sparked by Claire's desire, but we decided we could not include when Claire was no longer able to perform. I present the conversation at length in order to highlight the complex group negotiation around this weighty issue:

Claire: I've got an idea, how about I die trying to get [blood]...

Lindsay: Well, the idea was to kind of look like dying, but that there might be a way that the community can support living too, do you know what I mean?

Roxanne: Well, yeah, I don't want you to die.

Laurel: Community can support access.

Roxanne: I don't even like the idea of that Claire. That makes me uncomfortable.

Alex: That's scary!

Alison: No, same here.

Roxanne: We'll get you the blood, right?

Claire: Yeah, but, what if there's not enough time? And people do.

Lindsay: Well, and people do, that's the thing.

Roxanne: We want to show the struggle, right? You know, and the fact that you could die...

Claire: Yeah

Roxanne: ...but that, as a community, we can help each other.

Claire: Right.

Roxanne: Right, so you almost die, but not quite.

Lindsay: Yeah, and I see that process being hard, and you doing the theatre behind that being something that becomes a really big struggle...

Claire: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...but I am not sure that we want to go with someone dying, too much.

Alison: Mmhmmm.

Roxanne: That might freak your mom out! (laughs)

Alex: We love you!

Lindsay: And I think, as a group, even in dying, my hope is that we can be there through that too, if we need to be, in a way that doesn't leave you dead onstage, it leaves you with a community onstage, right?

Laurel: Does the community always notice that you need help too? Like, that's what I'm finding, is a lot of times, the community completely ignores that you need help in any way, shape or form.

Lindsay: Mmhmmm.

Laurel: And that, but, then it becomes your responsibility to ask for help, right?

Lindsay: Yes.

Laurel: Claire's going back and forth and we are oblivious to her struggle.

Lindsay: Yeah, the whole group might just be totally, and then, finally...

Laurel: We are oblivious to the fact that it's getting to be more and more of a struggle. it's like, help!

Lindsay: Yeah! She could be at like that very end stage and just be like Hello! anybody?! and then one person might notice, and then for the next time, two people might notice, and then three people might notice, and so if these bean bags are kind of like, um, a symbolic dignity, access, life force,

Laurel: Almost like blood.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Roxanne: Yeah, well, and I like that, so then that's what we're going for, we're gonna get that!

Many of our dancers expressed discomfort with Claire dying. This is in part because we don't want her to die, and arguably in part because a number of the dancers involved in this exchange were wrestling with their own deaths at the same time. Laurel, Roxanne, and I suggested that we could imagine her enacting dying on stage, only to have us save her at the last minute. But as both Claire and Laurel point out, can we save her, offstage? In refusing to dance her death, what are we robbing her of? How do we end up overruling her desires, and even effacing Claire, as a result of our own discomforts with death? Some things are too big to know what to do with. Ian beautifully articulated what choices remain when there is seemingly nothing we can do:

> Well, and then there's also...the power of just being there, as opposed to being there for a purpose... It's not something that we need to have a purpose for, it's just something where you just need to be. And then things that happen as a result of that, that you can endure that together.

With this statement, Ian touches on an important aspect of relational ethics that are enacted within this group. Austin, Bergum, & Dossetor state that "relational ethics is about being with, as well as being for, the other" (p. 46). Being there for each other is sometimes the only, albeit important, way we can support each other through the most difficult experiences of our lives.

So, while we can be together, what do we do now? The polite audience has been deconstructed. The pile of chairs has fallen. The stage is disordered, messy. How might our dancers (re)compose their deconstructed bodies and

worlds? Must they compose themselves? McRuer (2006b), in his crip theorization of writing composition, argues no:

> I argue for the desirability of a loss of composure, since it is only in such a state that heteronormativity might be questioned or resisted and that new (queer/disabled) identities and communities might be imagined. (p. 166)

Our process is messy, our performance only slightly cleaner. Chaos, swinging chairs and rolling bodies. Our loss of composure in our final vignette creates an opportunity for breaking: breaking out of our daily experiences of oppression; breaking expectations of disability, normativity and community; breaking down, together. Drawing from Ian, it is in our loss of composure that we can be together. We can be elated and devastated, deeply hoping and intensely lost, all at once.

Maybe this loss of composure creates just enough space for a creative spark, a statement, a connection, a small wedge into the large structures that surround and enfold us? In a works-in-progress showing of this performance, the audience was invited to give feedback, and many people expressed a desire to see the laser-pointer-wielding Lindsay tortured intensely after this deconstruction as a result of what she had done to Kasia and the others. In discussion afterwards, the dancers did not want to torture Lindsay to the extent that the audience seemed to desire. At the same time, the dancers did want to demonstrate how Lindsay should be held accountable for her socially unjust actions. From this discussion, and some audience suggestions, we decided to

build a cage out of the chairs to encompass Lindsay. In this cage, the chairs symbolize the administrative rules and regulations, and the barriers imposed, by the systems of oppression Lindsay represented. As Kaylee put it, the cage was intended to impress that "you get what you give... it's sort of like a punishment." However, after Lindsay experienced the weight of systemic oppression turned back upon her, the dancers insisted that she be invited to join the rest of the group. Alison is the dancer who weaves her way through the collapsed chairs to invite Lindsay to join the group. Alison commented, "That would bother me immensely in the real world, if someone was laying on the ground and I could not help them." Alex captured the complexity of the group's expressed desires to exact justice through punishment at the same time as rescuing someone in need. He noted:

> But I know I keep saying it, but it's true, we all care for each other, I don't care if we are good or we are bad, we are the evil and the good side, and the bad side. And we are more.

What we are feeling - the good side, and the bad side - and what we are making of it - community and art - Cvetkovich (2007) tells us, can be utopic. We create:

> …a utopia that exists in the here and now rather than the fantastic visions of science fiction and new worlds, a utopia that includes hardship and violence and that offers strategies for survival...the point would be to offer a vision of hope and possibility that doesn't foreclose despair and exhaustion. (p. 467)

Cvetkovich's concept of utopia, which includes the hard and the beautiful, was shared with the dancers in a focus group, and it resonated deeply. We had numerous conversations about wanting to show difficult issues in our group, at the same time as projecting hope. Onstage we craft an imaginary, seemingly utopic, world in which we confront and defeat the daily violences we encounter. Throughout our creative process, we enact our own complex utopia: sharing in the "hardship and violence," and creating dance performances as a collective "strategies for survival" (p. 467).

When performing our version of utopia, we were weary of being read as inspirational. We regularly engaged in conversations about the dangers of disability-related inspiration narratives (see Clare, 1999; Linton, 2006). Many of us worried that this perception of our performances flattens out the complexity of our dancers' lived realities, and creates unrealistic expectations of people who experience disability. As Iris argued, however, we may not be entirely ready to give up inspiration all together. Iris challenged the audience to regard our critical examination of social injustices, and our possible strategies for enacting social justice, as a larger call to action. She urged:

> Often, we as a group are told we are inspiring. The comment from the audience is "you guys are so inspiring!" We think, "inspiring, how? Why? What for?" Like, this production we just did, if that inspires you, then that's what we want. (Group laughs) Inspired to make some change. That's the kind of inspiration we want.

More Needs to Happen!

> MORE NEEDS TO HAPPEN, SO THAT ONE DAY WE CAN
> ACHIEVE "A FULLY INCLUSIVE WORLD... WHERE THE
> WHEELCHAIR IS OBSOLETE."[30]
> NOW PLEASE STAND FOR THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.

The dancers are reluctantly called to attention for the last time by the floating yellow happy-face balloon. Their distain for the talking head turns to hope for an instant with the words, "more needs to happen so that one day we can achieve a fully inclusive world." The group nods vigorously in agreement. This hope is soon crushed by the conclusion: "where the wheelchair is obsolete." It's a slap in the face. A guttural and desperate "no!!" erupts from each dancer. We all grasp Iris or Alison and their chairs. A world without wheelchairs is a world in which both Iris and Alison are isolated, immobilized, normalized, excised from our collective. This is deeply troubling.
"Now please stand for the national anthem" is salt in the wound. Defiantly, each of us refuses to stand and exclude the others. We drop, in solidarity with Iris and Alison, who use wheelchairs, and with Kasia whose nation this is not (yet). Another act in the revolt is launched. Laurel, Kelsie, and Kaylee lift Alison, in her wheelchair, and the four parade forth to confront the balloon. Alex swoops in from behind and grabs the balloon, drawing it into Alison's hands. Cracking from the weight of this erasure, and bolstered by the group's danced rebellion, she raises a pin in her fist. Slash. The balloon pops and wilts in her lap. With

[30] This is a direct quote from the Rick Hansen Foundation Website (2011b).

gentle care, Laurel, Kelsie and Kaylee return Alison and her chair to the ground. As she touches down, everyone turns to face the observing audience. The performance comes to an end, but the disquieted peanut gallery does not. We bite our fists.

Figure 9: Balloon pop. Photo credit: Danielle Peers.

Figure 10: We bite our fists. Photo credit: Tracy Kolenchuk.

Conclusion

This performance ethnography, framed by the transformative paradigm for researching with disability communities, explored social justice within and through integrated dance. Twelve dancers were involved in the collaborative creation and performance of a research-based integrated dance that explored their experiences, understandings, and performances of social (in)justice. This research process resulted in: two performances of the integrated dance (Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery; a video version of this dance that is available online; and this written thesis. I briefly summarize my written thesis, herein, and follow up with what I see as some of the most important results of this research: the shifts that it provoked and informed within Edmonton's integrated dance community. I end with a brief discussion about areas of possible future development with regards to my integrated dance community, and to my research.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I situated my research within the integrated dance literature, detailed the transformative paradigm and briefly outlined social justice as a concept. In Chapter 2, I detailed performance ethnography as a methodology and described my specific methods of focus groups and performance creation, which were drawn from iDANCE's own practices of knowledge-making. Chapters 3 to 5 detail the findings of this research study.

Chapter 3 explores the group's processual enactments of social justice, through a discussion of check-ins, negotiation and consent/sus, and care-sharing.

This discussion includes focus group transcripts, and is framed by the transformative paradigm's "disability terms of reference" for conducting research with disability communities (Mertens, Sullivan & Stace, 2011, p. 232). Check-ins are the group's way of knowing each other, generating knowledge about social injustice, and instigating plans for social justice action in art and daily life. Negotiation and consent/sus are informal, iterative and ongoing processes of sharing ideas, exploring discomforts, negotiating power relations, honoring a plurality of perspectives, attempting not to collapse complexity, and creating art that the dancers are mutually invested in. Care-sharing is a highly valued, day-to-day, interdependent and reciprocal exchange of skills, resources and supports amongst the dancers.

Chapter 4 is a DVD of the performance, entitled (Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery. It is a fifteen minute integrated dance performance, collaboratively created by the twelve dancers involved in this research project, and performed by Alex Sutherland, Alison Neuman, Anna Schuurman, Ian Gordon, Iris Dykes, Kasia (Katarzyna) Niewinska, Kaylee Gloeckler, Kelsie Acton, Laurel Sublime, and Lindsay Eales. This version of the research-based integrated dance was performed as a part of the Alberta Dance Alliance's "Made in Alberta" professional showcase at the FEATS Festival of Dance on July 13, 2012. It was filmed by Danielle Peers and the Alberta Dance Alliance. The video version was edited by Lindsay Eales.

In Chapter 5, I expand upon the performance (Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery by theoretically unpacking the vignettes (and related themes) that

constituted the performance. The themes that were collaboratively developed and explicated through the movement vignettes included: the silencing of subtle, and not-so-subtle, violences; inaccessibility; disability, able-bodiedness, and bodies of difference; immigration, citizenship, and other forms of structural oppression; under threat; and deconstruction, loss of composure and utopia. Within the chapter, these themes are translated into written form through a description of choreographed movement, and are reflected upon through critical disability theory and focus group transcripts.

As proud as I am of the performance and written thesis that resulted from my research, I am even more proud of the ways that this research process transformed our integrated dance community. Skill building and relevant community outcomes are an important part of research within the transformative paradigm (Mertens, Sullivan & Stance, 2011). Before this research, we practiced some collaboration and dancer consultation, and we were more implicitly consensus-based. We now have much more explicit discussions about our process; we more explicitly and consciously develop performance themes, intentions, purpose and content through collective decision-making.

This research process lead to community skill-building for all of the dancers, including myself, and this has been carried forward into our everyday practices of performance development. We, as a group, have begun to actively seek out learning opportunities that inform us about creating more explicitly political art, and we are beginning to make more explicitly political art. In the months since our performance, we have hosted numerous workshops to develop

dancer-generated movement, and we are including more and more dancer-generated movement in choreography. We have started to take turns watching and providing feedback on choreography. We have recently connected with local anti-oppressive performers in dance and theatre. We have developed an increased commitment to anti-oppressive social justice practice across all forms of marginalization. We create in more consciously collaborative ways, and we seek to collaboratively develop conscientiousness in ourselves and in each other.

This research project has profoundly influenced the organization and direction of the integrated dance community in Edmonton. In order to better support the growth and development of our community, and based on dancers' expressed desires for a more political, intersectional and arts-focused organization (ideas that emerged through our research process), we have founded a non-profit arts organization named CRIPSiE (Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society in Edmonton). CRIPSiE has assumed iDANCE Edmonton's performance portfolio, and builds upon their seven years of integrated dance experience. CRIPSiE is committed to fostering high quality, creative, anti-oppressive and inclusive art practices and performances. This organization is run by our artists, who experience disability or other forms of oppression, or who explicitly consider themselves artistic and political allies.

While iDANCE Edmonton Integrated Dance continues to provide recreational dance classes, CRIPSiE is dedicated to developing an integrated dance program that focuses on artistic performance and artist professionalization. Within CRIPSiE, dancers are acknowledged and treated as

artists, not as clients of rehabilitative or exercise programs. This shift enables us to pay our artists, which is one means of valuing our artists' labour and decreasing the potential exploitation of artists from marginalized groups (a social injustice issue discussed throughout our research project). Further, dancers are able to have greater control over their own artistic and arts community development by being able to become a board member of CRIPSiE. This is an important move towards fulfilling the disability movement's demand (Charlton, 1998): "Nothing about us without us." Under the umbrella of CRIPSiE, dancers are enabled to make more politicized artistic statements with less worry about the repercussions of contradicting the mission or mandate of The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement (the disability sport and physical activity focused parent organization of iDANCE). Further, because CRIPSiE is an arts organization (rather than a subsidiary of a sports organization) our community can now access arts grant funding, and thus more opportunities to develop our capacity for collaborative performance creation.

In terms of future community development, this research project has highlighted a community desire for further anti-oppressive arts training. Consensus-building training is one aspect of anti-oppressive practice that CRIPSiE is looking into accessing. We have previously functioned with an implicit practice of consensus-building that is valued by the group but that may serve to reproduce unequal power relations (as discussed in Chapter 3). An explicit consensus-building process that our group learns together and agrees to implement may contribute to balancing some of these relations of power. There

are local groups that offer anti-oppressive consensus-building workshops, and we are currently in discussions and planning to offer a training session very soon.

Additionally, Kelsie brought forth the idea to run an integrated dance choreography and composition training series. With this series, artists in our group can learn skills of choreography and dance composition in order to create their own performances, or become even more active in collaborative choreography like that used in this research process. This practice can ensure that the plurality of voices in our integrated dance community is honored and supported, and that integrated dance creation is accessible to those who desire to create.

Some of the possible limitations of this study include the ephemeral nature of the research performance, as well as the focus on only one integrated dance group with a limited number of dancers. Live performance, with its immediacy and embodied quality, which was a central aspect of this study. It was only possible to perform this dance twice, which means a limited audience had access to the live performance, and it may be difficult to bring the same dancers together to perform it in the future. Video was utilized in an attempt to capture and document the performance, however it certainly does not have the same effect or affect as a live performance. In future projects I would like to organize a time for a videographer to create a dance-on-film of the performance content, wherein the dancers would perform without an audience, and multiple

cameras could record and even weave through the performers in hopes of capturing the intimate and visceral nature of the dance.

Another limitation of this study was the limited scope of the project and its focus on only one specific integrated dance community. Both the political and artistic practices and experiences of the dancers' involved in this study are bound to the local and specific context in which they create and perform integrated dance. This research, while it may inform our understandings of social justice in integrated dance, cannot be generalized to other integrated dance companies in Canada or around the world. I plan to address this limitation in my doctoral research, by engaging a national performance ethnography of performers' perspectives on integrated dance and social justice. I hope to include integrated dance companies across Canada, and to create a trans-national performance event or film exploring the similar and divergent practices and performances of integrated dance and social justice.

This study has sparked a number of other directions for further investigation, and has motivated me to refine aspects of my research practices. Performance ethnography was a rich methodology that offered unique knowledge generation and dissemination capacities within the exploration of integrated dance, and I am strongly motivated to continue exploring this methodology. In the future, however, I would tweak some of my specific research methods. I would consider using more video-based, rather than audio-based, focus-groups and interviews, since one of my key assertions is that movement can communicate some things that words alone cannot, and that there

are some individuals who communicate through movement in ways they may not in words. There are benefits and trade-offs to this choice. Video has the potential to document the embodied and inarticulable nature of interactions in a way that audio transcription does not. At the same time, some individuals are self-conscious in front of a camera, which may limit the quality of the interview content. Anonymity may also be a larger issue within video recordings. In this research project, I found it hard to capture focus groups with one camera, and chose not to do so for this reason. I did miss some important moments of group interaction or connection as a result, and in the future I would plan to set up a number of cameras at different angles if this was a primary data collection method I chose. Another benefit of video is that it would be possible to create a film from merging focus group footage and performance footage; this would enable an alternative form of arts-based research that may create a more affective artwork, capturing group dynamic and processual integrated dance creation better than a written thesis or the video of a live performance alone.

This research project has piqued my interest in exploring and theorizing more about care-sharing, interdependence, and communities of care, as well as the politicization of embodiment in integrated dance. I am intrigued about how integrated dance practice may facilitate the practice of care-sharing, and about how bodies connecting through integrated dance are pulled to connect and reciprocally care for each other in other areas of life. I am also compelled to explore how integrated dance might politicize, as opposed to personalize,

disability and other axes of oppression. I am drawn to embodied experiences in integrated dance as a site of political action.

This research project has certainly been a learning process for both myself and my community. It is my hope that this learning will push us to create a more socially just integrated dance community, and push me to conduct more socially just research. Further, it is our community's expressed hope that this research-based performance pushes our audiences, and each of us, to consider how we might act differently to foster the opportunities and supports necessary for each other to thrive. We ask: How might we dance each other into a better world?

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