

**Dancing with Difference: An Auto/ethnographic Analysis of Dominant Discourses in
Integrated Dance**

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THESIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Literature Review	6
Theoretical Framework	16
Thesis Format	19
Overview of Chapter 2:	21
Overview of Chapter 3:	26
Data Analysis	31
Conclusion	33
References	34
Chapter 2: Dance Dance Revolution? Responding to Dominant Discourses in Contemporary Integrated Dance	43
Chapter 3: Dancing with Myself: One Dancer-Researcher's Story of the Challenges in Resisting Dominant Discourses in Contemporary Dance and Qualitative Research	79
Chapter 4: Conclusions: Bringing the Dance to a Close.	112
Contributions	121

Abstract

Through six months of ethnographic and autoethnographic fieldwork, which included participant observation and ten individual semi-structured interviews, I sought to determine how dominant discourses in dance, especially those pertaining to professionalism, ability, validity, and legitimacy, are circulated in and through training, and how we as dancers responded to these discourses. Following the stand alone thesis format, this thesis is comprised of two publishable papers. The first is an ethnography of one integrated dance company's members' experience with negotiating space for alternative forms of dance in contemporary dance. The second is an autoethnographic piece of writing where I show the challenges of resisting dominant discourses of validity and legitimacy in both qualitative research as well as contemporary dance. Together, these papers form a thesis that strengthens our scholarly understanding of the discourses and associated tensions at work in participating in and writing about integrated dance.

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In the past decade there has been an increase in research that explores integrated programming, i.e., programming for persons with and without disabilities, in educational settings (Graves & Tracy, 1998; Lupart, McDonald, Odishaw & Whitley, 2008), in competitive sport (Storey, 2004), and in leisure and recreational activities (Dattilo, 2002). The goal for most of this research has been to improve strategies for planning and implementing such programs in order to better meet participants' needs. While a plethora of work exists that examines a variety of integrated programs, from outdoor adventure camps (Anderson, Schleien, McAvoy, Lais & Seligmann, 1997) to sport leagues (Devine, 2003/2004), our socio-cultural understanding of integrated dance remains limited. At the core of dance is the body and the manipulation of that the body (Kuppers, 2000). As contemporary dance remains dominated by the image of the fit, graceful, linear, highly flexible and athletic body and associated movement aesthetic (Fortin, Vieira & Tremblay, 2009), few dancers with disabilities find training opportunities in dance to be accessible or available. Instead, dancers who do not conform to this ideal are often discouraged from participation, or, if included, they may find that they are subjected to disciplinary action to train their bodies toward the norm in dance.

Using a Foucauldian analysis of the body, which is the point at which the social is inscribed (Harvey & Rail, 1995), the socio-cultural research that comprises this thesis consisted of one ethnographic and one autoethnographic study of and with one integrated dance organization's performance company, of which I was a member. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, throughout this thesis, I will refer to the dance company as Reaction Dance and the performance group as The Crew. The Crew is a company that is "integrated" in that it includes members with and without disabilities. Through six months of ethnographic fieldwork, which included participant observation and ten individual semi-

structured interviews, I sought to determine how dominant discourses in dance, especially those pertaining to the legitimate dancing body, the valid form of movement, and the professional aesthetic, are circulated in and through training, and how we as dancers chose to respond to these discourses.

In order to situate my research and this thesis, it is important to begin with a brief review of the literature pertaining to the process of normalization for persons with disabilities throughout Canadian history, the two main models used to understand disability, the dominant discourses in contemporary dance, the current body of literature on integrated dance, and lastly a brief review of Foucauldian theory and research on physical activity, leisure and sport. Following this overview, I present Foucauldian theory, with a particular emphasis on his understandings of technologies of power, the concept of discourse as a form of modern power, and technologies of the self, which serves as the theoretical framework for the two studies that comprise this thesis. I then provide an overview of the methodologies and methods employed in each project, followed by a description of Foucauldian discourse analysis, which was used to analyze my data. Lastly, I end this chapter showing my research's applicability to the broader field of the social sciences.

Literature Review

A Brief Review of Normalization in Canada

According to Foucault (1980), power is imbedded in social discourse, which allows individuals to form rules about what is socially acceptable or unacceptable through the use of the discursively constructed categories of “normal” or “abnormal.” These discourses serve to individualize and normalize those who are deemed abnormal and ultimately lead to the stigmatization and discrimination of persons with disabilities (Tremain, 2005). Hutchinson and

McGill (1998) indicated that persons with disabilities have undergone a process of devaluation in industrialized nations; in Canada in particular this has been the case since the mid-nineteenth century. Prior to this era Canadians with disabilities were regarded as “holy innocents” by the Church and were comparable to saints and therefore placed above other members of society (Hutchinson & McGill, p. 39). With the rise of industrialization and capitalism worldwide between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, persons with disabilities were discursively re-produced as inefficient beings that offered little to the nation’s productivity. Davis (1995) has explained that persons with disabilities were not viewed as inferior in relation to persons without disabilities in modern times prior to the nineteenth century because the discursive constructs of normal and abnormal were not in existence until then.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century statistician Adolphe Quintlet (1796-1847) conceptualized “‘the normal’ to signify what is usual or typical” and persons with disabilities began to experience a radical shift in their treatment (Shogan, 2003, p. 68). Quintlet developed his theory using the “law of error,” which was originally employed by astronomers to rule out which celestial sightings were errors. Quintlet applied the law of error to human and social phenomena and posited that moral and social behaviours that fell below or *above* the normal distribution on a bell-curve indicated abnormality, and an equally undesirable state of being for any thing and/or any body. Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) used Quintlet’s work as a foundation for the creation of the normal distribution curve. Galton divided the curve into quartiles around the median, and he assigned ranks to each quartile. For Galton, the median represented mediocrity as opposed to an ideal state and thus in his system those characteristics and bodies in the lower quadrant were labeled as deviant, while those that fell in the upper quadrant became desirable (Shogan). These views contributed to the eugenics movement, which included the

sterilization of persons with developmental disabilities (e.g., The Sexual Sterilization Act of Alberta, 1928), the creation of institutions, and the segregation of those with incurable ailments away from apparently normal and productive citizens for over a century (Hutchinson & McGill; Rioux & Prince, 2002).

It was not until the late 1950s that deinstitutionalization and community living were adopted as more effective rehabilitation options for persons with disabilities (Hutchinson & McGill, 1998), as well as more economical solutions to addressing the needs of persons with disabilities (Rioux & Prince, 2002). By this time, notions of persons with disabilities as “worthy poor” were deeply engrained in North American society, with the concomitant belief that individuals with disabilities were inherently dependant on charity and paternalistic care by those without disabilities (Rioux & Prince). In the 1960s and 1970s many disability advocacy organizations formed in Canada (Rioux & Prince). The late 1970s marked a pivotal time of change for persons with disabilities as in the years leading up to the creation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms activist groups began advocating for the achievement of equality of rights for persons with disabilities (Barnartt, 2008). In 1982 equal rights for persons with disabilities became a constitutional reality and Canadians were to be regarded as equal and free from discrimination regardless of ability (Department of Justice Canada, n.d.). In the years following the creation of the Canadian Constitution, persons with disabilities came to rely on community-based services for support, which led to the creation of programs specifically designed for persons with disabilities (Pedlar & Hutchinson, 2000; Rioux & Prince). These programs included and continue to include special education programs, rehabilitation programs, and prenatal diagnostic tests to name a few. Such programs, ironically, have served to re-categorize individuals with disabilities as abnormal and therefore serve to train the bodies and

actions of “social anomalies” toward the social norm (Tremain, 2005, p. 6). According to Shogan (2003), adapted physical activity programs can also be added to the list of tools used to normalize the bodies of persons that society has deemed abnormal. A Foucauldian understanding of power, however, maintains that wherever and whenever power relations serve to inhibit action, power also serves to enable resistance to these pressures to conform (Foucault, 1990). In disability studies the concepts of normality and abnormality are understood by applying two main models of disability: the Medical Model of Disability and the Social Model of Disability.

Two Models of Disability

According to Hogan and Llewellyn (2000), a model serves to “explain phenomena by reference to an abstract system and mechanism” (p. 157) and models can be useful when generating hypotheses. Though a model of disability is not a theory in and of itself, both the Medical Model of Disability and the Social Model of Disability represent structural theories (Hogan & Llewellyn) that seek to aid academics in understanding disability and the appropriate measures of meeting the needs of those who are living with a disability.

The Medical Model, which dominates leisure studies research in North America (Aitchison, 2003), gives authority to those in the medical profession to determine the cause of a loss of physical or mental functioning and the necessary treatments needed to restore *normal* functioning. For medical professionals, a disability is typically understood as “the result of some physiological impairment due to damage or to a disease process” (Hogan & Llewellyn, 2000, p. 158). Improvement is to be made at the individual level, through various programs and therapies, as opposed to at the societal level. According to Bryan (2002), the Medical Model is useful in identifying and eliminating factors that cause physical and cognitive disabilities and thus is also effective in determining appropriate interventions and treatments to alleviate associated

symptoms. On the other hand, many disability scholars posit that the Medical Model also denies the harmful impact the medical diagnosis of disability can have on an individual when the diagnosis is transformed into a social label (Aitchison, 2003; Hogan & Llwellyn, 2000; McKeever & Miller, 2004). These scholars and others argue that society's role in the construction of disability is far greater than interpreted by the Medical Model. In response to this perceived shortcoming, another model was created to more adequately account for society's role in the creation of disability (Humphrey, 2000): the Social Model.

The Social Model of Disability is used by scholars to view disability as being discursively constructed and imposed on persons with impairments (Hughes & Paterson, 1997; Hutchinson, 1995). According to the Social Model, though an impairment is a tangible and present difference in one's biological or physical makeup, a disability is simply how society views this difference and in turn labels and defines the bearer of this difference. Disabling barriers are therefore created and woven into the social discourse to exclude persons with disabilities from typical social roles and opportunities due to a societal fear of difference and impairment (Hughes & Paterson). Some scholars have argued that defining disability using the Social Model "puts the problem back into the collective responsibility of society as a whole and there is a de-emphasis upon the individual" (Hogan & Llwellyn, 2000, p. 159). Other researchers in the field, however, contend that the Social Model renders the body "synonymous with its impairment or physical dysfunction," which creates a body that is "devoid of history...[and] meaning" (Hughes & Paterson, p. 328-329), thus ignoring the difficulties in physical and/or cognitive functioning experienced by those with disabilities.

Recent research in disability studies has indicated that applying both the Social and Medical Models together can offer the best understanding of challenges faced by persons with

disabilities in a society that does not lend itself to understanding the difficulties and experiences, including physical pain and social exclusion, experienced by many with impairments (Aitchison, 2003; Bass Jenks, 2005; Bryan, 2002). Bass Jenks' study in particular found that for parents of children with a visual impairment, disability is "not situated simply in bodies that are not medically normal, nor does disability exist solely in the discursive world" but rather, "disability is simultaneously physically embodied and socially constructed" (p. 164), which implies the need to apply both models to a lived situation in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of lived experiences of disability. Furthermore, Aitchison found that "challenging the dualism or false-dichotomy of social-medical...is particularly pertinent in relation to leisure, sport and physical activity, where medical intervention plays an inevitable part in sports injury rehabilitation and more general leisure-related interventions perceived to have health related benefits" (p. 966). Regardless of the strengths offered by the Social Model and the benefits accrued by using the Social and Medical Models together, the Medical Model continues to dominate social discourse and how persons with disabilities are treated and afforded opportunities for education, employment, and social and physical activities. While I can acknowledge the value in using both the Social Model and the Medical Model together, as my research questions focus on the role of discourse in shaping action, it was particularly useful for me to engage more predominately with the Social Model of Disability. Viewing dominant discourses in dance through a Social Model of Disability lens produces the idea that dancers with disabilities and integrated companies are socially constructed as invalid and illegitimate in comparison to dancers without disabilities and companies that do not include dancers with disabilities. It is through contemporary dance practices that dominant discourses of

professionalism, validity, and legitimacy penetrate dancers' bodies and minds to manipulate them toward the ideal dance and social norms.

Dominant Discourses in Contemporary Dance

Although the premise of contemporary dance is to broaden the scope of dance to include more diverse dancing styles and bodies (Fortin, Vieira & Tremblay, 2009), the image of the fit, long-limbed, graceful, linear and able-bodied dancer and corresponding aesthetic of perfection continues to dominate dance culture (Benjamin, 2002; Cooper-Albright, 1997; Davies, 2008; Fortin, Vieira & Tremblay; Gard, 2006). As Kuppers 2000 explained, "ballet and its imagery can still be seen arguably as the main cultural image of dance in Western culture, even if this stronghold is challenged by the widespread coverage of contemporary dance forms in the popular media" (p. 122). Through tedious and meticulous training regimes, the bodies of professional dancers are manipulated by dance teachers, master choreographers and company directors toward the norm in contemporary dance (Aalton, 2007; Jamurtas & Koutedakis, 2004), one that is impossible for many aspiring dancers to attain. According to Sherlock (1996), it is through traditional dance practices and their associated discourses that cultural ideals of ablebodiedness are spread. Importantly, however, power relations that inhibit action (i.e., professional dance only for those whom maintain the ideal dancing body and movement quality) also provide the potential to enable resistive action (Foucault, 1990). As a result, power relations at play in dance set the stage for dancers with disabilities and those in integrated companies to follow/reinforce the dominant discourses upheld in traditional dance practices and/or resist them in order to create a form of dance that challenges dominant discourses of professionalism, ability, validity and legitimacy in dance.

Integrated Dance

In integrated dance, bodies that our culture has traditionally sought to hide from view and/or normalize are brought into the spotlight and share the stage with bodies of all forms and abilities (Cooper-Albright, 1997). While integrated dance has been growing steadily across the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) for the past few decades, it remains in its infancy in Canada. As such, the majority of the literature on integrated dance has explored and analyzed the works and/or dynamics of professional groups pioneering integrated dance abroad. A few of these studies have indicated the potential for dancers with disabilities and integrated groups to disrupt dominant discourses of what it means to produce valid and legitimate movements in dance. For instance, Sherlock (1996) analyzed several dance pieces by UK-based integrated dance group CandoCo Company and determined that the pieces possessed the potential to challenge “the dance institution’s narrow aesthetic of body selection” (p. 532). In addition, a study by Davies (2008) on AXIS dance company, a professional integrated dance company based in Oakland, California, indicated that choreographers and dancers with physical disabilities viewed assistive devices, such as canes and wheelchairs, as providing opportunities for new movement vocabulary, as opposed to limiting the range of movement possibilities, which is the dominant perception of assistive devices elsewhere in dance.

A handful of other studies have looked at dance at the grassroots level and have identified similar instances of integrated dance challenging dominant discourses in dance. Whatley (2007), conducted a study with an integrated group of young female university students studying dance in the UK. Her study indicated that integrated classes opened up new ways of interpreting the dancing body, for the dance students with disabilities as well as those without. At the end of the semester, the students with and without disabilities learned to acknowledge and confront their pre-conceived notions surrounding ability in dance and the impact the social construction of

disability can have in shaping dancers' and audiences members' interpretations of legitimate bodies and valid art. Furthermore, Gregory's (1998) research on how youth without disabilities view integrated dance showed potential for dancers with disabilities to challenge restrictive norms that circulate through the dance world. Her study indicated that youth without disabilities held positive images of dancers with physical disabilities and of collaborative dance between persons with physical disabilities and those without disabilities.

While the research discussed above focused on the potential for integrated dance to challenge dominant discourses surrounding ability and validity in dance, few studies have addressed the fact that integrated dance can and does in some instances seek to guide dancers with disabilities and/or those in integrated companies to replicate dominant standards of legitimacy and validity in dance. One such study (Kuppers, 2000) presented the idea that not all forms or styles of integrated dance have the same ability to challenge dominant discourses in dance. Kuppers believed that those integrated companies that relied on the foundations of ballet sought to mask disability and normalize differences as opposed to using dance as a means of encouraging audiences to acknowledge the social construction of disability in dance and elsewhere as other forms of dance, such as dance theatre, have. Similarly, Cooper-Albright (1997), analyzed Cleveland Ballet Dancing Wheels, amongst other integrated companies, and concluded that there remained a need to construct new images of the disability and the dancing body or an ableist aesthetic would continue to dominate contemporary dance. Furthermore, while she commended Cleveland Ballet Dancing Wheels for "opening up the field of dance for dancers with wheels" (Cooper-Albright, p. 71) she also critiqued the company for maintaining the dominant discourses of the perfect dancing body and corresponding aesthetic. While the socio-

cultural study of integrated dance has yet to employ Foucauldian theory to frame analysis, there exists a much greater body of knowledge on Foucauldian theory and leisure and sport studies.

Foucault, Leisure, Sport, and Physical Activity

Over the past few decades much has been written on the socio-cultural aspects of leisure, sport and physical activity using a Foucauldian lens (Harvey & Rail, 1995; Markula, 2003; Shogan, 1999, 2002; Smith Maguire, 2002). Foucauldian theories have been applied to a wide array of leisure, physical activity and sporting practices including, but not limited to, women's artistic gymnastics (WAG) (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010), women's rugby (Chase, 2006), "Clydesdale" running (Chase, 2008), women's rowing (Chapman, 1997), contemporary dance (Fortin, Vieira, and Tremblay, 2009), and Aboriginal sport and recreation (Giles, 2004, 2008; Giles & Forsyth, 2007). In their ethnographic study of competitive WAG, Barker-Ruchti and Tinning used Foucault's concept of discipline and found that the participating gymnasts were "actively-passive" (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010, p. 244) - active in that their bodies were trained and disciplined through movement, and passive in terms of their lack of presence in decision making and reflection on training practices and experiences. Chase (2006, 2008) employed Foucauldian theories of discipline, power and docile bodies in two separate studies, one exploring women's rugby the other the experiences of "Clydesdale, large and/or fat long-distance runners. The results of her two studies indicated that recreation and sporting arenas could serve both as sites of resistance to the dominant discourses of the ideal active body, as well as sites where disciplinary processes have the potential to produce docile sporting bodies. Furthermore, Chapman (1997) focused on Foucault's later works, where he contrasted technologies of power with technologies of the self, and she concluded that practices of making weight in light-weight rowing were both instances of technologies of power as well as "practices

of freedom,” or technologies of the self (p. 208). Fortin, Vieira and Tremblay also found that there exists both a dominant discourse as well as marginal discourses in dance, which were constructed through technologies of power and technologies of the self. Others still (Giles, 2004, 2008; Giles & Forsyth, 2007), have found that Foucauldian theory can be useful in understanding the impact dominant discourses have in shaping recreation and sport for and by Aboriginal groups. The research presented in my Master’s of Arts thesis adds to the literature available that utilizes a Foucauldian lens in the field of physical activity. Furthermore, by applying technologies of power and technologies of the self to the physical activity practice of integrated dance, this research adds to our scholarly understanding of how discourse impacts the actions of active bodies and how these individuals negotiate space for alternative discourses in and through their choice activity.

Theoretical Framework

The research presented herein is informed by Foucauldian understandings of technologies of power (Foucault, 1980, 1995) and technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988, 1990). Technologies of power exist through the construction and circulation of social discourses. The concept of discourse, as a body of knowledge and a form of modern power, works to guide and shape the minds and bodies of individuals and groups of individuals (Foucault, 1980). Discipline is achieved through covert measures of discourse and language, rather than physical force (Foucault, 1980, 1995), and is used to manipulate bodies to “operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines” (Foucault, 1995, p. 138). A Foucauldian approach to understanding disability is centered on the notion that the discursively constructed categories of normal and able-bodied or abnormal and disabled emerged and persist

to “shape, guide, or affect” the conduct of persons with disabilities toward their able-bodied counterparts (Tremain, 2005, p. 8).

Discourse succeeds in governing individuals’ thoughts and actions through the creation of regimes of truth. Regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980) compose a knowledge base of any given social institution, such as contemporary dance. These bodies of knowledge are available to only a select and elite few in order to maintain one group’s privilege and/or status over all others. In order to access the privileges allowed to those in possession of a body of knowledge, an individual must conform to the dominant discourses of that discipline; within dance, this means adhering to a slim, linear, athletic and able body and corresponding aesthetic of perfection and hyper athleticism. Through various training regimes, or dance exercises, dancers learn how to move and perform in order to try to achieve the ideal dancing body. Often, mirrors found in studios act as a means of facilitating internal and external surveillance, as all movements can be viewed by everyone in the room and then judged based on their conformity or deviation from the prescribed expectations (Foucault, 1995). In order to achieve a state of normality, and the privileges and benefits associated with this category, individuals may alter their actions and behaviours until their bodies have achieved a state of discipline and docility (Foucault).

While technologies of power use discipline to produces docile bodies, the Foucauldian notion of a docile body is anything but passive. Instead, a docile body is one that may be “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1995, p. 136). Furthermore, according to Foucault, modern power can never be possessed nor “given, nor exchanged, nor recovered” by anyone, only exercised and therefore only exists in reciprocative action (Foucault, 1980, p. 89). Foucault maintained that “where there is power there is resistance” (Foucault, 1990, p. 95), which implies that power is never simply inhibitory; rather it always simultaneously both inhibits

and enables action (Fraser, 1989; Shogan, 1999, 2002), which thus makes the body both the site of control and resistance (Chase, 2008).

In his later works, Foucault began to develop his understanding of technologies of the self, which he introduced in *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*. Technologies of the self refer to the “possible freedoms” available to individuals (Martin, 1988, p. 15) “to effect by their own means, or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies, and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). Technologies of the self have been interpreted by some sport scholars to mean that, “people can make conscious choices about how to understand and relate to themselves” (Chapman, 1997, p. 208) and as “practices that free the individual from the control of disciplinary practices, and consequently, lead to self transformation” (Markula, 2003, p. 88). Furthermore, Chase (2006) maintained that it was through the technologies of the self that Foucault ascribed a certain degree of freedom for individuals to choose how they would act in response to discourses circulating throughout the social world.

An integrated contemporary dance context opens up discursive space and opportunity to exercise power that both seeks to normalize bodies as well as offer space for these same bodies to resist dominant discourses surrounding the valid and legitimate dancer and dance aesthetic. My research sought to determine dancers’ responses to dominant discourses in contemporary dance practices and to understand the tensions that arise when these same discourses are challenged. As such, Foucauldian theory was particularly useful as it allowed me to tease out the instances of resistance and conformity to dominant discourses as well as the tensions that arose

as the dancers, including myself, sought to negotiate discursive space for new ways of knowing and being in contemporary dance.

Thesis Format

My thesis has been written in the stand-alone, publishable paper format. Although the requirements of a Master's of Arts degree stipulate the necessity of only one publishable paper in a master's thesis, I offer two. The first paper is normative in nature – it is an ethnography of an integrated dance company in one major Canadian city. The second illustrates my resistance to the dominant form of conducting and writing social science research – it is an autoethnography that uses narratives of the self to analyze my own position as a researcher-dancer without a disability in an integrated company. Eighteen months of dance training with The Crew informed both studies. The first paper, *Dance dance revolution?: Responding to dominant discourses in contemporary integrated dance*, presents the tensions that arose as the dancers in The Crew negotiated space for their bodies and works in the contemporary dance community. Through dialogue generated in the semi-structured interviews as well as in observing rehearsals, the dancers indicated and/or demonstrated that they were actively challenging dominant discourses of professionalism, legitimacy and validity in dance. Nevertheless, the dancers also possessed a desire to gain professional status and to be regarded as valid artists, which required them to be aware of and actively work to reduce the risks of reinforcing exclusionary discourses as they moved from community-level to professional level performance. In the second paper, *Dancing with myself: One dancer-researcher's story of the challenges in resisting dominant discourses in contemporary dance and qualitative research*, I use autoethnography to draw parallels between the critiques and devaluation autoethnography faces in academe with the critiques and devaluation with which integrated dance is met. These parallels illustrate what can happen when

privilege is challenged: those who resist dominant discourses are labeled as transgressive, lazy, and unworthy of attention, while those who perpetuate the norm reap the benefits associated with maintaining the ideal dance aesthetic or traditional way of conducting and writing qualitative research.

Methodology

My thesis uses two different, yet closely related, methodologies: ethnography and autoethnography. The first publishable paper in my thesis presents an ethnographic account of The Crew, while the second uses autoethnography to interrogate and illustrate the power relations at work in both integrated dance and qualitative research. Autoethnography grew out of ethnography and, as such, it is important to first situate ethnography within the qualitative research landscape.

The term “ethnography” refers to “an integration of both first-hand empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 1). Ethnography has also been defined as a form of social research that accesses the “why” and “how” of actions, thoughts and feelings through observation conducted on-the-ground, and in real time, near or within the phenomenon under study (Wacquant, 2003). Ethnography emerged in nineteenth century anthropology and was initially employed in anthropological fieldwork to study the distinctive ways of life, the values, beliefs and customs, of a group of people outside of the Western world (Hammersley & Atkinson). In the late nineteenth century to the twentieth century, however, sociologists adopted ethnography as a viable means to document the social world (Gold, 1997) and the use of ethnography in sociology and other social sciences has grown substantially since then (Grant & Buford May, 1999). Sociologists found ethnography to be advantageous as it allowed them to

“gather valid and reliable qualitative data through the development of close and continuing contact with those being studied (Gold, p. 388-389). From the 1960s onwards a move to study cultural groups closer to home was embraced, albeit somewhat reluctantly in some institutions and by some individuals, by sociologists and anthropologists alike (Hammersley & Atkinson).

Ethnographic fieldwork was and remains an attractive methodology for researchers studying social-cultural phenomena. Ethnography and ethnographic methods have been found to be useful when the goal of the research is to gain an individual’s or group’s perspectives on a wide variety of socio-cultural issues (Angrosino, 2007). Ethnography is especially applicable to the study of dance (Aalten, 2007; Boyd, 2010; Frosch, 1999; Ness, 1992; Potter, 2008). Ness (1992) presented parallels between the art of the ethnographer and the art of the dancer:

The ethnographer stepping into a foreign culture is like the student of choreography learning to step into a dance...like the dancer, the ethnographer must learn by participation, through repeated interaction, with help of those around him or her...[and] eventually, some audience or readership will benefit from and be inspired by whatever atonement the ethnographer has achieved within this culture. (p. 12)

Ethnographers employ various methods to record what they learn from and about the groups they are studying, including participant observation, field notes, interviews, photography, videography and audio recordings. The data generated by means of these methods provides a more nuanced picture and understanding of the topic under study.

Ethnographic Methods

For the first study, I used participant observation, field notes, informal interviews, conversations before and after classes, performances and outreach workshops, as well as digitally-recorded semi-structured interviews as data gathering techniques. My entry into “the

field” was eased by the relationship that I had with Reaction Dance prior to the start of my research. As Sands (2002) pointed out, at times “the ethnographer may already have a foot in the door upon arrival” (p. 64) to the group and/or culture. In my case, I had joined a recreational integrated dance class with Reaction Dance prior to even contemplating conducting my research and subsequently training with the performing company. Through participation in the integrated recreational dance class I developed a relationship with Rita, one of the co-artistic directors and lead teachers, as well as one other dancer Tina, a middle-aged dancer who has a physical disability and who participated in the recreational class and also trained with The Crew. Rita and Tina, who could be described as “gatekeepers” (Sands, p. 64) to the culture under study, facilitated my integration into The Crew and over time I became what I felt was a valued and integral member of the group. I discussed the prospect of conducting research with The Crew with the co-directors and Reaction Dance’s Board of Directors prior to discussing the possibility with the dancers themselves and, when necessary, parental and/or legal guardians. Ethics approval was obtained in November 2009 and I commenced participant observation from November 24th 2009 until June 12th 2010. I began semi-structured interviews in January 2010, which were completed with all ten of the participants by the end of April 2010. Each participant was given a copy of his or her transcript to review. Three of the ten participants asked that changes and or omissions be made to aspects of their accounts and these changes were made accordingly.

Researchers who conduct ethnographies attempt to better understand and experience participants’ lives by engaging in their daily routines alongside them and over an extended period of time (Bernard, 1988; Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002); this intimate involvement in daily routines allows for a deeper understanding of the participants’ subject positions, which was

certainly the case for me. The ethnographer's task is to explore a specific area of the lives of a group of people in order to determine how these individuals view themselves, those around them, their relationships with others, and the situations they encounter in their everyday lives (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Participant observation has been found to be a useful method for data collection for scholars studying the socio-cultural aspects of dance (Aalten, 2007; Boyd, 2010; Frosch, 1999; Ness, 1992; Potter, 2008) as well as disability (Bass Jenks, 2005; Kelly, 2005). After living the dual-role of ethnographer/dance student for several months, I agree with scholars in the field who maintain that participant observation is an attractive method for those conducting research in dance (Ness; Frosch). Indeed, according to Frosch, having the opportunity to move with dancers on stage and in the studio through participant observation allows the ethnographer to build "kinesthetic empathy" (p. 259) with the research participants and collect "felt data" (p. 259), which contributes to an ethnographic record rich in experiential detail. Furthermore, in my research participant observation allowed for dancers with more limited expressive communication to contribute to the research, as through observing dancers as well as participating alongside them as a peer, I was able to learn to interpret and apply meanings to non-verbal cues and expressions.

In order to record or track understandings of the group and culture under study, field jottings, "the heart of any ethnography," are maintained throughout the duration of participant observation (Sands, 2002, p. 65). I brought a notebook with me to each class, one that I left at the side of the dance floor with my water bottle. Even when things were busy with rehearsing for upcoming performances, I found I was able to jot down at least a few words that could later bring me back to the moment I was attempting to record. After each class I used my brief jottings to create more full accounts of the classes' events: my field notes, which provided descriptive

accounts of the people, events, scenes, and dialogue I encountered and well as my own experiences with and reactions to these elements (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001).

Individual semi-structured interviews complemented the data generated through field notes. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) noted that there are distinct advantages to using participant observation in conjunction with interviews, as the data generated by each method can be used to shed light on meaning inherent in the other. Furthermore, interviews are useful tools to access information that one may not be able to gain through participant observation alone, namely the individual's descriptions, perspectives and the discursive strategies surrounding particular events (Hammersley & Atkinson). For this study I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with the three male and seven female participants ranging in age from 19 to 60. The interviews ranged in length from 30 to 90 minutes, were all digitally recorded, and then transcribed verbatim. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to enter the interview with a loose guide of the questions s/he would like to have answered. Maintaining a flexible interview structure allows the participants to direct the flow of the interview and to answer the questions in their own time and through their own thought processes, which can result in attention being paid to a situation or topic that may have otherwise been overlooked (Sands, 2002). The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a setting of each participant's choosing, which ended up being in each individual's respective home. For four of the interviews parents and/or support workers were present to assist with the consent process and to clarify information if and when required by the participant. In addition to these more formal interviews, I also gathered information from the dancers through informal conversations held while travelling to and from class and performances, during class breaks, back stage and before or after interviews. Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) have maintained that day-to-day accounts that occur naturally in the field are

useful in providing information about a setting and context as well as evidence about the individuals who live in this setting and the perspectives, concerns and discursive practices they produce. The ability to gather and generate data rich in detail and depth is ethnography's key strength.

Ethnography has faced certain critiques over the years, especially with the rise of postmodernism and the dual crisis of representation and legitimization within ethnography (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 1999). In these postmodern times many have critiqued the privileged position of observer-author that ethnography maintains, such as the notion of the researcher as "a disengaged master" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 434) who holds a "privileged and totalizing gaze" (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, p. 463). This has led to the silencing, distortion and/or mistelling of stories, especially those of individuals from marginalized groups, by a select elite in academe (Brown, 2004; Grant & Buford May, 1999). In response to this criticism some have advocated for a critical approach to ethnography, one that is "not univocal, but a polyphonic discourse" (Brown, p. 299) and which synthesizes the personal with the political by encouraging reflexivity of the author's multiple selves. In this way ethnography "is moving toward a more dialectic engagement with theory and a dialogic solidarity with participants" (Brown, p. 306). The ethnographic work presented in the first chapter answers the call for work that upholds researchers' ethical obligation of to take extra measures to include persons with cognitive disabilities' perspectives and voices in qualitative research.

According to Hammersley (1992) and Tedlock (2003), ethnography is the best methodological approach to employ in order to understand the beliefs, motivations and behaviours of research participants. I chose to employ ethnographic fieldwork for part of my thesis research as my research question required that I gain an in-depth understanding of how the

dancers responded to dominant discourses circulating in the contemporary dance world and any tensions that resulted as dominant discourses were challenged and alternative discourses were created. Unlike other means of gathering qualitative data, such as survey research or interviews, the employment of ethnography meant I was involved in the daily dance practices of my research participants. As ethnography provides the researcher with a means of participating in life's activities alongside the participants, ethnographers gather data rich in detail as well as access to context and information that other methods, such as survey research or interviews alone, would not necessarily capture.

Autoethnographic Methods

The second paper follows the autoethnographic mantra of show instead of tell (Ellis, 1998). In this paper, I used autoethnography to explore my own training experiences in integrated dance to shed light on the power relations at play in integrated dance and also qualitative research. According to Ellis and Bochner (2006), the purpose of autoethnographic stories is to “center our attention on how we should live and brings us into lived experiences in a feeling and embodied way” (p. 439). I used field notes to record the details of my lived experiences in training with The Crew, including perceptions, experiences and feelings, especially those that were contradictory, which I encountered before, during and after dance classes and performances. I took special note of events or instances when I felt conflicted by contradictory instructions or discourses. Though “standing alone,” the autoethnographic paper presented in the third chapter of my thesis builds on the second chapter, the ethnography, in that it allowed me to delve into my own experiences with resisting dominant discourses in two disciplines, contemporary dance and qualitative research, in order to further trouble regimes of

truth in an embodied and evocative way in an effort to encourage readers to do the same in their own lives.

Defined as both an art and a science (Ellis, 2004), autoethnography is a mode of inquiry that is used to describe a group of human beings' social institutions, interpersonal behaviours, material productions and beliefs - a function that it shares with ethnography (Angrosino, 2007). Autoethnography, however, branches away from traditional ethnography to embrace the embodiment of the researcher in all aspects of the research process (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Autoethnography was instigated to "move ethnography away from the gaze of the distanced and detached observer and toward the embrace of the intimate involvement, engagement and embodied participation" (Ellis & Bochner, p. 433-434). Ellis (2004) noted that autoethnographic inquiry is particularly useful when an experience, epiphany or crisis challenges one's existing knowledge base or construction of meaning and requires them to reevaluate how they understand themselves, others and the world around them. Through the use of highly personal accounts, autoethnographers draw on their own experiences in order to extend sociological understanding (Sparkes, 2002).

The evocative quality of autoethnography is its distinguishing feature (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Autoethnographers use first person language and personal stories to foster a connection and a sense of role sharing between the researchers and participants, writers and readers, and performers and audience members (Bochner & Ellis, 2003). This connection, coupled with the copious detail provided through autoethnographic stories, invites the reader to immerse him/herself in the story by finding parallels within his/her own life experiences (Angrosino, 2007). A story's ability to evoke feeling and emotion in the reader and encourage him/her to reflect on the stories of his/her own past, present and future is what Bochner and Ellis have

argued provides autoethnography with the potential to make a difference in people's lives, as it invites them to question their own premises and positions in the social world. Through the use of various writing techniques such as dramatic recall, strong metaphors, vivid characters, unusual phrasing and detail (Hopper et al., 2008), autoethnographic stories encourage the reader and writer alike "to care, to feel, to empathize and to do something, to act" (Ellis & Bochner, p. 434).

In leisure research to date, autoethnographic stories are rare (Giles & Williams, 2007). As Giles and Williams explained, leisure scholars have avoided autoethnography, or personal narrative research, as it is viewed as lacking scientific validity and generalizability due to its subjectivist nature. In addition, Ellis and Bochner (2000) have explained that the notion of using stories, written in the present to document past events, is felt to lack reliability. Furthermore, writing about themselves and their own experiences has led autoethnographers to be accused of producing work that is narcissistic, self-indulgent and self-absorbed (Atkinson, 2006; Coffey, 1999; Gans, 1999). When coupled with the view of the field of leisure studies as a science that lacks rigor, leisure scholars who employ autoethnographic research may be open to additional and substantial scrutiny (Giles & Williams).

Sparkes (2002) explained that there is a fine line between self-indulgent and masturbatory writing and that which is "self-knowing, self-respectful, self-sacrificing and self-luminous" (p. 90). Several researchers who employ or write about autoethnography have written about the criteria that can be useful in evaluating the effectiveness and applicability of autoethnographic research to the greater body of social knowledge. According to Ellis and Bochner (2006), the term autoethnography is "reserved for work that ties sociology to literature, expresses fieldwork evocatively, and has an ethical agenda" (p. 445). In order to achieve these three goals,

autoethnographic stories should contain several key elements. Bochner (2000) offered a list of criteria that can be used to properly evaluate autoethnography: the presence of abundant concrete detail, including “trivial routines” in addition to the “flesh and blood emotions of people coping with life’s contingencies” (p. 270); structurally complex, non-linear narratives that rotate between past and present; disclosure of vulnerability, honesty and layers of subjectivities; evidence of “a life’s course reimagined or transformed by crisis” (p. 270); an ethical concern for how others are represented through the narrative and how the readers’ will interact with the story; and lastly the readers should be moved by the story and shown “what life feels like now and what it can mean” (p. 270). To this list of criteria one additional point made by Sparkes may be added: the importance of an authentic or believable story, which allows the audience to feel an intimate connection with the writer and his/her story and feel motivated and/or empowered to make change in their own lives. This list should not be mistaken as an indication that there is only one way of writing autoethnographic research; instead, lists such as Bochner’s have been developed and referred to by readers and writers of autoethnography to ensure that appropriate criteria are used to help scholars, especially those unfamiliar with this emerging methodology, to evaluate this distinct form of qualitative inquiry (Sparkes).

In contrast to the belief that autoethnography is an easy and soft form of science, several researchers who employ autoethnographic studies have explained the ways in which this form of research is “more difficult, both personally and professionally than first meets the eye” (Giles & Williams, 2007, p. 191). One of the most challenging aspects of autoethnography is the vulnerable position the writer must adopt in order to achieve an insightful autoethnographic piece, which requires a high level of personal disclosure that may not always present the researcher in a flattering light (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner,

2000). Autoethnographers “focus on aesthetics and [the] link to arts and humanities rather than Truth claims and [the] link to science” (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 434), which further leaves them open to critique. This vulnerable position has implications for researchers, as the humility shown in autoethnography goes against the prevailing norms of academe, which uphold the objectivist nature of science and exclude the researcher’s own feelings or thoughts (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, 2006).

In addition to the personal and professional difficulties related to autoethnographic research, autoethnography, in and of itself, is a challenging methodology.

Autoethnographic researchers must be incredibly observant of their surroundings and ongoing occurrences, as all experiences contribute to the understanding of an event, setting or individual (Bochner & Ellis, 2000). From the plethora of information gathered the researcher then has the difficult task of thoroughly considering what information to include in the story and what information to omit, as well as how to represent people, places and events (Giles & Williams, 2007). For this reason autoethnography, and writing about autoethnography, has been described as “a balancing act,” as the author must determine how to balance between telling and showing (Holman Jones, 2005), the auto (self), ethnos (culture), and graphy (the research process) (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). These tedious decisions must be made to ensure the knowledge generated through the stories will be beneficial to the readers and contribute to the greater body of social science literature (Giles & Williams).

Qualitative researchers have advocated for the use and value of autoethnography as a means of broadening our understanding of social phenomena in the social sciences. In particular, Giles and Williams (2007) have stated that an autoethnographic approach to

research as autoethnography offers leisure scholars “an exciting opportunity to further our understanding of leisure and leisure research” (p. 190). Others have indicated that autoethnography also has the potential to challenge the dominant ways of conducting and writing scientific research. For example, according to Ellis and Bochner (2006) “autoethnography helps to undercut conventions of writing that foster hierarchy and division” in academia (p. 436). Autoethnographic inquiry allows the reader to “share the platform” (Ellis & Bochner, p. 438) with the researcher and interpret meaning into their own lives. Furthermore, others have maintained that “in writing individual experiences, we write social experiences in ways that challenge disembodied ways of knowing and enhance empathetic forms of understanding” (Hopper et al., 2008, p. 225). As a result, autoethnographers trouble calls for validity, generalizability, and reliability in social science.

The use of an autoethnographic approach for this thesis allowed for the critical reflection and analysis of my own preconceived notions of legitimate dance forms and dancing bodies as well as my own experiences with responding to dominant discourses in dance and academe. An autoethnographic approach to research holds the potential to contribute to the greater body of social science knowledge through accessing diverse insights and understandings through the use of various literary techniques (Giles & Williams, 2007) and by creating an open dialogue with the reader that evokes feeling, empathy and ultimately action (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

Data Analysis

The methods described above provided rich texts that underwent discourse analysis, a form of textual analysis that is “concerned with language and its role in the constitution of social...life” (Willig, 2008, p. 172). According to Fairclough (1992), critical discourse analysis,

such a Foucauldian discourse analysis, “shows how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief” (p. 12). Through discourse individuals are placed within certain frameworks of living, which construct guidelines for acceptable thoughts and actions, as Willig explained, “discourses make available ways of seeing and ways of being” (p. 172).

Discourse analysts are trained to look at the multiple forms of speech and text known as discourses in a critical way. Parker (1992) explained that discourse analysts “are continually putting what they read into quotation marks: ‘why was this said, and not that? Why these words, and where do the connotations of the words fit with different ways of talking about the world’” (p. 4). As a result, discourse analysts can uncover the deeper meanings hidden within discourses, the dispersion of particular roles and rights for particular subject positions, as well as the corresponding levels of power exercised in each position (Willig).

Foucauldian discourse analysis was applied to the texts generated in the semi-structured interviews as well as the field notes in order to determine the discursive powers at play in integrated dance and academia. After transcribing the interviews and field notes, I coded the text manually in order to trace the differences that were expressed between integrated dance and non-integrated mainstream dance classes, how class exercises and performance of these exercises, bodies and/or somatic practices were described and any connections that were made between the dancers themselves and the discursive categories of disability and/or ability. I then looked for examples of resistance and or reinforcement of dominant discourses, which was followed by a search for statements that contradicted either other statements or actions I had encountered and/or observed during practice and/or performance. This approach enabled me to tease out

tensions that were associated with either reinforcing or challenging dominant discourses in dance and, in the case of the second paper, academe.

Ethnography and Autoethnography: A Duet

Both ethnography and autoethnography provided me the level of intimacy needed in order to gain a nuanced understanding of this emerging genre of contemporary dance. Furthermore, the use of Foucauldian theory was particularly useful given that both studies focused on the social construction of the body in dance and society's role in inhibiting and enabling action through the construction of discourse. In analyzing the ethnographic fieldnotes and interview transcripts the dominant discourses that surfaced pertained to the constitution of the professional, valid and legitimate body and dance aesthetic contrasted by discourses of inclusion of bodies and movement qualities by persons of all abilities. In analyzing my personal fieldnotes, which documented my own experiences and expression in integrated dance, results indicated that the dominant discourses surrounding legitimacy and validity paralleled with the dominant discourses of validity and legitimacy found in qualitative research. Foucauldian theory, ethnography and autoethnography, participant observation, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and discourse analysis form the foundation of a thesis that I believe strengthens our scholarly understanding of the discourses and associated tensions at work in participating in and writing about integrated dance.

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Dance, dance revolution?: Responding to dominant discourses in contemporary integrated dance

Abstract

This paper is informed by six months of ethnographic fieldwork and ten semi-structured interviews with ten members of an integrated dance company. Through the use of Foucauldian theory and discourse analysis, I found that the discourses of legitimacy circulating in and through contemporary dance have typically excluded the bodies and artistic contributions of dancers with disabilities. The participants in this research believed that they actively resisted dominant discourses of professionalism and provided alternative discourses of the valid dancing body and aesthetic through their creation of integrated dance works. Their desire to gain recognition as valid dance professionals, however, did at times create tensions with their equally strong desire to challenge dominant discourses of what professional dance and dancers should look like. Tensions were most apparent in relation to choreography and the capacity for structured movements to either reinforce dominant discourses of the legitimate dance aesthetic and/or to provide opportunities for dancers to challenge these and other dominant discourses of ability and validity both within and outside of dance. As a result, this research furthers scholarly understandings of the ways in which persons with disabilities, and more specifically dancers with disabilities, negotiate societal discourses.

Studies conducted over the past decade have indicated an increase in integrated programming – i.e., programming for persons with and without disabilities, in educational settings (Graves & Tracy, 1998; Lupart, McDonald, Odishaw & Whitley, 2008), in competitive sport (Storey, 2004), and in leisure and recreational activities (Dattilo, 2002). In reviewing the literature on integrated recreation and physical activity, it is clear that a plethora of work exists that examines a variety of integrated programs, from outdoor adventure camps (Anderson, Schleien, McAvoy, Lais & Seligmann, 1997) to sport leagues (Devine, 2003/2004). To date, however, there is a dearth of scholarly work that focuses on what has been called mixed-ability, inclusive or integrated¹ dance.

The study outlined in this chapter focuses on competing discourses circulating in the contemporary dance world and, more importantly, the impact these discourses have in shaping the conduct and beliefs of dancers with and without disabilities in one integrated dance company in their attempt to facilitate what might be called a Dance, Dance Revolution². This study is informed by six months of ethnographic research with an integrated dance company, which was complemented by semi-structured interviews and participant observation with its members. Guided by Foucauldian understandings of technologies of power and modern power as both inhibiting and enabling action, and technologies of the self, discourse analysis was conducted on my ethnographic fieldnotes and interview transcripts to tease out how dancers in one integrated company respond to dominant discourses in dance. The results of this analysis indicated that the dancers used performance to challenge dominant discourses in dance, including discourses that exclude the bodies and artistic contributions of dancers with disabilities. The analysis also revealed tensions surrounding discourses of the legitimate dancing body and dance aesthetic. Tensions were most apparent in relation to choreography and the capacity for structured

movements to either reinforce dominant discourses of the legitimate dance aesthetic and/or to provide opportunities for dancers to resist these and other dominant discourses of ability, validity and legitimacy circulating in the social world.

Setting the Stage: Overview of the Research Study

This ethnographic study was conducted with dancers in one integrated dance company in an urban Canadian city; specifically, my research centred on members of “The Crew,”³ the performance company within a broader integrated dance organization, Reaction Dance⁴. I first began dancing with The Crew in March of 2009. A young, white woman without a disability, who was coming off of an eight year hiatus from highland, tap and jazz dance training, I originally began dancing with Reaction Dance’s community-level recreation group in January 2009 as a way to integrate leisure back into my hectic student schedule. After several months, however, I became so interested in the organization that I decided to try to approach the company to see if I could make it the focus for my MA research. I was thrilled when I received a call from Rita, one of the co-artistic directors, in March 2009 inviting me to join The Crew as well as to discuss the possibility of a research study with The Crew. I received ethics approval for the research in November 2009, after which time I began conducting participant observations and interviews with The Crew, which was made up of nine dancers, including myself: three males and six females. All of the dancers, other than myself, had physical and/or developmental disabilities, activity limitations and participation restrictions as defined by the World Health Organization⁵ (2010). In addition, the two female co-founders and lead teachers, Ginger and Rita, one of whom has a history of disability, agreed to participate in the study. Both Rita and Ginger have trained in various styles of dance, including improvisation, contact improvisation, modern dance, contemporary dance and West African dance. In addition, both have an extensive

history of teaching dance at the community level for integrated groups. The dancers themselves had a range of experience with the company, from long-term involvement since Reaction Dance's initial beginnings nearly a decade ago, to more recent members who joined two years earlier. The participating dancers and teachers ranged in age from 19 to 60 years. The eight dancers and the two teachers each agreed to participate in one individual semi-structured interview, all of which were led by me, a fellow Crew member. To protect the dancers' identities and privacy, I have used pseudonyms and have kept the specifics of each person's disability deliberately vague; thus, while I will disclose whether or not a particular dancer had a physical or developmental disability, I am unable to provide more specific information.

Reaction Dance's mandate and vision include providing inclusive, integrated and accessible dance training, education and public performance opportunities to people with and without disabilities in order to remove barriers to participation, promote artistic diversity, and encourage the development of dance. The organization attempts to meet its mandate and vision through providing recreational level, community-based classes for children, youth and adults with and without disabilities; community outreach workshops and performances to provide opportunities in dance for those who face barriers to participation as well as to educate community members and expose new audiences to integrated arts; and by offering ongoing training and mentoring for dancers with and without disabilities who wish to pursue a profession in integrated dance as a teacher, choreographer and/or performer. The Crew's dancers are frequently involved in assisting with the recreational level classes and facilitating community outreach workshops and performances, which provides paid employment opportunities in dance instruction and performance for dancers in The Crew. The primary dance form studied by The Crew is contemporary dance, including contact improvisation, a dance form that Steve Paxton

introduced to the American contemporary dance community in the early 1970s. Contact improvisation relies on the principles of improvisation through weight exchange, touch, and kinesthetic communication (Cooper-Albright, 1997). A reliance on the dancer as creator of his/her own choreography tends to make improvisation a more attractive dance method for integrated companies, as improvisation may be more inclusive to the wide-array of abilities and styles of movement created by integrated groups. The features of contact improvisation, coupled with The Crew's interest in identifying and including original movements unique to each of the dancers, allows the teachers to offer dance lessons that are accessible to persons with and without disabilities.

Literature Review

Dominant Discourses in Dance

Although the premise of contemporary dance is to broaden the scope of traditional dance to include more diverse dancing styles and bodies (Fortin, Vieira & Tremblay, 2009), gains in this direction have been gradual and it remains apparent that this idea has yet to fully manifest itself on stage or in the studio. As Koppers 2000 explained "ballet and its imagery can still be seen arguably as the main cultural image of dance in Western culture, even if this stronghold is challenged by the widespread coverage of contemporary dance forms in the popular media" (p. 122). Furthermore, according to Sherlock (1996), it is through traditional dance practices and their associated discourses that cultural ideals of ablebodiedness are spread. Other research on dance has supported the above assertions and has documented that the allure of contemporary dance and dancers remains sustained through idolizing the ideal body and corresponding dance aesthetic (Benjamin, 2002; Cooper-Albright, 1997; Davies, 2008; Gard, 2006). Cooper-Albright explained that the ideal dancing body has been one that creates a façade of weightlessness and

effortlessness, which allows dancers to appear to transcend human movement boundaries. Cultural norms that privilege the slim, long-limbed, linear and able-body exclude most bodies from participating in dance training and performance, especially those bodies that may present the additional challenge of adapting teaching methods and techniques to physical and/or developmental impairments. Importantly, though, power relations that inhibit action also provide the potential to enable resistive action (Foucault, 1990). These power relations set the stage for dancers with disabilities and those in integrated companies to follow the dominant discourses upheld in dominant dance practices in order to gain professional status and recognition in the contemporary dance world and/or to resist these discourses in order to try to create a form of dance that meets the needs of dancers with and without disabilities and that creates an aesthetic that showcases diversity.

Integrated Dance

While integrated dance has been growing steadily across the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) for the past few decades, it remains in its infancy in Canada. Integrated dance came into the North American dance scene in the late 1980s around the time integrated dance artists Celeste Dandeker and Adam Benjamin were developing CandoCo Dance Company in the UK. Alito Alessi, Artistic Director of Dance Ability International, is regarded as one of the pioneers in integrated dance in North America. Together with his friend and fellow dancer, Emery Blackwell, a young man with Cerebral Palsy, Alessi began experimenting with choreography to find movement vocabulary that was inclusive to dancers with and without disabilities (A. Alessi, personal communication, May 27, 2010). Alessi and Blackwell adopted Paxton's contact improvisation as a means of creating inclusive, co-constructed choreography. With foundations in weight exchange, balance and improvisation, contact improvisation lent

itself to Alessi and Blackwell's vision for a style of dance that was accessible to persons with and without disabilities within the broader genre of contemporary dance.

In integrated dance, bodies that our culture has traditionally sought to hide from view and/or normalize are brought into the spotlight and share the stage with bodies of all forms and abilities (Cooper-Albright, 1997). By presenting alternative discourses in dance through performance these dancers may be able to exercise resistive power, which problematizes dominant and ableist discourses of what it means to be a dancer (Cooper-Albright). Amongst the handful of studies available that explore dance and disability, many do elude to the potential integrated dance has to disrupt and/or resist dominant discourses of what it means to be normal within society and the dance world. Gregory's (1998) research on how others view integrated dance showed potential for dancers with disabilities to challenge restrictive norms that circulate through the dance world. Her study indicated that youth without disabilities held positive images of dancers with physical disabilities and of collaborative dance between persons with physical disabilities and those without disabilities.

Whatley (2007) conducted a study with an integrated group of young female dance students. Her study indicated that disability opened up new ways of interpreting the dancing body, for the dance students with disabilities as well as those without. Other researchers have chosen to conduct studies with professional integrated companies to explore this burgeoning dance genre. For example, Sherlock (1996) analyzed several dance pieces by UK-based CandoCo Company and determined that their works possessed the potential to challenge "the dance institution's narrow aesthetic of body selection" (p. 532). Similarly, a study by Davies (2008) on AXIS dance company, a professional integrated dance company based in Oakland, California, indicated that choreographers and dancers with physical disabilities viewed assistive

devises, such as canes and wheelchairs, as providing opportunities for new movement vocabulary, as opposed to limiting the range of movement possibilities. While the studies introduced above have shown the potential for integrated dance groups to challenge norms related to ability and legitimacy in dance, all three studies have focused on the experiences of dancers with physical disabilities, while accounts of dancers in integrated companies with other impairments remain relatively scarce. Our current understanding of dance and dancing bodies is informed by what our culture and our society deems normal and abnormal.

The Binary of Normal and Abnormal

According to Foucault (1980), power is imbedded in social discourse, which allows individuals to form rules about what is socially acceptable or unacceptable through the use of discursively constructed categories of “normal” or “abnormal”. The limited definition of normalcy leads to discrimination and stigmatization of persons with disabilities, as “normal” is reserved for those who do not deviate from historically and socially constructed discourses of the norm. Davis (1995) noted that persons with disabilities were not viewed as inferior in relation to persons without disabilities prior to the nineteenth century. In fact, the concept of normal and abnormal did not exist until the mid-nineteenth century when Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) created the normal distribution curve. Galton divided the bell curve into quartiles around the median, and he assigned ranks to each quartile. For Galton, the median represented mediocrity and therefore those characteristics and bodies that fell in the lower quadrant were perceived to be deviant, while those that fell in the upper quadrant became desirable.

The views of scholars such as Galton, coupled with the rise of industrialization and capitalism in the mid- nineteenth century, led society to discursively produce persons with disabilities as inefficient beings who offered little to the nation’s productivity; such views

resulted in the creation of institutions, such as long-term care facilities and mental health hospitals, and the segregation of persons with disabilities from the apparently normal and productive citizens (Hutchinson & McGill, 1998). It was not until the late 1950s that a move towards deinstitutionalization was adopted and the notion of community living as offering better rehabilitation and opportunities for persons with disabilities was embraced. Despite these changes, the integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream society has clearly not been embraced fully by all. Prejudice, discrimination and isolation and their associated discourses persist and are used to exclude persons with disabilities from a variety of educational, social, physical and health programs – including dance, which are so readily available to persons without disabilities.

Currently, the literature suggests that understandings of normalcy as they pertain to ability and/or disability are typically determined through the use of one of two models: The Social Model of Disability or the Medical Model of Disability. According to Hogan and Llewellyn (2000), a model serves to “explain phenomena by reference to an abstract system and mechanism” (p. 157) and models can be useful when generating hypotheses. Though a model of disability is not a theory in and of itself, both the Social Model and the Medical Model represent structural theories (Hogan & Llewellyn) that seek to aid academics, advocates and professionals in understanding disability in our society and the appropriate measures for meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. The Social Model of Disability was developed by disability activists to bring attention to the social construction of disability and how social discourses can and do create obstacles to full participation by persons with an impairment (Hughes & Paterson, 1997; Hutchinson, 1995). The Medical Model of Disability on the other hand relies on medical professionals to determine the cause of a loss of physical or mental functioning, that is the

impairment, and the necessary treatments needed to restore *normal* functioning (Hogan & Llwellyn).

The prevalence of the Medical Model in social discourse is exemplified by the continued existence of various normalizing tools, such as prenatal tests, special education programs and rehabilitation programs, which are typically designed to train the bodies and actions of “social anomalies” toward the social norm or to eliminate them all together (Tremain, 2005). Influenced by a Foucauldian understanding of modern power, Tremain explained that it is through the creation of the binary of normal/abnormal, which implies a choice between two opposing terms, or groups of terms, that the modern state gains the power to “produce an ever-expanding and increasingly totalizing web of social control” (p. 6). By upholding a specific norm as the one proper way of being, the norm becomes a state to strive for as it offers various privileges and benefits that those who depart from this ideal cannot access. In dance, such privileges certainly include access to dance education, training, and opportunities to choreograph, perform and teach. Integrated dance programs and classes provide an avenue for dancers with disabilities to gain access to opportunities in dance and may foster the creation of alternative discourses of ability in dance and beyond. It may only be, however, through the acceptance of dominant discourses that integrated dance groups will gain recognition by the mainstream dance community. As such, Foucauldian theory provides a strong framework to think through these issues.

Foucault, Leisure, Sport, and Physical Activity

Over the past few decades much has been written on the socio-cultural aspects of leisure, sport and physical activity using a Foucauldian lens (Harvey & Rail, 1995; Markula, 2003; Shogan, 1999, 2002; Smith Maguire, 2002). Foucauldian theories have been applied to a wide array of leisure, physical activities and sporting practices including, but not limited to, women’s

artistic gymnastics (WAG) (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010), women's rugby (Chase, 2006), "Clydesdale" running (Chase, 2008), women's rowing (Chapman, 1997), contemporary dance (Fortin, Viera & Tremblay, 2009) and aboriginal sport and recreation (Giles, 2004, 2008; Giles & Forsyth, 2007). In their ethnographic study of competitive WAG, Barker-Ruchti and Tinning used Foucault's concept of discipline and found that the gymnasts were "actively-passive" (p. 244), active in that their bodies were trained and disciplined through movement, and passive in terms of their lack of presence in decision making and reflection on training practices and experiences. Similarly, Chase (2006, 2008) utilized Foucauldian theories of discipline, power and docile bodies in two separate studies, one exploring women's rugby and the other the experiences of "Clydesdale", large and/or fat long-distance runners. In both studies Chase concluded that the recreation and sporting arena can act as both a site of resistance to dominant discourses, of valid active bodies, as well as a site where disciplinary processes have the potential to produce docile sporting bodies. Furthermore, Chapman focused on Foucault's later works, where he contrasted technologies of power with technologies of the self, and she concluded that practices of making weight in women's rowing were both instances of technologies of power as well as "practices of freedom", or technologies of the self (p. 208). In their research, Fortin, Vieira and Tremblay found that there existed both a dominant discourse as well as marginal discourses in dance, which were constructed through technologies of power and technologies of the self. Others still (Giles, 2008; Giles & Forsyth, 2007), have found that Foucauldian theory can be useful in understanding the impact dominant discourses have in shaping recreation and sport by and for Aboriginal peoples. My research adds to the literature available that utilizes a Foucauldian lens in the field of leisure studies. Furthermore, by applying technologies of power and technologies of the self to the leisure practice of integrated dance, this

research adds to our scholarly understandings of how discourses impact dancing bodies and how dancers negotiate space for alternative discourses in and through their choice activity.

Theoretical Framework

French theorist Michel Foucault (1980) conceptualized language and discourse as technologies of power: “In any society, there are manifold relations of power...[which] cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse (p. 92). Through the adoption and mass proliferation of socially constructed meta-narratives, or all encompassing truths, governing bodies, such as medical and educational institutions, are able to take hold of individuals’ thoughts and actions and train bodies toward the social norm, thus producing what Foucault (1995) termed docile bodies. According to Foucault, docile bodies are by no means passive, but rather those bodies that have trained to become disciplined in a particular skill area to perform that skill with a high degree of efficiency. Such docility is not to be viewed as inherently negative; rather, in his conceptualization of docile bodies, Foucault wished to draw our attention to the more subtle ways that bodies can be “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1995, p. 136) through the exercise of “calculated constraints” that “run slowly through each part of the body” (p. 135).

Docile Bodies and Dance

Through tedious and meticulous training regimes, dancers’ bodies are manipulated toward an ideal dance aesthetic (Aalton, 2007; Jamurtas & Koutedakis, 2004), one that glorifies the athletic and aesthetically pleasing, slim, long-limbed, flexible, and able-bodied dancer (Cooper-Albright, 1997; Davies, 2008; Fortin, Vieira, & Tremblay, 2009; Gard, 2006). In order to meet standards in place in contemporary dance, dancers with disabilities may feel pressure to

train their bodies to more closely resemble the aesthetic and athleticism of dancers without disabilities. Applying Foucauldian theory, we can see that such training regimes use technologies of power, language, discipline and surveillance, to produce docile bodies. These pressures can both inhibit and enable action.

According to Foucault (1990, 1995), the body and its actions are understood in relation to the culture in which they exist and are direct products of discursive power relations at play in their social world. A Foucauldian approach to understanding disability is centered on the notion that the discursive categories of normal and able-bodied or abnormal and disabled emerged and persist to “shape, guide, or affect the conduct of persons” (Tremain, 2005, p. 8). In effect, these categories promote surveillance on all bodies and actions, and encourage persons with disabilities to seek out treatment and programs that assist them in becoming more like their peers without disabilities (Foucault, 1995). Indeed, modern power, in its “capillary form” penetrates deeper than earlier forms of power by circulating throughout the entire social body, from the largest branches to the tiniest extremities to “insert itself into...actions and attitudes...discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980, p. 39). In order to achieve a state of normalcy, which carries with it certain privileges and benefits, individuals may survey themselves in relation to the norm and attempt to alter, or discipline, their actions and behaviours until their bodies have achieved a state of docility.

Shogan (2003) has argued that adapted physical activities can serve as a means to normalize those bodies deemed abnormal through social discourses. As integrated dance was born out of contemporary dance, it does hold the potential to act as a means of disciplining bodies to conform to the social norm. Foucault’s conceptualization of modern power, however, differs from earlier forms of power in that it can never be possessed nor “given, nor exchanged,

nor recovered” by anyone, only exercised (Foucault, 1980, p. 89). As a result, power is only ever present in reciprocative action and therefore never simply constrains action; to the contrary, it always simultaneously both inhibits and enables action (Fraser, 1989; Shogan, 1999, 2002). As a result, while certain contemporary dance discourses inhibit the participation of those with disabilities in dance training and performance, these discourses simultaneously enable the emergence of alternative discourses, such as those that support the creation of a new form of dance that is more inclusive in nature. Through technologies of the self as “possible freedoms” (Martin, 1988, p. 15) available to individuals, Foucault ascribed a certain degree of freedom for individuals to choose how they would act in response to discourses circulating throughout the social world. As such, integrated dance and its associated discourses hold the potential to act as a site to enable as well as inhibit resistance for dancers, especially, as I will argue, for dances with disabilities.

Methodology

This paper presents an ethnographic account of an integrated dance company. The term “ethnography” refers to “an integration of both first-hand empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 1). Ethnography was born in nineteenth-century anthropology and was initially employed in anthropological fieldwork to study the distinctive ways of life, the values, beliefs and customs, of a group of people (Hammersley & Atkinson). In the late nineteenth century to the twentieth century, sociologists adopted ethnography as a viable means to document the social world (Gold, 1997). Ethnography and ethnographic methods have been found to be quite useful when the goal of the research is to gain individuals’ perspectives on the issue under exploration (Angrosino, 2007), as ethnographic fieldwork allows the researcher to

“gather rich and detailed data directly from participants in the social worlds under study” (Sherman Heyl, 2007, p. 369). Indeed, several scholars (Aalten, 2007; Boyd, 2010; Frosch, 1999; Ness, 1992; Potter, 2008) have found ethnography and its associated method of participant observation to be an attractive methodology when researching dance. Frosch, for instance, indicated that having the opportunity to move with dancers on stage and in the studio through participant observation allows the ethnographer to build “kinesthetic empathy” (p. 259) with the research participants and collect “felt data” (p. 259), which contributes to an ethnographic record rich in experiential detail.

Methods

Ethnographers employ various methods to record what they learn from and about the groups they are studying, including participant observation, field notes, interviews, photography, videography and audio recordings. Over the course of my research I relied on participant observation, field notes, informal interviews, conversations before and after classes, performances and outreach workshops, as well as digitally-recorded semi-structured interviews to answer my research question: How do dancers respond to dominant discourses in dance in and through integrated dance?

As Sands (2002) pointed out, at times “the ethnographer may already have a foot in the door upon arrival” (p. 64) to the group and/or culture. In my case, I had joined a recreational integrated dance class with Reaction Dance prior to even contemplating conducting my research and subsequently training with the performing company. Through participation in the integrated recreational dance class I had already developed a solid three-month relationship with Rita, one of the co-artistic directors and lead teachers, as well as Tina, a middle-aged dancer who has a physical disability and who had become a member of the Crew the previous year. My

relationship with Rita and Tina facilitated my integration into The Crew and over time I became what I felt was a valued and integral member of the company. I found myself to be quite welcome to participate in and simultaneously observe the classes, which allowed me to gain knowledge of a particular phenomenon (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002), in this case the discourses at play in this group's expressions of integrated dance.

According to Bernand (1988) and Dewalt and Dewalt (2002), researchers who engage in participant observation attempt to better understand and experience participants' lives by engaging in their daily routines alongside them and over an extended period of time, which allows for a deeper understanding of the participants' subject positions. Field jottings, "the heart of any ethnography" (Sands, 2002) are crucial learning tools used by the researcher to track his/her understandings of the group and culture under study. I brought a notebook with me to each class, one that I left at the side of the dance floor with my water bottle. Even when things were busy with rehearsing for upcoming shows, I found I was able to jot down at least a few words that could later bring me back to the moment I was attempting to record. After each class I used my brief jottings to create more full accounts of the classes' events: my field notes.

Individual semi-structured interviews complemented the data generated through field notes and as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) noted, "there are distinct advantages to combining participant observation with interviews; in particular, the data from each can be used to illuminate the other" (p. 32). Furthermore, interviews are useful tools to access information that one may not be able to gain through participant observation alone, namely the individual's descriptions, perspectives and the discursive strategies surrounding particular events (Hammersley & Atkinson). For this study I conducted ten semi-structured interviews ranging in length from 30 to 90 minutes between January 2010 and April 2010. Semi-structured interviews

allow the researcher to enter the interview with a loose guide of the questions they would like to have answered. Maintaining a flexible interview structure allows the participants to direct the flow of the interview, coming to answer the questions in their own time and through their own thought processes and ultimately taking the researcher down new avenues into aspects of the culture, situation or topic that may have otherwise been overlooked (Sands, 2002). The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a setting of each participant's choosing, which ended up being in each individual's respective home. For four of the interviews parents and/or support workers were present to assist with the consent process and to clarify information if and when required by the participant. In addition to these more formal interviews, I also gathered information from the dancers through informal conversations held while travelling to and from class and performances, during class breaks, back stage and before or after interviews. As Sands explained, "Situations arise daily in fieldwork when cultural members offer explanations on cultural behaviour or experience" (p. 67), which allows informal conversations to contribute to the richness to the data and depth to the researcher's understanding of the topic under study.

Results

The field notes and interview transcripts were coded manually and discourse analysis was conducted to tease out the dominant discourses that circulated in and through the contemporary dance world and permeated The Crew's culture. Discourse analysis aids the researcher in identifying the influence dominant discourses have on shaping behaviour by uncovering the deeper meanings hidden within discourses, the dispersion of particular roles and rights for specific subject positions (Willig, 2008). Discourse analysts identify dominant discourses by "putting what they read into quotation marks: 'why was this said, and not that? Why these words, and where do the connotations of the words fit with different ways of talking about the world'"

(Parker, 1992, p. 4). By applying discourse analysis to my interview transcripts and field notes I was able to tease out power relations at play as the dancers negotiated their responses to the dominant discourses in dance. The dominant discourses that became most evident through analysis were those surrounding the constitution of the professional, valid and legitimate body and dance aesthetic, which were contrasted by discourses of inclusion of bodies and movement qualities by persons of all abilities. Dominant discourses of the professional and legitimate dance aesthetic were often challenged through the group's choreographed works; however, the dancers also indicated that there were ways in which choreography could also inhibit the formation of alternative discourses in integrated dance. Using a Foucauldian lens to understand the group's transition from community level work to professional level standards revealed that negotiating space for alternative discourses in dance is accompanied by tensions in balancing discourses of the valid dancer and movement aesthetic and professional standards with inclusion and diversity in dance.

Discussion

This discussion elucidates the ways in which the dancers in The Crew resisted dominant discourses in dance and the ways in which choreography could potentially act both as a means to resist and/or reinforce dominant discourses in dance. The organization's mottos were reiterated frequently in the interviews and were indicated to be influential in the dancers' proliferation of resistive discourses of contemporary dance, especially ones of inclusion. Their presentation of bodies, techniques and choreography that vary from those that dominate the contemporary dance world also challenged dominant discourses that systematically devalue the artistic contributions of persons with disabilities. The member's of the Crew, however, faced challenges when the techniques and choreography rehearsed emphasized memorization in movement sequence, timing

and spacing, typical of the dominant aesthetic in dance. The challenges were a part of the dancer's process of negotiating their desire to challenge the normative boundaries of dance while simultaneously attempting to gain recognition and appreciation as professional and valid dancers.

Discourses of Inclusion and Resistance: If You Can Breathe, You Can Dance

The co-founders and lead teachers of Reaction Dance, Ginger and Rita, created two mottos that intend to foster inclusion and the creation and acceptance of alternative discourses in dance: "If you can breathe, you can dance" and "All moves are good moves." These mottos contrast with the philosophy exhibited in traditional dance practices where choreographed moves represent the "good" or "right" way of moving and the dancer is expected to push his/her body toward movements that appear to surpass the capacity of the human body. Reaction Dance's mottos serve to challenge the dominant discourses in dance that seek to legitimize the athletic and highly technical dancing body and discredit variance from this dominant form. Many of the dancers felt that these mottos and their corresponding aesthetics allowed The Crew to create alternative discourses that resist the dominant discourses of what constitutes a professional dancer and what it means to be capable of producing beautiful, alluring, profound and valid movements.

Karen, a young woman with a physical disability, believed that the organization's mottos have the potential to educate others about the need for alternative discourses surrounding legitimate bodies and styles of movement in dance:

We're saying it doesn't matter who you are or what [disability] you've got...[and] We're pushing the worldview that if you're perfect you get everything and if you're not perfect you get nothing. We're pushing for a new view. We're saying to audiences all over, we're not perfect...but look at what we *can* do, and appreciate us for who we are.

Several other dancers referred back to the organization's mottos over the course of their interviews. Rachel, a young woman with a developmental disability, indicated that the group's mottos are an integral part of Ginger's and Rita's teaching methods, which she explained encourage her to discover new movement vocabulary and grow her dance repertoire. She explained, "I really love [Ginger's and Rita's] teaching methods because [the methods] help me a lot with the dance vocabulary...I love every single thing about...their teaching methods ...how all moves are good moves and if you can breathe you can dance." For Michael, a young man with a physical disability, the mottos reminded him that "there is not just one way of contemporary dance." Instead, he felt that The Crew was "constantly thinking of difference ways to dance." Furthermore, Tina, a middle-aged dancer who has a physical disability, believed that through performances that exemplify an inclusive philosophy the group is able to "open people's eyes to challenge the assumptions about disability."

Exploring Inclusive Technique: All Moves are Good Moves

In Reaction Dance, members of The Crew are included in the creation process to assist with developing interesting and inclusive choreography and the company's overall artistic vision, which often brings Reaction Dance's mottos to life. Several dancers in particular, including Michael, Karen, and Cassie, a young woman with a developmental disability, have had opportunities to choreograph pieces for the company to present at annual year-end performances, as well as at community performances. Furthermore, contrary to typical teaching practices in contemporary dance, at Reaction Dance movements were often adapted to meet the dancers' needs in order to ensure accessibility and inclusion. For instance, during one class Karen spoke up to bring attention to the limitations she experienced when performing synchronized movements. For Karen, executing quick and fluid movements were challenging given the muscle

spasticity she experiences throughout her body. In order to maintain cohesion in the piece, Ginger and Rita decided to have the group chose movements that Karen could lead. As such, the speed at which the movements were performed was determined and led by Karen, which ensured everyone could participate and maintain similar timing. Karen expressed an appreciation for the accommodations made during training: “I can’t do some things so we change it...and we follow my speed. I think it is pretty good how [Ginger and Rita] incorporate everyone and if one person can’t do it they adapt.” By adjusting the choreography, the group was able to resist the dominant discourse in dance that maintains that when a move cannot be performed the problem lies in the dancer’s ability or inability to perform, and not the movements and/or constructed standards.

Other dancers provided examples of techniques being adapted by dancers to incorporate their individual abilities and artistic contributions. Michael stated,

I never knew for a long part of my life that I was able to move my wheelchair that fast or move it that fluidly. Even I thought you can’t dance in a wheelchair. But when I moved more and more I thought, I can dance in my wheelchair! Maybe not standing up, but I can move with my wheelchair. [I can do] spins or wheelies.

Here, Michael shares just two of the many techniques that he and other dancers who use wheelchairs have learned through training with The Crew. These techniques promote an alternative to the aesthetic of weightlessness and effortlessness conveyed through the classic pirouette or leap. Providing opportunities for members to contribute to the development of choreography was also particularly advantageous for Margie, the eldest dancer in the group, who has developmental and physical disabilities, and limited expressive communication. In class and on stage, Margie was often given the opportunity to direct dancers in improvised pieces with her arms or eyes as opposed to providing more structured choreography with verbal commands. In

class and during her interview Margie expressed that this was her favourite aspect of training with The Crew.

The co-constructed choreography performed by The Crew provided opportunities for dancers to showcase their strengths and movement capabilities, which also acted to challenge dominant discourses of the legitimate dancing body and movement aesthetic. Danny, a young man with developmental and physical disabilities, thoroughly enjoyed dancing in and out of his wheelchair and maneuvering his chair with varying degrees of speed in practice and during performances. Danny's preferred dance moves challenged the belief that persons who use wheelchairs are dependent entirely on these devices. Similarly, Johnny, a young man with developmental and physical disabilities, enjoyed demonstrating his strength to others: "I do a lot of lifts with Rita...and I like doing it; I just don't want to drop her." For Johnny, being chosen to perform intricate lifts fostered a sense of responsibility and pride while simultaneously challenging preconceived notions surrounding the limited ability and strength typically assigned by spectators to persons with disabilities. Furthermore, for Cassie, having the opportunity to attend weekly classes and performances independent of support was a source of pride for her and a means of challenging the dependence on others ascribed to persons with disabilities. When Cassie spoke of her participation in dance, she stated, "I like going on my own. I can do it [dance class] on my own without any help." These dancers used dance to spread alternative discourses in dance that resist the dominant discourses that depict persons with disabilities as incapable of producing powerful, intriguing and beautiful movements.

Dance for Every Body

In Reaction Dance, Rita and Ginger have created a group culture that is accepting of dancers that do not fit the slim, athletic and linear body that dominates contemporary dance.

When asked to comment on what motivated her to be a part of the creation of an integrated dance organization, Ginger traced it back to her history with a prestigious ballet school. She explained, “When I was in grade 8, I was told that I couldn’t become a dancer because I didn’t have the right body type for ballet. I was one of many, many students that, you know, don’t fit that mold.” Her experience with being asked to leave the ballet school was the driving force behind her involvement in the creation of a dance organization that is inclusive to all who wish to train and perform in dance regardless of ability, size, income or age. She explained,

I’m really interested in people being able to see themselves on the stage...I think a lot of people come to contemporary dance shows and don’t feel connected to what they see on stage...because the people that are accepted into the dance form, even contemporary dancers...still tend to follow the long-legged, skinny, athletic...bodies.

One dancer in particular, Rachel, also commented on The Crew’s acceptance of dancers with atypical dancer bodies: “[With us] it’s not about how skinny you are. Just be who you want to be and just dance it out.” All of The Crew members are interested in co-constructing alternative discourses in contemporary dance, those that embrace the movement qualities that persons with varying body types and abilities co-create.

Dancing with Dominant Discourses

According to Foucault (1990), “power is exercised from innumerable points” (p. 94), which results in multiple and competing discourses, including those that resist dominant discourses and others that motivate a state of docility in line with prescribed social discourses. Reaction Dance, its mottos, and the diverse styles of movement the company encourages, serve to foster the privileging of discourses in dance that encourage inclusion and diversity; however, as the organization and dancers find themselves wanting to advance their technique, grow the

group's artistry and gain recognition as valid and professional artists, members of The Crew are faced with competing discourses circulating in the dance world. The dancers and teachers alike recognized that as they increasingly move into the world of professional mainstream contemporary dance, there is the risk of reinforcing dominant discourses of the ideal dancing body and corresponding movement aesthetic. Indeed, with the motivation to reach professional standards in order to assist dancers in their professional goals as well as spread awareness and appreciation for integrated work in contemporary dance, Ginger and Rita have been focused on teaching the dancers professional skills. These skills include developing technique, choreography and stage presence. While the data showed that at times choreography could be used to resist dominant discourses of ability and legitimacy in dance and beyond, it also illustrated that choreography had the potential to reinforce dominant discourses of the valid and legitimate movement aesthetic in dance.

Choreography and Technologies of Power

Although The Crew has been working on creating their own professional standards, they are still conflicted and influenced by those standards that derive from other more classical and mainstream dance genres. Over the course of my training with the company, I noticed that the dance pieces became more and more choreographed in an effort to make our pieces look more technical, more developed and, ultimately, more professional in our eyes and our audiences'. According to Shogan (1999), the manipulation of movement cadence can be a means of producing disciplined and docile bodies that perform in a particular way to serve a particular means, such as mastering a set sequence of movements, or choreography, for a dance piece. While The Crew members did not express feeling pushed to conform to any one way of moving in practice or on stage, they did however indicate either in their interviews or in practice that

choreography was at times problematic for them or other group members, particularly in terms of memorization of movement sequences, timing and spacing.

While Rachel thought that remembering places and cues was an area for improvement for the company, given her desire to create more professional looking works, she also found that memorization was difficult for her to execute a times: “In choreography you just learn how to do, this move, and then this move, and then this move. I don’t think I can do that quite well. I’m not that good with memory.” In addition, Karen voiced concern with forgetting choreography and she also expressed difficulty with timing given the muscle spasms she experienced. On a few occasions Karen shared that she disliked the way she looked when compared to the rest of the group during segments of choreography that were meant to be quick and synchronized, as she moved at a different time and speed than others. In conversation, Karen also brought up the concern she had for the company’s skill level one day surpassing the physical and cognitive capabilities of some dancers, and perhaps even her own. This concern was echoed by other dancers who also wished to improve their dance skills but felt uneasy about reinforcing the dominant standards that typically excluded persons with disabilities from participating in dance. The Crew members recognized the risk of reinforcing dominant discourses of ability, legitimacy and validity in dance if memorization became a predominate element of the group’s pieces, given the challenges some dancers faced in executing certain choreographed movements. Instead of passively accepting problematic and potentially exclusive choreography, however, the dancers created space to voice the challenges they faced and to co-create and adapt choreography to accommodate their varying abilities and styles of movement.

Discourses of Validity and Professionalism and Technologies of the Self

In order to avoid reinforcing normalizing and exclusive discourses, The Crew's members also actively worked on creating their own definition of professional standards, ones that remained flexible to multiple learning styles and artistic visions. Both Rita and Ginger indicated that The Crew was in a phase of transition from "all moves are good moves" to professional level work. Rita explained the complexity of what The Crew faced in terms of responding to the professional standards privileged in contemporary dance:

We're trying to make a space for artists with and without disability to work together...if we [The Crew] always stay community [based], we won't be recognized as valid artists and then I feel like that is a disservice...[we want integrated dance to be] taken seriously as art and as professional art...and I think that's why we need to be working more in a professional way... but also thinking [about] how we can make that inclusive.

Ginger expressed similar challenges related to pursuing professional standards while maintaining inclusion within the group. She shared,

The work has to be excellent artistically and choreographically, like all other professional dance companies. What is tricky, however, is that the mainstream dance community is used to seeing movement vocabulary that has been created, taught and performed by able-bodied people...I suspect it will take the mainstream dance community some time to appreciate seeing dancers with disabilities moving on stage, as their presence defies the traditional notion of what dancers are to look like.

In line with Foucault's technologies of the self, the dancers were making conscious choices about how they defined professional standards. Practice was linked to professionalism for many of the dancers and Tina, Rachel, Karen and Michael, in particular, indicated a need for

more practice in order to master technique and ascend skill levels in dance. In his interview, Michael shared, “We have a lot of work to do and we can do it...I watch some [online] videos and I’m like this is not one of those once a week classes.” Tina also indicated that practicing once a week was not enough and that additional time to practice together would be beneficial to learning technique and skills and growing as a company. All of the dancers indicated a desire to continue training with The Crew and some, including Michael, Rachel and Karen, expressed an interest in pursuing a career in dance by starting their own dance companies. Reflecting on hearing that some dancers had formed this goal Rita shared, “That’s what you want to have happen. That you are creating opportunities for people to follow their own artistic vision.”

While challenges existed in negotiating a space for alternative discourses of the legitimate, valid and professional dance body and movement aesthetic in integrated dance, the dancers in The Crew actively worked towards resisting dominant discourses in dance that privilege the able-bodied dancer and aesthetic of perfection. Resistance was apparent as the dancers discussed their own standards of excellence in dance, as well as the need to open up space and opportunities for multiple artistic visions to contribute to choreography and the development of integrated dance. Through training and public performances the dancers presented an alternative professional and valid dance aesthetic, one that relied on the unique and varying capabilities and movement styles created when bodies with and without disabilities improvise together to choreograph dance pieces. The dancers did, however, face tensions in negotiating space for this new aesthetic, most notably in determining choreography that could lead to skill development in dancers and move audiences, while at the same time could remain inclusive to varying abilities. In recognizing the potential risks of reinforcing dominant discourses in the transition from community level to professional level performance, however,

the dancers were able to make conscious decisions about how to achieve growth as professional dancers and reduce the risks of recreating exclusive ablest standards in the process.

Conclusion

This study shows the utility of Foucauldian analysis to draw out the tensions involved in attempting to resist dominant discourses in contemporary dance. Members of The Crew felt conflicted about competing discourses circulating in their own group and in the broader dance community, especially those concerning professionalism and inclusion. It was clear that the dancers expressed a desire to grow their skills in dance and be recognized as valid and professional artists. This desire, however, was complicated by dominant discourses of the valid and professional dancer and associated movement aesthetics, which conflicted with discourses of inclusion and alternative ideas of professional and legitimate dancers and bodies that the members of The Crew also sought to circulate. The risk of reinforcing dominant discourses in dance became most prevalent when practices of choreography emphasized memorization in timing, placement and movement sequences. Through active involvement of The Crew members in the development of choreography and the company's artistic vision, the dancers were able to reduce the risk of reinforcing dominant and exclusive discourses in their dance. As integrated dance transitions from a recreational activity to one that is professional in nature, it will be important for members of that dance community to discuss the dominant discourses in dance concerning the valid and legitimate body, ability and aesthetic, and how these discourses will or will not shape and guide their actions. If there is to be a Dance, Dance Revolution, one that embraces diverse abilities and an integrated aesthetic, these issues will require careful consideration and further research.

Endnotes

¹ While the terms inclusive and integrated have been taken-up in leisure research to have different meanings, integrated dance will be used throughout this paper as it is the term preferred by the participating dance organization. In this paper the term integrated will imply full and equitable participation by individuals with and without disabilities in the same activity.

² Dance, Dance Revolution is the name of an astoundingly popular video game. Interestingly, however, in this “revolution,” one must exactly re-create the dance moves prescribed by the game. One might then question the game’s revolutionary nature.

³ I am inspired by one of my fellow dancers, Johnny, to refer to the participating integrated dance company as “The Crew”.

⁴ Reaction Dance is a fictitious name for the participating organization.

⁵ The World Health Organization (2010) uses the term disabilities to refer to three interconnected entities: an impairment, which includes problems in body structure or function; an activity limitation, which refers to difficulties encountered when an individual attempts to execute an action; and lastly a participation restriction, which indicates a situation when an individual experiences difficulty being involved in life situations.

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Dancing with Myself: One Dancer-Researcher's Story of the Challenges of Resisting Dominant
Discourses in Contemporary Dance and Qualitative Research

Abstract

In this paper I use an autoethnographic approach to illustrate the ways in which both autoethnography and integrated dance are concomitantly challenged by and issue challenges to notions of legitimacy and validity in their respective disciplines. Guided by Foucauldian theory (1980, 1990, 1995), I offer an explanation of and how concepts of discourse, knowledge, and power work together to guide and shape individuals' actions toward the norm – in this case, the norms associated with qualitative research and dance. To illustrate the tensions I experienced in challenging dominant discourses in contemporary dance and qualitative research, I use a story of dueling selves, through the metaphorical use of two characters, Butterfly and Moth. My findings suggest that those who adhere to dominant discourses in dance and qualitative research continue to reap rewards, but that resistance to these discourses can trouble regimes of truth and produce alternative ways of knowing and being in the social world.

Casting Call

It's the fall and the market stands are now filled with pumpkins of all sizes, baskets of MacIntosh apples and ears of multi-coloured corn bunched together into decorative ornaments to adorn doorways for upcoming Thanksgiving family gatherings. I'm spending the morning at the park with CJ, the two and a half year old boy I watch to supplement my limited grad student income. And I'm on a scholarship, I think to myself, wondering how on earth anyone could afford to pursue grad school without securing such assistance. We're sitting at the vacant picnic tables for snack. When CJ finishes his granola bar, he slides off the bench and runs to the slide leaving his wrapper to blow away in the breeze. I lunge for it, miss, and chase after it. On my way to the garbage an image on a flyer on the community bulletin board catches my eye: A little girl in a wheelchair sits posed holding an umbrella, another child is standing beside her smiling. "Reaction Dance,¹ an integrated² arts organization providing creative movement classes for children with and without disabilities," the black and white photocopy reads. I immediately wonder if they might need volunteers. I have worked with children with and without disabilities for the past few years and I do have seven years of training in dance. Maybe they could use my help, is my initial thought. Suddenly, I feel a presence stirring inside me and before I know it I find myself caught between the fears and desires of two opposing sides: The vibrant Butterfly within me that longs to try new things, take risks, rebel against the status quo and broaden my understanding of the world, and the Butterfly's adversary, the resident Moth, who prefers to keep things stable, normal and safe. "It's been such a long time since you have danced in a studio or on stage, you probably don't even remember how to dance," Moth reminds me. "Well, maybe this could be a good way to ease back into it," Butterfly encourages. Maybe, I think. I take note of the website

and scribble it down in my planner for further investigation before chasing after CJ, who is ready to play hide and seek around the trees.

Water Break: A Pause for Reflection

At the time I did not realize that my chase after a granola bar wrapper would serve as the impetus for chasing understandings of how Foucauldian concepts of discourse, knowledge, and power work together to guide and shape individuals' actions toward the norm – in this case, the norms associated with qualitative research and dance. I was also still quite unaware of the role my dueling selves, brought to life in this autoethnography through the metaphorical characters of Butterfly and Moth, would play in assisting me to illustrate and ultimately tease out the tensions I experienced in challenging dominant discourses in contemporary dance and qualitative research. I would soon find that those who adhere to dominant discourses in dance and qualitative research continue to reap rewards, while I would also be reminded that through resistance to these same discourses regimes of truth can be troubled and alternative discourses can be created and circulated throughout the social world.

The Audition for Moth and Butterfly

Once home from work, I discard the morning's belongings on my bedroom floor and settle down in front of my flashy new laptop, a decided essential for my Master's process. I pull up Reaction Dance's website. Across the top of the page is a banner that shows dancers, some of them in wheelchairs, frozen in various poses, reaching out toward the audience. I am intrigued by the dancers in wheelchairs, something I have never seen before on stage. "And look," Butterfly chimes in, "they're *all* adults!" Indeed, unlike the flyer I saw earlier in the day, the dancers on the screen are all adults. Does this mean that perhaps I could participate in dance classes as opposed to simply volunteering? "How exciting," Butterfly exclaims. "And intimidating," Moth adds. "Don't

listen to her," Butterfly advises, disregarding Moth's concern. "She's *always* so worried about what other people think of you." Moth shoots back, "Don't you remember how dance made you feel like an ogre amongst fairies? I thought you had accepted that not all movement is dancing and not everyone can be a dancer." I could not help but listen to my more reserved self: Moth had a point. My past experiences had been influential in discouraging me from even attempting dance lessons for the past eight years. I had passively accepted the fact that I was simply not a dancer. I had accepted and not resisted the discursive construction of the "dancerly body" (Kuppers, 2000, p. 119) as the tall, slim, athletic and extremely able body that I had consistently encountered in dance (Cooper-Albright, 1997; Davies, 2008; Fortin, Vieira, & Tremblay, 2009; Gard, 2006), bodies that I perceived to be quite different from my own. I felt that because I lacked the flexibility, athleticism, and grace exhibited by my peers in dance class I should bow out, quite literally, and leave dance to the more skilled bodies. "Integrated dance reminds me of that methodology you learned about this week in your Qualitative Research Methods class with your supervisor, Audrey. What was it called again?" Moth inquires. Autoethnography? I reply. "Yes, yes, autoethnography. Like autoethnography, integrated dance may seem novel and exciting, but we both know autoethnography lacks rigor, reliability and validity (Fine, 2003; Gans, 1999) and surely integrated dance cannot meet the standards of legitimacy set by contemporary dance critics and audiences. Soon you'll chicken out of wanting to start up dance again, just like I hope you're chickening out of the thought of conducting an autoethnography for your thesis." "There she goes again, being so bossy," Butterfly retorts. "You need to question the reasons behind Moth's disdain toward both the possibility of your engagement with integrated dance and autoethnography." I hadn't really thought about ulterior motives, I admit to my dueling selves. I had just accepted the fact that autoethnography and integrated dance would most likely be characterized as invalid given their variation from the norm. Moth has a point.

“And what are the implications of your refusal to question Moth’s point on the legitimacy of autoethnography and integrated dance?” Butterfly asks. Well, you don’t usually question something that you believe is true, I say. So I suppose in not questioning her, I’m reinforcing her Truth. “Precisely,” Butterfly says. “You assumed the statements made were true because Moth’s points correspond with the dominant discourses in both contemporary dance and qualitative research, discourses that have been influential in constructing your own conceptions of the legitimate form of conducting and writing research as well as how a body should look and move in dance. Both integrated dance and autoethnography trouble the notions of legitimacy and validity in their respective domains. Foucault (1980) would tell you that the legitimate form of doing and writing qualitative research or performing contemporary dance only exists through the discursive construction of discourses of legitimacy, which require an illegitimate other to make sense. Yeah, I respond. I suppose that when the image of the ideal dancing body takes to the stage to perform with perfection in extension, articulation and athleticism, all other forms of dance and dancing bodies seem grotesque (Sherlock, 1996). “Foucault (1980, 1990), however, also maintained that power is not a one-way exchange and therefore those who are the target of power are also the point of its articulation,” reminds Butterfly. Where there is power there is resistance (Foucault, 1990), I state in agreement, perhaps somewhat smugly.

The discussion with my selves makes me aware of the silent and often invisible power relations at play in everyday contexts. A student’s decision to employ autoethnographic research or a dancer’s decision to train in integrated dance would threaten the foundations of division, hierarchy, and privilege in qualitative research and contemporary dance. Given that one side

seeks to normalize individuals and the other side tries to resist these attempts, it's no wonder that I am now presented with a dilemma of how to respond to dominant discourses. Do I join integrated dance and challenge the dominant discourse circulating in contemporary dance that maintain only the ideal body can dance and produce valid movements? Or do I passively disregard integrated dance as an option for legitimate dance training? Furthermore, do I write my thesis within the conventions of qualitative research, which is typically very normative in nature and places an emphasis on validity and even generalizability (Fine, 2003; Gans, 1999)? Or do I write an autoethnography and challenge the dominant discourses that seek to silence other forms of qualitative scholarship (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Sparkes, 2002)? "You cannot be serious – there's no choice here. Safety first!" Moth scoffs. Well, someone should really tease out the tensions surrounding legitimacy in dance and autoethnography – the parallels are stunning, I retort. "Well, why don't you do it, then?" Butterfly asks. She continues, "Yes. You should write an autoethnography. An autoethnography about the challenges of resisting dominant discourses of legitimacy and validity in both qualitative research and integrated dance!" "Ohhhhh no!" Moth says defiantly. "Embarrass yourself in front of your colleagues, committee members and the social science community as a whole (Gans, 1999)? I don't think so!" Regardless of Moth's hostility toward autoethnography, I decide to file this mode of inquiry away in my mind for future reference and not for my MA research.

Warming Up to Alternative Discourses

I wonder what my role will be as someone without a disability in an integrated context. Will I be a support or assistant for those with disabilities? Or will I be a student like everyone else? What will be expected of me as a dancer without a disability? "Why are you nervous? Do you assume that expectations will be heightened?" Butterfly inquires. "Is this assumption based on the

fact that you do not have a disability and thus somehow think that you'll be a better dancer?" She asks what I will never say out loud – thoughts that I don't want to acknowledge because I am ashamed to admit them even to myself. Maybe. No. I don't know. Yes, I conclude. "You sound like all those people who look down on people with disabilities, those who attempt to categorize and normalize people based on socially constructed notions of who constitutes a valid and valuable citizen" (Shogan, 2003; Tremain 2005). My insides twist at this thought. Am I really just like all the others from whom I try so hard to separate myself? "Stop it Butterfly," cries Moth defensively. "You're making her feel uncomfortable". "She should feel uncomfortable," Butterfly answers back. "She needs to face up to her own understandings of ability, legitimacy and validity in dance. She cannot just ignore these reactions, no matter how uncomfortable they may make her feel. Instead, it is necessary that she "look in detail at the origins of these feelings" and at her "social understanding and knowledge of disability...and at bodies and their placement in social discourse" (Kuppers, 2000, p. 128). She must "confront any resistance, prejudice or stereotypical views...about learning with students with disabilities" (Whatley, 2007, p. 7). Furthermore, it is important that she recognizes the fact that, like it or not, she is in a privileged position as an individual without a disability in a society that devalues variance from the norm" (Tremain, 2005).

Listening to this discussion play out in my head, I squirm. I do not want to assume that I have an enhanced skill level based solely on physical or intellectual ability and I certainly do not want to be equated with anyone who discriminates against another based on difference! And yet, something inside me insists that I acknowledge these thoughts and my understanding of disability prior to dancing with an integrated group. I try to settle the disagreement between

Moth and Butterfly. I am privileged. There, I said it. I do not have a disability. I am white, young, heterosexual, middle class. I may as well have a giant P on my forehead. “But do these identifiers render your experiences inconsequential?” asks the Butterfly. “Not long ago, women, ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups were silenced in the academy (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Grant & Buford May, 1999). Not long ago, ethnography itself was considered an illegitimate form of inquiry (Grant & Buford May). Not long ago, autoethnographic research was entirely absent from academic debates (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, 2006). Not long ago, integrated dance would have been considered as only therapeutic recreation (Benjamin, 2002; Cooper-Albright, 1997). You can provide references for all of these points, but there is no reference that you can provide to convince others that your experiences matter. Dance is typically exclusive. Academe is typically exclusive. When we stop policing and (re)producing those boundaries and we acknowledge difference, we disrupt dominant relations of power.” Alright, I admit that my understanding of dance, of disability, and ability has been constructed through social discourses that uphold the notion that only certain bodies can produce legitimate, beautiful and alluring movements (Cooper-Albright; Davies, 2008; Fortin, Vieira, & Tremblay, 2009; Gard, 2006) and that I find it difficult and confusing to understand where I might fit in an integrated dance class. Or if I’ll fit in at all.

Tech Rehearsal – Setting the Stage

I’m staring at Reaction Dance’s website, which I visited for the first time nearly two years ago. I’m procrastinating again, avoiding working on my autoethnography, which is due to my committee in a few weeks. “Maybe you should try to think of your autoethnographic paper like a dance performance,” Butterfly suggests. “How would you begin a performance?” With a technical

rehearsal, I answer. “Sure,” Butterfly says, “A tech rehearsal is kind of like a rough draft of a paper even. Both the rehearsal and the draft help produce what is hoped to be a flawless product to present to an audience.” That’s not a bad idea, I think. “Why not start with the basics,” Butterfly adds.

“Where did you conduct your autoethnographic fieldwork,, with whom, and for how long?” Okay, I think. I can mention that I started dancing with one of Reaction Dance’s integrated recreational classes in January 2009 before training with the performance company known as The Crew.³ At this time I was well on my way to writing my master’s research proposal on the leisure of single mothers with children with disabilities. “I still don’t understand why you didn’t stick with that topic,” Moth harps. “There wouldn’t have been a chance for you to conduct an autoethnography with single mothers as your research participants, unless you were planning on getting pregnant and leaving Travis, which I don’t recommend.” I roll my eyes and try not to let Moth distract me from the task at hand. I know she would prefer me to give up on this methodology altogether. Instead, I continue writing. I add that after two months of dancing in Reaction Dance’s recreation class I became intrigued by the emerging form of integrated dance and I decided to approach my supervisor, Audrey, to see if I could switch my research focus to examine the power relations and dominant discourses at play in integrated dance. “Remember how nervous you were?” Butterfly laughs. I was indeed nervous, so much so that I had avoided asking her about switching topics for weeks. I worried for nothing, however, and not only did Audrey support my desire to investigate integrated dance, she even suggested I conduct an autoethnography of my experiences as a dancer in the burgeoning genre of contemporary dance. “Go big or go home,” Moth says with sarcasm.

In attempting to be a good, ethical, and just researcher, I spoke with Reaction Dance’s co-directors and lead teachers about my interest in pursuing research with Reaction Dance. Based on my commitment, effort and ability to collaborate with dancers with and without disabilities in

the recreation class, I was invited to join the performance company and to discuss the possibility of pursuing a research study with the dancers in the company. “You had no idea how they would receive you,” Butterfly shares. “There was really no guarantee that the dancers would be interested in being a part of your research study at all.” It turned out, however, that all eight dancers and the two teachers were quite keen on being a part of my research and I would eventually interview each of them for another chapter for my Master’s of Arts thesis. All of the eight dancers have physical and/or developmental disabilities, activity limitations and participation restrictions (WHO, 2010). Four of the dancers use manual wheelchairs, one uses a power wheelchair and six of us, including myself, and the two teachers, do not use wheelchairs. In rehearsing with dancers who used wheelchairs, I soon came to view wheelchairs as offering a range of new movement possibilities as others in integrated dance had before me (Davies, 2008; Whatley, 2007).

“I think that’s a good start,” Butterfly says. I read over what I’ve just written and agree; however, it is just a beginning and I’m still unsure of how to write the rest of the paper. Through an ethnography, one of the other components of my Master’s research, I explored the tensions at work in integrated dance from the perspectives of my fellow Crew mates. The dancers each had a different story to tell about how they became involved with Reaction Dance, what sort of challenges they had faced in being a part of an emerging dance genre, and how they were feeling about the transition from community-level work to training to meet more professional standards. This autoethnography is about the process I went through with my research and not about the participants that I interviewed. I feel that I need to write about my own experiences, especially given the fact that I was the only dance student in the class without a disability. I feel that my account can contribute to the greater understanding of integrated dance, as it offers the perspective of a dancer without disability in an integrated company and the unique challenges I

faced in responding to dominant discourses that sought to construct very specific roles and expectations.

If only this were a performance, I sigh. Of course, dancing is just not the same as writing and writing is not the same as dancing (Ward, 1997). “Well that’s not entirely true,” Butterfly says. “At least not in the case of autoethnographic writing and integrated dance. In fact, the two share many similarities.” How so, I question? “Both autoethnography and integrated dance challenge expectations concerning legitimacy. For example, Ellis and Bochner (2006) have argued that the use of autoethnographic stories in research helps to ‘undercut conventions of writing that foster hierarchy and division’ (p. 436). Kimpson (2005) has similarly argued that autoethnographic stories ‘transgress academic and disciplinary expectations about ‘acceptable’ research topics, and violate norms about how research is ‘supposed’ to be conducted’ (p. 73). And, I add, Cooper-Albright (1997) and Kupperts (2000) have both written about how presenting disability and difference through performance allows dancers with disabilities and integrated companies to disrupt dominant discourses of what it means to be a dancer and what constitutes beautiful, alluring and valid movements. Indeed, there are a plethora of connections between autoethnography and integrated dance. “Keep digging – you’re on the right track,” encourages Butterfly.

I pause. Given many social scientists’ lack of familiarity, nay skepticism, of a genre of ethnography that is criticized for being an easy, soft pseudo-science that is narcissistic, self-indulgent and devoid of validity (Atkinson, 2006; Coffey, 1999; Gans, 1999), how can I satisfy the goals of autoethnography while seeming credible to my committee members? This question gets Butterfly flapping frantically. “Isn’t the whole point of autoethnography to challenge the privileging of one way of doing science” (Ellis & Bochner, 2006)? Butterfly asks. “Writing an

evocative, engaged and embodied text only to cut the reader off abruptly to defend the validity of your work seems counterproductive to the goals of autoethnography, which are to displace the 'distanced analysis' and 'disengaged master' (Ellis & Bochner, p. 434). Don't you see, both dance and academe are normative and both dance and academe produce docile bodies (Foucault, 1995). What about the resistance to dominant discourses? Are you just going to dance the normative dance and write the normative thesis? Or are you going to resist? You are a "vehicle of power," an element of power's articulation, not merely the point of its articulation" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Good point I think. Moth, who has remained unusually quiet up until this point, disagrees. "For the record," she starts, "I don't think writing an autoethnography is a good idea - especially at this stage in your academic career. Why not just stick with the ethnography? Qualitative research has a bad enough reputation and now you want to 'give fodder to those who claim that ethnography isn't science?' (Ellis & Bochner, p. 445). Autoethnography is a lazy approach to doing research - bad research" (Atkinson; Coffey; Gans)!

I remember a few articles and chapters in my literature search that discussed the skepticism and hostility toward autoethnography found in qualitative research. My supervisor Audrey co-authored one of them with her long-time friend and colleague, DJ Williams. In response to the normative conventions upheld in the social sciences, Giles and Williams (2007) called upon leisure scholars, in particular, to take up autoethnography, a call that echoed other qualitative scholars who have encouraged students in qualitative research, like me, to "follow their hearts...[and] not model themselves after quantitative scientists" (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 280). New qualitative researchers are encouraged to reveal their inner most thoughts and feeling and make themselves vulnerable (Ellis & Bochner, 2006), which is nothing more than what researchers typically expect from their subjects (Sparkes, 2002). Those new to the field are also

encouraged to acknowledge their positions and biases not as aspects that need to be repressed, but rather as integral parts of research process, as they are intertwined with researchers' analysis of any social phenomenon (Wall, 2006). Lastly, they are called upon to abandon their quest for objective truth and instead recognize the fact that no one truth exists (Bochner, 2000; Ellis; 2004; Ellis & Bochner; Giles & Williams; Tamas, 2009). It is a call I want to answer, a revolution of which I want to be a part. Nevertheless, I have been "socialized to believe that "real" science is quantitative, experimental, and understood by only a select and elite few" (Wall, p. 2).

Integrated dance groups have faced similar challenges in gaining recognition for their work as valid forms of art and dance in the contemporary dance community. My previous dance training and experiences with viewing dance performances on stage or on television portrayed dance as being highly regulated in terms of how the dancers' bodies looked and when and how these bodies moved. All movements seemed effortless and with the dancers having limitless capacities in strength, flexibility and agility (Cooper-Albright, 1997). Perfect replication in every movement from one dancer to the next, from their spotting heads to their pointed toes. These images were viewed by the majority of spectators, including myself, to be the representation of legitimate and valid forms of dance and dancing bodies (Gard, 2006). In integrated dance, however, no one looked the same, not the shapes or sizes of our bodies and not the way we moved around in the space. We all moved differently, at different speeds and with different movement qualities from fast, to slow. Some of us with fluid movements and other with spastic movements. Each of us brought to the stage different movement capabilities and aesthetic qualities.

At Reaction Dance, like many other integrated companies (Davies, 2008), we trained in contemporary dance with an emphasis on contact improvisation, which allows dancers with and

without disabilities to connect in order to create unique and dynamic movement pieces through principles of weight exchange, touch, and kinesthetic communication (Cooper-Albright, 1997). Contact improvisation is concerned with impulse, immediacy and movement in the moment (Davies). Traditionally however, the dominant means of structuring movement in dance has been through choreography as opposed to improvisation. In choreography timing, placement, and steps are set and practiced until they can be executed flawlessly in order to present “a series of stage pictures that highlight musculature and pictorial virtuosity” (Davies, p. 45). An improvised aesthetic varies quite substantially from the synchronized and highly technical structure that dominates contemporary dance (Cooper-Albright, 1997; Sherlock, 1996). Some dance students have found creative movement and improvisation to be uncomfortable, unusual, weird and therefore an undesirable dance form (Gard, 2006), a view that has undoubtedly been formed by cultural norms surrounding what bodies can produce dance and what constitutes a valid dance aesthetic. Furthermore, persons with disabilities symbolize “helplessness” and “uselessness” in our culture and therefore take away from the allure of dance, which is to transport the viewer into a fantasy world where bodies are not affected by age, illness or impairment (Sherlock). Bodies with and without disabilities improvising movement sequences together create an aesthetic that further deviates from the normal body and aesthetic in contemporary dance (Sherlock). Given the fact that integrated dance departs significantly from the dominant dance aesthetic it has become devalued and viewed as invalid in comparison to other contemporary dance forms.

Initially, I had a very difficult time abandoning my previous notions of what a dance piece should look like and I often found myself resorting back to traditional dance regimes, asking my teachers for the counts or the set sequence of steps. I also, however, found myself frustrated when relying on these rigid standards did not render the image or vision for which I

had hoped. Sometimes I was given counts and choreography to follow, which I found relieving especially at first, while other times I was told to listen to the group and base my timing and movement on the energy that was created in the moment by different bodies moving in a variety of ways. I found negotiating space in my pre-conceived notions of dance extremely difficult at times, and the challenges I faced parallel the struggles I face in negotiating space for autoethnography in mainstream scientific research.

Opening Number - Reliving Dominant Discourses in Dance

"Okay, Hannah, from the top. Back to your beginnings in dance," Butterfly prompts. You mean share more about dancing with Reaction Dance? I ask. "No, not right now. I want you to concentrate on your old, more normative school of dance," is her reply. I'd really rather not, I tell her. "Ha!" she laughs. "You thought this would be easy? You thought that you could just write a story about how wonderful and uncomplicated your training with dance has been? Hannah, weren't you just going on about how autoethnography isn't easy? Indeed, there is nothing easy about exposing yourself to a group of people, especially those who will critically assess, if not criticize, your choice of autoethnography as a methodology" (Sparkes, 2002; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Giles & Williams, 2007). "What did you get yourself into?" Moth whines in a voice tinged with panic. "So nice of you to drop by again, Moth," chirps Butterfly. "Are you here to try to sensor the really intimate parts of the story? Or are you too scared (Giles & Williams) to even stick around for this part? You were the reason she quit dance in the first place!" Butterfly shouts. Silence. Moth flies away and perches a safe distance away on a book about qualitative research. Butterfly turns her attention back to me. "You've just touched on being out of dance for eight years, but you really need to add to that

piece. You need to dig deeper inside yourself and pull out 'the flesh and blood emotions' (Bochner, 2000, p. 270) that you have felt over the years as a dance student. I know you'd rather save face and just discuss the positive aspects of dance training, namely Reaction Dance, and to take the easy way out, but you need to go out on a limb here - you need to provide some context to the tensions you have experienced as a dancer in Reaction Dance. Furthermore, you need to show instead of tell (Ellis, 1998) the audience your story."

Show instead of tell. Right. Okay. Shake it out. Deep breathes. I honestly never considered myself to be a dancer. Even, or especially, after two years of highland dance training, three years of tap training and five years of jazz training. I started taking dance lessons not to be a prima ballerina, nor to bring tears to the eyes or goosebumps to the arms of adoring fans, as I honestly never thought I would have the courage or athleticism to ever evoke such responses from an audience. I joined a school of dance for far less ambitious reasons: Dance, and performing dance in particular, looked like so much fun. At age 11 I was entering a phase in my life where I was in constant conflict with myself. I needed a place away from the social pressures I was encountering at school and a place where I could be content with who I was. I wanted a chance to find something at which I felt I could succeed. I didn't want to be a star; I just didn't want to feel invisible anymore.

I started jazz dance lessons when I was 11 and I no longer felt invisible. On the contrary, I felt overexposed. In my mind, dance class brought to the surface all of my shortcomings. My hair was too short on my head and too long on my arms. My feet were too wide for pointe shoes, my legs too stubby and my knees too chubby to replicate a ballerina's string bean-like limbs. I was not extremely flexible, athletic or coordinated. I had enrolled in jazz with the hope of avoiding the strict requirements found in ballet, and yet I was unable to escape the exercises that

oozed from the classic dance genre into my more contemporary classes. During warm-up I'd face the mirror, hands on the bar in front of me, staring into my own eyes. I'd then follow the commands to lift myself up on my toes and drop myself down into a complete plié. To each side of me there was a row of seeming paper doll cut outs moving like thin, unoriginal clones. Our teacher would call out the counts and commands to the tune of a pop-y Michael Jackson song. Through the exercises I'd hold my breath and diligently follow the instructions while hoping that that night I'd be able to kick high enough, lunge deep enough, spin fast enough, stand straight enough, point my toes sharp enough and hold my arms light enough. I'd hope that that night it was not me – that I wouldn't be chosen to be the target of additional scrutiny. Over time, I stopped caring if the additional criticism was supposed to push me toward greatness or perfection in flexibility, alignment and athleticism. I had hoped joining dance would increase my confidence level not add to my already complicated relationship with my body.

I think back to when I first started jazz, back to when dance classes did not leave me feeling gritty in my own skin. I had worked so hard over the years to build up my technique in dance, but I was simply not agile enough to master a strong leap and during pirouette practice I needed to stop and ground myself every few feet to avoid spinning out of control. Instead of building up the confidence that had been stripped away at school, my self-esteem further withered away. The Moth would ask, "Why are you here? This is too hard. You suck. Just quit," while Butterfly would say, "Why are you trying so hard to conform to their standards of the 'good' and the 'beautiful' body?" At 15 I concluded that I was neither good nor beautiful and was simply not cut out to be a dancer. I stopped dancing that winter.

"Good Hannah. That's better. Just remember that the point of an autoethnography is that you can offer an intimate view of the topic under study (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). You need to keep it

personal, honest and artful (Ellis, 2004). You're going to feel vulnerable, but this will add to the knowledge you have to share" (Ellis & Bochner). "You're going to feel terribly exposed and wish you hadn't done this," Moth yells from a distance.

The "Dancer"

Sitting at the kitchen table, I am surrounded by the articles and book chapters that are piled in front of me in the organized chaos that drives my boyfriend crazy. I'm still working away on my autoethnographic story and I'm sifting through my field jottings, interview transcripts, memories, pictures, posters and articles on dance, integrated dance, disability studies, Foucauldian theory, ethnography, and autoethnography, trying desperately to decide what to include and what to leave out. There's just so much to work with. I press my palms firmly against my temples. I don't think I can write this. "Remember how excited you were to write an autoethnography a year ago?" Butterfly reminds me. I can remember this enthusiasm vividly. I had bounced up and down in my desk chair like a toddler waiting for a handout of candy when Audrey suggested I write an autoethnography on my training with Reaction Dance. But that was before my defence was so terrifyingly close, and the reality of actually having my work evaluated was then a bridge I would cross at a much later date. "You also used to be this nervous before each Reaction Dance class remember?" Butterfly continues, trying to keep me from getting discouraged. I can indeed recall how excited and nervous I was for my very first Reaction Dance community recreation class. I was so concerned about how to work with people with disabilities as a peer on equal terms, a feeling I would learn was common with other dance students without disabilities in integrated groups (Whatley, 2007). I was so used to working *for*

people with disabilities as a supervisor or an assistant in segregated recreational and social programming that I was unsure of how to negotiate my new role of dancing *with* them.

We started the class with an opening circle, which over time would become very familiar to me. In this circle we learned everyone's names and had an introduction to dancing with dancers who used wheelchairs. The openness offered by the dancers in the group who used wheelchairs really helped me to feel more at ease, which ultimately helped to calm my jitters. During class we focused on various movement qualities and speeds. We worked in partners, alone, and at other times we worked as connecting as one big group. Near the end of the class we were given free time to move around to the music in our own unique ways. After the initial jitters, I found that it was such an incredible feeling to abandon my previous training regimes and just move in the space however my body wanted and with others - that was, until a mother of a member of The Crew commented that I "looked and moved like a dancer." Her words caught me off guard and left me feeling out of place. "Aren't we all dancers here?" I silently asked myself. I assumed her comments were based on the fact that I did not have a disability and that perhaps elements of my previous movement vocabulary had seeped out during practice. Instead of feeling proud of myself, I felt somewhat ashamed and betrayed by my ability.

The words "you look like a dancer" did not feel as good as I always thought they would. In previous classes I had longed to be told that I looked like a dancer. Here, in this context, however, I felt that being told I resembled a dancer separated me from the rest of the group, as opposed to making me a part of it. The image of the hyper-feminine, weightless, technical and athletic body, something that I spent pages of graduate course assignments critiquing, was suddenly that with which I was labeled. In trying to escape this

dominant discourse through integrated dance, I was somehow seen as reinforcing it, embodying it. The mother made me question if I belonged in the group, or if I was making the other dancers look bad. I wondered if it was selfish of me to take up a spot in an integrated class given the limited spaces and opportunities for dancers with disabilities to engage in dance training. At the same time, however, it seemed absurd to me that anyone would equate me with a dancer. I had taken dance classes in the past and I was back to learn more about dance, but I was not a dancer.

When I started training with the performance group, The Crew, I had other occasions to question my position and role in integrated dance. At one class a guest teacher had assumed that I was a support worker with one of the other members of The Crew. Seeing me warming up in the space with the other dancers he asked, “Who are you working with?” To which I responded, “I’m just a dance student; I’m here to learn.” While I waited for class to proceed, I looked around the room at my fellow dancers and suddenly realized – though it was really no surprise, that other than our two regular teachers, I was the only dancer in the group without a disability. I had began to feel as though I fit in, but that feeling disappeared in an instant. Again, the comments made by the guest teacher made me feel that not having a disability was undesirable in this context and that perhaps I, a young woman without a disability, was infiltrating a space reserved for those with disabilities. I know that the mother and the assistant teacher were not trying to imply that I was unwelcome or did not belong; I could not, however, ignore the way both the guest teacher and the mother made me feel.

“Perhaps you didn’t like the way they made you feel because they confirmed your fears surrounding what audiences would think of your involvement in an integrated group and the greater implications this would have on their preconceived notions of persons with disabilities in general as

well as their worth in relation to persons without disabilities,” Butterfly offers. Indeed, she is right. It seemed that the comments made by these two individuals reaffirmed the dominant roles for an individual without a disability in a group of persons with disabilities: Either the valid to the invalid or the support to the dependant. I didn’t want my presence to be viewed as necessary in order for dancers with disabilities to be “able” to dance. I also didn’t want anyone to assume I was a better dancer than my peers with disabilities and present only to validate the dance form by bringing the audience’s gaze back to the linear, normal dancing body (Kuppers, 2000). In the dominant discourses proliferated in dance, many of my fellow Crew members were constructed as not belonging and I did not want to be a part of reinforcing this idea. At the time I was unsure of how to proceed. I had yet to realize I could use integrated dance and autoethnography to fight back.

Discourse, Knowledge and Power: A Trio.

Discourse, knowledge and power move throughout the entirety of the social body (Foucault, 1980) like dancers moving about the stage. Inseparable and intertwined, together this trio radiates an air of prestige and ultimate authority. They have a story to tell and a moral to their dance: Power is exercised through the production of discourses of truth, legitimacy and validity that surround ways of being and knowing in any given discipline (Foucault, 1980). In order for this trio to maintain its allure, privilege and elevated status, it must devalue and subjugate deviants, such as the atypical dancing body and aesthetic in contemporary dance or the burgeoning genre of personal narrative research in the social sciences. The normal, right and/or true or desirable way of doing things exists only so long as there is the creation and maintenance of a polar opposite: the abnormal, wrong and/or false and undesirable. Foucault (1990, 1995) has argued that power is inherently productive in that as it works to constrain action, it also provides

the potential for individuals to create alternative that resist the dominant discourses that serve to uphold on true way of being and knowing in any given discipline (Foucault, 1980, 1990). Enter resistance. A struggle ensues and the lights go down.

The Dance of the Conflicted Academic

Regardless of how hard I tried to avoid it, I had to accept that sooner or later I would have to defend my use of autoethnography to the academy in the form of my proposal defence and later a thesis defence. Given the critiques of autoethnography as a methodology that is easy, unscientific and self-indulgent (Atkinson, 2006; Coffey, 1999; Gans, 1999), I had no idea how I was going to form a defence. I went to Audrey for advice. Like a mother bear preparing to send her academic off-spring to battle, Audrey advised me fight, to sift through the scholarly research, scant though it may be, on autoethnography and personal narrative research to learn more about the critiques of it, as well as how in light of these critiques scholars have used autoethnography to expose the privileging of particular ways of knowing and being in the world. Heeding her advice, I stumbled upon *The Ethnographic I*, a text where Ellis (2004) responded to a student's query regarding handling the critique that autoethnography is self-absorbed. In response, Ellis noted, "it is self-absorbed to pretend that you are somehow outside of what you study and not impacted by the same forces as others. It is self-absorbed to mistakenly think that your actions and relationships need no reflexive thought" (p. 34). "Through your reading you also learned that autoethnography, as a mode of inquiry, is inherently reflexive, as it 'blurs the lines between researcher and participants, writers and readers, performers and audiences' (Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p. 509). In this way the researcher is forced to step back and view his/her position and how this position impacts his/her lived experiences and the stories s/he tells. Some believe that it is this very reflexivity that makes it possible for autoethnography to make a difference in the lives of readers by making them

care, feel and empathize along with the story (Ellis & Bochner, 2006) so that they may become active “agents of personal and/or cultural change” (Kidd & Finlayson, 2009, p. 982).

I continued reading through the available literature in order to learn how other autoethnographers had dealt with skepticism, critique and hostile attitudes toward their choice of research methodology. I encountered other authors (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Sparkes, 2000, 2002) who warned me that I would indeed face scrutiny from the academic community for my decision to conduct personal narrative research. In particular, Ellis and Bochner noted that I would “feel the tension between being a part of the sociological establishment and part of the movement for transformation and new forms of research and writing” (p. 441). This reminded me of something I read in *Making an Entrance: Theory and Practice for Disabled and Non-Disabled Dancers* (Benjamin, 2002). I pulled my copy from my bookcase and flipped to the first chapter. Benjamin quotes Lloyd Newson (1998), artistic director of DV8 Physical Theatre, a UK based company that produces socially and politically relevant dance works: “Beauty is the breadth of human experience — the struggle can also be beautiful. And so much of dance is to deny the struggle” (p. 3). Similarly, so much of academia is about denying the existence and potential of the personal. “For good reason!” Harps Moth. “The personal introduces bias into the research. The personal compromises the validity, the generalizability and the credibility of the research” (Gans, 1999). “And there we can find the root of all this tension,” Butterfly sighs. “Autoethnography challenges conventional ways of conducting and writing qualitative research (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Sparkes, 2002). This is why qualitative researchers who employ autoethnography are subjected to criticism. Power cannot be exercised without the production of regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980). Once you question the dominant way of knowing and acting in the social sciences you diminish the power and privilege of

those who conform to the dominant style of research. They're scared," Butterfly says softly. "They're scared and so they are lashing out at what is causing them to feel uneasy. Autoethnographers leave mainstream researchers feeling like 'the rug has been pulled out from under them' (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 443), even though this is not the autoethnographer's aim."

"This is all very nice, but how will you feel, Hannah, when you fail your defence?" Moth inquires, flying nearer and spreading fear back into my mind. I work on ignoring Moth.

Finale

I enter in black. I take my place covering the florescent green X that marks my spot. I have a few seconds to myself where I try to calm my breath and clear my mind of anything but the steps I've spent months memorizing. I take my first pose in the dark. The music starts and the lights come up slowly. I'm illuminated in a pool of light. I assume the audience sits eager and waiting, but with my head up and my eyes looking out I see no one and for a brief moment I can imagine I am dancing for myself and am therefore free to move as I please without the gaze of others on me, threatening to judge my every move (Foucault, 1995). I hold my pose for a moment, just long enough for the heat radiating from the lights overhead to threaten to throw off my concentration and tempt me to use any available body part to shield my face. Just as the heat is getting unbearable, I hear the musical cue and it's time to move. My memory takes over and I burst out in movement, my limbs moving wildly about me as I move about the stage. Butterfly is delighted. She has broken free, showing the audience what I have inside me. This still scares Moth stiff. "They will see how inflexible you are," she moans. "You are making yourself vulnerable to their judgments, putting yourself at risk of looking awkward, silly or pathetic if your attempts fail." "Just remember what your teachers have told you Hannah," Butterfly chimes in. "All moves are good

moves.” I think about this, one of Reaction Dance’s mottos, which I have heard continuously over the past several months. I then look to the other dancers for guidance. They have all been here longer than me, some with previous dance and/or performance training, others introduced to dance only when they began dancing with Reaction Dance. They move around the stage fluidly now, some on foot, some on wheels, but all reaching out to their fellow dancers and to the audience.

As I dance, I realize that my peers have allowed me to “open up new ways of interpreting the body in dance, thereby enabling a radical shift in aesthetic and a less judgmental view of [my] own and others’ bodies” (Whatley, 2007, p. 20). Indeed, my fellow Crew members have inspired me to move more confidently and with purpose in and through the expectations surrounding ability, legitimacy and validity in dance that hang in limbo between us and our own assumptions and us and the audience’s assumptions (Whatley). In challenging the image of the ideal body and corresponding movement aesthetic in dance, my fellow Crew members also encourage me to complicate dominant notions of what constitutes beautiful, powerful and valid bodies and movements. Even though our annual performance is a relatively safe place for me to attempt to abandon the discourses that dominate my knowledge of dance performance, I still feel vulnerable to the audience members’ gazes. I have learned, however, that I am not powerless against this gaze. I know I can exercise power as resistance because I am aware of the purpose of the gaze (Foucault, 1995). I know it wants to discipline my body and subvert my new found way of knowing and being in dance. I am aware that the notion of the valid and legitimate dancer and dance technique relies on the subversion of the bodies I move with on stage. Moth pleads with me to revert back to my old ways of moving on stage: “Not everyone can be a dancer. You can’t cut it. Stop humiliating yourself” The longer I dance, however, the less I find myself listening to Moth.

Final Bow

"You did it" Butterfly shrieks with excitement. "Take a bow." I must admit, I do feel rather proud of myself. "Proud or self-indulged?" Moth asks sarcastically. I ignore her. "You have every right to be proud," Butterfly exclaims. "You've performed in several major integrated dance productions over the past few months with The Crew and contributed to a group that is inserting into the contemporary dance culture a new dance aesthetic (Kuppers, 2000). And you have also completed an autoethnographic story as part of your Master's of Arts degree requirements, further troubling the notions of legitimacy and validity in not only dance, but also qualitative research." And writing an autoethnography was certainly no easy feat, I sigh. I was so afraid of what my committee would think of my choice to employ autoethnography that I almost allowed this fear to paralyze me to the point where I was in serious danger of abandoning this challenging but advantageous methodology or not finishing at all. "I still wish you had decided to let the autoethnography go," sulks Moth. I'm surprised I have not been able to sway Moth's affections towards autoethnography even in the slightest. "It's not me you should be worried about" Moth says. "It's your committee members who have the task of evaluating your thesis." "Maybe her committee members will start writing autoethnographies, too!" suggests Butterfly. "Not likely," Moth snorts. "Hear her out," suggests Butterfly.

Well, Ellis (2004) noted that autoethnographic inquiry is particularly useful when an experience, epiphany or crisis challenges one's existing construction of meaning. Given Ellis's claim, would it not seem logical for those who feel that autoethnographers have become lost in the narrative turn to themselves take up autoethnography as a means of understanding the tensions they are experiencing and the hostility they direct toward this form of ethnography?

“Must we antagonize our committee members?” Moth shoots back. I mean, I continue, when I apply Ellis’s claim to my own experiences, I can see that integrated dance has indeed challenged and altered my construction of dance, dancing bodies and ability in the studio and on stage and beyond these spheres into other areas of society, while autoethnography has troubled my understanding of valid and legitimate forms of qualitative research. Using autoethnography to tease out these tensions has certainly helped me. “Yes, but what contribution can writing an autoethnography about these experiences possibly make the greater body of social knowledge?” Moth demands skeptically. I think for a brief moment before responding to Moth. My autoethnography presents a clear example of how knowledge – be it of integrated dance or stories of the self, can be systematically devalued, disqualified and subjugated through dominant discourses and regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980). Furthermore, autoethnography’s evocative quality seeks to connect readers with the story and help them to identify with what was experienced and felt by the author (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Kidd & Finlayson, 2009). In my case, I want my readers to identify with the tensions I encountered in challenging dominant discourses in contemporary dance and in qualitative research. I hope that through a vivid portrayal of the everyday dilemmas I faced, the reader can establish a connection with dominant discourses in areas of their own lives, and thereby be encouraged to question how these discourses came to be, why they persist, and what they can do to become active agents for change in their lives, their communities and their society.

“How exciting” Butterfly shrieks. I can’t agree more. I expect to hear Moth object, but she is silent. In the distance, I catch a glimpse of Moth flying away. She has abandoned her attempts to sway me in the “right” direction for the moment and appears now to be attracted – perhaps fatally, to the glow of the stage lights.

Endnotes

¹ Reaction Dance is a fictitious name for the dance company that was the focus of this research.

² The term “integrated” implies the inclusion of persons with and without disabilities in the same activities. Integrated dance will be used throughout this paper as it is the term preferred by the participating dance organization.

³ I am inspired by one of my fellow dancers, Johnny, to refer to the participating integrated company as “The Crew”. This is a fictitious name applied to the company to protect anonymity.

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Conclusions: Bringing the Dance to a Close

At a week long integrated dance workshop last May, I sat amongst dozens of eager dance students of all ages and abilities and listened attentively to Alito Alessi, a pioneer in integrated dance in North America, discuss the current state of integrated contemporary dance. He shared his vision of a contemporary dance world open to persons of all abilities stating, “integrated dance is not something special for disabled people. It is not something special for those who are not disabled. It is not special at all. It is simply how it should be” (A. Alessi, personal communication, May 23 2010). Alessi also echoed others in the field (Benjamin, 2002; Fortin, Vieira & Tremblay, 2009; Koppers, 2000) who have noted that although contemporary dance is supposed to be a departure from the dominant classical dance aesthetic and related ideals, it is apparent that contemporary dance has yet to embrace the Otherness of integrated dance and dancers. Indeed, most avid contemporary dance spectators, especially those in Canada, would probably have a difficult time naming an integrated dance company or piece. Through the use of Foucauldian theory (1980, 1988, 1990, 1995), and specifically technologies of power and the understanding of discourse as a form of modern power, and technologies of the self, this thesis makes a contribution to our scholarly understanding of how people respond to competing discourses in the social world - and what is at stake in reinforcing and/or challenging dominant discourses.

Existing Research

Research to date that has explored integrated dance has yet to attend to the unique challenges community level integrated dance groups face in gaining recognition, appreciation, and professional status. Instead, the available literature on integrated dance has focused on analyzing the practices, performances, and to a lesser extent, members’

experiences of being in professional dance companies that have been well established for decades (Cooper-Albright, 1997; Davies, 2008; Sherlock, 1996) and on dance curricula in university settings (Kuppers, 2000; Whatley, 2007). As such, little is known about community level integrated companies, which have typically received limited recognition in their local dance communities and/or are currently going through the transition from community level programming to professional level performance. Furthermore, the majority of the literature has focused on dancers with physical disabilities, which has marginalized accounts of integrated dancers with other disabilities and those without disabilities.

Filling the Gap

Both stand-alone papers in this thesis focused on teasing out the discourses that simultaneously inhibited and enabled the actions of dancers in one integrated company and the tensions that ensued as a result of this modern power struggle; as such, though they are separate, the papers should be seen as being linked to the same overall project. Both papers illuminate the ways in which dominant discourses, bodies of knowledge, and relations of power in contemporary integrated dance and academe can be challenged and/or reinforced.

For the first stand-alone paper in this thesis, I employed ethnographic fieldwork to present the challenges the members of one integrated dance company faced in gaining recognition and support for an integrated aesthetic in the broader contemporary dance community in one urban Canadian city. Social discourses are direct reflections of the society in which they are created and circulated. Research has demonstrated that the legitimate form of dance and the dancing body was created based on societal and cultural ideals of perfection and ableism (Gard, 2006; Sherlock, 1996). Accordingly, binaries of normal/abnormal and able-

bodied/disabled permeate dance practices and create and reinforce discourses of legitimate/privileged and illegitimate/marginalized forms of dance and dancers. These binaries create a dilemma for dancers who wish to promote an inclusive and accessible form of dance, while also gaining access to the privileges available for those groups who produce works deemed legitimate forms of professional dance, namely increased opportunities in the field, recognition and funding; yet, prior to this study, these tensions were poorly understood. To better understand them, I used an ethnographic approach to achieve and share a “thick” understanding of these tensions and the challenges of resisting dominant discourses.

In the second stand-alone paper, I used autoethnography to explore my own experiences in integrated dance and focused on the challenges I faced in negotiating space for integrated dance in my own understandings of dance and dancing bodies and also in integrating my selves and my research into integrated dance and qualitative research. Integrated dance and some emerging forms of qualitative research face similar challenges to gaining acceptance as being valid in their respective domains. Like dancers in integrated companies, qualitative researchers are also presented with conflicting discourses surrounding what seems to be a fine line between acceptable and legitimate or unacceptable and illegitimate ways of conducting and writing research. While recent years have marked pivotal changes in moving qualitative research away from forms that emulated studies conducted by quantitative researchers, certain forms of qualitative scholarship, such as autoethnography or personal narrative research, have faced substantial scrutiny (Atkinson, 2006; Coffey, 1999; Gans, 1999), which has been passed on to those who choose to employ this methodology (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Giles & Williams, 2007; Sparkes, 2000, 2002). To date, there has been a dearth of autoethnographic accounts of

participation in integrated dance. As a result, I chose to use autoethnography to show the impact dominant discourses can have on the minds and bodies of dancers, scholars, and society in general.

The two papers presented in this thesis make a novel contribution to our scholarly understanding of integrated dance by including the perspectives of all members of an integrated group, including the co-directors, dancers with physical and developmental disabilities, and me, the only dance student without a disability in the company at the time. Furthermore, as opposed to merely analyzing the capacity for a particular integrated performance to either resist or reinforce ideals in dance, as past research has emphasized, in this thesis I have examined the reasons behind the dancers' decisions to either challenge or follow dominant discourses in dance. In teasing out the "why" behind the dancers' decisions I was able to shed light on the dilemmas the dancers faced as they worked toward achieving professional status. My research findings further indicate that those with and without disabilities have roles to play in enabling integrated programming to promote the greater ethical agenda of achieving inclusive and accessible communities and the vision of disability as one more possibility in the breadth of humanity.

Future Challenges

Integrated dance is still a relatively new genre in contemporary dance, especially in Canada, and therefore dancers in integrated companies face challenges in gaining recognition and appreciation for their work. As social discourses of ableism permeate all areas of society, what will be needed to create contemporary dance environments, classes, and audiences that integrate and accept a wider variety of dancing bodies and styles of movement into their deeply engrained understandings of dance? Arguably, a change is needed at the cultural level – a change

in the values, beliefs and customs found in contemporary dance and elsewhere in society (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The current culture in contemporary dance marginalizes diversity, inclusion, and innovation in aesthetics. To start the process of bringing about change, one that some may argue is becoming increasingly accepted in other areas of society, dance companies could begin by embracing a dance aesthetic that engages with a broader range of dancerly-bodies by showcasing performances that include dancers with and without disabilities (Kuppers, 2000). Indeed, some scholars have called for the use of dancers with and without disabilities to juxtapose one another in positions and roles that challenge those prescribed through dominant discourses in order to resist these discourses (Cooper-Albright, 1997; Kuppers, 2000; Sherlock, 1996).

Like dance, research also has an important role to play in challenging dominant and often exclusionary societal discourses. By troubling the conventions surrounding what topics are worthy of study, who can be considered a credible author, and how findings can be presented in a legitimate fashion, those who take-up autoethnography can challenge discourses of validity, credibility and generalizability that are privileged in qualitative research (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Kimpson, 2005; Sparkes, 2000; 2002). Those who choose to employ autoethnography can also expose how knowledge is socially constructed and how through discourse some ways of seeing and being in the world become known as valuable and valid while other ways are deemed as being quite the opposite. Changing the culture in contemporary dance or qualitative research will not happen over night; instead, it will be a long and gradual process. Nevertheless, when hierarchies and binaries are troubled in one area of society, such as dance or qualitative research, there is hope that individuals will question dominant discourses in other areas of their lives and act to challenge claims to Truth.

Further qualitative research that examines the perspectives of participants in integrated programming, both those individuals with disabilities and those without, is needed in order to determine how diversity and inclusion are encouraged and maintained during these transitional societal times from segregated to integrated programs and communities. Research on integrated dance in particular could benefit from studies that shed light on how integrated groups elsewhere in Canada or abroad have gained recognition and status as professional companies and the impact such status and recognition has on the group's goals, especially if these goals include advocating for greater social impacts such as inclusion in all social spheres. Finally, a more nuanced understanding of the extent to which and how programs like community level integrated dance programs and professional integrated dance performances can challenge participants' and spectators' understandings of their social world and whether or not such programs can/do lead to greater inclusion in society would make a strong contribution to our scholarly understanding of dance's role in shaping societal norms and practices.

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Contributions

Hannah Irving developed, designed, and undertook this thesis, its theorization, analysis and writing.

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