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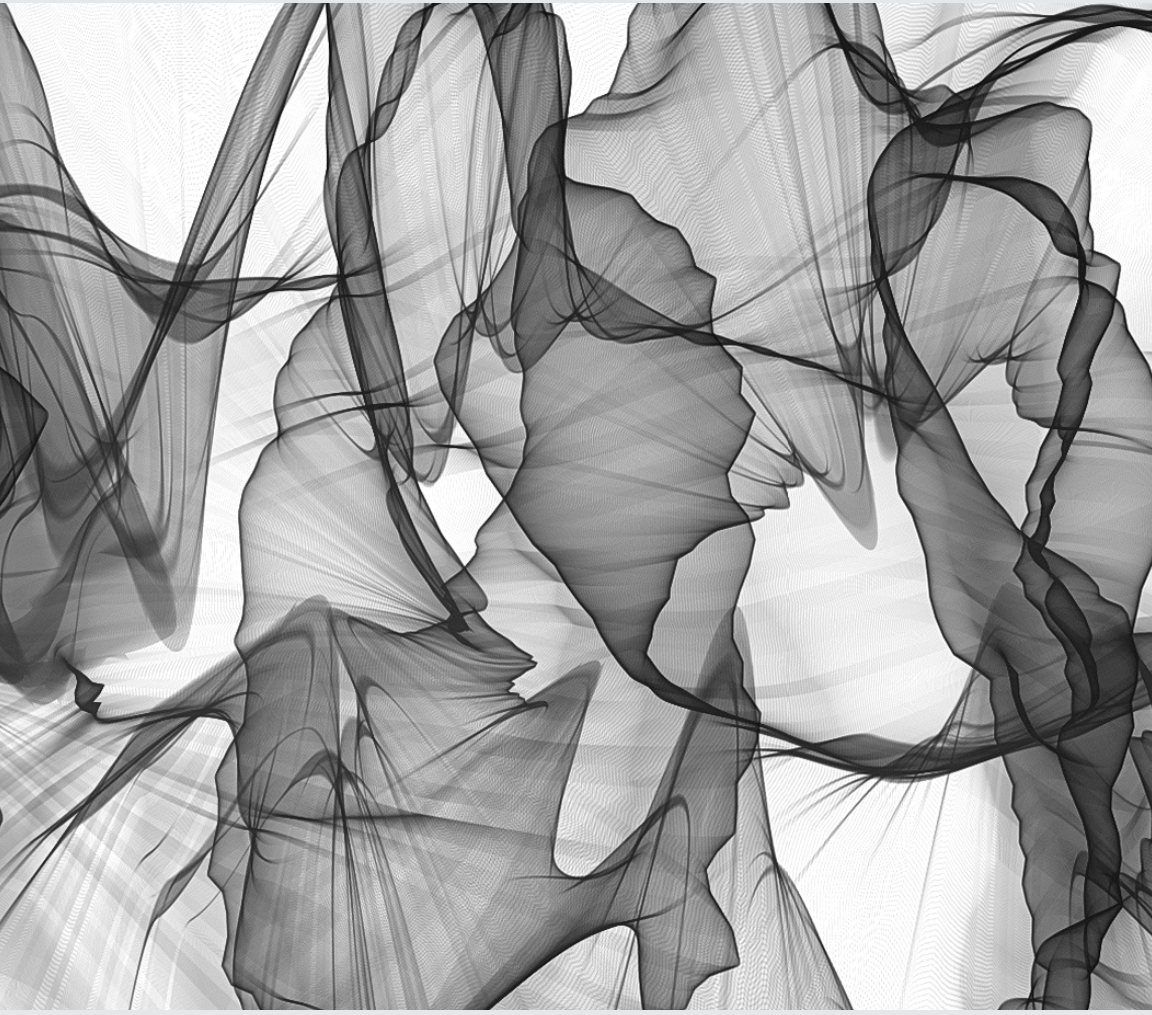

Denise Handlarski, Akanksha Misra, Margarita Levine, Jacqui Getfield, Pooja Bhatia Narang and many more

JOHANNA KIRK

"Sisters in the Struggle": Can Postmodern Dance Make Space for Dancer Parents?

Forged in the wake of the antiestablishment and antibourgeois movements of the 1960s, postmodern dance in the United States has long prided itself on its nonelitism and its inclusivity of dancer body types and life experiences. However, even today, the postmodern professional dance world is particularly unhospitable to dancers with children and dancers who are pregnant. In this article, I describe a meeting between female dancers with dependents who were grappling with how the dance world might make room for dancer parents. In this meeting, they were offered the challenge to become "solidarity for themselves" and to carve out spaces together to make dance culture more parent centred, or at least more parent friendly. I discuss why this challenge was met with apprehension and skepticism by some professional dancers with children and why matters of dancers' and choreographers' race complicated their conversations about maternal rights and dance professionalism. I proceed to discuss how some dance communities (especially those of colour) have created their own systems of pre-, ante- and postnatal care within their professional dance spaces, which fully avoid allopathic medicine and rely instead on webs of somatic practitioners and their own body intuition to monitor and optimize their health. For example, dancers become trained as doulas and organize community meetups and movement classes, in which individuals can enjoy a safe space and are encouraged to represent their personal experiences through their moving bodies. I interpret this culture making through dance as an important intervention in healthcare as well as in the postmodern professional dance world.

A largely overlooked reality of the professional dance world is that it is populated primarily by females who are, quietly, making decisions about pregnancies and parenthood during their choreographic and performance careers. In my experiences as a student of dance and a dance professional, pregnancy and parenting were never directly discussed nor were the dilemmas

they create for many dancers. This was the case even in my world of postmodern dance, which in contrast to many professional genres welcomes diverse dancer body types and life experiences. Forged in the wake of the antiestablishment and antibourgeois movements of the 1960s, postmodern dance in the United States (US) has long prided itself on its nonelitism and gender equity. However, although the concerns and aesthetics of postmodern dance emphasize egalitarianism, pregnant and maternal bodies remain largely absent from its dance culture, making them an intriguing litmus test for postmodernism's professed inclusiveness.

Today, as an academic who works between dance and qualitative health research, I study postmodern dancers' diverse experiences of pregnancy and maternity and how dancing reveals, supports, or complicates these experiences. Moreover, I investigate how the practices of postmodern dance—such as bearing witness, making sense of bodies through attunement to sensation, creatively responding to unfamiliar experiences of self, and creating sharable and trusting communities with others—can enrich practices of pre- and postnatal care. Through my work, I appreciate dances and choreographic processes that productively destabilize conventional ideas about dancers' bodies, mothers' bodies, and the power dynamics of the art world, and I recognize choreographies and performances by pregnant individuals and parents that confront professional dance culture with its implicit exclusions. I celebrate choreographic works and company models that productively stretch who can participate in concert dance while also acknowledging that this work of stretching boundaries from the inside is challenging and occurs despite multiple points of friction.

Speaking to these points of friction, this article aims to shed light on the stresses that dancer-mothers face as they strive to balance their commitments to parenting and their vocation. It excavates a roundtable discussion revelatory of how and why many dancers are reticent to engage their motherhood in their creative work and why some, in the name of professionalism, keep their artistic and private lives decidedly separate. The examined conversation also exposes how dancers' separate-spheres attitude, which might protect their livelihoods, protects a (patriarchal) status quo and puts additional invisible labour on mothers in both their professional and family lives. Not only does this conversation disclose dancer perceptions of the ways in which race does and does not meaningfully intersect with their ideas about professionalism as well as their praxes of parenting, but it also reveals and problematizes perceptions, largely among white dancers, of why Black dance spaces are more hospitable to maternal bodies—perceptions that hamper mothers' intradance solidarity work. The roundtable launched a call to action for mothers to be change makers within the dance field; however, the dialogue illuminates the obstacles (many of which are deeply internalized by dancer-parents) that interfere with

mother-artists rallying behind such a call. Thus, it offers a case study in why progress toward mother-embracing professional dance spaces is slow.

My Entry into This Work

I know at an embodied level both the pleasure and precarity of life as an experimental dancer-choreographer in an urban hub. After my undergraduate studies in dance at Barnard College, I stayed in New York City gigging as a freelance performer and choreographer. During this time, I regularly took classes at Movement Research—a nonprofit organization that offers dance instruction, workshops, residencies, and performance opportunities for free or at low cost. Movement Research aligned with my artistic and pedagogical values, with its focus on improvisation, postmodern dance, and experimentation as well as its dedication to dance as not only an artform but also a vehicle for community building and a practice with a "vital role within society" (Movement Research). Per its mission statement, the organization "strives to reflect the cultural, political and economic diversity of its moving community, including artists and audiences alike," and part of the way that it works to meet this goal is by offering regular programing that engages artists and audiences not only in collective movement practices but also in discussion of the dance field at large, the political and social climates surrounding it, and how dancers might build toward its best and most inclusive future (Movement Research). Towards these ends and to address emerging whispers of discontent among dancers with dependents, in 2017, Movement Research organized a studies project to explore the question "Does the dance field make room for dancer parents?"

From my situation now as an interdisciplinary academic researcher, I feel implicated and deeply enmeshed in dance while also—especially with the passage of time and my personal journeys into motherhood and academia—invested in reflecting on it from new perspectives and with measured criticality. Likewise, my scholarly subdisciplines of motherhood studies and the medical humanities have helped me to gain a useful vantage point on the dance world as have my research methods, rooted in feminist qualitative interviewing and interpretive phenomenology (how individuals perceive and make sense of the phenomena of their bodies). To better understand dancer-choreographers' perceptions of the relationships between professional dance culture and parenthood, in 2019, I began IRB-approved, boots-on-the-ground research in New York City, during which I collected interviews with experimental choreographers who are parents, about their lived experiences of their bodies in familial and professional spaces. I did ethnographic research in intradance circles of care and compiled interviews with dancer-parents, which I examined using the inductive analysis technique of grounded theory (Charmaz). I also

conducted archival research in New York City dance collections and centres, during which I encountered a recording of a roundtable conversation that was part of the aforementioned Movement Research project. It discussed the titular question and was open to the larger dance and New York City performance communities. I was happy to uncover this recording, as several of my interviewees mentioned the event during our conversations and remembered it as a watershed moment, which broke a long silence within the dance world about the pressures of juggling careers and families. As a former member of the subculture of dance that orbits around Movement Research, I was familiar with the panelists, and I had recently been in conversation with the moderator, Nia Love, who was in artistic residence in the university department where I was teaching. What is more, I recognized many of the recorded voices of those in the audience, some of whom were among my interviewees (although I respect their anonymity within this article).

I find this to be a timely conversation to revisit five years hence, when dancers, many of whose livelihoods remain on hold due to the COVID-19 crisis, face unprecedented financial strain, overlapping with unprecedented childcare responsibilities. My interviews have shown me that many dancers are having to rely more than ever on their dance training, philosophies, praxes, and communities to be their village for creative making, selfcare, and childcare. I contend that the majority-female dance world has a unique capacity to support women's health and maternal rights, but to do so, it must first overcome stubborn inertia rooted in artists' respect for tradition. That being said, every day, mother-artists productively expand and transgress the boundaries of traditional concert dance and, in so doing, manifest not only innovative art but also a dance culture that welcomes and supports more individuals' experiences. To recognize as much, this article closes by appreciating the work of contemporary vanguard mother-dancer-choreographers who are actively culture building to create the dance spaces that they personally need and feel other parents deserve.

Parenting as a Burden or a Boon to Choreographic Processes and Company Culture, and the Challenge of Claiming Full Personhood in Dance

When the Movement Research roundtable discussion on parenthood convened, Samantha Speis—current codirector of the celebrated US dance company Urban Bush Women and mother of two—was among the handful of artists invited to contribute. In addition to being the only panelist working in the space between postmodernism and African diasporic dance, she was also the only Black panelist—that is, aside from Love, the moderator, who is a mother of four, grandmother of two, and has decades of experience navigating the experimental dance world as a parent. It was quickly apparent that when it

came to facing and fearing dance world discrimination based on becoming pregnant or having additional child-related needs, Love's and Speis's experiences differed tremendously from their colleagues'. For instance, Speis explained that Urban Bush Women faced zero penalties if they decided to have children, and not only were children welcomed into rehearsal and performance spaces, but they were also treated as valued members of the company—members whose needs informed the company's needs. With this security and support, she, her codirector Chanon Judson, a mother of three, and other Urban Bush Women were undeterred from starting families while dancing with the company. What is more, Speis's two daughters, Aminata and Aicha, accompanied their mother to every rehearsal, performance, and on every tour (as they had in-utero), and Aminata even performed with the company as a toddler in Speis's 2018 choreography *Hair & Other Stories*.

In contrast to Speis, the rest of the panel spoke of the immense financial, physical, and emotional stresses of pregnancy and parenthood within the postmodern dance field and the unequal treatment they received because they had chosen to be parents. Speis, who had brought her daughter Aminata to the panel, was compassionate but could not relate to these experiences. Dancing for Zollar while pregnant and then with a baby in tow instilled in her fierce confidence to unapologetically declare without qualification: "I shouldn't be judged for having a child. I shouldn't apologize for bringing life into this world." After all, this was just, she explained, "owning what [her] reality is." Having had her experiences with Zollar, she refused to be involved in any projects that did not make space for her as a "whole person," and being "whole," for her, meant her children would always have the right to occupy the same space as their mother, just as they had when she was pregnant with them. She emphasized: "My reality is I have a daughter, and she goes everywhere with me, [and] if you don't want me in your space, then I don't want to be in your space!" When Aminata was born, the Urban Bush Women treated her not as a baby to be tolerated but as the eighth person in the otherwise seven-member company. Speaking to the disparity between her professional experiences and those of her peers, she concluded: "It really makes me think about how we [the experimental dance community] think about … professionalism and the thoughts and the assumptions around children and parents." In saying this, she presented a challenge; she put responsibility not on those in positions of power or on a biased system outside of the panelists, which was inflicting inequities upon them, but directly on herself and her peers. She suggested that together, they could change their thinking and assumptions and thereby develop their ideas of what is possible in dance spaces.

Perhaps feeling affronted by her bold self-assertions and also doubtful that Speis truly felt no shame or anxiety about bringing her child to rehearsals, copanelists pressed her: "But who takes care of your baby when you're

performing?" To this, Love and Speis answered in emphatic unison: "the company!" Others were incredulous that such could be the case—that parenthood could be copacetic with professional dance company culture. In retort, one panelist described her preference for keeping her art and family in totally separate mental and physical spaces because she did not want to "burden the work with her messy life." Another seconded this sentiment, adding how hard she had worked to be taken seriously as an artist and how she now worked hard not to lose the ground that she had gained by letting others see her (in her mind, pejoratively) as a "mommy." These artists painstakingly guarded their personally erected barricades between art and life, making it impossible to fathom themselves as both mothers and serious dance professionals. Their comments, in addition to exemplifying a pressure felt by many working mothers regardless of career path, belied a lack of experience with (even incredulity towards) professional environments in which collaborative childcare is part of the company culture.

Examining What Divides and What Connects Mothers in Dance: Intersections of Race and Motherhood and the Possibility of Othermothering within Dance Company Culture

As the panel progressed, Love and Speis continued to voice their lived experiences of dancing and parenting, which were distinctive from their peers'. As white attendees spoke to these differences, race gradually entered the subtext of the conversation. Eventually, one panelist said outright what others were dancing around—that Speis's positive experiences had to do with her being a "Black woman working in a Black company." In other words, she ventured that Black dance spaces are more inclusive of dancers' lives outside of dance. The panelist continued that in her "white space" of professional dance, the attitude was more "No! We're not gonna take all of you. We're gonna take the one part that we can control." To this, there was a hum of agreement among others in the room.

Now, there are histories within many Black communities—including communities in Africa, the African diaspora, and the US—of communal childcare within extended families and networks of friends and neighbours. However, especially in the US, biological mothers are often different from children's primary caregivers because of economic necessity—not tradition or cultural preferences and certainly not because of skin colour. As race, class, and gender scholar Patricia Hill Collins argues, charging one person with full responsibility for mothering a Black child is often not feasible for Black parents because mothers have to bring income into their families. Consequently, othermothers—women who assist "bloodmothers" by sharing mothering responsibilities—have traditionally been central to parenting (Troester).

It is possible to see the Urban Bush Women as othermothers for company children. For example, Love described rehearsing a piece with Speis and Zollar at Jacob's Pillow, the storied dance retreat tucked away in the Berkshire mountains, during which Speis "strapped that baby to her back and … did all of the work, and when she couldn't, somebody just took the baby and somebody else had the baby and strapped the baby … " Her words merged with and then faded to a pantomime of the choreography of deftly passing a baby between ready hands, which attached that baby to various bodies within the larger body of the company. She appreciated how, through this collective choreography of care, rehearsal continued without incident.

Still, the audience members' insinuation that motherhood is easier for Black dancers took the conversation into rocky territory. Indeed, motherhood is never simpler for Black women in the US—a country with a history of forced hysterectomies, rape, and medical experimentation affecting women of colour. Unlike many white women, especially those who are not poor, women of colour are burdened with multiple oppressions simultaneously, which affect their experiences of and access to maternal support both inside and outside of dance. Furthermore, in addition to the transgenerational trauma that Black women carry in their bodies, the daily stress of racism, stereotyping, racial profiling, and what psychologist Joy DeGruy has defined as "posttraumatic slave syndrome" affects Black women's psychological and physiological health while making many reticent to look for healing resources within the medical system. Considering the history of violence towards Black women in the US and the history of white patriarchy violently interfering in their fertility, Black women have, out of necessity, created traditions of intracommunity maternity care. Such traditions are strong and offer models for larger community organizing around motherhood, and such traditions certainly exist in dance.

However, within the Movement Research conversation, the type of communal childcare modelled by the Urban Bush Women was attributed solely to company members' skin colour; thus, other intersectional aspects of dancers' identities that both require and inspire their company model (aspects of identity that they may share with non-Black dancers) were overlooked. Problematically, such selective attention and hasty conjecturing by white dancers forward counterproductive and false binaries between Black and white spaces of dance and Black and white experiences of motherhood. Such unnecessary categorization and differentiation directly counteract the work that is possible if mothers band together and work from shared experiences towards shared goals. Furthermore, and as critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw argues, there is no existing discourse that addresses the intersectional complexity of pervasive stereotypes of Black motherhood. I contend that spaces of dance are conducive to initiating new strands of discourse, as they foster choreographies and communities that appreciate and express the more

dimensional personhood of individuals and that offer new points of connection between individuals who are participating in a common project and invested in a shared vision. However, when white dancers assume, wrongly, that Black dancers are both more maternal and, implicitly, less professional than white dancers (as they did in the Movement Research panel), they bolster simplistic and divisive broader patterns of social thought and reinforce reductive stereotypes. They thereby limit what dance and dancing communities can be and do and who they can include.

Philosopher and political activist Angela Davis argues that through art, it becomes possible to create a community of resistance to white patriarchy: "Art can assist people to learn not only about the objective forces at work in the society in which they live, but also about the intensely social character of their interior lives. Ultimately it can propel people toward social emancipation" (200). Yet a prerequisite to such emancipatory work is that erroneous beliefs about how race divides need to be reexamined and, where appropriate, superseded by shared priorities to work towards furthering all mothers' rights and wellbeing in the dance world as well as racial equity in and across motherhood. Following Davis, the imaginative acts and fresh collaborations that are at the heart of dancemaking will naturally lead mother-dancers into uncharted territory and reveal what is possible together; however, the path must first be cleared of false and polarizing race-based assumptions. Only then, can collaborative innovation transpire.

Working towards Becoming "Sisters in the Struggle"

In the context of the Movement Research panel, Love asserted that the choreography of mutual caregiving worked within Urban Bush Women not because it was a company composed of Black women, somehow innately endowed with the capacity or the impulse to collectively mother, but because it was a company that with the exception of one male member was entirely female and—especially because all-female, female-directed companies are still rarities in the dance world—they valued what their situation afforded them. They also shared an understanding of the economic precarity of both making a life in dance and sustaining the type of company they were carefully manifesting together. Consequently, each artist was willing to make certain commitments in the interest of sustaining Urban Bush Women and its distinctive methods of making art and community. Love clarified that male choreographers (or male-minded choreographers) can have empathy for mothers, but "empathy doesn't support what we're doing" because what Urban Bush Women was doing was actively appreciating what is possible and possibly better when mothers and children are fully included and supported in creative processes. She continued that what does support the simultaneity of mothering

and making art is to have "sisters in the struggle," which, like Speis, she invited the other panelists to be for one another. Echoing Speis, she encouraged the room to create for themselves communities in which they hold space for one another to be artists and mothers without apology and with gratitude for how this mutual support enriches everyone's experiences. In other words, Love argued that maternal solidarity need not have anything to do with race. It is a matter of sisterhood, and this sisterhood, as achieved by Urban Bush Women, needs to be the work of mothers looking to change their daily professional lived reality.

In her own experiences within the postmodern dance world, Love fondly remembered US experimental choreographer Liz Lehrman, who is white, being the first artist to employ her once she had a daughter. At the time, Lehrman had no children of her own. However, welcoming Love's child furthered her goal to deconstruct the notion of patriarchy as it permeated experimental dance and to proactively invite more bodies into her art. In other words, inviting Love and her daughter into her professional space was not a maternal instinct; it was a political act, and it was her choice as someone with the power to create and model for audiences and other makers new ways for people to be and make together. She was a sister in the struggle and a maternal ally.

Backwards Steps and Baby Steps as We Work towards "Solidarity for Ourselves"

As the Movement Research panel drew to a close, Love asked the panelists the following: "When do we become solidarity for ourselves? … Can we move in this revolution or are we trying to dismantle the master's house with the same fucking tools?" With fervency, she continued: "Are we really gonna dismantle this patriarchy that keeps always burning and breaking us down? I feel like we can do something more, and we're not."

After several moments of tense silence, another panelist hesitantly spoke but only to shift the conversation back to a familiar track—the pressure she feels as a mid-career artist not to lose the sparse dance opportunities that she currently received by imprudently rocking the proverbial boat. Others rallied behind this sentiment, which also offered an alternative to, in that moment, committing to the sisterhood work Love was charging them to do. However, one panelist cut in and returned focus to Love's challenge. Addressing the moderator directly, she said that although she had a hard time fathoming herself organizing and resisting in the ways that Love was encouraging her to do, to hear how Love, Speis, and Lehrman "completely reject" the patriarchal status quo was inspiring. She continued: "It's hard to unlearn fifteen years of professional training and twenty years of training before that." These

experiences had taught her never to expect to be asked "What do you need?" but rather to make her life outside of the work appear to disappear so as to uphold the willing suspension of disbelief that artists are only their art. While afraid to make a next move, she was excited that there could be "a different way to do things"—that parent-choreographers could become solidarity for themselves. In that moment, a baby step towards sisterly solidarity in postmodern dance was made.

Later, another step was made at a Jacob's Pillow talk back, in which Speis and her two daughters shared a single folding chair—the physical, professional space that Speis was allotted. As the camera person tightly focused shots to crop out her children for the purposes of video documentation and the others involved proceeded with the customary choreographies of a "serious" discussion, between "serious" people, about "serious" art, Speis proceeded to dexterously engage in a complex, compact improvisation of parenting while also eloquently responding to the moderator's questions. She did so until a sister in the struggle quietly intervened to bring another chair on stage for Aminata and another swept Aicha away from the stage lights and staring eyes. To be sure, such small steps of solidarity happen quietly every day in dance communities, and it is fortunate that they do, for such small steps of solidarity are requisite for artists like Speis to persevere with their art in the face of a dance culture that consistently tests such perseverance.

The Sisterhood and Birth Justice Praxes of Dancer-Doulas and Existing Intracommunity Choreographies of Care for Maternal Bodies in Dance

For her part, in addition to creating a welcoming space for pregnant persons and mothers in her own choreographies, Love supports her community as a birth doula. As a doula, she offers encouragement and care for friends and dance colleagues, such as Urban Bush Women dancers Marjani Forté-Saunders and Paloma McGregor. Doula-ing is also part of her intracommunity justice work—it is a means to protect and care for Black, brown, and Indigenous pregnant bodies, since these bodies have been and continue to be grossly mistreated by the medical system in the US. Recent data report that Black women in the US are 243 per cent more likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes than white women, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that Black and Indigenous women are two to three times more likely to die of preventable causes surrounding pregnancy than white women ("Memphis Midwives"; Center for Disease Control and Prevention). Some in the health sciences argue that because of racial bias, Black women in particular are less believed when they share symptoms and concerns, and this feeds a vicious cycle of distrust between physicians and patients. Low-income pregnant women of colour remain the most vulnerable,

the most stigmatized, and the most untrusting/untrusted in clinical spaces (Bridges). They are the least likely to receive adequate prenatal care and the most defenseless to having their bodies controlled by the medical-industrial complex.

In response, a growing population of experimental choreographers, like Love, offer supplemental or alternative maternity care, which incorporates the politics and sensitivities that inform their dancing bodies into their practices of care. For example, Ogemdi Ude integrates somatic healing methods from her dance background as well as her commitment as an art activist to the wellness of Black, brown, femme, and queer communities into her birth doula care. She advertises this care as nonjudgmental support that is "radically inclusive and affirming of POC, queer, and trans folks" (Ude). Testament to this budding phenomenon, Movement Research hosted *Passage: A Dialogue with Doulas, Dancers, and Caregivers*, and it began a new studies project exploring dancers whose embodied practices include doula-ing.

Other examples of experimental choreographers who have extended their movement praxes into care and advocacy for pregnant and parenting dancer populations include the following: Molly Lieber, who is a prenatal yoga teacher as well as a lactation consultant and hosts a breastfeeding support group (mollyslactationcounseling.com); Hilary Clark, who offers classes in pre- and postnatal Pilates as well as parental bodywork (www.citrinebrooklyn.com); Anna Carapetyan, who works as a birth doula and volunteers as an abortion doula (www.heartandmindbirth.com); Margaret Paek, who structures and guides a recurring dance improvisation jam for movers and their children (https://margaretpaek.com/page/1-Biography.html); Ana Maria Alvarez, who hosts a weekly podcast in which she interviews artist activists about their experiences of making while parenting (www.contra-tiempo.org/ana-maria-alvarez); Meg Foley, who created an ongoing conversation group exploring queer motherhood (www.megfoley.org/blood-baby.html); and parent allies like Miguel Gutierrez, who, as a company director, has made sure that pregnant and parent collaborators receive the compensation and conditions that they need to fully participate in his creative projects (www.miguelgutierrez.org).

What is more, many artists make dances surrounding pregnancies that create spaces, practices, and communities to protect their health and share their lived experiences. Such choreographers are typically independent artists in romantic partnerships with other artists or parenting on their own, and they sustain themselves in urban centres with high costs of living. Thus, regardless of their cultural, racial, or educational backgrounds, many are in financially precarious situations at the times of their pregnancies, and they continue to be as parents. Accordingly, their access to healthcare is often

bounded by state-specific statutes of Medicaid. As follows, part of their experience of pregnancy is confronting the limitations put on their body-selves by a society that, by and large, does not value their work in financially measurable ways and by a medical system that does not value their somatic self-awareness. However, as I explore in my current book project, for some, making work while pregnant offers tactics for self-definition, self-observation, and self-care, which directly combat their experiences of feeling defined, observed, and managed in clinical contexts.

Many such choreographers find in their dancing bodies the means to see and assess themselves without reliance on the objectifying *medical gaze*. Their dances, which involve regular praxes of deep somatic attention, allow for more individuated inventories of somatic flux, which they observe both as and with their bodies. Their self-observations allow them to participate in their bodily and personal transformations because their assessments are epistemologically different from those that label or rank the health and normalcy of their bodies. In other words, their self-aware artmaking allows them to experience themselves as the subjects of their own pregnant experiences, not the objects of medical experts' knowledge. Such artists explore their pregnancies artistically so as to interrupt choreographies of *medicalizing* pregnant bodies because in their dances, they render the evident and diagnosable unfamiliar and open to new meanings or opacities. These artists celebrate art's ability to overthrow accepted reference systems in favour of "deconstructivist unknowability" (Küppers, 2). Such overthrows matter because whereas medicine necessarily pursues certainty and tries to close the gap between one's body and its representations, art can and, I argue, should do the opposite. While medicine promotes "a translucent body whose data are visibly available," artists may experience and stage their bodies as unrecognizable (25). I appreciate the importance of dance artists' ability to insert new gaps or to reveal and explore the existing gaps in what the empiric system of medicine can know, show, and say about bodies by foregrounding what can be known only to/by individual bodies. Likewise, I appreciate how, choreographically, artists may position their pregnancies within their larger experiences of their bodies in society—including their experiences related to race, class, culture, and sexuality—and position their pregnancies within more dimensional personal stories, which also include stories of intentionally not becoming pregnant or stories of pregnancies resulting in abortions, miscarriages, still births, and adoptions.

For me, choreographers' navigations of the theoretical and physical spaces between bodies having biological, cultural, and artistic experiences of themselves create new possibilities for dance, new communities, and new experiential insights for witnesses to ponder. From my purview, all these gains are of value to a variety of discourses of the body—including health science, praxes of self-care, as well as social performances of health, self, ability, and

professionalism—as individuals continue to challenge and grow understandings of what it means to have a body, to reproduce, to create family, to create art, to be or not to be female, to be a mother, to take care of one another, and to "become solidarity for ourselves."

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