

All Bodies Dance Project: Exploring Inclusivity in Dance

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Ethics Statement

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Abstract

This report examines how All Bodies Dance Project (ABDP) fosters inclusivity and accessibility within both community-based and professional dance settings. Grounded in Disability Justice (DJ) principles and Community Cultural Development (CCD) methodologies, the research explores ABDP's current strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth. The study employs a qualitative, mixed-methods approach, including structured interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and arts-based reflections, alongside a literature review on disability arts and inclusive dance practices.

Findings highlight ABDP's success in creating a welcoming and nonjudgmental environment where participants feel valued, experience creative freedom, and develop deep personal and artistic connections. However, challenges persist in physical accessibility, transportation barriers, leadership representation, and engagement with underrepresented communities. Participants identified a need for greater clarity in performance pathways, expanded outreach efforts, and more disabled representation in leadership and teaching roles.

Recommendations include improving venue accessibility, increasing transportation support, expanding class offerings, strengthening outreach to marginalized groups, and developing mentorship programs for disabled artists. By addressing these areas, ABDP can continue its leadership in inclusive dance, providing a transformative and equitable space that challenges traditional notions of ability, performance, and artistic expression.

Keywords: Inclusive dance, Disability Justice, Community Cultural Development, Accessibility, Arts-based research

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List of Acronyms

ABDP	All Bodies Dance Project
CCD	Community Cultural Development
DJ	Disability Justice

Glossary

Community Cultural
Development (CDC)

CCD is a collaborative approach to cultural and artistic practice that empowers communities to shape and express their own identities. Rooted in equity, inclusion, and social justice, CCD emphasizes co-creation, amplifies marginalized voices, and uses art as a tool for community connection and social transformation. By prioritizing lived experiences and fostering capacity-building, CCD promotes cultural equity and long-term resilience within communities. See Arlene Goldbrand's *New Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* (2006)

Disability Justice (DJ)

Disability Justice is a framework that centres intersectionality, collective care, and the leadership of disabled people, particularly those from marginalized communities. Developed by disabled activists, it emphasizes access, interdependence, and the rejection of ableism. The principles advocate for systemic change, community empowerment, and the recognition of all bodies as valuable, fostering equity and inclusion across social, cultural, and political landscapes. See Sid Invalid's *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People* (2019)

Executive Summary

This project explores how All Bodies Dance Project (ABDP) can enhance inclusivity in its community-engaged and professional dance practices. It reflects on its alignment with Disability Justice (DJ) principles and Community Cultural Development (CCD) methodologies. Through this reflection, the project seeks to address barriers, celebrate diverse abilities, and foster equitable participation in dance, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability, can fully engage in artistic expression.

1.1. Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to develop actionable strategies that enhance accessibility and inclusivity within ABDP's programs. The project focuses on:

- Identifying strengths and gaps in ABDP's current practices.
- Developing strategies and methodologies that foster greater inclusivity in all aspects of programming.
- Increasing engagement with underrepresented participants and collaborators to reflect the diversity of the communities ABDP serves.
- Contributing to broader conversations on equity and inclusion in dance, positioning ABDP as a model for best practices in the arts sector.

1.2. Methodology

A qualitative approach was employed, incorporating multiple methods to ensure a holistic understanding of inclusivity:

- **Structured Interviews:** Engaged participants, instructors, staff, and board members to gather insights on their experiences with inclusivity and accessibility.
- **Participant Observation:** Observed ABDP programming (classes and performance) to witness how programming functions in terms of inclusivity.
- **Arts-Based Reflection:** Allowed participants to express their experiences through creative mediums (dance, drawing, creative writing), enriching the depth of collected data.
- **Literature Review:** Examined key works in disability arts, community development, and inclusive dance to provide a theoretical foundation.

1.3. Key Findings

1. **Strong Culture of Inclusivity:** ABDP creates welcoming, nonjudgmental spaces that prioritize accessibility and celebrate individual contributions, fostering a sense of belonging and community among participants of all abilities.
2. **Transformative Impact of Dance:** Participants report significant personal growth, including increased self-confidence, emotional well-being, and developing self-advocacy skills.

3. **Deep Community Engagement:** ABDP's focus on mutual respect and shared humanity strengthens connections among participants, with moments like warm welcomes and celebratory performances solidifying these bonds.
4. **Artistic Freedom and Exploration:** The program's emphasis on improvisation encourages authentic self-expression and challenges traditional notions of choreography, allowing participants to transform perceived limitations into creative strengths.
5. **Opportunities for Growth:** Accessibility barriers, such as physical infrastructure and transportation challenges, restrict full participation. Additionally, underrepresentation of individuals with disabilities in leadership roles highlights the need for increased inclusivity within the organization.

1.4. Recommendations

To advance inclusivity and accessibility, the following strategies are recommended:

1. **Enhance Accessibility**
 - a. Address physical barriers
 - b. Improve transportation support.
2. **Expand Community Reach**
 - a. Expand community programming to different geographic areas
 - b. Target underrepresented groups
- c. Foster visibility through collaborations, partnerships and events.
3. **Increase Representation**
 - a. Create leadership pathways for individuals with disabilities.
 - b. Prioritize individuals with disabilities in recruitment practices.
4. **Maintain Artistic Freedom**
 - a. Ensure open-ended exploration (improvisation) in classes
 - b. Encourage ongoing instructor re-training to refine inclusive facilitation practices.

By integrating these recommendations, ABDP can lead the way in creating transformative, inclusive dance environments that challenge systemic inequities and celebrate the diverse possibilities of human movement. The findings of this research not only serve ABDP but also contribute to the broader discourse on equity, accessibility, and representation in the dance sector.

1.5. Conclusion

ABDP is a pioneering model for inclusive dance, but opportunities remain to deepen accessibility, broaden community engagement, and strengthen leadership representation. By addressing these areas, ABDP can continue fostering a more diverse, accessible, and equitable dance environment for all.

Chapter 2.

Introduction

2.1. Background

ABDP operates at the intersection of community engagement and artistic practice, creating spaces where dancers of diverse abilities, backgrounds, and identities can come together to create and dance. With a commitment to inclusivity, ABDP champions the belief that dance is a universal language that should be accessible to everyone. However, the organization recognizes the need to deepen its practices of inclusivity. Specifically, the focus is on examining how ABDP aligns with DJ principles and CCD methodologies to ensure equitable participation. This research project was initiated to examine how ABDP can enhance its inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that its programming authentically reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of its community.

2.2. Project Partners

This research is being conducted in partnership with Simon Fraser University's Main 312 Research Shop. This collaboration brings together academic expertise and community-focused methodologies to support ABDP in advancing its goals of inclusivity and accessibility.

2.3. Problem Statement

While ABDP has made commendable strides in fostering inclusive dance environments, challenges remain regarding barriers to achieving inclusion from individuals with disabilities. There is an absence of a comprehensive framework to guide inclusivity efforts. These challenges are compounded by broader societal attitudes toward disability, which often manifest in exclusionary practices within the arts. Without deliberate strategies to address these issues, ABDP risks falling short of its goal to create equitable and welcoming spaces for all.

2.4. Scope

This study focuses on enhancing the inclusivity of ABDP's community-engaged and professional dance practices. It examines the organization's current strengths and areas for improvement, emphasizing alignment with DJ principles and CCD methodologies. The study is intentionally scoped to include the perspectives of dancers, instructors, staff, and board members, gathered through methods such as interviews, participant observation, and arts-based reflection. While the research highlights ABDP's specific context, the findings and recommendations are tailored to ABDP's unique needs and environment, and they may also offer valuable insights for other arts organizations seeking to adopt similar principles.

Chapter 3.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to develop actionable strategies that enhance the inclusivity of the ABDP community-engaged and professional dance practices. The project aims to foster more equitable participation and representation across all facets of ABDP's work. By addressing barriers to accessibility and inclusivity, the research seeks to strengthen ABDP's ability to serve its diverse community of dancers and collaborators.

3.1. Specific Objectives

- **Identify Strengths and Areas for Improvement:** Assess ABDP's current practices to highlight what is already working well and pinpoint opportunities for growth in fostering inclusivity.
- **Develop Actionable Frameworks:** Create frameworks and strategies that enhance accessibility, ensuring that these methodologies inform future programming and organizational practices.
- **Enhance Capacity for Diverse Engagement:** Increase ABDP's ability to engage participants and collaborators from a broader range of backgrounds and abilities, reflecting the diversity of the communities it serves.

These objectives directly address critical societal needs for equity and representation within the arts. By grounding its practices in DJ principles, ABDP acknowledges the systemic barriers that have historically excluded disabled individuals from meaningful participation in dance and cultural production. The project's focus on CDC methodologies ensures that inclusivity is approached holistically, valuing collaboration, cultural exchange, and community empowerment.

In fostering greater inclusivity, ABDP is positioned to challenge prevailing ableist norms in the arts, demonstrating the transformative potential of dance as a tool for social justice. The outcomes of this research not only benefit ABDP but also contribute to broader efforts to reimagine the arts as spaces where diversity is celebrated and all bodies are valued. By addressing these needs, the project aligns with ABDP's mission and serves as a model for other organizations seeking to center equity in their practices.

Chapter 4.

Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach to deeply explore the inclusivity practices within ABDP. Emphasizing participatory and arts-based methodologies, the research focuses on capturing the lived experiences, perspectives, and creative contributions of participants, instructors, staff and board members. By integrating observational and creative reflection methods, the study aims to uncover nuanced insights into the interplay between inclusivity and artistic practice.

4.2. Data Collection

A range of techniques has been employed to gather comprehensive data:

4.2.1. Structured One-on-One Interviews

Individual interviews with participants, instructors, staff members, and board members explored personal experiences with inclusivity in ABDP's programming. A series of 13 questions (See *Appendix A*) were asked to gain a comprehensive understanding of how inclusivity is experienced, implemented, and perceived within the organization. These questions were designed to explore participants' sense of belonging, moments of inclusion, and any barriers they encountered during their involvement with ABDP while also gathering suggestions for improving accessibility and representation.

The questions also aimed to uncover the ways in which ABDP's practices align with Disability Justice principles and Community Cultural Development methodologies. By capturing diverse perspectives from individuals across all levels of engagement, the interviews provided rich qualitative data to inform the analysis of ABDP's strengths and areas for development.

4.2.2. Arts-Based Reflection

The arts-based reflection process is a dynamic and inclusive methodology that captures participants' experiences through creative approaches such as drawing, movement exercises, and creative writing. These methods go beyond verbal articulation, allowing individuals to express complex emotions, embodied experiences, and personal insights in ways that align with their unique perspectives and abilities. Drawing provides a visual representation of themes like accessibility and belonging, offering symbolic and emotional dimensions of

participants' interactions. Movement exercises, rooted in the physical nature of dance, highlight how individuals navigate space and experience inclusivity within ABDP's environment. Creative writing adds depth through metaphor, storytelling, and introspection, complementing visual and movement-based outputs for a richer understanding of participants' journeys. (see *Appendix B*)

4.2.3. Participant Observation

Participant observation is a critical methodology in this research, allowing the researcher to gain firsthand insights into the practical dynamics of inclusivity within ABDP's activities. By attending classes, rehearsals, and performances, the researcher observed the real-time interactions between participants, instructors, and staff, noting how inclusivity is fostered or potentially restricted in these settings.

4.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis process is both iterative and thematic, designed to explore the depth and nuance of participant experiences within ABDP.

4.3.1. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis serves as the foundation, with transcribed interviews and observational notes undergoing detailed analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships. This method highlights the central ideas emerging from participant narratives, revealing connections between individual and collective experiences within the program.

4.3.2. Arts-Based Analysis

Arts-based analytical techniques honour the creative and embodied nature of dance. Visual and creative outputs, such as drawings and creative writing, were examined alongside other data. This approach emphasizes symbolic, emotional, and spatial elements, capturing the nuanced and embodied aspects of participants' engagement that might not be fully conveyed through verbal accounts alone.

4.3.3. Comparative Frameworks

Findings are examined through comparative frameworks to assess their alignment with broader principles of DJ and CCD methodologies. These

frameworks provide a lens for evaluating the extent to which ABDP's practices support equity, access, and collaboration. By identifying both strengths and gaps, this comparative approach ensures the analysis remains grounded in established theoretical models while also contributing to ongoing discussions about best practices in inclusive arts.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

The research process is guided by rigorous ethical standards to ensure the dignity, safety, and autonomy of all participants.

Informed Consent

Participants are provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, methods, and potential outcomes before providing consent.

Confidentiality

Data is anonymized to protect participant identities.

Accessibility

Data collection tools and formats are adapted to meet participants' needs, including providing alternative communication methods and ensuring physical accessibility of research venues.

Institutional Approval

The study has received ethical approval from Simon Fraser University's Ethics Review Board, ensuring compliance with standards for research involving human subjects. Ethics Approval #30002799

This robust methodological framework ensures that the research remains participatory, inclusive, and aligned with the values of ABDP and its community.

Chapter 5.

Findings & Results

5.1. Literature Review

This research explores the intersection of dance, DJ, and CCD, examining how inclusive practices can transform artistic and social landscapes. It aligns with DJ principles as outlined by Sins Invalid in *Skin, Tooth, and Bone* (2019), emphasizing interdependence, collective care, and the rejection of ableism. Simultaneously, it intersects with Arlene Goldbard's CCD methodologies (*New Creative Community*, 2006), which prioritize collaboration and cultural equity in artistic participation.

A central theme is the redefinition of inclusivity in dance as a practice that celebrates diverse abilities. Petra Kupperts (*Disability Arts and Culture*, 2019) and others discuss how inclusive dance challenges traditional aesthetic norms while fostering belonging and self-expression. Accessibility, both physical and relational, plays a key role in supporting collaboration among dancers of mixed abilities (Acton, 2021; Goodwin, 2019). Disability Justice provides a foundational framework, emphasizing intersectionality and systemic change. Scholars like Judith Smith and Alida Anderson highlight the importance of leadership and pedagogy in fostering equitable, inclusive dance spaces (Smith, 2016; Anderson & Mathews, 2024), while others explore how power dynamics can be shifted by centering disabled artists (Evans, 2024; *A Blade of Grass*, 2018).

Despite advancements in inclusive dance, barriers persist, including physical inaccessibility, attitudinal biases, and entrenched aesthetic norms that marginalize disabled artists (Aujla & Redding, 2013). However, innovative strategies—such as Universal Design principles, multimodal teaching tools, and care-sharing practices—offer potential solutions (Quinten et al., 2015; Goodwin, 2019). Research methodologies like participatory action research and arts-based approaches amplify voices traditionally excluded from dance narratives. Organizations like ABDP exemplify these principles, striving to align with DJ and CCD methodologies (National Arts Centre, 2023). By integrating these frameworks into broader dance practices, this research models how cultural perceptions can be reshaped to create equitable artistic spaces.

Goldbard (2006) defines CCD as an inclusive, participatory process that empowers communities through artistic and cultural activities. By fostering collaboration between artists and communities, CCD promotes cultural democracy, bridges social divides, and encourages collective problem-solving through art. Similarly, Disability Justice, as articulated by Sins Invalid (2019), calls for systemic change by valuing all bodies and recognizing the intersection of ableism with other forms of oppression. It prioritizes leadership by those most impacted and envisions a world where disabled individuals can thrive authentically.

This research contributes to the growing discourse on systemic inclusivity in dance. By synthesizing insights from disability studies and community engagement, it underscores the transformative potential of aligning artistic practices with principles of equity and justice. It highlights how fostering inclusive dance spaces can drive both personal and community transformation, positioning ABDP as a model for broader efforts toward accessibility and social change in the arts.

5.2. Community Cultural Development Methods

According to Arlene Goldbard's *New Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* (2006), cultural development methods emphasize participatory, community-based, and collaborative approaches to art-making and cultural expression. These methods prioritize empowering communities to explore, create, and express their unique identities, histories, and challenges. Key cultural development methods include:

- **Community Engagement:** Actively involving community members in the artistic process, from conception to execution, ensuring that their voices and perspectives shape the work.
- **Collaboration Between Artists and Communities:** Facilitating partnerships where artists work with communities to co-create cultural projects that reflect shared experiences and values.
- **Cultural Democracy:** Promoting equitable access to cultural participation, emphasizing that every community has the right to engage in and create culture on its own terms.
- **Storytelling and Oral Histories:** Using narrative techniques to preserve and celebrate local histories and personal stories as a form of cultural expression.
- **Interdisciplinary Art Forms:** Combining multiple artistic disciplines, such as theatre, visual arts, music, and dance, to create multifaceted cultural projects.
- **Asset-Based Development:** Identifying and building upon the strengths, talents, and resources already present in a community rather than focusing solely on deficits or challenges.
- **Facilitation and Capacity Building:** Providing tools, training, and resources that enable community members to sustain cultural initiatives and become active agents of change.
- **Social and Political Advocacy:** Using art as a medium to address social issues, challenge injustices, and advocate for systemic change.
- **Evaluation and Reflection:** Encouraging communities to assess the impact of their cultural projects, fostering continuous learning and adaptation.

5.3. Disability Justice Principles

According to Sins Invalid in their book *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement Is Our People* (2019), the 10 Principles of Disability Justice offer a framework that centers the lived experiences of disabled individuals, especially those at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class. These principles promote collective liberation, interdependence, and the rejection of ableism. Below is a description of each principle:

- **Intersectionality:** Disability Justice recognizes that individuals experience multiple, overlapping forms of oppression. It centers the voices of those most impacted, such as disabled individuals who are Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), queer, trans, and economically marginalized.
- **Leadership of Those Most Impacted:** The movement prioritizes the leadership of disabled people who face the most systemic barriers. Their lived experiences guide the practices and priorities of Disability Justice.
- **Anti-Capitalist Politics:** Disability Justice challenges the capitalist emphasis on productivity and value based on economic output. It advocates for systems that prioritize human worth, care, and sustainability over profit.
- **Cross-Movement Solidarity:** This principle calls for collaboration and solidarity across different social justice movements, recognizing that all forms of oppression—ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and others—are interconnected.
- **Recognizing Wholeness:** Every individual is valued as whole, regardless of their abilities. This principle acknowledges the importance of personal narratives, emotions, and dreams as integral to the human experience.
- **Sustainability:** Disability Justice emphasizes the need for long-term sustainability, encouraging rest, care, and reflection as necessary components of activism and life, rather than constant output or exhaustion.
- **Commitment to Cross-Disability Solidarity:** The movement fosters unity across diverse disability experiences, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities. It celebrates differences and builds understanding and mutual support.
- **Interdependence:** Interdependence highlights the idea that everyone relies on one another. It values mutual care and the acknowledgment that community

and connection are essential to thriving.

- **Collective Access:** Disability Justice recognizes access as a collective responsibility. It calls for creative, flexible approaches to meeting access needs that consider the diverse ways people navigate the world.
- **Collective Liberation:** The ultimate goal is a world where everyone can thrive, free from systemic oppression. Disability Justice is committed to dismantling ableism and other intersecting forms of oppression to achieve collective freedom and justice.

5.4. Identified Strengths

5.4.1. Inclusivity and Accessibility

ABDP is celebrated for its inclusivity, which is evident in its name and practice. Participants are drawn to its culture of acceptance, warmth, and flexibility, which ensures that people of all abilities feel welcome and valued. By creating nonjudgmental spaces that celebrate individual contributions, ABDP fosters a sense of belonging, growth, and community among participants. Structured yet adaptable activities allow participants to engage fully, regardless of ability.

5.4.2. Community Engagement and Connection

ABDP is deeply rooted in its ability to build meaningful relationships and a strong sense of community. Participants consistently highlight the program's spirit of shared humanity, where mutual respect, recognition, and validation are central to the experience. Moments of inclusion—such as warm welcomes and celebratory performances—solidify participants' connection to the group and encourage long-term engagement.

5.4.3. Transformative Impact

The program is recognized as a platform for personal growth and self-discovery. Participants report increased self-confidence, emotional well-being, and a deeper appreciation for others' experiences and strengths. Dance within ABDP is described as therapeutic and transformative, providing participants with joy, creativity, and a renewed sense of self-trust.

5.4.4. Creative and Artistic Freedom

ABDP's focus on improvisation and non-directive practices distinguishes it from other dance programs. This emphasis on open-ended exploration allows participants to contribute authentically, transforming perceived limitations into creative strengths. The program challenges traditional notions of choreography, valuing diversity in movement and expression as core artistic elements.

5.4.5. Commitment to Disability Experiences

ABDP actively supports the lived experiences of people with disabilities through inclusive values and practices. Open-ended class structures, creating space for access needs, and a culture of reframing challenges as opportunities highlight its dedication to creating space for the disability experiences. While participants feel this is done effectively, there is room for growth in including more individuals with disabilities in leadership and teaching roles.

5.5. Identified Gaps

5.5.1. Accessibility Challenges

Participants pointed to specific accessibility barriers as a significant challenge in fully engaging with ABDP. Participants noted physical barriers such as the lack of automatic doors in some interior spaces and uneven grassy locations as outdoor performance sites. Secondly, the availability of accessible transportation options and class locations was limited, further restricting participation for those with mobility challenges or geographic constraints. Although the online class offered free access from the comforts of participants' homes, there was a continued request for more in-person/in-community offerings along with more availability of online classes.

5.5.2. Geographic and Demographic Outreach

Participants identified a need for ABDP to expand its reach geographically and demographically. They emphasized the importance of targeted outreach to underrepresented communities, including low-income groups, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized populations. Efforts such as interdisciplinary collaborations with other arts and non-arts organizations, social media campaigns, and partnership events were suggested as ways to raise visibility and foster engagement with these groups. To address these barriers and enhance its offerings, participants recommended forging partnerships with health systems, rehabilitation centers, and disability-focused organizations. Collaborations with live musicians, theatres, and schools were also proposed as a way to enrich the program's creative scope and attract broader participation.

5.5.3. Insecurity and Emotional Barriers

Feelings of insecurity, often stemming from past experiences of rejection outside of ABDP, were another recurring theme. While ABDP has created a nonjudgmental and inclusive environment, participants highlighted that overcoming these emotional barriers requires continuous support and a welcoming atmosphere. Although ABDP can not alter the feelings of lived experience that a participant may bring with them into classes, this does underline the importance of maintaining and deepening the project's culture of acceptance and belonging.

5.5.4. Balancing Structure and Improvisation

Some participants expressed concerns about overly directive or choreographed approaches in classes. They felt that these methods could limit the freedom of improvisation that defines ABDP's inclusive and creative practices. Maintaining flexibility and a focus on open-ended exploration was seen as vital to ensuring that all participants feel empowered to contribute authentically.

5.5.5. Representation in Leadership

While ABDP actively supports the lived experiences of people with disabilities, participants noted room for improvement in leadership and teaching roles. They suggested that increasing the representation of individuals with disabilities in these positions could further strengthen the program's commitment to inclusivity and provide role models for participants.

Chapter 6. Discussion and Analysis

6.1. Alignment with Sins Invalid's Disability Justice (DJ) Principles and Arlene Goldbard's Community Cultural Development (CCD) Principles

6.1.1. Inclusivity and Accessibility

ABDP's emphasis on inclusivity aligns strongly with Sins Invalid's DJ principles, particularly the prioritization of intersectionality and access. The program creates welcoming, nonjudgmental spaces that validate diverse experiences and needs, fostering a culture of acceptance that reflects the DJ commitment to celebrating all bodies and rejecting ableism. By offering structured but flexible activities and reframing perceived limitations as strengths, ABDP demonstrates a commitment to making space for disabled voices and creating equitable opportunities for participation. This also aligns with CCD principles, particularly the focus on cultural equity and valuing community knowledge, as ABDP ensures that individuals from various backgrounds can contribute authentically to the creative process.

6.1.2. Community Engagement and Connection

The strong sense of community fostered within ABDP echoes DJ principles of interdependence and collective care. The program's focus on mutual respect, recognition, and shared humanity embodies the DJ framework, which views interdependence as a strength rather than a limitation. Similarly, CCD principles emphasize collaboration and relationship-building as central to cultural development, both of which are evident in ABDP's efforts to create meaningful connections among participants. The moments of inclusion, such as warm welcomes and celebratory performances, further reflect both frameworks' emphasis on belonging and relational dynamics.

6.1.3. Transformative Impact and Creative Freedom

ABDP's transformative impact and focus on improvisation align with DJ principles by providing participants with opportunities for self-expression, healing, and personal growth. The therapeutic and creative aspects of the program mirror DJ's recognition of art as a tool for reclaiming agency and identity. Furthermore, ABDP's prioritization of artistic freedom and open-ended exploration resonates with CCD's principle of fostering creativity and valuing diverse expressions of cultural identity. The emphasis on non-directive practices encourages participants to challenge conventional notions of dance, reflecting the DJ value of embracing diverse embodiments and reimaging traditional aesthetics.

6.1.4. Areas for Growth

While ABDP effectively embodies many DJ and CCD principles, identified barriers highlight areas for deeper alignment. Accessibility challenges in physical spaces and transportation reveal gaps in addressing the DJ principle of access as love and the CCD emphasis on equitable resource distribution. The call for greater representation of disabled individuals in leadership aligns with DJ's principle of centering the leadership of those most impacted, suggesting opportunities to strengthen ABDP's alignment with this value. Similarly, participants' suggestions for expanded geographic and demographic outreach reflect CCD's focus on cultural democracy and inclusivity, emphasizing the need to engage underrepresented communities and ensure broader access to programming.

6.1.5. Other Notable Findings

The following are a few other notable findings from this research. While many of these may already be familiar to current staff, board members, and instructors, it's worth documenting them as part of a larger reflection on ABDP's impact and opportunities for growth. By identifying these findings, ABDP can not only celebrate its successes but also refine its practices to better serve its diverse community and continue its role as a leader in inclusive dance.

Emotional Weight of Insecurity

Despite ABDP's strong culture of inclusion, participants highlighted that feelings of insecurity, often stemming from past experiences of exclusion outside the program, remained a significant barrier. This finding underscores the lasting impact of external societal rejection and suggests that even in highly inclusive spaces, emotional barriers may persist and require ongoing support.

Transformative Impact of Dance

The emotional and physical impact of dance on participants was more profound than anticipated. Beyond the dance studio, participants reported significant life changes, including quitting alcohol, developing self-advocacy skills, and experiencing heightened emotional well-being. These outcomes highlight the deep therapeutic and transformative power of ABDP's programming, reinforcing its value as a holistic intervention in participants' lives.

Concerns About Class Prompts Limiting Creative Freedom

Participants raised concerns about overly directive or choreographed approaches in classes, which they felt could limit the improvisational spirit central to ABDP's ethos. This feedback was somewhat unexpected, given the program's strong emphasis on creative exploration. It highlights a potential tension between maintaining the necessary

structure and preserving the open-ended, participant-driven nature of the program. Additionally, this feedback suggests the importance of instructors periodically returning to the role of students as a way to refine their understanding and practice of accessible, inclusive dance facilitation. This approach could help ensure that the program continues to align with its core values while fostering an evolving understanding of participant needs.

Chapter 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1. Conclusion

ABDP demonstrates a profound commitment to inclusivity, community engagement, and artistic freedom, aligning strongly with DJ principles and CCD methodologies. By fostering spaces that celebrate diversity and value the contributions of all participants, ABDP embodies a transformative vision of dance as a tool for self-expression, healing, and collective empowerment. The findings of this research underscore the program's success in creating a welcoming, supportive environment where participants of all abilities can thrive.

However, the study also reveals areas for growth to ensure deeper aspirational alignment with DJ and CCD principles. Addressing physical and geographic accessibility and increasing the representation of individuals with disabilities in leadership and teaching roles are critical steps toward reinforcing ABDP's mission. By embracing these recommendations and building on its strengths, ABDP is well-positioned to expand its reach, amplify its impact, and continue serving as a model for inclusivity and equity in dance.

7.2. Recommendations

7.2.1. Address Accessibility Barriers in Physical Spaces

- **Improve Facility Accessibility:** Partner with venues to install automatic doors and eliminate the use of uneven ground (during performance location scouting) to ensure participants using mobility aids can navigate spaces easily.
- **Space Accessibility Guide & Audits:** Develop a site accessibility guide that can be used to conduct audits of events, performances and class venues to identify and address physical barriers beforehand.

7.2.2. Expand Reach

- **Satellite Programs:** Develop partnerships with local organizations in underserved communities to establish satellite classes and workshops either in-person or online.
- **Additional Classes & Locations:** Increase the availability of online classes while expanding in-person, community-based programming to accommodate diverse needs and preferences.

- **Transportation Support:** Seek funding for accessible transportation services to facilitate participant attendance.
- **Reaching Underrepresented Communities:** Target underrepresented communities, including LGBTQ+ groups, low-income populations, and marginalized identities. Efforts such as interdisciplinary collaborations with other arts and non-arts organizations, social media campaigns, and participatory events were suggested as ways to raise visibility and foster engagement with these groups.

7.2.3. Increase Representation in Leadership & Teaching Staff

- **Leadership Development Program:** Establish pathways for participants with disabilities to take on leadership roles (choreographers, facilitators, arts administrators) supported by mentorship and capacity-building initiatives.
- **Recruitment Policies:** Prioritize hiring assistants, facilitators and leaders with lived experiences of disability and who have the capacity of the expectations of these roles to enhance representation.

7.2.4. Balance Structure and Improvisation

- **Open-ended Exploration Prompts:** Ensure class prompts and choreography allow for open-ended exploration, maintaining the improvisational spirit central to ABDP's ethos.
- **On-going Re-Training of Instructors:** Encourage instructors to periodically adopt the role of students through ongoing re-training to refine their understanding of inclusive practices

Chapter 8. Implications and Next Steps

8.1. Policy Implications

The findings highlight the need for policies that prioritize accessibility, equity, and inclusivity in municipal arts programs and the larger dance sector:

8.1.1. Accessibility in Physical and Geographic Spaces

Ensuring that venues are equipped with ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and adequate space for movement fosters equitable participation. Additionally, the geographic distribution of classes is vital to reducing travel barriers, particularly for individuals with mobility challenges or limited access to transportation. Municipal arts programs must adopt policies that standardize these accessibility measures to create truly inclusive spaces and programming.

8.1.2. Equity in Leadership Representation

Representation of individuals with disabilities in leadership, instructor or choreographer roles is a significant gap that must be addressed. Increasing opportunities for mentorship and leadership within municipal and sector-wide arts programs would not only empower individuals with lived experience but also ensure that decision-making reflects diverse perspectives. Policies that mandate equitable representation in leadership roles can transform organizational cultures and make inclusivity a foundational practice.

8.1.3. Emotional and Psychological Accessibility

The findings reveal that feelings of insecurity stemming from past exclusion can persist even in inclusive environments, emphasizing the need for policies that address emotional and psychological barriers. Municipal arts programs could incorporate or partner with ongoing support systems, such as counseling resources or peer support networks, to help participants feel safe and valued. These measures can complement efforts to foster physical accessibility, ensuring holistic inclusivity.

8.1.4. Interdisciplinary and Cross-Sector Partnerships

The need for interdisciplinary collaborations points to the value of integrating arts programs with health systems, disability advocacy organizations, and other sectors. Policies encouraging partnerships between municipal arts programs and these entities can amplify resources and create richer, more inclusive programming. For the more significant dance sector, this approach can lead to innovative practices that benefit both

artists and audiences while also helping to mentor and build capacity in emerging artists with disabilities.

8.2. Next Steps for ABDP

8.2.1. Address Accessibility Barriers in Physical Spaces

To ensure physical spaces meet the needs of all participants, ABDP should:

- **Partner with Venues:** Collaborate with performance and class venues to install accessibility features such as automatic doors, ramps, and smooth, even surfaces. This includes prioritizing these features during location scouting for performances and events.
- **Develop a Site Accessibility Guide:** Create a comprehensive accessibility guide to audit event, performance, and class spaces. Regular audits should identify and address potential physical barriers, ensuring readiness and inclusivity in all ABDP venues.

8.2.2. Expand Program Reach

ABDP can broaden its impact and accessibility by:

- **Establishing Satellite Programs:** Partner with local organizations in underserved communities to launch satellite classes and workshops, both in-person and online, to increase geographic reach.
- **Increasing Class Offerings:** Expand the availability of online classes and in-person community-based programming to cater to participants' diverse needs and preferences.
- **Providing Transportation Support:** Seek funding or partnerships to offer accessible transportation services, ensuring participants can attend programs without logistical barriers.
- **Seek Out Underrepresented Communities:** Design outreach initiatives to connect with LGBTQ+ groups, low-income populations, and other marginalized communities. Strategies could include interdisciplinary collaborations, social media campaigns, and participatory events to raise awareness and foster inclusivity.

8.2.3. Increase Representation in Leadership and Teaching Staff

Enhancing representation of individuals with disabilities in leadership roles requires:

- **Developing a Leadership Program:** Create pathways for participants with disabilities to transition into roles as choreographers, facilitators, and arts

administrators. Offer mentorship and capacity-building initiatives to support their growth and success.

- **Updating Recruitment Policies:** Revise hiring practices to prioritize individuals with lived experiences of disability for assistant, facilitator, and leadership roles. Provide clear expectations and support to ensure they thrive in these positions.

8.2.4. Balance Structure and Improvisation

To maintain the improvisational spirit central to ABDP while providing structure:

- **Foster Open-ended Exploration:** Design class prompts and choreographic approaches that encourage open-ended exploration, allowing participants to express themselves freely and authentically.
- **Re-train Instructors:** Offer ongoing professional development for instructors, encouraging them to periodically take on the role of students. This practice will refine their understanding of inclusive and accessible facilitation methods, ensuring alignment with ABDP's values.

8.3. Implementation Strategy

ABDP should create a phased implementation plan for these steps, beginning with quick wins such as developing an accessibility guide and piloting outreach campaigns. Longer-term goals, like leadership development programs and securing transportation funding, should include clear timelines and measurable outcomes. By addressing these next steps, ABDP can deepen its commitment to inclusivity, expand its reach, and strengthen its position as a leader in inclusive dance practices.

The following is a *suggested* implementation plan that outlines a structured approach to integrating the recommendations identified in this research. The implementation will be carried out in three phases: Short-Term (0-6 months), Medium-Term (6-18 months), and Long-Term (18 months and beyond).

Again, this is just a suggested implementation plan and should be adapted based on ABDP's capacity, available resources, and community input. Flexibility is key, allowing for adjustments as new challenges and opportunities arise.

8.3.1. Phase 1: Short-Term Implementation (0-6 months)

Objective: Establish foundational steps to address immediate barriers and set up structures for long-term success.

1. Improve Accessibility and Participation

- Conduct an accessibility audit of all program venues to identify barriers and necessary accommodations.
- Develop an access plan, including guidelines for transportation support, venue selection, and sensory-friendly spaces.
- Establish clearer communication channels (email, website updates, social media) to provide consistent program details, including class drop-in options.

2. Expand Outreach and Community Engagement

- Strengthen partnerships with disability organizations, rehabilitation centers, and cultural organizations to reach underrepresented communities.
- Develop promotional materials (videos, posters, brochures) highlighting diverse participants to encourage broader engagement.
- Hold introductory sessions or open houses in new locations to attract participants unfamiliar with the project.

3. Training and Capacity Building

- Provide inclusivity and accessibility training for facilitators, focusing on Disability Justice principles and Community Cultural Development methodologies.
- Offer co-learning opportunities where facilitators with and without lived experience of disability collaborate on class structures.
- Create mentorship pathways for participants interested in becoming facilitators or peer leaders.

8.3.2. Phase 2: Medium-Term Implementation (6-18 months)

Objective: Scale successful initiatives, deepen impact, and strengthen infrastructure for long-term sustainability.

4. Increase Funding and Resource Allocation

- Identify and apply for grants that align with accessibility, disability arts, and community cultural development.
- Explore partnerships with transit services to provide more reliable transportation options for participants.
- Develop a funding strategy for an accessible bus service for those with mobility challenges.

5. Enhance Performance and Creative Opportunities

- Establish more frequent, accessible public performances with clear participation pathways for new and long-term participants.

- Develop opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaborations with musicians, visual artists, and spoken word performers.
- Create an artist-in-residence program for disabled artists to collaborate with facilitators and participants.

6. Foster Sustainable Leadership and Governance

- Introduce participant advisory groups to ensure community voices are integrated into decision-making processes.
- Develop transparent selection criteria for performance and leadership opportunities to address concerns about exclusivity.
- Expand governance structures to include individuals with lived disability experience in leadership roles.

8.3.3. Phase 3: Long-Term Implementation (18+ months and beyond)

Objective: Ensure sustainability, innovation, and continued alignment with principles of inclusivity and accessibility.

7. Expand Programming and Geographic Reach

- Establish classes in new locations based on accessibility needs and community interest.
- Develop hybrid programming (in-person and online) to reach individuals unable to attend physically.
- Explore international partnerships to share methodologies and expand impact globally.

8. Institutionalize Disability-Led Practices

- Strengthen pathways for disabled artists and leaders to take on key roles in facilitation, management, and board positions.
- Integrate accessibility policies into organizational frameworks to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Advocate for systemic changes in the broader dance and arts community to recognize and prioritize accessibility in creative spaces.

9. Continuous Evaluation and Improvement

- Conduct annual accessibility audits and community feedback sessions to ensure ongoing responsiveness to participants' needs.
- Publish findings and best practices to contribute to the field of inclusive dance and disability arts.
- Develop a sustainability plan to secure funding and resources for future growth.

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Appendix A.

One-on-One Interviews

The following is a summarized account of the interviewees' responses to the 14 questions asked during the one-on-one interview portion of this research. Any references to specific locations or individuals have been redacted. This is not a verbatim transcript but a condensed 1-2 line summary of their responses.

Question 1: Can you tell me a bit about your connection to All Bodies Dance Project and how you first became involved?

- **Interviewee 1:**
I first learned about the project through a conversation at a bus stop. I asked a friend if they knew of any places where I could dance using my power chair. They handed me a postcard for ABDP, and I attended my first class the following week. I was welcomed immediately, and I knew I wanted to be part of it. Over the years, I've grown as a dancer and facilitator, and now I dream of helping ABDP have a global impact.
- **Interviewee 2:**
My child has been participating in ABDP for a long time. A friend suggested it, thinking it might be a good fit. It has been one of the only places where my child feels completely accepted and embraced.
- **Interviewee 3:**
I first got involved in 2019 through a dance teacher. At first, I wasn't sure if I would like it since I had mostly done choreography-based dance, but I decided to give it a try and ended up really enjoying it.
- **Interviewee 4:**
I started attending ABDP in 2014 when I was looking for an activity that fit into my schedule. My child had a dance class in the same building, so I decided to try the class, and I immediately fell in love with it.
- **Interviewee 5:**
I heard about ABDP through a dance instructor I knew from another program. I kept hearing about it from different people and eventually decided to give it a try.
- **Interviewee 6:**
A friend encouraged me to check it out. I used to dance but had stopped, and this felt like a new opportunity to reconnect with movement.
- **Interviewee 7:**
I was already involved in mixed-ability dance in another city before moving here. I connected with a community programmer and received support to start what eventually became ABDP.
- **Interviewee 8:**
I learned about ABDP at a summer event. I tried a Zoom session but found it difficult to participate from home, so I decided to attend in person, and I'm so glad I did.

- **Interviewee 9:**
A friend invited me to try a class. After a couple of sessions, we were given the option to be part of a performance or return later. I decided to stay and participate in the performance.
- **Interviewee 10:**
I used to dance but had stepped away for many years. I was looking for something to reconnect me with movement and found ABDP through word of mouth.

Question 2: What drew you to ABDP, and what has kept you engaged with it over time?

- **Interviewee 1:**
I was drawn in by the accessibility and inclusivity. The facilitators made me feel welcome, and the approach to dance was unlike anything I had experienced before.
- **Interviewee 2:**
ABDP allows my child to participate without being treated differently. It's a space where they can be themselves, which is rare in other programs.
- **Interviewee 3:**
The mix of people and dance styles kept me engaged. Unlike other programs, I didn't feel isolated because of my disability.
- **Interviewee 4:**
The openness of the program, where everyone is welcomed regardless of experience, made me want to keep coming back.
- **Interviewee 5:**
The diversity in the room was incredible. People of all backgrounds and abilities moving together felt very special.
- **Interviewee 6:**
The freedom to move in my own way and not feel judged kept me engaged.
- **Interviewee 7:**
At first, it was a job opportunity, but over time, I became deeply invested in the work and the community it created.
- **Interviewee 8:**
I didn't think I belonged at first, but the encouragement I received changed my mind. Now, I can't imagine not dancing.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Improvisation in dance is what excites me, and ABDP allows me to explore that in a welcoming space.
- **Interviewee 10:**
I love that ABDP prioritizes community and inclusion over perfection. It allows people to be part of something meaningful.

Question 3: What's something you've learned or gained from being part of ABDP that you'd like others to experience?

- **Interviewee 1:**
I never knew I could have this much fun as a disabled person. It gave me confidence, joy, and a healthier lifestyle.

- **Interviewee 2:**
The sense of belonging is powerful. ABDP shows how important it is to create spaces where people are fully accepted.
- **Interviewee 3:**
I've learned how to truly include people in a way that values their contributions rather than just accommodating them.
- **Interviewee 4:**
True inclusion happens when everyone shows up fully as themselves.
- **Interviewee 5:**
It's deepened my understanding of how essential community is for well-being.
- **Interviewee 6:**
ABDP has helped me trust myself again through movement.
- **Interviewee 7:**
The power of connection through movement is something I wish more people could experience.
- **Interviewee 8:**
I thought I couldn't dance because of my injuries, but ABDP showed me that I can.
- **Interviewee 9:**
The compositional aspect of improvisation has been eye-opening.
- **Interviewee 10:**
The ability to let go of self-consciousness and simply move is a gift I want others to experience.

Question 4: Can you describe a moment in ABDP where you felt most included?

- **Interviewee 1:**
During check-ins, when facilitators ask, "What do we need to know to dance with you today?" This simple act acknowledges each person's needs and centers accessibility.
- **Interviewee 2:**
When an instructor celebrated a small movement my child made—something that might have been overlooked elsewhere. It was powerful to see their unique movement recognized.
- **Interviewee 3:**
When a friend I knew before ABDP joined the program. Having someone familiar to share the experience with made me feel even more included.
- **Interviewee 4:**
The moment I walk into the room, I'm greeted warmly. Even if I'm late, people welcome me by name, and that means a lot.
- **Interviewee 5:**
I've always felt included, but one specific moment was when I was partnered with someone who used a power wheelchair. We created movement together in a way that felt natural and collaborative.
- **Interviewee 6:**
Every class is inclusive, but I'm still new and learning how I fit into the group.
- **Interviewee 7:**
Performing together creates a sense of deep connection. Being part of something bigger than myself makes me feel included.

- **Interviewee 8:**
Just being in class, moving with others, and feeling part of the energy of the group makes me feel included.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Watching a video of our performance made me realize how well we all worked together, and I felt immense pride in being part of the group.
- **Interviewee 10:**
The performances are special. There's a point where I stop overthinking and just move—it's in those moments that I feel most included.

Question 5: In your experience, how does ABDP create space for people of all abilities to feel welcome and valued?

- **Interviewee 1:**
There's an absence of judgment. People are treated as individuals, and access needs are addressed with care.
- **Interviewee 2:**
ABDP asks questions rather than giving rigid instructions. This openness allows everyone to engage in their own way.
- **Interviewee 3:**
The community is incredibly welcoming. You don't need dance experience to feel included.
- **Interviewee 4:**
The program encourages everyone's movement, no matter how small. Everything is valid.
- **Interviewee 5:**
The use of improvisation allows people to move in ways that work for them.
- **Interviewee 6:**
ABDP allows everyone to make choices about their own movement rather than being told how they should move.
- **Interviewee 7:**
Facilitators acknowledge and amplify participants' movements, ensuring everyone's presence is valued.
- **Interviewee 8:**
There's a strong sense of encouragement, making even hesitant dancers feel comfortable.
- **Interviewee 9:**
The instructor fosters an environment where there's no right or wrong way to participate.
- **Interviewee 10:**
The focus is on connection rather than perfection. Everyone can contribute in their own way.

Question 6: What, if anything, has made you or others feel excluded or uncertain about participating?

- **Interviewee 1:**
Performing in a physically inaccessible space damaged my mobility aid. These barriers can be frustrating.

- **Interviewee 2:**
My child was once included in a program but then left out of the final group photo. That kind of performative inclusion can be hurtful.
- **Interviewee 3:**
Sometimes, assumptions about ability create barriers, like when I struggled to incorporate my crutches into movement.
- **Interviewee 4:**
There was a perception that certain people were always chosen for performances, which made some feel left out.
- **Interviewee 5:**
I haven't personally felt excluded, but I know access issues have been a problem for others.
- **Interviewee 6:**
My own perceptions sometimes make me feel uncertain, but the program itself has always been welcoming.
- **Interviewee 7:**
The leadership team has not always included people with disabilities, which can create unintended barriers.
- **Interviewee 8:**
At times, I've wished for more guidance or examples to follow in class.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Some instructors in other programs have been too directive, which can be limiting. Thankfully, ABDP is not like that.
- **Interviewee 10:**
Certain activities might feel intimidating at first, but ABDP does a great job of making adaptations when needed.

Question 7: In your view, how well does ABDP center the lived experiences of people with disabilities in their classes and work?

- **Interviewee 1:**
Facilitators try their best, but there's always room for more representation of people with disabilities in leadership roles.
- **Interviewee 2:**
ABDP makes sure people's experiences are heard and valued.
- **Interviewee 3:**
The program builds confidence in participants by ensuring everyone's experiences are respected.
- **Interviewee 4:**
The diversity in the room goes beyond ability—there's also a range of dance experience, body types, and identities.
- **Interviewee 5:**
The focus seems to be more on community than specifically on disability, but that's not a bad thing.
- **Interviewee 6:**
ABDP creates opportunities for people with disabilities to feel good about themselves and express their creativity.
- **Interviewee 7:**
Leadership has not always been disability-led, and that's an area for growth.

- **Interviewee 8:**
The accessibility of the program shows a deep commitment to centering disabled experiences.
- **Interviewee 9:**
The improvisational structure allows for lived experiences to shape the movement rather than impose external ideas.
- **Interviewee 10:**
The space encourages everyone to engage at their own comfort level.

Question 8: What changes, if any, would you like to see to support folks with disabilities better?

- **Interviewee 1:**
I'd love to see an accessible bus provided for those relying on unreliable public transit.
- **Interviewee 2:**
I don't think anything needs to change—the program is already incredible. My only wish is for it to expand.
- **Interviewee 3:**
More efforts could be made to ensure people using wheelchairs have the necessary support to navigate the dance space comfortably.
- **Interviewee 4:**
Providing transportation options for participants could make the program more accessible.
- **Interviewee 5:**
More wheelchair users in the space would help make it feel even more inclusive.
- **Interviewee 6:**
I think the support is already strong, but I'd love to see it continue to grow.
- **Interviewee 7:**
More disabled people in leadership positions would make a difference, but this must be accompanied by proper mentorship and support.
- **Interviewee 8:**
It would be great to have mentorship programs where experienced dancers guide participants.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Accessibility at venues should always be a top priority, ensuring spaces are free of barriers.
- **Interviewee 10:**
Keeping the group intimate and ensuring each person gets individualized support would help sustain inclusivity.

Question 9: What kinds of collaborations or partnerships do you think could strengthen ABDP's work?

- **Interviewee 1:**
I was thrilled when a partnership with an accessibility organization was formed. More collaborations with rehab centers and schools would be great.
- **Interviewee 2:**
Connecting with small, inclusive arts organizations could help build a larger support network.

- **Interviewee 3:**
Expanding partnerships with LGBTQ+ organizations could foster more representation.
- **Interviewee 4:**
ABDP has built great relationships so far. I trust the leadership to continue meaningful collaborations.
- **Interviewee 5:**
Partnering with the healthcare system could introduce more people to the program through social prescriptions.
- **Interviewee 6:**
Collaborating with the arts and culture sector could help bring new creative opportunities.
- **Interviewee 7:**
Partnerships with disability-specific organizations could help expand outreach, though it's important that ABDP maintains autonomy.
- **Interviewee 8:**
Working with live musicians or theater groups could enhance the creative experience.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Schools could be a great place to introduce inclusive dance to younger generations.
- **Interviewee 10:**
Connecting with other community dance programs could build a wider network of support.

Question 10: How could ABDP better engage with communities that are currently underrepresented in its programs?

- **Interviewee 1:**
A documentary about ABDP's work could reach new audiences.
- **Interviewee 2:**
Creating visibility through social media and videos would help.
- **Interviewee 3:**
More outreach to LGBTQ+ communities could expand representation.
- **Interviewee 4:**
Open house events with food and participatory classes could attract new people.
- **Interviewee 5:**
Collaborating with wellness programs for aging communities could help reach more participants.
- **Interviewee 6:**
More public performances and community dance events could spread awareness.
- **Interviewee 7:**
Expanding to different neighborhoods would make it easier for people to join.
- **Interviewee 8:**
Making sure underrepresented communities see themselves reflected in the program could encourage participation.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Connecting with community centers in different regions could help broaden accessibility.

- **Interviewee 10:**
Ensuring outreach includes low-income and marginalized communities is essential.

Question 11: If you could imagine the ideal version of ABDP five years from now, what would it look like?

- **Interviewee 1:**
Consistency in facilitators and participants so relationships are maintained.
- **Interviewee 2:**
The same program but expanded to other cities.
- **Interviewee 3:**
Growth, while maintaining the same intimate and welcoming environment.
- **Interviewee 4:**
More intergenerational classes so younger children can participate too.
- **Interviewee 5:**
A sustainable program with long-term funding to support staff and artists fairly.
- **Interviewee 6:**
More classes available every day and in multiple locations.
- **Interviewee 7:**
A balance between community and professional art, while still centering inclusivity.
- **Interviewee 8:**
More performance opportunities that involve both professional dancers and community members.
- **Interviewee 9:**
More spaces where dancers, regardless of ability, feel empowered and welcomed.
- **Interviewee 10:**
Stronger leadership pathways for disabled dancers who want to step into facilitation roles.

Question 12: What resources, training, or practices do you think could help ABDP grow in its inclusivity?

- **Interviewee 1:**
More of what ABDP is already doing—it's on the right track.
- **Interviewee 2:**
Inclusivity is not something that can be fully trained—it's about mindset and approach.
- **Interviewee 3:**
Collaborating with organizations that support different disability groups could be beneficial.
- **Interviewee 4:**
Outreach to disability-specific organizations to inform more people about the program.
- **Interviewee 5:**
Ongoing training for facilitators in trauma-informed practices.
- **Interviewee 6:**
Building long-term relationships with accessibility professionals like ASL interpreters.

- **Interviewee 7:**
Co-learning sessions among facilitators to deepen shared understanding.
- **Interviewee 8:**
Having accessibility resources built into the program rather than added as an afterthought.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Continuing to listen to participants and adapt the program based on evolving needs.
- **Interviewee 10:**
Keeping class sizes small to ensure everyone gets personalized attention.

Question 13: What advice would you give to someone who is new to ABDP about making the most of their experience?

- **Interviewee 1:**
Keep showing up—it gets easier and more rewarding over time.
- **Interviewee 2:**
Trust that the space is safe and let yourself be present.
- **Interviewee 3:**
Be open to meeting new people and trying new movements.
- **Interviewee 4:**
Treat it like playtime—there's no wrong way to participate.
- **Interviewee 5:**
Be yourself. Your ideas and movements are valued.
- **Interviewee 6:**
Try not to overthink it—just move and enjoy.
- **Interviewee 7:**
Take risks and push past any initial nervousness.
- **Interviewee 8:**
Trust that your presence adds something important to the group.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Let go of expectations and enjoy the process.
- **Interviewee 10:**
Stay connected outside of class—watch performances, meet other dancers, and immerse yourself in the community.

Question 14: Is there anything we didn't discuss that you feel is important to share?

- **Interviewee 1:**
I appreciate ABDP but would love more transparency and updates on what's happening.
- **Interviewee 2:**
The community is strong, but more opportunities to gather and celebrate together would be great.
- **Interviewee 3:**
I'd love to see even more performances and ways to engage with the work.
- **Interviewee 4:**
The shift in participant demographics over time has been interesting to witness.
- **Interviewee 5:**
I hope the program continues to grow and thrive.

- **Interviewee 6:**
ABDP has had an incredible impact on my life, and I hope it reaches more people.
- **Interviewee 7:**
Ensuring financial stability for staff and artists should be a priority.
- **Interviewee 8:**
I feel deeply grateful for the program and everyone involved in making it happen.
- **Interviewee 9:**
Creating clear leadership pathways for disabled dancers would help the program evolve.
- **Interviewee 10:**
Thank you for the work you do—this program is life-changing.

Appendix B: Arts Based Session

The following is a summary of key insights and themes expressed during the arts-based session.

What does justice in dance look like to you? How do you imagine it could look like with ABDP?

- It's rare to be inclusive to 100% of people so the point is to be as inclusive to as many people so we get the most access to participation.
- Weighing the conflicting needs of those in the room
- Create dance opportunities for as many people in the space; where their concerns will be listened to.
- Repair and restoration
- Dance is healing.
- Getting ideas from people who are non-verbal
- Giving access to people with physical barriers or who have sensitivity needs
- Access needs are met
- More than just equality
- Everybody counts/ is acknowledged/ respected.
- Who has power in the room?
- Who gets listened to?
- Humble
- Asks questions
- Openness
- To always be with the question: how might we be more inclusive?

What does justice & inclusivity feel like?

- Acceptance.
- Invitations.
- Radical acceptance.
- Equality.
- Empathy and humility.
- Allowance.
- Compassion.

- Circles.
- Let go.
- Uncertain Assurance.
- Questioning.
- Fulfillment.
- Problem solving.
- Recreating and reinvention.
- Appreciation.
- Checking in.

If you could dream big, what would an ideal future for ABDP look like?

- To learn how to harvest our emotions (as another way to express through dance) not just tasks/games. Somatic practices. Emotional release exercises.
- Offer intellectual and philosophical forums to explore ideas and opportunities in ABDP.
- Students can try facilitating which leads to personal leadership development.
- Continuous paid professional development for staff/facilitators (including mentorship)
- Unlimited funding for staff, facilitators and performers.
- Funding to support members to attend classes and other activities; to advertise and support awareness of ABDP and accessibility.
- Scale of community/ network. Each local community class (Trout Lake, Roundhouse, Carnegie, Online) builds/contributes to a city community to a national community to an international community. A network to celebrate differences and come together.
- A homebase for ABDP (like Ballet BC) with accessible performance spaces.
- Connect and collaborate with various and different arts and dance communities. Work together across disciplines and within the field of dance.

What do we need to get to this ideal future for ABDP?

- People trained in somatics/ trauma informed dance
- Students invited to share a short facilitation
- Involvement of class members beyond classes (ie. connected activities outside class)
- Encouragement and support

- Invest in people
- Avoid burn out and exhaustion
- Find more money
- Attract more people with disabilities and other underrepresented groups.
- Accessible spaces with a proper dance floor.
- Connect with other groups (ie. other outsider arts organizations and artists)
- Promote via media

