

**CAN DANCE BE USED EFFECTIVELY TO COMMUNICATE LIFE
EVENTS: AN INTRAPERSONAL ANALYSIS**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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We, Grace Bulkeley¹ and Jonathan Olivares², certify that all research compliance requirements related to this Undergraduate Research Scholars thesis have been addressed with my Research Faculty Advisor prior to the collection of any data used in this final thesis submission.

This project required approval from the Texas A&M University Research Compliance & Biosafety office.

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ABSTRACT

Can Dance Be Used Effectively to Communicate Life Events: An Interpersonal Analysis

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This study is a focus on the intrapersonal evaluation of communication using the subject of LGBTQ+ individuals through dance. Individuals that identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community were recruited from the Bryan/College Station, Texas area to share their coming out stories and impactful aspects of their lives with the researchers. The researchers then created a solo dance piece within a modern-day dance genre that was presented to the participants. The participants reported back to the researchers how they identified with the piece and to what degree it represented their individual story. The researchers used the feedback to determine the effectiveness of dance as a storytelling medium.

Dance as a form of communication has been seen throughout human development in most cultures, with styles that include movement for the sake of movement and movement for the sake of storytelling. The creation of modern-day forms of dance have gravitated towards the former as opposed to the more traditional forms of dance that would be more inclined to demonstrate the latter. The researchers chose to use modern-day genres of dance to attempt to

communicate the life events of participants, considering that older forms of dance (i.e. ballet) have already been created with the intention of storytelling.

The LGBTQ+ community was chosen as a parameter for participation due to the underrepresentation of that community in modern media. People who identify within this community are typically less likely to have identified with the story of characters present in modern media. The researchers also believe that there should be equal representation of all people in research.

After the presentation of the individual pieces to the participants, it was determined that the dances were successful in staying true to the original story told by participants, and creating deeper thought in an independent audience.

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the members of the LGBTQ+ community who have been unable to see themselves represented in the media, have lost their lives due to their identification with the community, and those who have been unable to recognize themselves as a part of or come out within the community.

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NOMENCLATURE

LGBTQ	An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer.”
Lesbian	A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.
Gay	A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.
Bisexual	A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual.
Transgender	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.
Queer	A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ movement.
Non-Binary	An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.
Ally	A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community).

Coming out The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

Ballet Ballet can be defined as ‘a type of dancing where carefully organized movements tell a story or express an idea, or a theatre work that uses this type of dancing. Ballet developed during the European Renaissance (c 1400-1600), most notably in France, first at the court of Catherine de Medici (1519-89), and later at that of Louis XIV (1638-1715).

1. AESTHETIC MOTIVATION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

1.1 Aesthetic Motivation

When discussing an area and population of interest, the researchers were drawn to the LGBTQ+ community. The LGBTQ+ community has long experienced ostracization from modern media, specifically television, despite the rising knowledge and acceptance of the community in society. The inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters is still fought by devout religious and anti-LGBTQ+ organizations and can be seen as a risk to be taken by television writers and producers.

From the beginning development of modern media, communities that did not fit into a certain stereotype were not included in media. From newspapers to prime-time television, one would typically not be able to find a character that was not straight, white, and mentally typical. Television is the main way that Americans consume entertainment media and can be the most important part of character representation for individuals. The media individuals were consuming, specifically in the twentieth century, was reminiscent of the “American Dream” that drove the way society functioned. As the civil rights movement, both for people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals, continued, only then was there a noticeable change in the traits of characters and content of reporting media. These changes in the media were also met with backlash by ‘typical’ members of society. Each time the diversity of television was expanded, anti-progressive Americans vigorously attempted to remove the characters and/or shows from television.

Another common issue that has arisen as the diversity of characters on television has increased, is the idea that LGBTQ+ characters should be played by members of the LGBTQ+

community. When LGBTQ+ characters were first introduced to television and movies, they were commonly played by actors that had no association with the LGBTQ+ community. There has been a call to create more jobs for LGBTQ+ by only hiring people a part of the LGBTQ+ community to play those roles. This is done with the intention to inspire adolescents in the LGBTQ+ community and create normalcy surrounding the subject of the LGBTQ+ community.

Many times, members of the LGBTQ+ community grow up without seeing a representation of themselves or the things they go through during development in the media. With the development of social media throughout the last two decades, the amount of exposure that adolescents receive to the LGBTQ+ community has increased. However, those from older generations still get the most exposure to media and changes in society through television. This makes it of greater importance for there to not only be a presence of LGBTQ+ characters, but that those characters should be played by LGBTQ+ actors. This is assumed to help older generations accept the presence of the LGBTQ+ in the media, and furthermore in society.

Focusing this research on the stories of members of the LGBTQ+ community will increase the amount of visibility that the community receives, especially in the Bryan-College Station community and at Texas A&M University.

1.2 Creative Artifact

The creative artifact the researchers chose to work with is dance. This is because of the extensive background both the researchers have in dance and its important relation to the research question.

The thoughts and feelings of human beings have long been communicated through the spoken or written word (Chakravarthi, 1992). The language surrounding personal hardships has been developed to effectively communicate feelings from one person to another, or to

themselves. Music has been created by individuals to communicate ideas in a different way.

There are specific keys and ways to arrange notes that can be used to connect people to the sound being created (Ionescu, 2017). With dance, however, there is no certain vocabulary that has been created to equate one certain feeling from one person to another. This creates a more open arena for personal interpretation in environments where dance is used to tell a story. Therefore, it can be difficult to communicate from choreographers to audience members accurately (Mackrell, 2019).

Dance has been used frequently for the use of telling stories to an audience. Ballet is the style of dance that uses this process most often for creating choreography, however, this process has also bled into the modern dance field. Even though dance is typically used in a traditional sense for storytelling, is it an effective way to communicate a story to an audience? Storytelling through dance has been done on multiple subjects through multiple genres of dance, but this project will be completed using LGBTQ+ stories. The stories will be told through modern dance, one of the newest and most widely used forms of dance. The researchers would like to establish whether or not telling stories through the art of dance is acceptable or perhaps damaging to the story through the use of current struggles and events.

1.3 Research Question Critical and Creative Modes

The question the researchers are testing is whether or not storytelling through dance is an effective form of storytelling and communication. The researchers will be using modern dance in an effort to include a relatively new genre of dance to broach a relatively new subject of storytelling.

Critically, the researchers will be analyzing the interpersonal connection that the participants feel with their finished piece. The participants will be asked whether they feel the

choreography actively reflects the main points of their personal story that they shared with the researchers. If the participants respond positively to their individual piece, it will be considered a success and if the piece is reacted to negatively by the participant, researchers will consider it a failure to prove the research question. If all participants react positively to their pieces, the researchers will accept the hypothesis that dance is an effective form of communication, and if the participants all react negatively, the hypothesis will be rejected. This will help the researchers critically evaluate whether storytelling through dance is an effective communication.

Creatively, the researchers will be exploring the scope of modern choreography and whether or not they can effectively create choreography that will prove the research question. If the participants respond positively, the choreographers will have been successful in their choreographic intent, and if the participants respond negatively the researchers were unsuccessful in creatively producing storytelling through dance.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT, DISCIPLINARY PARADIGMS, AND AESTHETIC STANDARDS

2.1 Historical Context

When evaluating the historical advancements that make this research possible it is important to consider both the creative artifact and the aesthetic motivation. This requires that the history for both parts of the research be explained in their separate contexts.

2.1.1 *Communication and Storytelling Through Non-Spoken Means*

The ability for humans to communicate between individuals and groups is seen as one of the most important features of higher intelligence. That is, the intelligence that sets humans apart from other species. This ability to communicate has been developed throughout human existence up until the present day; or what we consider to be the height of human communication, both in speed and legitimate transmission. Although spoken word, especially in present times, would be considered the most effective and successful form of communication, there are many ways humans communicate without words (Burgoon, J. K., et al. 2010). The most common way humans experience communication without words is through body language. Communication via body language is not something humans tend to learn through academic means, as could typically be assumed through verbal communication, but is learned through the physical human experience. This method of communication can also transcend language barriers. Although the body language of individuals may change in context from culture to culture, most frequently the experience of body language communication will overlap and be identifiable between cultures. This helps aid the idea of communication through more complex movement (Kadaej, B., &

Hamiti, V., 2020). For the purposes of the creative artifact the researchers chose to focus on the history of the development of non-verbal communication in humans.

There has been a presence of dance as a storytelling medium across cultures going as far back in time as the development of different cultures (Yilmaz, R., & Mahmet, F., 2019).

Different cultures created different movements that had a connected meaning to them. One of the best and most common examples of this would be the Hawaiian dance, Hula (Hajibayova, L. & Buente, W., 2017). The combination of movements in Hula, as is the same with other cultural dances, can be changed to affect the overall meaning the dancers are attempting to portray. Examples of this movement-based form of communication can be seen extremely frequently in cultures that have a long line of establishment. More examples would be the tribal dances of Native Americans that are still practiced to this day or the tradition of Hakka which is still performed frequently in the native culture present in New Zealand.

When exploring these dances in a modern context, one can see the development of the meaning of the movement throughout time. Although these dances still are and can be practiced in a more traditional sense, there is also a presence of these dances in a modern format. It can typically be seen in moments of celebration. For example, at the 2016 summer Olympics the New Zealand Olympians could be seen practicing Hakka in front of opposing teams. Although this is not the complete intent of the original form of Hakka, it can be seen that it is still used as a unity tool between people.

This leads into the evaluation of current dance practices as a method of communication. Another form of dance as a method of communication, perhaps a more common idea of communicative dance for some, is ballet. Ballet was formed in the early sixteenth century as a form of entertainment, however it became one of the most respected forms of dance in the world.

It is common for people to go to the ballet to experience a night of storytelling through dance. Ballet has a common set of pantomimic movements and large expressive bodily movements that combine to tell a story. This is one of the most successful forms of communicative dance in the modern setting. Most people in a developed nation will be able to tell you what ballet is, what it looks like, and they will be able to identify with the movements being presented. Although this is an amazing example of communication through movement, there is criticism that ballet gives too much of the story away and does not require people to use critical thinking to engage with the story.

This idea leads into the development of modern dance. At the time modern dance was created, ballet was unreachable to the masses. Not only were tickets to view ballet expensive, but the training itself was unachievable for individuals who did not have excessive disposable income. So, modern dance was created with the intention of being accessible to the masses, not only for visual entertainment but for the purposes of training and performance. As modern dance has developed, it has also become a mode for the idea of critical thought in movement.

2.1.2 LGBTQ+ Representation in the Media

The conversation surrounding lack of inclusion in modern media has been a long-discussed topic, even on public platforms of discussion. This issue has spanned many communities, including those who identify with a different sexual or gender orientation, racial or ethnic, or religious group other than white straight Christians. This topic has been increasing in its visibility over recent years, specifically with the creation and use of social media. Although lack of representation in media does affect many communities, for the purposes of this study the researchers will be focusing mainly on the lack of LGBTQ+ representation in modern media.

As visual media developed, specifically television and advertisements, the focus mainly surrounded the nuclear family. That is, a family with a typical mother, father, and “normal” children. Normal in this context refers to presenting as heterosexual and gender conforming. Those who were not heterosexual or gender non-conforming were unable to see themselves represented in these visual media outlets. Therefore, they were not receiving the same experience that heterosexual gender conforming people were receiving- seeing themselves explicitly portrayed on a public platform. Even if it was not them being seen publicly, it was people like them being presented, leading to a sense of greater identification within their community, an experience that was lacking among those either currently identified or could have identified within the LGBTQ+ community.

Being able to identify widely with those surrounding them, heteronormative people were able to create a strong sense of community, but that action had consequences. Feeling empowered, this way of life was seen as “correct,” and those who did not fit in with the heteronormative culture were ostracized. Due to the increasing ignorance with respect to the LGBTQ+ community driven by lack of representation in modern media, an increasing nature of violence against those seen as different began to arise. People who did identify within the LGBTQ+ community often were closeted, or hiding their true identification, in order to avoid ostracization and violence. Those who chose to go against heteronormative culture tended to live in larger cities within communities of like-minded people. Within these communities there was a greater sense of empowerment and safety.

The development of social media has been one of the largest aids in increasing the visibility of the LGBTQ+ community. With the world becoming smaller in the age of technology, those who identified as LGBTQ+ but did not live in areas of high LGBTQ+

concentration were able to connect over social platforms. People began to question the lack of wide representation in the media. Again, this happened within many cultures that were different than the previous standard for representation. An informal call for action began to surface on social platforms, and eventually companies responsible for producing content and advertisement took notice. One of the most notable beginnings of inclusion was Ellen DeGeneres and the character she played on Ellen coming out on the television show and in the media. Although her television show was cancelled for this reason, this is commonly used as a marker for more frequent inclusion on the modern media.

3. EXPLANATION OF EXHIBIT

3.1 Exhibit Venue and Resources

The exhibit was presented twice over Zoom from the Physical Education Activity Program (PEAP) Building at Texas A&M University. Both presentations consisted of prerecorded dances that either the participant or the audience then viewed. The dances were filmed in PEAP 207 at an earlier date in order to decrease the chances of technical or dancer difficulties.

The resources used for the exhibit presentations were the personal laptops of the researchers, the Texas A&M PEAP Building, and the Zoom system.

3.1.1 First Artifact Exhibit

The first presentation of the exhibit was given to the participants of the study individually. The participants were notified about their individual showing at the initial interview and were sent a form at the beginning of March to pick out a time during the week of March 8, 2021- March 13, 2021 to view and survey their piece. They were sent a Zoom link by the researchers via email where they would be able to view the video over a shared screen from one of the researchers. They were also emailed a version of the artifact to view in the case that viewing the video with the researchers was too technically difficult and interfered with the full comprehension of the piece. The participants were then asked a series of questions that the researchers were able to use to evaluate their success in communicating the life event through dance.

3.1.2 Second Artifact Exhibit

The second exhibit of the artifact was a formal showing to an open audience via zoom. The audience viewed a shared screen where each piece was then presented to the audience, whereas in the participant showing each participant was only able to view their own piece. The audience was able to ask the researchers questions about their creative decisions or reasons for research, but the researchers were not able to give away any identifying information about the participants that may have been present in the pieces. The audience was not given a survey. It was appropriate for the creative artifact to be presented in this manner chiefly due to COVID-19 restrictions. Creating an in-person viewing experience, both for the participants and the general public, was feasible but ultimately was decided to not be the safer and more efficient option. It was easier to maintain participants' anonymity, especially with dancers, when using an online platform. Using Zoom also allowed for more people to be present at the general public presentation, and allowed researchers to reach a larger, more diverse audience in more distant areas. The researchers do not believe that using an online platform for the exhibit presentations inhibited the experience for the participants or the general public.

3.2 Exhibit Planning

When planning the exhibit of the artifact, an in-person presentation was considered, but again, was deemed too dangerous as COVID-19 cases continued to rise in the United States. The researchers also considered in-person showings for participants only, which was decided against in order to protect the identities of the participants. It was also discussed whether or not a public showing needed to take place at all, considering the public showing has no impact on the results of the study. However, due to the idea behind increasing visibility of the LGBTQ+ community in the media, the researchers ultimately decided that a public exhibit of the artifact was necessary.

Filming was completed the week before the first exhibit using the space in PEAP 207. The space was converted into a performance ready area by pulling curtains and expanding the stadium style seating. This was done only so the researchers would be able to film the entire space, not for seating accommodations for any people. Using a tripod, the researchers set up an iPhone 11 to film. This choice was made because the iPhone 11 offers the ability to change the light setting and expand the view of the visual field. It also offered the ease of upload ability, versus a video camera, which the researchers needed for the quick turn around time of the filming to the exhibit. All 5 pieces were performed twice by dancers and the best performance was chosen by the researchers to be presented to the participants. The researchers used iMovie to overlay the music, as the sound picked up through the recording was not up to the standard that the researchers wanted. The videos were then shared with the participants at the beginning of the week prior to their exhibit to give them time to view and critique the researchers work on the piece.

The first exhibit of the artifact, which was to the participants individually, was planned exclusively between the researchers and the participants. The participants were sent a form in which they could indicate which time in the week of March 8, 2021 would be most convenient for them to complete the approximately 20-30 minute survey following the viewing of their personal dance piece. They were notified that this part of the process would be taking place at the initial interview and again when the viewing form was sent to them.

The second exhibit of the artifact was advertised via the Texas A&M University Dance Science Program email and social media. Since the second exhibit would be a public zoom showing, the presentation was openly advertised using online fliers and a small description detailing the concept behind the performances. Audience members were able to sign up to

receive a zoom link. They then logged into zoom at the date and time of the show using the password provided. The audience was asked to turn off their cameras and microphones in an effort to minimize distractions from the audience while the exhibition was taking place. The artifact was presented by sharing the screen of a researcher that had the prepared videos edited together in a row. The audience viewed all five pieces one after another and were able to ask questions to the researchers at the end of the exhibit once the screen was unshared and they were allowed to unmute themselves and turn their microphones back on.

The Q&A session at the end of the public viewing, although impactful to the results of the study, was included because the researchers felt it met one of the overall themes of the research which was the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics in media. By including the Q&A section, the floor was opened to audience members to potentially increase their understanding of and exposure to the LGBTQ+ community. The researchers were also able to share their findings about the effectiveness of the storytelling medium with the audience.

4. REFLECTION

4.1 Conceptualizing a Larger Project

The celebration of the artifact let the researchers experience the fully realized potential of their work. The researchers always hoped that this work would be impactful to those in and close to the LGBTQ+ community, but seeing it in person and experiencing the positive feedback from the audience made the true fulfillment of the project clear. Not only were the participants of the study touched by the performances of their own stories, but other audience members reached out to the researchers inquiring about the further role of the project in society. The participants were able to see themselves through their dances and see how they feel portrayed in movement. This movement was a different way for our participants to see themselves and their journey, and allowed them to gain this experience through the avenue of art and creativity as opposed to only personal experience. Knowing this, the researchers were able to determine that there is a potential role for this project to help others achieve self-actualization through the visibility the project brings to the LGBTQ+ community. This is because of the specific and common themes that people who identify as LGBTQ+ experience. Especially those people within the community that have yet to realize their own identification, or are working toward learning their identification.

Based upon the feedback that was received nothing about the project changed, however the researchers were inspired by the potential the project has on a wider scale. The idea that this project could potentially assist individuals in actualizing their “true selves,” a common phrase used within the LGBTQ+ community, has somewhat inspired the researchers to conceptualize about the impact this project could have on a wider scale, and what the details of a larger project

would look like. Having gone through training, and learning about the various identifications within the LGBTQ+ community, the researchers have felt a growing sense of duty to continue to spread creative work surrounding the LGBTQ+ community. Learning one's identification and taking ownership of their role within the community is a long and lengthy process. When considering human individuality, specifically the different ways people learn and their interests in different areas of knowledge, the researchers have seen that there is a space for LGBTQ+ awareness in the creative field. Knowing the community exists, as most people in our society do, is one thing, but most people do not take the time to introspect and evaluate their own potential identification, or consider the inner and outer struggles one has to go through to truly realize their identification. Potentially, if more people had access to a creative viewing that inspired them to think more deeply about the LGBTQ+ community, they would be able to consider what place they hold in the community, whether that be as an ally or someone who identifies within the community.

4.2 Q&A and the Independent Audience

The Q&A session helped the researcher truly gauge the impact of their work, specifically in an artistic sense. In attendance were multiple professors from the Texas A&M Dance Science Program. These professors, and students from the program, tended to ask artistically specific questions, requiring that the researchers explore their true motivation behind each piece. Through these questions, the researchers were able to articulate that the inspiration behind each piece was as unique as the stories told in the interview, and some had more driving force and a clearer idea than others. The researchers discussed with the audience how when it came to the creative nature of the work, each piece had unique variables that individually impacted its development. Questions asked by non-dancers tended to lean more toward the philosophical questioning of the

pieces and the choreographers themselves. One question asked was what the choreographers had “realized about themselves” throughout the entire research process. The researchers’ answers were both related specifically to the new choreographic identity they had created through the different pieces and their individual difficulty levels. These questions inspired the researcher to evaluate each piece analytically, looking at the relationship between the researcher and each piece, and also varying individual impact that each piece could have, and did have, on an independent audience.

4.3 Changes for Repetition

If the artifact was to be repeated, the researchers would include more abstract thought in the interview process. The main difficulty with some pieces was not translating them into dance too literally, but being able to maintain the emotion and integrity of the stories. The researchers wanted to avoid pantomimic movements, but occasionally they seemed to be the only part of a participant’s story that the researchers knew or had personal identification with. The researchers did ask participants to have photos ready, which were intended to assist the researchers in the choreographic process in a visual medium, but at times this was not enough. If repeated, the researchers would put more work into truly prompting and leading the participants to more abstract and philosophical thoughts about what their story would look like in an artistic sense, rather than just the literal reiteration of their story. The researchers would also schedule more interviews throughout the course of the entire project. There were just two interviews between researchers, pre and post. Pre referred to the first interview, which was commonly the first meeting between participants and researchers, post referred to the interview after the participant had seen their dance and was now evaluating the effectiveness of their piece. Often, the amount of time between these two interviews was between four to six months. During this time details

about the story being told changed on the side of the participant as well as the researchers. The researchers felt they could have created a more abstract and well-adapted piece if they had been able to maintain contact with the participant. Some of the participants were also going through ongoing identification questioning processes. Not all of the participants were confident within their labels at the time of the interview, and the researchers would have liked to keep up with that journey during the creative choreography process. This also coincides with the culture of the LGBTQ+ community and the idea that one's identification is not stagnant, but something that one can evaluate and reevaluate continuously. The community is constantly expanding and society is also constantly adapting to the new ideas and new titles that people can identify within. It would have been prudent for the researchers to use this concept of adaptation and expansion during the course of the study to keep contact with the participants. The last issue related to the timeline and the idea of maintaining contact with the participants, is they often did not remember the answers to the questions we asked in the first interview. It is unclear whether this was because the participants had changed over time or because so much time had passed that the memory of the first interview was lacking. No matter the case, this still solidifies the idea that more frequent interviews during the choreography period would have been beneficial for both the researchers and participants

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APPENDIX: CREATIVE ARTIFACT

Interviews

Original interviews were designed and intended for researchers to be able to receive the most knowledge about a participant's personality and identification in one sitting. The researchers began by reading through the list of questions that were pre-prepared and making note of the participants answers separately. From there, the researchers took the opportunity to ask any additional questions they believed would help aid in the choreography process. These interviews were also recorded for use of the researchers to reference during the choreography process. Consent was not obtained for the use of these recordings in publishing and therefore will not be included here.

Interview Questions

1. Preferred Name
2. Pronouns
3. Where are you from?
4. How do you identify yourself in gender and sexual orientation?
5. What is a small biography of you? (including life milestones, favorite activities, passions, etc.)
6. On a scale from one to ten, one being most feminine and ten being most masculine, how would you describe your appearance, style, or dress?
7. Is this different from how you wish to present yourself?

8. A person's appearance, style, or dress may affect the way people think of them. On a scale from one to ten, one being most feminine and 10 being most masculine, on average, how do you think people would describe your appearance, style, or dress?
9. Do you think this is an accurate representation of how you wish to present yourself?
10. A person's mannerisms, such as the way they walk or talk, may affect the way people think of them. On a scale from one to ten, one being most feminine and ten being most masculine, on average, how do you think people would describe your mannerisms?
11. Do you think this is an accurate representation of yourself?
12. On a scale from one to ten, one being most feminine and ten being most masculine, how would you describe your own mannerisms?
13. Do you hide your mannerisms at all in an attempt to fit in with the status quo?
14. Have you ever been bullied (physically or verbally) for being LGBTQ+?
15. If so, can you describe the first time, the most recent time, and the times that stick out most in your memory?
16. Who did you come out to first?
17. Was it a positive or negative experience?
18. How did that experience impact your comfortability level with respect to coming out to more people?
19. How did you come out to your family and friends and how did they react?
20. What is your current relationship like with your family?
21. Does your family welcome your partner(s)?
22. If you are isolated from your family of origin, do you have a chosen family?
23. Which part of your journey has impacted you the most and why?

24. Where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?

25. Please explain three other things you would like us to know about your journey.

26. Do you have any ideas from your story that you feel should be translated into this dance piece (specific movements, specific themes, etc.)?

Dance Recordings

The recording of each of the five dances that were created by the researchers are included separately from this document, but are accessible to the public reader. Each dance occurs in order from Participant 1 to Participant 5 and are titled as such.

Participant 1 begins at 0:00:15, and tells the story of a gender fluid queer person. The participants had a very extensive answer for question 24 in the interview process, and the researchers chose to focus on the idea of the future throughout this piece. The participant also worked within skilled labor practices on a family farm, which can be seen in the movement of the flexing and pointing of the feet, and connection to the ground throughout the dance. The beginning of the dance shows the dancer being somewhat hidden from view, consistently keeping her back toward the audience, but develops to standing and more free forward-facing movement throughout the piece. The connection to the ground and repetition of the flexed foot movement represents the connection the participant still held with family and work despite their changing identity.

Participant 2 begins at 0:03:58. This participant is a transgender male. In the interview process, the participant talked deeply about how daunting their transition had been, but how they felt lighter and at piece in the current time. They were one of the only participants to give input in question 26, saying they saw the overarching subject of “thinking back” and included a “sad sort of blue” color. The researchers included the feeling of difficulty and heaviness they got from

hearing about the participants transition, seen in the heavy lunging movements, and the dancers increasing irritability with the skirt as the dance progresses and the music builds. The darkness of the beginning was contrasted by the feeling of freedom when they had reached their true self, shown in the lightness of the dancing once the skirt was removed (0:06:58). The music also lightened once the skirt was removed and the dancer was told to have a more peaceful face, which was likely blocked by the mask used to comply with COVID guidelines.

Participant 3 begins at 0:07:57 and shows a portion of the story of a non-binary queer person. This participant emphasized their passion for their painting hobby in the interview, they also provided answers to question 26. Their answers included “warm colors” and “smooth slow movements.” The dancer for this piece was told to hold their hand as if they were holding a paint brush, and all the movement can be seen to be slow and smooth. This is typically equated to having a “goeey-like” quality in dance. The dancer begins with controlled and internalized movement, keeping close to themselves and only painting the area surrounding them. Closely following this is a standing moment where the dancer paints herself (0:09:01). The participant resonated strongly with this movement, saying it felt like it showed how they “came into themselves.” As the dance progresses, the movement remains slow and smooth, but becomes larger scaled. The imagery used here was the idea of painting the space, a development from only painting the immediately surrounding area and themselves.

Participant 4 is a non-binary gay male whose dance begins at 0:11:42. Participant 4 participates in Drag, so the movement used in the piece was intended to be alike to a strut, and was modeled after the stage presence of Drag Queens. The developing jumping movement (0:13:10) exemplifies the energy that the participant has that was felt by the researchers in the interview. The other movement with specific intent to an idea was the corner facings (0:13:30).

Lastly, the hip movements seen throughout the dance represent the idea of switching between feminine and masculine movements, specifically within the context of Drag, but can also be applied to how the participant feels within their own lifestyle.

Participant 5 is a bisexual female whose piece begins at 0:14:48. At the time of this interview, Participant 5 was not yet out in public so her dance focused on the line between her “true self” and her public and family persona. This could be heard in some of the lyrics (i.e., “borderline,” “meet me halfway,” “where do we go”) well as seen as the dancer running back and forth between stage left and right. These were intended to represent the struggle she feels to balance the two sides of her life, as well as the potential integration of her “true self” into her public life. The movement that happens on stage left is more energetic and “jumpy,” in order to show the joy she feels knowing who she is, and the movement taking place on stage right is more grounded to show the deep connection she has with her family.

Post-Interviews

Post-interview refers to the interviews that were conducted after each participant viewed the piece that was created in response to their original interview answers.

Participant Feedback

A problem that commonly occurred using the two-interview method was how much time had passed in between interviews. The participants frequently had to be reminded how they responded to certain questions in the first interview. This particularly effected question 5, because participants often did not remember what they had told researchers in the first interview.

Question 1 received heavily positive feedback and scores ranged from seven to nine, indicating that researchers were successful in creating accurate stories through dance. Question 3 received mostly positive feedback, again ranging from seven to nine, however, Participant 5 did

point out that although the dance matched the story she told, it could also match many stories told by different people. Participant 5 rated question 3 a three on the scale. Participants had little to say about question six, only Participant 2 pointed out that he wished blue had been included in the costuming considering that he sighted that in the interview process. The researchers chose to dress the dancer in black because of the ease of access to that color in costuming. Question 7 received similar input from all participants. They said that an unknowing audience would likely be able to pick out parts of the story, but they would not necessarily be able to relate it back to LGBTQ+ significance based upon the individuals background knowledge and experiences. A similar answer was present for the second part of question. An unknowing audience would likely be able to communicate the events of the dance but perhaps not in the context of LGBTQ+ subject matter.

Post-Interview Questions

27. On a scale from one to ten, one being not well at all and ten being very well, how do you feel your story was told through the dance?
28. Were you able to pick out any specific instances from your story that appeared in the dance?
29. On a scale from one to ten, one being most unlike your story and ten being most like your story, how well were you able to identify that it was your story being told in the dance?
30. Do you feel the choreographers were successful in telling your story through movement?
Explain why or why not.
31. Did the choreographers include any ideas that you suggested in the interview process?

32. Do you think the choreographers could have explained or told your story, through movement, better than what was presented to you? If so, what could they have done differently.
33. Do you think an audience of people that did not know your story would be able to follow the sequence of events presented through movement? Do you think they would be able to correctly communicate the events through spoken word to another person? How well?
34. Do you have any other opinions you would like the researchers to know?