

# THE INTELLECT HANDBOOK OF



## *Dance Education Research*

**EDITED BY  
LYNNETTE YOUNG OVERBY,  
BILLIE LEPCZYK, JILL GREEN**



# The Intellect Handbook of Dance Education Research

Edited by

Lynnette Young Overby, Billie Lepczyk  
and Jill Green



Bristol, UK / Chicago, USA

# Introduction

Lynnette Young Overby, Billie Lepczyk and Jill Green

With an invitation from the editors at Intellect, this journey to compile a book that would provide readers with an in-depth view of dance research began. After proposing a few ideas, we landed on dance education research as the focus of this handbook. The proposed *Handbook of Dance Education Research* would be designed to provide a comprehensive overview of dance education research methods, types and formats. Dance research scholars Billie Lepczyk and Jill Green soon joined me as co-editors to embark on this quest.

We soon recognized that there did not exist (to our knowledge) a book of this type—one that would not only provide examples of a variety of dance education research projects, but also present a broad look at methodologies. In addition, the book would not only focus on dance education research in the United States, but more broadly with examples of dance research from several different countries. Moreover, the curated book would include the voices of seasoned professionals and newer scholars in the field. As all three of us have experienced long careers in dance, we want to reveal a little about our background and interests that prompted us to compile this handbook.

Lynnette states that dance education research is necessary for the accessibility of dance for everyone who desires to experience this art form.

*I have spent the last 40+ years as an educator, researcher and advocate for dance education. After taking my first educational research course as an MA student in dance education at George Washington University, it occurred to me that these research methods could easily be applied to dance education and could lead to a deeper understanding of the benefits of this experience. With the addition of a Ph.D. from the University of Delaware and several more research courses, I became encouraged to promote and pursue research that could advance the knowledge of dance educators, and enable policy-makers to make positive decisions about the inclusion of dance in public schools. To foster this belief, I was fortunate to receive mentorship in writing and editing from University of Maryland Professors, Jane Clark and James Humphrey, who gave me the opportunity to edit and publish several volumes of Dance: Current Selected Research. The research in these nine volumes provided an outlet for dance researchers from 1989 to 2018. Co-editor Billie Lepczyk and I edited several volumes of Dance: Current Selected Research, and co-editor Jill Green has been a contributor to the volumes. My research has included interdisciplinary learning, movement imagery, and arts-based, community-engaged research.*

*In addition to my work as a researcher and editor, I have served in several leadership positions in dance and in arts organizations including President of the National Dance Association, The Michigan Dance Alliance and the Delaware Dance Education Organization. Advocacy/policy change became goals of these organizations, when asked to speak to legislators and other administrators about the importance of a dance education. I recall attending several March for the Arts trips to Washington, DC with the Delaware Arts Alliance, and speaking to legislators about the importance of arts/dance integration for all students, based on current research. Currently I am an appointed member of the National Council on the Humanities, and a Research Associate for the Arnhold*

*Institute for Dance Education Research, Policy and Leadership, where dance education research has found a supportive home.*

In the following statement, Billie Lepczyk shares her journey to the field of dance education research.

*As a young dancer living in Athens and performing with the Greek Choreodrama I wanted to learn what was different in the movement of other modern dance styles, as I had only been exposed to ballet and Graham technique. There were no clear descriptions in books. After a career performing on stage, in plays, and in film, I returned to the United States to attend Michigan State University. While earning my BA I directed the dance program at Lansing Community College and taught dance in the MSU Continuing Education Program. There I discovered my second passion, teaching. I went on to study at Teachers College, Columbia University and the Dance Notation Bureau, where I trained as a notator under Muriel Topaz and completed the Effort/Shape Certification Program under Irmgard Bartenieff. My E/S Certification Project, Meetings-First Duet by Sandra Neels, was hailed “a milestone” in the development of dance style research (Dance Research Annual IX, CORD, 64–65).*

*As a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, I was an adjunct assistant professor in the Dance Education Department at New York University teaching several courses in Labanotation and Effort/Shape. With these tools and experience, I was equipped to begin to fill the void of research on dance style. Sponsored by Maxine Greene as a Teachers College Fellow I wrote my doctoral dissertation, “A comparative analysis of movement style in dance,” which was my initial contribution to dance education research. Serving as a co-editor of this Handbook on Dance Education Research allowed me to share findings about dance education for current and future dance educators and researchers.*

Co-editor Jill Green feels deeply about the dissemination of research in dance education as she expresses in her statement.

*After completing my master’s degree from New York University, I was in the first dance teacher group licensed to teach dance in New York City. After teaching in the New York City Public School system for seven years, I became interested in the newly formed area of somatics. I was able to continue my studies in somatics and dance education when I entered the Ohio State University somatics program. While studying for my Ph.D., I found myself enthralled with educational research, taking five research courses with Patti Lather, a well-known and renowned educational theorist and researcher. It was here that I developed a love of research. Engaging in it from a creative and sociopolitical lens, I began to develop the idea of social somatic theory in dance education and research. I was hired at the University of North Carolina in 1993 and never looked back. While at UNCG I conducted research, taught two graduate research courses, and taught courses in somatics, body studies, and pedagogy.*

*In 2017, I was honored to receive the Outstanding Dance Education Researcher Award, from the National Dance Education Organization. And in 2021, I was honored with a lifetime achievement award from the Dance Science and Somatics Education Group. With my continued interest in bridging research in dance education, somatics, and social justice issues, it has been a great privilege to work on this book with Lynnette and Billie during these last few years. I believe that we were able to give a voice to a number of researchers from many areas of dance education, while providing a vehicle for the representation of a number of different methodologies.*

Together, over the past two and a half years, the three of us have worked to curate and create this *Handbook on Dance Education Research* that we hope will (1) allow current and future dance education researchers to gain a deeper understanding of specific ways to answer a question through a variety of traditional and nontraditional research methods, (2) provide clear examples of dance education research that has been conducted internationally, (3) develop improved teaching practices based on knowledge from selected studies and (4) gain support for the advocacy of dance education based on the impact gleaned from the research.

This book is divided into four parts. Part I focuses on dance education research and methodologies and is divided into three sections. With an introduction by Jill Green, the chapters that follow provide an

overview of various types of research including the more traditional, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed and other methods such as portraiture and a/r/tography.

Part II, introduced by Lynnette Young Overby, includes examples of dance education research that incorporate qualitative, quantitative and/or mixed methods. This part has three sections covering dance education research applications in the areas of history and culture, dance teaching and choreography, and community-based research. The projects described in these sections provide clear examples of the many approaches to dance education scholarship that can be replicated or applied to various K-12, higher education and in various community settings.

Part III provides insight into dance education that takes place in several countries. This part is introduced by Peter Cook, Associate Deputy Chancellor, Southern Cross University, Australia. The collection of chapters within this part provides snapshots of research practices from contrasting international areas, and with a variety of approaches and paradigms. The contributions represent several countries including Korea, South Africa, the United States, Jamaica, India, the United Kingdom, Brazil, and Slovenia, and underscore the global relevance and significance of research in dance education.

Part IV includes chapters focused on social justice dance education practice and research. This part is introduced by Alfdaniel Mivule Basibye Mabingo, Makerere University, Uganda. These chapters push the boundaries of dance education research to promote meaning and social change. They provide substantive examples of the impact dance education research can have in response to social and cultural issues.

We believe that this book will be a useful resource for university students, professors, practitioners and policy-makers in organizations and in school systems. Furthermore, we hope that this book will inspire future dance education researchers to conduct research that is collaborative, impactful, inclusive and diverse—research that will solidify the place of dance as an integral part of each person's education.