As a dancer and artist-scholar, I draw on the embodied nature of dance to foreground research that explores, illustrates, and enhances people's embodied experiences, while offering dance as a vehicle to express their identities and narratives. My work focuses on how *mind-full-body-in-environment* manifests, is designed for, and participates somatically, culturally, socially, and politically. Broadly, my scholarship engages dance to examine iterations of Place-making through how bodies move and have freedom of movement within social, political, and ecological environments. As well as grassroots community activity, my focus also catalyzes interdisciplinary scholarly collaborations, such as my role as a Research Affiliate and Guest Artist (2020–2022) at Arts, Culture, and Technology, MIT. I challenge and expand the Western normative narratives around Place and identity, offering new ways of understanding and representing the lived experience. My work challenges academic binaries of mind/body often incorporating the somatics of digital technology, site-specific dance installations, and interdisciplinary and community-based collaborations. Through this, I reimagine the role of dance in contemporary society, not just as an art form but as a tool for social, political, and ecological inquiry. My work demonstrates how dance can be a vehicle for social change, storytelling, cultural preservation, and community engagement. As well as suggesting dance is a scholarly method for exploring how knowledge is generated.

Ontology/worldview and research design: Place, embodiment, and relationality are key to my work because I operate from Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous worldviews. My ontology is encapsulated by the Lakota and Bantu phrases, Mitákuye Oyás'iŋn ("we are all related") and Ubuntu ("I am because we are"). In a Western context, I align these concepts with John Dewey's theory of *trans-action* and Karen Barad's theory of *intra-action*, which emphasize the interconnectedness of beings and environments. Dance, with its inherent relationality, exemplifies these worldviews: dance simultaneously manifests across, with, in, and through bodies and environments. Likewise, the choreography of dances across the world holds cultural and Place-based insights for being with, and in the environments they are from. My research uses dance knowledges, often working from a practice-as/is-research paradigm to uphold the role of embodiment and relationality within the theoretical and practical design of research activity. My non-Western paradigm challenges binary thinking of separations and classifications, leading me to naturally engage in interdisciplinary, practice-based, Place-based, relational accountability, and socially engaged work. This is articulated by Shawn Wilson *'...we view the world around us through our whole lives, not just in the research process. We cannot remove ourselves from our world in order to examine it*.'[1]

Interdisciplinary Collaborations: My passion for dance and choreography fuels an interest in how design, physically and conceptually impacts and creates opportunities for bodies to express and move in real-world situations, including social, political, and ecological environments. I consider choreographic-thinking (how things move and impact each other) as an attribute of design. Thus, my research frequently intersects with other disciplines, fostering collaborations that extend beyond the traditional boundaries of dance. For instance, my work in urban design looking at how non-white and female-presenting bodies experience Western cities, resulted in my book *Dance, Architecture, and Engineering* (2021), which highlights the role of choreography as a form of spatial inquiry and design. This book, which was featured on *MIT's 2021 Summer Reading List* and reviewed in the *Architecture Theory Review* (Volume 27, 2023 – Issue 2), exemplifies how dance

[1] Page 14, Wilson, Shawn (2008). Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods. Black Point, N.S.:Fernwood Pub.

can inform and be informed by other spatial disciplines such as curation, engineering, architecture, and urban design. These interdisciplinary endeavors are integral to my scholarship, leading to further projects like my Theatrum Mundi Fellowship and resulting publication, *Navigations: Scoring the Moment*, which explores a lexicon of ten choreographic-related words that generate place-based collaborative discussions between grassroots communities and disciplines outside of dance.

Methodological Rigor: I ensure methodological rigor through an ethnographic and narrative inquiry approach. I draw on a range of documentation and analysis techniques including the use of video recordings, reflective journaling, and participant feedback to critically assess the impact and effectiveness of my research projects. I discuss and challenge my methods with peers through publication in the field, for instance in the peer-reviewed article Marking the Moment: documenting dance in coloured water, flesh, sand, and charcoal. *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices, 15 (2)*, 159-169. I also maintain a robust and reflexive practice-as/is-research (PaR) process by actively engaging in published discourses in the PaR field and by leading grassroots and community projects where I solicit feedback from participants, ensuring the work remains understandable and relevant to their real-world concerns.

Artistic Practice - Community Engagement: I aim to contribute artistically and scholarly to the empowerment of marginalized communities and environments. Particularly, how they take ownership of their stories and contribute to broader societal conversations and future building. My scholarship includes writing, dance performance, film, and installation. Recently, I was commissioned by Hayward Gallery, Southbank, UK, to create *Belonging (in the Hop)*, a public interactive, site-specific dance work on migrant workers who pick hops in the UK, for *The Hop Installation* by Jyll Bradley. I created musical accompaniment that was the live bio-electrical responses of a hop plant put through a synthesizer in the installation with those dancing. This led to a further commission from Frieze Festival to create *[re]-membering The Hop*, a community dance project with youth dancers in East London, performed at Hop Square, Regents Park, UK. I also work with digital technology, film, and Augmented Reality (AR). For instance, I was commissioned by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) to create *How do we remember as a society*? a series of three short dance films exploring the relationship between body, memory, and material structure. I made these films using 'glitches' in Zoom algorithms. This work commemorated RIBA's presentation of the 2021 Royal Gold Medal to Sir David Adjaye OBE and stems from my research on the disappearances and hyper-visibility of female-presenting Black and Indigenous bodies in Western cities. My interest in the presence of Black and Indigenous bodies in Place extends to digital spaces, as demonstrated by my current project Space+Dance+Digital ($S+D^2$). $S+D^2$ emerged as I concluded my role as an Affiliate Researcher and Guest Artist at MIT. Building on this, during the 2023/24 academic year, I continued developing S+D2 with support from a *National Endowment for the Arts* grant. The funding allowed me to collaborate with young Black homeless youth at the Ruth Ellis Center in Detroit (building on my history there) and youth at the *North American Indian Center of Boston*, MA to develop the AR performance application further. This research asks

- what *does it mean artistically for dance to take advantage of the physical boundary crossing of digital space*?
- Can dance experience and choreographic thinking contribute to a sense of collaborative place-making?

- *Can dance experience and choreographic thinking contribute to new ways of artistic and political togetherness?*

Empowering young people for the future: As a researcher, I believe it is also vital to engage with the next generation to maintain rigor and accountability. Children's feedback is direct and thorough. Therefore, I consistently produce research outcomes that are directed at young populations. I also have ongoing research questions asking:

- *How do children (particularly those from non-European diasporas) reclaim cultural spaces and have a voice in the cultural curation of the city/town where they live?*
- *How do we support and empower these young people in telling narratives of Self that authentically speak to their twenty-first-century circumstances?*

This has led me to create a number of dance-performance works for young audiences. I use a practice-as/is-research approach, making these works in consultation with young people through residencies and community workshops. The works that carry some of the creative voice of the young people tour traditional and non-traditional performance spaces in other young peoples communities. This has led me to publications reflecting on this work such as the book chapter For Kaydence and Her Cousins: Health and Happiness in Cultural Legacies and Contemporary Contexts. In Nancy Van Styvendale, J.D. McDougall, Robert Henry, Robert Alexander Innes (eds.), *The Arts of Indigenous Health and Wellbeing* University of Manitoba Press (2021) pp. 60-75.

Water Conservation and Environmental Commitment: Within my scholarship, I maintain an ongoing commitment to water conservation and environmental sustainability. I received research funding from my current university to begin the project *Water Sources as Embodied Archives: Ecosomatic Dances and Traditional Knowledges (Teotihuacan, Mexico City, and Denton).* I have consulted with *Global Water Dances* to support the creation of their dance curriculum. I am currently touring an interactive dance performance work for young audiences called *SPLASH!.* The work was developed in collaboration with visual artists using found riverside materials to draw with. The show uses projection to immerse the dancers and young audience members in drawings of rivers and oceans and immersive sound that responds to body movement. The outcome of the research that produced *SPLASH!* also informs my book chapter *Fearless Belonging and river-me* in Geographies of Us: Ecosomatic Essays and Practice Pages edited by Sondra Fraleigh and Shannon Rose Riley, Routledge (2024).

Engagement with Students and Pedagogy: My practice-based scholarship deeply informs my teaching, allowing me to offer students cutting-edge perspectives and student-centered pedagogical experiences, where students are engaged in hands-on, collaborative projects that connect academic learning with real-world issues and Indigenous knowledge systems. My courses often include collaborative projects that allow students to engage with the community and apply their learning in real-world contexts, thus bridging the gap between scholarship and practice. At my current university, *Texas Woman's University* (TWU), I have been recognized with the College of Arts and Sciences' Excellence in Scholarship Award (2024/25).

In conclusion, my scholarship is a dynamic interplay of practice and theory, rooted in Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous worldviews and driven by a commitment to social, cultural, and ecological justice. Through interdisciplinary collaborations, practice-as/is-research methodologies, and a strong engagement with community, I strive to contribute meaningfully to cultural preservation, social and environmental justice, educational transformation, and interdisciplinary innovation.