# Cardiff School of Sport
# DISSERTATION ASSESSMENT PROFORMA:
Empirical [1]

| Student name: | Grace Cushion | Student ID: | ST10001528 |
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| Dissertation title: | An Examination of Improvisation in Capoeria. |
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| Supervisor: | Heidi Wilson |

| Comments | Section |
|---|---|
| | **Title and Abstract**<br>Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem.<br>Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken. |
| | **Introduction and literature review**<br>To include: outline of context (theoretical/conceptual/applied) for the question; analysis of findings of previous related research including gaps in the literature and relevant contributions; logical flow to, and clear presentation of the research problem/ question; an indication of any research expectations, (i.e., hypotheses if applicable). |
| | **Methods and Research Design**<br>To include: details of the research design and justification for the methods applied; participant details; comprehensive replicable protocol. |
| | **Results and Analysis [2]**<br>To include: description and justification of data treatment/ data analysis procedures; appropriate presentation of analysed data within text and in tables or figures; description of critical findings. |
| | **Discussion and Conclusions [2]**<br>To include: collation of information and ideas and evaluation of those ideas relative to the extant literature/concept/theory and research question/problem; adoption of a personal position on the study by linking and combining different elements of the data reported; discussion of the real-life impact of your research findings for coaches and/or practitioners (i.e. practical implications); discussion of the limitations and a critical reflection of the approach/process adopted; and indication of potential improvements and future developments building on the study; and a conclusion which summarises the relationship between the research question and the major findings. |
| | **Presentation**<br>To include: academic writing style; depth, scope and accuracy of referencing in the text and final reference list; clarity in organisation, formatting and visual presentation |

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[1] This form should be used for both quantitative and qualitative dissertations. The descriptors associated with both quantitative and qualitative dissertations should be referred to by both students and markers.
[2] There is scope within qualitative dissertations for the RESULTS and DISCUSSION sections to be presented as a combined section followed by an appropriate CONCLUSION. The mark distribution and criteria across these two sections should be aggregated in those circumstances.

# CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
## Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd


# CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT


# DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS)


# DANCE


# AN EXAMINATION OF IMPROVISATION IN CAPOEIRA


# (Dissertation submitted under the discipline of Dance)


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# An Examination of Improvisation in Capoeira.

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# **Contents Page**

# Acknowledgments

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# Abstract

This study examines the use of improvisation in the martial art Capoeira and in dance. It considers the use of improvisation in other art forms and aesthetic sporting activities. The research was completed through building and then comparing two Case Studies; one on the Angola style of Capoeira, and one on a piece by Laurie Booth called Dance House 4. This research highlighted that the relationship between performers in duet forms of improvisation, such as Capoeira and Contact Improvisation, holds a great amount of interest for an audience. How improvisation is judged, and what is valued in improvisation is important. Also creativity lies within the choices performers make to negotiate the different components of an improvisation; often this includes a performer attempting discover something new or unusual. In Capoeira this research also identified a possible link between creativity and a more playful attitude and approach to the style. The examination of Booth's piece, Dance House 4, with Capoeira suggests that the shift from improvised performance into a composed piece of work can lead to the sacrifice of the excitement and unpredictability within the relationship between performers.

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1.1    Introduction

Improvisation is used in many different art forms and many styles of dance. This study aims to examine the use improvisation in Capoeria. Capoeira is a Brazilian style that has combines elements of dance, martial art, sport and music. In order to examine improvisation in Capoeira a comparison will be made between; how improvisation is used in Capoeira and how improvisation is used in Contact Improvisation through the use of Laban's Movement Analysis.

## 1.2    Literature Review

Improvisation can be defined as something which is "created spontaneously or without preparation" (Oxford Dictionaries 2012 online) or as "working without a set score" (Schechner 2002 p158). Smith-Autard (2004) defines improvisation as something that is spontaneous, that evolves and changes, "invention without preparation" (p80).   Smith-Autard questions what true improvisation is and states that for true improvisation to take place a performer needs to respond completely spontaneously. She goes on to suggest that structure within improvisation limits a performer's response, therefore true improvisation is not reached (2004). Conversely if the improvisation is structured the freedom can be found in not having to make certain decisions as well as deviating from the structure when a performer chooses to (Burrows 2010).

This spontaneous creation has to occur during a moment in time, and this moment is important. Blom and Chaplin (1989) emphasise that improvisation comes from the moment and does not come from any preplanning.  Blom and Chaplin also suggest that a "plan emerges to take us forward in time, yet it only becomes articulated as we move" (2000 p7). This implies that improvisation cannot be reproduced as it is dependent on the conditions and atmosphere created in one particular moment in time. In this moment

improvisation can provide freedom for performers to follow impulses and work at the speed of thinking (Burrows 2010).

Tufnell and Crickmay (1993) also consider this approach to improvisation as being something that is created in the moment; as well as referring to the moment growing and changing as it happens and takes form. Tufnell and Crickmay draw from these aspects and propose that the material generated "in its complexity and unexpectedness, could never be planned or arrived at by logical means" (1993, p194).

Tufnell and Crickmay highlight the importance of an open minded approach towards improvisation; of shedding self-image and becoming receptive to the moment. This could allow for something to become improvisation, as Tufnell and Crickmay suggest that the point at which improvisation occurs is when a performer no longer knows what is going to happen (1993). This leads to Blom and Chaplin to propose that improvisation is a tool which allows for "spontaneous and simultaneous exploring, creating, and performing" (1989 p6).

Blom and Chaplin (2000) discuss the purpose of the improvisation and whether the performer or choreographer makes choices as to what this is. Is it to communicate a dramatic idea or is it expression, or the expression of an emotion. This highlights the idea that improvisation is often used as a way of expressing and translating a feeling or response to something. Smith-Autard (2004) suggests that improvisation and the movement created comes from within the performer and often indulges in the performers feelings. Minton (2007) agrees with this by suggesting that improvisation is an experience that is internal, a feeling response to some kind of inspiration. Blom and Chaplin refer to this as an idea but call it "inner-directed movement" (1989 p6). Blom and Chaplin (1989) discuss the notion that the improvisation does not exist by itself; ideas, emotions and the context has influence over it. It could be concluded that the purpose of the improvisation effects what is created.

## 1.3   Where does improvisation occur in dance?

Improvisation is used in many different art forms and mediums such as dance, theatre, music, performance art and even sport. Improvisation within dance shares similar qualities with improvisation in different art forms (Gibbs 2003). Schechner argues that a performer can draw on everyday behaviour or from a codified behaviour in order to create improvisation (2002). The medium in which improvisation is being applied determines which kind of behaviour the performer would draw from. Improvisation within different genres and styles is used differently. Schechner (2002) discusses improvisation in different situations from sport to music, dance, acting and even everyday life. Whilst Cooper Albright and Gere state that anyone can move "improvisationally" (2003 p193).

Improvisation can be used in the process of creating, as well as in the end product; a performance. Schechner (2002) states that improvisation is used within sport; comparing a player to a jazz musician. Schechner states that codified behaviour ensures a level of understanding from both participants and the audience. Schechner suggests that in basketball the basic moves like passing and dribbling are these codified movements. This creates a base that ensures that the audience can understand and follow the game. Schechner then identifies that a great player "knows the moves and can riff on them" (2002 p156). Schechner then compares this style of improvisation to a jazz music, highlighting how a jazz musician might improvise off a certain progression. Smith-Autard also discusses how jazz musicians use improvisation to create variations on an original theme; all the while the original theme provides a tight structure to adhere to. Smith-Autard suggests that the spontaneity is in the musician's response to the structure (2004).

Exploration is part of improvisation; Smith-Autard (2004) states that this exploration happens at different times in different art forms. A visual artist has the time to explore an idea before selecting the product. In dance and music improvisation the performance is immediate which means that this exploration and selection process happens simultaneously during a performance. In

terms of improvisation as a product; composers; choreographers; or playwrights explore and search for material that is selected to form a product.

In dance there are examples of improvisation being used as both a choreographic process and as an end product or "principle for performance" (Burrows 2010 p24). In choreography improvisation is often used by choreographers as a process or tool towards discovering material that will be selected, structured and used to create the end product (Burrows 2010). With improvisation as performance the selection of the material happens in sight of the audience during the performance, the process and creation of the end product are simultaneous.

Smith-Autard argues that improvisation can be an "open free spontaneous response in movement" to a "more limited framed … interpretation within a given structure" (2004 p81). Smith-Autard argues that these freedoms or limitations of an improvisation can sit along a scale or continuum, from open to structured.  Smith-Autard suggests that as soon as thought and directed consciousness are used in improvisation the improvisation becomes less free and less spontaneous. This may occur as ideas for the dance may have already been researched and genre and style may have already been decided upon. Therefore it can be argued that some structure has already taken shape during this kind of improvisation, as well as ideas on what may be appropriate for the dance, this planning could potentially impose limitations on the dance. According to Smith-Autard all of these factors limit the improvisation in some way.  Smith-Autard suggests that most improvisation in dance is not free, but falls into the limited category, but the extent to which the improvisation is limited varies.

Conversely in improvisation the process of making choices based on a stimulus is crucial. Choice in an improvisation could mean different things. The choice may lie in the ordering of set steps, not in the invention of the steps or movement themselves. This is still considered improvisation but the creativity lies with the choice. In some instances this stimulus could simply be the body.

Free improvisation is therefore difficult to achieve. Smith-Autard argues that the only way to achieve free improvisation is to move in silence to no music, as even music can limit the outcome of the improvisation. In terms of free improvisation Smith-Autard argues everyone should try improvising towards the free end of the continuum as this can bring forth very original ideas (2004). She also describes this as "permitting imagination to fly and the unexpected movement to emerge" (2004 p83). Despite this view on free improvisation providing great freedom for new movements to emerge Smith-Autard goes on to argue that limited improvisation can be far more creative than free. The rules and research that are applied to improvisation can allow the dancer to explore the idea in much more depth. Smith-Autard discusses these two views and suggests that the experience of the dancer may play a role in whether or not free or limited improvisation provides more creativity. She states that a more experienced dancer may find complete freedom easier to explore whereas a less experienced dancer may struggle. She also concedes that a lack of experience can also provide a clean slate to work free from any preconceived ideas, which could provide more freedom and movement that are not connected to any codified technique.

In dance, improvisation is used in many different ways; to create movement for choreographic purposes, and can also be used in performance. It could also be argued that depending on the style or purpose of the dance the improvisation is organised accordingly. Improvisation as a tool to choreograph is used extensively within multiple dance styles. Ballet is a codified style and technique; the dancers interpret the movements and steps from different ballets or choreographers but do not change them. New ballets are created using these codified steps; these movements are selected and arranged to create a new ballet (Schechner 2002). It could be argue that on Smith-Autard's continuum of improvisation this would be placed towards the limited end of the spectrum, as the there are many rules and boundaries placed on the improvisation. The dancer's improvise within the codified technique.

When examining improvisation in dance it is also important to consider the context of the dance; be it social, artistic or ritualistic and the purpose that the dance was created for. Adshead stresses the importance of examining dance

with the purpose and context in which the dance was created in mind. Only by examining dance in this way ensures the dance, and the study of it, contains meaning. It is important to consider that a dance many have more than one context and could have been created for more than one purpose (1981).

## 1.4    How is improvisation organised across different genres/styles of dance?

As with Ballet, Flamenco dancers often improvise within the codified technique of Flamenco dancing. Heffner Hayes (2003) discusses how this improvisation takes place. A structure of improvisation develops in which movement is introduced, repeated and combined. This continues until the structure has been explored fully and the limitations of this have been exhausted. The improvisation is governed by codified movements that are "strictly prescribed" (Heffner Hayes 2003 p111). Despite this dancers still find ways to explore in and around this traditional, codified movement vocabulary. Heffner Hayes argues that the spontaneous element to improvising in the Flamenco style comes from the decisions made by the performers and the "subtle disruption of traditional choreographic codes."(2003 p111). This could be explained as in both Ballet and Flamenco dancing there is very strict tradition of movements that create the technique; if the dancers do not improvise within this tradition it could be argued that the outcome could therefore not be described as Flamenco (Heffner Hayes 2003). On Smith-Autards (2004) continuum of improvisation, improvising using Flamenco dancing could be described as a limited improvisation as the dancers must improvise with a set technique and structure in order for the improvisation to still be described as Flamenco.

Contact Improvisation is a form of dance that uses improvisation in creation of movement material as well as in performance. Contact Improvisation usually involves two people that support each other's weight when they move (Novack 1988). Cooper Albright discusses what has influenced contact improvisation. Contact improvisation is described as having the "casual…ethos of social dancing and the experimentation with pedestrian and

tasklike movement" (2003 p205). Cohen (2010) also discusses how dancers use gravity and momentum to move together during contact improvisation. The dancers must be incredibly responsive during contact improvisation; Cooper Albright (2003) highlights this stating that one of the aims is to create a responsive dancer through Contact Improvisation.

Gibbs (2003) describes the journey of the dancers during improvisation, highlighting moments of togetherness, moments of struggle, as well as exploration when the dancers feel out new pathways. The ideal is for the dancers to "coordinate and cooperate" (Gibbs 2003 p186).  Cohen (2010) states that working with a partner for a sustained period of time allows for a dance to unfold. Cohen also suggests that the dancers are often responding to their own instincts and impulses which allow for new movement possibilities. This can lead to each of the dancers pushing each other to the point of unfamiliarity in the moment which brings each individual out of control. (Cohen 2010).

Cohen suggests that dancers during contact improvisation "yield to (or choose among) the unique movement possibilities offered within each particular moment" (2010 pp 107). When performing dancers are using a structure or improvising around a certain idea that has been rehearsed numerous times. This would suggest that on Smith-Autards continuum of improvisation (2004) Contact Improvisation has taken on qualities of both free and limited improvisation.

## 1.5   Capoeira

Contact Improvisation has some similarities with another art form that uses improvisation: Capoeira. Capoeira is a Brazilian art form that is a combination of a dance, a fight and a game between two players. The movements used include acrobatics, kicks and traditional dance moves (Browning 1995). Capoeira is often referred to as a game; playing or *jogo de capoeira*, instead of fighting or dancing (Talmon-Chvacier, 2004).

Talmon-Chvacier (2004) discusses the different reasons for the rituals in Capoeira, and highlights how these have changed from the origins of Capoeira. The circle that surrounds the performers may have originated from slaves wishing to conceal their activities from their masters; to modern day when the circle gives strength and energy to those taking part. Those taking part change roles from observer, dancer, musician and singer (Talmon-Chvacier 2004).

There is also research that focuses on the two main styles of Capoeira Angola and Regional. Fuggle (2008) highlights the on-going debate between capoeiristas as to which of the two main forms of capoeira is to be favoured, or is more authentic. Regional is a fast and far more aggressive version that places emphasis on the fighting aspect, technical skill and acrobatics. Angola is a slower form that is very playful and is played close to the ground; this form has much closer links with capoeira's African roots.

Fuggle (2008) also goes on to argue that capoeira allows for each capoeirista to develop their own form of expression and personality within the framework of the art. This research demonstrates that different forms of capoeira appeal to different people; these forms and styles are then used to express something. This suggests a link to how improvisation can be used in dance; as improvisation comes from within and is often about expressing something. This link is strengthened further when Fuggle discusses the need for the players in a game to create space. They must do this by "using one's own creative and artistic expression" (Fuggle 2008 p209). Fuggle also states that the players have to listen and then respond to one another's movements and describes this as a "physical dialogue" (2008 p209). This would suggest a connection to contact improvisation and how the dancers must behave in order to achieve it. Fuggle does not go on to examine the extent at which this improvisation is free or limited.

## 1.6    What is the difference between sport and art?

As Capoeira is a mixture of a martial art and dance, for the purpose of this study it may be necessary to identify the difference between sport and art. It has already been highlighted that improvisation can be used in many art forms, and also in sport; Schechner (2002) describes the use of improvisation in basketball. Improvisation is also used in many art forms but in different ways. It could be argued that the difference between sport and in art lies in the purpose of the genre.

In sport the purpose and main focus is placed on scoring more points or goals than an opponent, or to outperform an opponent in some way. Sport in most cases has an emphasis placed on being competitive and winning. Schechner (2006 cited in Kennedy 2009) states that the purpose of performance is to entertain, make something beautiful, mark or change identity, make or foster community, to heal, teach persuade or convince, and to deal with scared or demonic. Redfern (2010) states that the purpose of art is to create something new or beautiful; it could also be to express something or make a statement; conversely art can also have no purpose beyond itself and meaning may arise from the moment (Redfern 2010). Preston-Dunlop (1998) discusses the meaning behind a dance; questioning whether or not dance needs to be meaningful. Preston-Dunlop also identifies that the viewer often places their own interpretation and meaning onto the dance.

Sport like art often has a certain aesthetic. Gymnastics is a sport that is often linked to dance as there are dance elements and a certain aesthetic that contributes to how the sport is judged and scored. Novack (1988) notes the similarities between Gymnasts and Contact Improvisation dancers; contact dancers often have gymnastic ability, but unlike gymnastics their movements are improvised. In gymnastics the routines performed are set and practiced with extreme precision in order to perform well and score highly with the judging panel. The scoring system in Gymnastics means that the there are certain elements such as technical elements that a gymnast must incorporate into their routines. This ticking of the boxes ensures that if the gymnast can execute the movements well a good score will be achieved. These sorts of

constraints are not apparent in the creation of art, or dance. If Gymnastics was not a sport or competition but perceived as an art form the scoring system would not influence what was performed.  Would Gymnastics be more creative and artistic? Although both Gymnastics and Contact Improvisation share similar skill sets and both have a particular aesthetic, the purpose is different. In Gymnastics the purpose is to score high and win the competition but in Contact the purpose could be to create something new, something that challenges what has gone before, or to create something beautiful.

This study will aim to explore some of these issues further; particularly the uses of improvisation within dance. This will be achieved by conducting two case studies; one on Capoeria and one on choreographer and performer Laurie Booth.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach will be taken for this study. Qualitative research strives to record experiences qualities and meanings that are not quantifiable (Gratton and Jones 2010). As this study deals with non-numerical data a quantitative approach would be inappropriate. This research will consist of two case studies. Gratton and Jones (2010) refer to case studies as having a narrower focus which allows for far more in depth research. A researcher will identify a certain factor and observes and questions it (Bell 2004). Case studies allow for the environment and the context of the subject to be explored and considered (Gratton and Jones 2010).

Critics of case studies state that generalisation is not always possible and question the value of a study of a single instance. Cohen and Manion (1994) consider the validity of observation based studies, questioning whether one set of results is applicable to other situations. However Bassey (1981 cited in Bell 2004) states that how relatable the case study is to the field of research is more important than generalisation.

### 2.1    Participants

This research uses two case studies in order to examine improvisation in Capoeira. The first case study is an example of the Angola Capoeira style being performed in Brazil. The second case study is a piece of dance choreographed by Laurie Booth; a choreographer who uses improvisation and Capoeira in his work. The video clips of both practices are analysed by employing Laban's categorisation of movement fundamentals: the characteristic use of the body; space; effort/dynamics, and; relationship. The clips used are:

Case Study One – Documentary Pastinha: A Life, Capoeira (1998) by Carlos Antonio Muricy (Angola style)

Case Study Two – Titled Dance House 4 – Dance House Series BBC (1991) Choreographed by Laurie Booth. Directed by Emma Burge, Produced by Dancelines.

## 2.2    Selection Criteria

With a case study approach the researcher selects the area for study (Bell 2004). The video clip shows the Angolan style of Capoeira which, research has shown, is agreed by Capoeiristas to be the most traditional style of Capoeira practiced in Brazil. The Angolan style of Capoeira practiced in Brazil today is considered to be a less diluted form of the martial art which has now been exported worldwide. The documentary of Capoeira was chosen because it is an authentic demonstration of the Angolan style as it showcases Brazilian performers in Brazil.

Video clips will be used because in order to review the Angola style of Capoeira. It is not practical to travel to Brazil so the video clips are used to gain an authentic demonstration of the Angolan style. Choosing to examine improvisation in Angolan Capoeira allows for a comparison to be made with Booth's work where Capoeira is taken from the context in which it was created and practiced and placed in a 'set' choreography.

The second case study will examine a piece by Laurie Booth.  Booth has been chosen as a choreographer and performer who uses improvisation in both performance and in the making of his work. Booth also studied Capoeira and incorporates the style into his work. Dance House 4 has been chosen as it is one of the few recordings of Booth's work. Booth is not currently touring any work that could be watched as a live performance in a theatre.

## 2.3    Instruments and Procedure

Video clips are being used to carry out this research, as opposed to watching live performances; this is due to several factors. Watching the selected video clips allows the researcher to watch the movement more than once. This allows a more in depth and detailed analysis of the movement to take place

by eliminating the need to rely on the memory of a single viewing as would be the case for a live event. Each video clip will be watched a total of five times; and the researcher will pause the clip when necessary to take notes; this is to ensure a thorough viewing of both clips.

## 2.4    Bias

Within case study research Gratton and Jones (2010) state that the researcher is the data collection instrument. This method uses a single researcher to carry out the study therefore bias is an issue. Within case studies selective reporting and therefore the possible distortion of a particular event is a concern (Bell 2004). This has considered and acknowledged by the researcher.

## 2.5    Data Analysis

Though observation is often used in case studies "methods of collecting information are selected which are appropriate for the task" (Bell 2004 p10). For the purpose of this study the video clips will be analysed using Laban's movement analysis.

The four sections of this analysis are Body, Space, Dynamics and Relationships. Body concerns the characteristic use of body parts; shape and actions. Examples of these could be; travelling; turning; jumping; gesturing; and stillness. Space pertains to the use of different levels; the pathways created on the floor and in the air; extension and contraction of the body; the different planes of movement; as well as the use of the performance space including entrances and exits. Dynamics or Effort deals with the quality of the movements. The flow of the movement could be described as bound, capable of stopping or free continual movement. Movements can also be characterised as; sudden-sustained; strong-light; and direct-indirect. Relationship involves the relationship to other dancers; over, under, around, through. Spatial relationships such as near, far; in front of; side by side are considered; together with the relationship to props, objects and the aural setting (Bradley 2009).

This movement analysis will then be used to conduct a comparison of the similarities and differences between the two selected examples; this will help to draw conclusions concerning the use of improvisation in Capoeira.

## 3. DATA COLLECTION - CASE STUDIES

### 3.1    Capoeira

Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial dance which consists of a combination of elements from many different genres including dance, martial arts, folklore, sport, ritual and training for combat (Downey 2002). Geertz (1983, cited in Downey 2002 p490) refers to Capoeira as a "blurred genre" due to the mixture of elements that characterise Capoeira.

Those who participated in Capoeira were originally slaves from several African ethnic groups. Talmon-Chvacier (2004) argues that many of the rituals used in Capoeira stem from Bantu and Yoruban traditions particularly how each person changes role between musician, observer, dancer and singer. She argues that over time these traditions have come to be justified as the response of slaves to the oppression of their masters and the original Bantu and Yoruban heritage has been largely forgotten. An example of this is the *roda* or ring that is made by spectators and musicians forming a circle around the game. In this instance Talmon-Chvacier (2004) suggests that whilst the ritual of the *roda* is still practiced, the significance of why it is used has changed. In Brazil the explanation for this tradition is that slaves wished to hide the practice of Capoeira from their masters as the practice was seen as a way for slaves to rebel and had therefore been banned. Most capoeiristas consider the *roda* to be the most traditional way to practice Capoeira.

Some believe that due to the circumstances of slavery in Brazil the slaves that practiced the Capoeira focused on the combative elements and lost the ritualistic elements of the style. Capoeira became form of resistance for slaves which led to it being banned by the authorities; even carrying a Berimbau, one of the instruments played to create the music for Capoeira, was enough to get arrested (Downey 2002).

Capoeira is now practiced all over the world and for different purposes. Today Capoeira can be viewed in different contexts including as a performance for tourists; as part of folklore; in physical education lessons; at athletic competitions, and, in self defence training (Downey 2002). Many Brazilians now view Capoeira as having significant cultural importance, and is considered to be Brazil's national sport (Talmon-Chvacier 2004).

The most important instrument used in Capoeira is the Berimbau. The music being played on the Berimbau determines the style of the "game" and the players respond to this accordingly. For example when an Angola rhythm is played on the Berimbau a close to the ground, slow game is suggested to the players (Downey 2002). Music and chants can inform players when to start and stop their games as well when to enter the space. Pairs can enter the space together or an individual can intercept a game or "buy" it by interrupting and challenging a player from an existing game.

Within a Capoeira game moments of cooperation and moments of aggression and conflict occur. These are sometimes prompted in response to the music. The cooperative moments tend to be more artistic with players using acrobatics movements such as cartwheels to travel around and pass over and under each other. Downey describes these moments of cooperation as an "improvised dance that merely implies fighting" (2002 p491). Moments of aggression and conflict look more like fighting rather than an intricate dance. Players attempt to knock each other down by tripping and striking. These violent moments link more to sport, martial arts and winning, rather than aesthetics and beauty. Despite this, consideration and value is given to both aspects when judging a Capoeira battle.

A Capoeira battle is judged by taking into account both the practical aspects of who got tripped, as well as the aesthetic and beauty of how it was done. Downey states that players "strive to perform beautifully, interpret the music, respond in imaginative, unexpected ways to an opponent's moves, and use ritual, humour and drama to enhance performance" (2002 p491). Therefore

Capoeira is judged by the aesthetic and drama of the game as well as who managed to knock who down.

Downey (2002) argues that there is not always a clear winner to a Capoeira game; however there are certain things to look for. The players will try to out-perform and out-do one another by showing *malicia* or cunning. This may appear when the player attempts to trick their opponents through the use of humour or dramatics. Importance is also placed on the command of the space, as well as showing great technical virtuosity or anticipating the player's moves. The players can also achieve victory by knocking their opponent to the floor by tripping or head butting them to ensure that a part of the body other than the feet hands and head touch the ground.

## 3.2   Documentary Pastinha: A Life Capoeira (1998) by Carlos Antonio Muricy (Angola style)

This first case study is a Brazilian documentary examining the history of Capoeira particularly examining the influence of Master Vicente Ferreira Pastinha.

**LABANS Movement Analysis**

**Body/Actions**

The body actions, parts and characteristics used by the dancers are often kicks that travel in circular pathways. The players use these kicks in many different ways; in handstands that shift through the space as well as kicking over and under an opponent. They also use cartwheels and handstands in order to evade their opponents. The players sway from side to side with a low centre of gravity. The players also turn whilst crouched low to the ground. The players often hold or sustain these difficult positions or movements which require control and balance.

**Space**

The players mostly use low levels, with their knees flexed crouching low to the ground. The players often have both hands and feet on the ground. The players mostly face one another; very rarely do they turn their backs to an opponent however they do use movements that cause them to go upside down such as handstands and cartwheels. The players travel in circular pathways, in around and over one another, continually circling their opponent similar to a fight. The players stay in close proximity to one another during the game, occasionally they drift further apart but are drawn back together.

**Relationships**

The relationship between the players is intricate. The "game" begins when two opponents step into the space; face each and sink into a low centre of gravity before one will make the first move. The players are then reacting to their opponents' movements whilst using their skill in an attempt to find opportunities to trip them. A player is often patient, waiting for the opponent to make a move and then responds to this. This leads to a playful relationship between players. The players move to evade each other so that there is almost no contact between them aside from an occasional brush of the foot, or connection between their hands. This relationship between players demands the players to be constantly observing and reacting to their opponents' moves whilst attempting to anticipate what might happen next.

**Dynamics**

The players have a fluid quality to their movements, making the transitions between movements and acrobatics flow freely. The movements are smooth but with a slightly bouncy quality, but the players remain on a low level. The speed of the players changes and contrasts between extremely slowed down moments and quicker paced moments.

## 3.3    Laurie Booth and Contact Improvisation

Steve Paxton is mainly credited as the founder of Contact Improvisation in the 1970s. Paxton worked with a group of dancers and artists who had backgrounds in diverse movement forms. These forms included; gymnastics; release technique; sport, and; dance; and each of the skills an artist offered were put to use to create contact improvisation.

Contact Improvisation is also influenced by modern dance techniques. Paxton also studied the Japanese martial art of Aikido; from this style Paxton took styles of falling and rolling without causing injury. Paxton also took principles and elements from other forms such as Tai Chi, Capoeira and Yoga and added them to Contact Improvisation (Kaltenbrunner 1998).

The characteristics of Contact Improvisation are: movement development from within; a continual movement flow, and; no distinction between "natural" movement and dance. Contact Improvisation is also a duet form; there is often a constant bodily contact point or surface which often shifts as each performer moves in support and play.  Contact Improvisation often explores the physical relationship between two people; this links to Capoeira which is also practiced in a duet. Each performer or "player" is aiming to use a combination of evasive manoeuvres; acrobatics; and kicks to knock each other to the ground. Unlike Contact Improvisation; contact in Capoeira is not a main characteristic, as each player wants to avoid being knocked to the floor. In order to do this each "player" must respond and react to their opponent.

Laurie Booth is a choreographer and performer who has studied Capoeria; which acts as an influence in his work. Booth was involved in the New Dance movement in Britain; he studied at Dartington College of Arts. He was also involved with X6, a dance collective set up to give support to choreographers and dancers looking to develop their work. Booth also co-founded Transitional Identity, a Contact Improvisation group.

Booth (1984 cited in Bremser 1999) discusses Capoeira, highlighting the grounded nature of the style. Furthermore Booth identifies the need for

considerable balance and control when practicing Capoeira in order for the practitioner to be able to manage the flow the game with cunning and unpredictability.  Mackrell (1992) states that; release technique, acrobatics and Contact Improvisation are also influences on Booth's work.

Capoeira has contributed to the characteristics of Booth's style which Bremser describes as graceful; with flow and control along with a low centre of gravity and off balance movement (1999). Mackrell also identifies the "continual flow of movement" evident in Booth's work (1992 p58). Mackrell also draws further attention to the flow of Booth's work describing how sudden changes may occur like a stillness in an off balance position, or a dive to the floor. Booth's work has fluidity; strength; and control; and the performers body actions can be described as daring.

Mackrell (1992) suggests that most of Booth's work is improvised, and that he is frequently unaware as to what may happen next; Booth is often thinking on his feet. Booth explores improvisation in performance and as part of the choreographic process. These extensive works with improvisation lead to a sense of discovery and chance in his performances. Booth is known to work as a solo performer as well as in collaboration with other dancers.

## 3.4 Dance House 4 – Dance House Series BBC (1991) Choreographed by Laurie Booth. Directed by Emma Burge, Produced by Dancelines.

This piece was created by Laurie Booth for television. There are three dancers that are accompanied by a Didgeridoo player; there is also some trapeze work incorporated into the performance.

**Labans Movement Analysis**

**Body**

The movements used in the piece vary. Acrobatic movements such as head stands and shoulder stands are used throughout. On a few occasions the dancers use their hands to support the dancers' weight in backwards handsprings and shifts through the space that change the dancers' direction or allow them to move in and out of the floor. The dancers' also utilise kicks that travel outwards in circular pathways. These circular pathways are also evident when dancers move in and out of the floor, using a variety of rolls and acrobatics to do this. The dancers also create linear lines through use of an extended arabesque line; furthermore the dancers extend one leg to the front at 90 degrees. These lines create angular shapes through the body that contrast with the circular pathways that are used. The influence of Tai Chi in this work can be seen through the use of the hands outlining a circle which is moved through the space.

**Space**

The piece has three dancers moving in the space, and different spatial constructs are explored. Often the dancers are arranged linearly whilst using and exploring different levels. Whilst in these linear formations the dancers use circular pathways of the arms and legs. These circular pathways allow the dancers to explore different levels, as they move seamlessly from lying flat on their backs on the floor to crouching down and changing the direction of their facings. This allows shapes and lines to intersect the space, whilst the use of the foreground and background emphasise this even more. The dancers also use poles that add to the spatial construction emphasising the lines created by the body. The dancers also explore moving over and under each other.

**Dynamics**

The dance has continuity and flow that is appealing to watch. The movements in some cases are very acrobatic but are carried out with such control that they are continuous and sustained. The transitions in and out of the floor are smooth and fluid, as are the transitions in and out of the acrobatic moments. The quality of the movements give the piece a relaxed flow and feel. Most of the movements are performed at quite a slow even pace; occasionally some moments are sustained for a longer period of time, like an extension into an arabesque line. Stillness is also used in headstands and shoulder stands, furthermore stillness is used in the background of the piece when a dancer is holding a particular position. The quality of the movements is similar to the quality of the Angolan Capoeira style.

**Relationships**

The dancers are moving in and through the space. The relationship between them is mostly linked to how they compliment and contrast each other spatially with the shapes created by their bodies. There does not seem to be any particular narrative relationship suggested between the dancers; however different viewers may interpret this differently. There is some unison between the dancers since on some occasions all three dancers perform the same movement material. In a few instances two dancers are performing the same material but with their own timings. The dancers seem to respond to one another when shifting though the space and changing levels to ensure the exploration of space continues. There is one moment of contact between a male and female dancer, where the male dancer lifts the female dancer and moves the dancer around his shoulders.

## 4. DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss issues such as the aesthetics of sport and art, along with relationship and creativity in dance. Discussion will also be focused on how to judge dance, as well as the interpretation and meaning communicated in dance.

### 4.1 Aesthetics and Relationship

One of the differences between the case studies is the use of contact. In Booth's piece there is a clear and definite moment of contact between two dancers; however it is not clear if this moment is improvised or not. The examples of Capoeira, on the other hand, do not have any moments of contact between the performers. This is because the intention here is to avoid the contact moments, which could cause a player to be knocked down therefore losing the game. Instead the performers use evasive manoeuvres, whilst improvising, to move around over and under one another, testing out one another's reactions. This makes the relationship interesting and exciting to watch.

When improvisation is used in performance the process of creating and selecting the material is simultaneous. Capoeira players must be receptive and responsive to other performers, reacting to flow of the game; this also applies to Contact Improvisation dancers. This leads to a sense of excitement as the audience or viewer does not know what will happen next. Within Booth's piece the improvised relationship between the dancers is not as present. The sense of excitement present with the Capoeira example, or the same sense of unpredictability that Mackrell (1992) describes in Booth's other work, is arguably not translated to the viewer. This could be because the improvised relationship between the dancers has lost a sense of spontaneity and become stale. Perhaps the improvisation has become too rehearsed during the process of composing the work. This loss of excitement could also be potentially due to the way the performance has come across on camera. Towers expresses that there is difficulty in ensuring that the energy of dance

is captured on film. Arguing that the "body in motion simply evokes too much to be contained" (Towers 2003 p9). As the performance has been recorded, the sense of occasion and atmosphere that is created by attending a live performance has not translated through the camera lens.

In the examples of Capoeira that have been studied, it could be argued that this sense of excitement and spontaneity that occurs in improvised moments has been maintained; even though this performance has also been recorded on camera. This could be because the performers are responding in the moment, acting and reacting to the situation. This links to Tufnell and Crickmay's (1993) ideas about the need to be receptive to the moment and other performers when taking part in improvisation. The performers are also going through the process of selecting movement in sight of the audience. Another possibility to explain this is that Capoeria, in these examples, has not been abstracted away from its purpose or intention. The focus is placed on the competition between players and winning the game. This is done by the knocking an opponent down which comes from the players being able to read and anticipate the complex relationship that develops between them. The players also try and do this in the most imaginative way possible. It is also worth considering that these examples are filmed; therefore it is a documentation of a live event not the creation of an art work which is created as a dance film.

As it has been previously discussed, when judging a Capoeira game consideration is given to both the practicalities of who got knocked down, and the manner in which this is done. The players are expected to perform and respond in the most creative and imaginative ways possible. This is given an equal amount of emphasis when judging who the winner of a game is. It then becomes difficult to distinguish whether Capoeria is an art or sport. In some ways Capoeria is comparable to Gymnastics. Gymnastics has an extremely precise judging system which is made of two halves; difficulty and execution. Each move has a difficultly value which is added up to determine the difficulty score. The execution score starts at ten, and the judges deduct points from this depending on how well the gymnast executes the routine. The scores are

then added together. Points can also be awarded for the artistic quality of a routine (The New York Times 2008). Whereas in Capoeira often it is not clear who has won the game, as this is often based on the interpretation of the audience or of the master presiding over the practice. On reflection it can be considered to have attributes similar to both sport and art.

There is potentially a point at which Capoeira becomes sport and a point at which it becomes art. Defining Capoeira as sport or art can hold importance to different people. Funders of both sport and art may take this into consideration when making decision on whether or not to support and fund Capoeira events or groups. In academia this distinction is a potential point of interest when considering how to analyse Capoeira. Those that participate in Capoeria itself may not be as concerned with the definition of this style. There are other aesthetic sports which occupy this hybrid space between sport and art. These may include competitive ballroom, synchronised swimming, gymnastics (already referred to), ice dancing, and dressage.

The mood or atmosphere of a particular game or practice may have some bearing on when Capoeira is art or sport. A highly competitive aggressive game does not always allow for players to explore and be creative, as the focus maybe on defending attacks from an opponent or attacking them. This may be a point where Capoeira sits more comfortably in the genre of sport. There are times when a more playful less competitive atmosphere or game may allow for more in depth exploration to take place. This could be a point when Capoeira sits more closely with art. This idea of allowing for playfulness and exploration links to philosophies held in other martial arts. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu practitioner Ryron Gracie has developed a philosophy called "keep it playful" when practicing Jiu Jitsu. The ideology behind this is to allow time to explore different positions and situations by being less competitive and not always going for the submission (which would mean a victory and end the bout) at the first opportunity.

## 4.2    Judgement and Meaning in Dance

Adshead (1981) stresses the importance of the context and the purpose for which the dance was created when undertaking an analysis, or critique of a piece of dance. This makes the criteria to judge the successfulness of the two case studies different, as they were created for vastly different purposes and in exceedingly different contexts.

When viewing the dance, criteria is used to judge the success of this work. Lavender (1996) reasons that there is no single standard way to judge art; but argues that there are many different viewpoints that are competing to become more widely accepted. It could be said that when Contemporary Dance is viewed it is usually judged with values associated with Modernism. These values include; creating something new, and something that challenges the classical and traditional (Oxford Dictionaries online 2013). This means that when a piece of work is reviewed or judged as part of this genre, importance is placed on these aspects. The interpretation and judgement of the success of a piece will depend upon the person viewing it, and what that individual values and sees as successful in a piece of work. This extends further as a discussion about the piece occurs in the press and between critics; dancers; and funders; who make up the dance community, and have shared in the experience of viewing this work. This discussion concerning the success of a piece of work is closely linked with accountability. If a dance piece is received positively by this community the choreographer is praised; if it is received negatively the choreographer is also held accountable.

It could be argued that an audience watching Booth's work, with the ideas and principles of Modernism in mind, would reason that the piece is not ground breaking or challenging the old. Therefore it would not be judged well. These are not necessarily always relevant criteria to judge dance, as it only really considers dance from one point of view. Using these values to judge dance does not always equate to a successful piece of choreography or to a successful performance. Lavender (1996) emphasises the dangers of judging art with predetermined criteria; stating that this could prevent the development and articulation of artistic values true to a choreographer. Redfern (2010) agrees with this and adds that having a prescribed set of properties to define

art would limit innovation. For example contemporary dance grew out of a departure from the properties associated with classical ballet and is now accepted as art.

When viewing dance an audience will often look for intention or meaning behind the movement. Lavender (1996) questions whether choreographers are always trying to communicate emotion and attitudes with through their work. The intention behind a piece is what stirs the initial need to create and often steers the choreographer during the process of composition. Intention can also refer to the choreographer's interpretation of the dance they have created. Preston-Dunlop (1998) states that there are several layers of meaning in dance which can be given by; the choreographer; the dancers; and by the audience or viewer.

Lavender (1996) also argues that meaning is given to a dance by the audience. This is their interpretation of the movements, set, props, costume, and relationships evident in the dance. Preston-Dunlop agrees with Lavender as she states that the viewer adds "imagined meanings…regardless of whether those meanings tally" with the choreographers intention (1998 p23). Lavender (1996) therefore suggests that the choreographer's intention is used as a jumping off point for an audience when viewing a work. Lavender also stresses that it is unfair to judge the success of a dance based on if the choreographer's intention and the audience's interpretation of the meaning is the same.

Preston-Dunlop (1998) also questions the importance this, and argues that it is up to the choreographer to decide if it is important to them whether or not the meaning intended by the dance is read by an audience. If this is important, then the choreographer needs to ensure that there are signs in the work that communicate the meaning they intend. Preston-Dunlop clarifies that it still possible to leave a dance open to interpretation and unintended meanings, whilst communicating the intended meaning. McFee (1992) also highlights that dance can be read with more than one interpretation;

furthermore a critical interpretation needs to be based on an identifiable feature of the dance in order to be considered valid.

Furthermore; do preconceived notions of what a person is about to view have an influence over how the individual judges success. Preston-Dunlop (1998) states that expectations can have an influence over the response an audience gives to a piece of dance; these can extend into other genres of entertainment. For example if you go and watch a jazz music performance there are certain expectations that go along with that kind of an event. Preston-Dunlop (1998) argues that these expectations are reached through the culture surrounding each event; therefore the viewers eyes are not "innocent" (p23).

It could be suggested that an audience does not look for meaning in Capoeira the same way that meaning is looked for in Booths piece. In sport value is placed on how a team or persons wins; the quality of the game is important. In Rugby winning by playing with creativity and scoring tries is viewed as a better way to win than if a team plays a defensive kicking game. Harding calls this "winning ugly" and states that this method of play is concerning, and not entertaining as it lacks "creative instinct" (2008 p30). Could audiences be looking at the method and quality of the game when viewing Capoeira?

Another point to consider is how to judge whether or not an improvisation is "good" or "successful." It is worth considering that this judgement may differ from the perspective of a dancer; a choreographer; or the viewer. Mackrell (1997) identifies that a good improvisation should be exciting for both the audience and performers; arguing that in improvisation the audience is invited to go on a journey of discovery with the performers. Additionally Mackrell highlights that risk taking and the possibility of failure in an improvisation contributes to the excitement of that moment. Blom and Chaplin (2000) also highlight that the gamble and potential payoff add to the excitement and give an intense on the edge feel to performances. Furthermore Blom and Chaplin (2000) identify that the unexpected and unknown is pleasing for an audience. These elements combine which that allows for an audience to derive pleasure

from knowing that what they are viewing is a unique "perfect unrepeatable moment" (Mackrell 1997 p180). Despite this both Mackrell and Blom and Chaplin admit that due to the gamble involved in improvisation not all performances add up to create a great performance. An improvisation may be considered too long; lacks structure or reason; or can become self indulgent (Blom and Chaplin 2000).

## 4.3    Where the Creativity lies in Improvisation

It could be considered that there is no one way to describe improvisation as it has already been established that improvisation can be described in many different ways, and is used in many different genres such as; dance; music; or drama. What improvisation is, and where the creativity lies within the improvisation could depend heavily on the genre that the improvisation is taking place in. Arguably improvisation is creation in the moment but there is no one way that this creation my come about. One of the considerations is the role that choice and decision making has on the improvisation. Does creativity in improvisation lie in the creation of new movements or a new way of moving. Alternatively can creativity in improvisation lie in the choices made by the choreographer or performer?   Certainly creativity lies in the how the performers create a relationship through negotiating and interacting between the dancers, the stimulus, and the environment. Laban refers to relationship as the emotional and physical relationship between dancers, as well as the spatial relationships between dancers, including the relationship to props, sound, costume, and set (Bradley 2009).

The case study of Capoeira shows improvisation being used. There are clear similarities between Contact Improvisation and Capoeira in terms of the relationship between those participating. Improvisation in both styles is based on the response that the two players have towards one another. This means that the relationship between the two players takes on great importance and interest; and this relationship is explored extensively. It could be suggested that it is this relationship that holds more interest to an audience rather than the movements themselves.

Redfern (2010) suggests that art is public and therefore needs to be offered up to the scrutiny of an audience. Redfern also argues that how something is regarded changes the way it is viewed (2010). Therefore she proposes that something can be regarded as art one time but not other, or in one place but not another. Without an audience something could be art, but is not regarded as art. Preston-Dunlop (1998) introduces the notion that dance fits in to Jakobson's communication model. This states that a message is needed as well as a medium to communicate it; someone to send the message and someone to receive it. The message is organised by the rules of the medium and is understood and shared. In dance the choreographer or performer has the message and dance is the medium. It is performed, shared and the audience receive it; however with dance there is no shared code. Each viewer receives and interprets the message differently; even if there is no intention to communicate a message, someone will interpret the dance as a form of communication.

It can be debated that the creativity in improvisation does not sit in the creation of new movements and steps, but rather in the choices made by the player; it could be considered that this is occurring in Capoeria. The players are drawing on a bank of movements, acrobatics and strikes that have been taught to them. As a response to an opponent, players attempt to select these codified set of movements and steps in a way that is unexpected in order to challenge and disrupt their opponent. This can ensure the upper hand over an opponent in a Capoeria game. Cohen (2010) discusses the point of unfamiliarity in an improvisation which brings an individual out of control. By making a choice that is unusual or unexpected a player brings their opponent out of their comfort zone and forces them to adapt to something new. Cohen's idea of unfamiliarity in improvisation could also apply to the audience as the choice to use a particular movement in response to an opponent's move could be unexpected or new. The value here has been placed on the players' reactions and on finding the new or unusual. This still links to a Modernist viewpoint in terms of judging dance and creativity.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The research has highlighted that improvisation is organised differently across different genres of dance, and different practices such as music and sport. Therefore how improvisation is judged, and what is valued in improvisation is different depending on the genre. However this research has highlighted that the relationship between performers in duet forms of improvisation, such as Capoeira and Contact Improvisation, holds a great amount of interest for an audience. Also creativity lies within the choices performers make to negotiate the different components of an improvisation; often this includes a performer attempting discover something new or unusual. The examination of Booth's piece, Dance House 4, with Capoeira suggests that the shift from improvised performance into a composed piece of work can lead to the sacrifice of the excitement and unpredictability within the relationship between performers. In Capoeira this research also identified a possible link between creativity and a more playful attitude and approach to the style. This could be explored further if research is undertaken to explore the idea of play in sport and dance. This study has also highlighted possible areas for further research into improvisation in different dance genres. Improvisation in performance could be examined, as well as exploring notions of creativity that are held in different genres of dance and other practices. This research could be improved by using an improvised piece of dance to compare with Capoeira in order to create more accurate results.

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