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Comments	Section		
	Title and Abstract Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.		
	Introduction and literature review 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 To include: details of the research design and justification for the methods applied; participant details; comprehensive replicable protocol.		
	Results and Analysis ² 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 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.		
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CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS)

DANCE

TITLE

**A feminist analysis of the role of women in ballet and
contemporary dance**

**(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of
DANCE)**

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A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN BALLET AND
CONTEMPORARY DANCE

Cardiff Metropolitan University
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ABSTRACT

This study is about the role of women in ballet and contemporary dance. It looks at the history of women in both dance styles with existing knowledge to see if the issues presented are still apparent within both dance styles in society today. The aim of this research was to contribute to knowledge and provide a richer understanding of how female dancers view themselves.

The participants in the study were five professional female individuals who are and have been performers and now have other roles within both ballet and contemporary dance. They were interviewed individually based on themes identified in the literature to discuss their professional and personal experiences as female dancers.

Key ideas were drawn out from each interview and the aim was to focus on the similarities and differences between each of them. Key findings were as follows; since contemporary dance has come into place it has enabled women to feel a lot more equal, it is commercial dance that reflects the social situation on women having sexualised bodies and it has been found that teachers, directors and choreographers have had a better experience within dance than dancers do. These findings have both challenged and reinforced previous research and this study shows that women can and do have a positive experience in dance in certain roles but that this success is not represented throughout the industry.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODCUTION

INTRODUCTION

Polhemus (1993) put forward that physical behaviour is categorised as biological and genetic rather than socio-cultural and learned and a person's first experience of their society is through manipulation of the body and stance, basic movement styles and gestures are resistant to change and constitute personal, social and cultural identity once learned. Adair (1992) proposed that everyone will have different social experiences due to the attitudes, beliefs and values in society today whether it may be because of their gender, race, class or age. Furthermore, Polhemus (1993) stated that movement in any society is filled with symbolic meaning and can transmit a variety of levels of socio-cultural information, especially the meanings that exceed the limits of verbal language. Physical culture may be viewed as an embodiment of the rooted fundamental level of what it means to be a part of a particular society (Polhemus, 1993).

Hannah (1998) suggests that an audience's perception of the dancer, performance and choreographic design are influenced by their knowledge of the history of the body, sex and gender and Adair (1992) explained that for women, trying to understand the reasons behind the aspects of dance that choose to highlight women's bodies will influence the way that dance is projected to the audience. In dance, the gendered majority is female and this has led to assertions that women dominate this art form and do not suffer oppression (Adair, 1992). However, Adair (1992) states that this does not work in the favour of these women due to the men receiving individual recognition because of their power status within society. Adair (1992) expressed that Margaret Mead's studies were extremely influential for women in the understanding of roles and the varied displays of gender in society that highlight that men are associated with status and power and women are not.

The earliest ballet dancers emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and were classed as noble amateurs that were led by the king or queen (Au, 1988). As the seventeenth century progressed, the audience's perception of the dancer began to change due to the change of the conditions of performing and dancers began to evolve into professionals that demanded a high level of technical training and skill (Au, 1988). By the early eighteenth century, a new concept of dance was shaping that would highlight dancers expressing movement in their own way (Au,

1988). It was no longer required for the professional dancer to preserve a gentlemanly manner but instead, ballet grew to display emotions that could be expressed in public life and choreographers began to seek more by feeling that dance should convey a meaning to the viewer rather than just the display of technique (Au, 1988).

Au (1998) put forward that during the nineteenth century Romantic ballet had achieved its modern identity by acquiring many characteristics that were now linked with the public mind's idea of the female dancer; wearing a tutu and creating the illusion of being effortless and light. Au (1988) explains that the ballet of this time included the ballerina's rise to the tips of her toes; this allowed the women to play the part of the leading male roles and resulted in a decrease of male dancers as they were reduced to stage decoration. By the end of the nineteenth century, ballet had reached a static point; it seemed to have lost its creativity and the public no longer classed it as a serious art form and lost interest (Au, 1988).

Cheney (1989) suggested that women in dance had experienced many radical changes throughout the nineteenth century, for example, Irene Castle cut her hair, freed her legs and torso and shortened her skirt popularizing a style that relieved women from their typical housewife or ballerina roles. Adair (1992) stated that the climate of change for women happened after the First World War; this had emphasis on creative independence that ensured that each generation should rebel against their heritage by challenging European ballet and creating their own forms of contemporary dance. Moreover, Adair (1992) expressed that the reason behind this was to attempt to narrow the gap between the dancer and the audience by making dance relevant to modern society.

Adair (1992) put forward that contemporary dance was founded and developed mainly by women. Au (1988) suggested that contemporary dance evolved believing that dance should not be for just pure entertainment or decorating a display of technique; it should also provoke, stimulate, inform and embody the complexities and contradictions of the modern world whilst having major emphasis on expressing feelings. Adair (1992) supports this by stating that contemporary dancers discover dance from their own life and experiences rather than attempting to create a certain look.

Different dancers gave different aspects of choreography to contemporary such as Isadora Duncan who became the symbol of female (Au, 1988). She took away the traditional roles of wife and mother and replaced them with sexual freedom and personal fulfilment as well as rejecting the feminine attire that consisted of the ballerina's tutu and pointe shoes and decided to perform her new dance form that was labelled "barefoot dancing" (Au, 1988). Au (1988) expressed that the dancer Ruth St Denis created choreography that included supple bendings and ecstatic whirls and these movements seemed to impress the female audiences. Martha Graham had a theory of contraction and release that when used in conjunction to one another, the two movements heightened each other's effect and communicated a variety of emotional states such as fear, sorrow, acceptance and joy (Au, 1988).

Meehan (1990) made it clear that women are rarely appointed to positions at higher levels of media or academic occupations, although despite this, Margaret Thatcher's decisions on staffing levels and service provision within the health and social services have increased women's responsibilities for dependents and has affected their employment opportunities as well as their own well-being. Meehan (1990) put forward that women have become a lot more equal in society today with protective legislation, pregnancy matters, child-care, income maintenance, sex equality, equal opportunities in the labour market or within education and equal pay.

Caird (2013) stated that it was found that within museums and galleries, only 28% have a female director, the boards are 72.6% male and men account for 90.7% of chairs and within theatre, women make up only 31.8% of chief executives of national theatre companies as 85.8% of these boards are chaired by men (Caird, 2013). However, according to report from Arts Council England last year, women make up 48% of chief executives and 45% of board members (Caird, 2013). Furthermore, women make up nearly 50% of the boards within the arts (Caird, 2013). Caird (2013) suggests that by working together, culture sector organisations can hope to address gender imbalance at the highest levels by creating and curating that work must reflect society too as anything other than 50:50 just won't do.

The research area of this study will look at the role of women in ballet and contemporary dance. What is interesting here is that it was presented that men are associated with status and power and women are not and this was evident within

dance in the early days however, as the years have progressed, men and women have become more and more equal in society today and especially within dance as contemporary came into place. The next chapter will look at existing knowledge so that key themes can be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

GENDER

Biological Sex

Thomas (1993) put forward that gender is culturally defined, not from the difference in human body parts but because of the fact that “maleness” and “femaleness” is a phenomenon of sociology, culture and physiology in any society and that it significantly differs from one society to another. Thomas (1993) also suggested that gender is problematic and that no matter how varied our experiences are in life all of us are either male or female and have not experienced life from the perspective of the gender which we are not.

Thomas (1993) stated that culture exists in the mind of a particular individual and narrows down to the world’s cultures dividing by two; the male culture and the female culture. In addition, Adair (1992) explained that even though there are physiological differences between the sexes, those differences are given meaning from what is received in the family through to education and culture and that these all contribute to the social construction of the body that lies between femininity and masculinity and results in a divergence between what was considered acceptable female behaviour and male behaviour.

Social Roles

In society, occupations are generally selected according to sex; for example, men have dominated the well-paid occupations and women (and homosexual men) have pursued the lower status roles (Hannah, 1998). The usual profession for a woman is one that is known as caring or domestic which mirrors their role in the family (Adair, 1992). Furthermore, a woman’s primary role is seen to be a mother and a homemaker, so when women work outside of this, it violates the male domain and threatens their role (Adair, 1992). Men act more powerful in roles that are dominant which leads to more affirmation the larger they are and this is vice-versa for women (Adair, 1992).

Hannah (1998) proposed that this is due to the world of work discriminating against the alleged “weaker” sex therefore tension was created between males and females

who continue to live their lives with the assumption that male is always superior to the female. Hannah (1998) added that something as little as everyday movement which is seen everywhere is conveyed as male-dominated in the same way that language does because of its power.

Dancing Roles

Adair (1992) expressed that interpretation in dance may reinforce or challenge a women's role, for example, these interpretations in dance could reinforce a women's role in classical ballet due to the existing state of affairs regarding to social or political issues or it could challenge a women's role as much as contemporary dance has done. In addition, Adair (1992) stated that these interpretations represent the views of society of certain values, unless they are recognised by the audience, and then in dance, any statement of meaning or expression will remain incomplete so for the audience to be able to understand their own interpretation of a work they will need to appreciate dance in relation to their own experience.

Hannah (1998) explained that dance is a way for both sexes to identify themselves and to either maintain or erase their boundaries, even though professional dancers do not always embrace the roles that they perform so the dancing of sexuality and gender may be detached. Additionally, the way in which each dancer performs what, when, how, why and who with along with their expressions is what either reflects or challenges the expected male and female roles seen by society (Hannah, 1998). Adair (1992) expressed that dance challenges and supports the social expectations of a woman's physical body. However, when we consider the dancer's appearances further, we consider the images that we are confronted with in the media which often promotes an aesthetic ideal of women as thin and men as broad and this seems to be evident when considering male and female roles in dance (Adair, 1992).

Hannah (1998) addressed that a gender role means an apparent body in dance and from that, society has been informed to create specific ways to send messages of sexual identity through showing us how to label ourselves as male or female such as when performers appear in nude, a revealing costume or a stereotyped costume such as a female in a dress and a male in trousers. In addition, Carter (1996) proposed that images in dance represent constructs of gender which have become "masculine" or "feminine" movement choices. However, this can be debated as

convention rather than fact. "Dance is an art form of the body, and the body is where gender distinctions are generally understood to originate" (Daly, 2002, p 298).

Adair (1992) put forward that there is an underlying issue that women dance differently because they belong to the category of "women" and this leads to biological essentialism. In addition, the daily dance class can determine the factor of gender and illustrate the physical differences between men and women through the idea that on one hand it is vital for women to be supple in their backs and legs to reach positions with visible ease whereas on the other hand it is vital for men to achieve the jumps and turns without being expected to reach the height or ease of positions to the same extent (Adair, 1992). This clarifies that the strength and control required by both these sexes are hidden through the woman's ease and are displayed through the man's force (Adair, 1992).

Hannah (1998) expressed that male domination is a recurring idea in dance with examples of the men protecting women through partnering in ballet and that in the twentieth century, rebellious women wanted to escape male control so they created a new form of dance known as Contemporary in which they could manage their own companies and move within their own power. Adair (1992) suggested that there are a variety of approaches to subvert male and female roles and an example of this would be a woman lifting the man; this would instantly challenge the way that women are displayed and even the assumption that women lack strength.

CARTESIAN DUALISM

Dualism

Thomas (1995) supports the idea of the mind/body dualism that was inscribed in Descartes' Discourse in Method (1637) which is better known as Cartesian Dualism. This states that the nature of human beings are not dependant on any materialistic thing and only consists in thinking which narrows down the mind and the body divide into binary oppositions that consist of rational over emotional, idealism over materialism, culture over nature and objectivity over subjectivity (Thomas, 1995). In addition, Adair (1992) stated that when binary oppositions are resisted, it offers a challenge to the perceptions and possibilities of new identities and that there are specific gender identities to be learnt within the ideology of family life. For example,

girls are expected to be dependent, helpful and caring and boys are encouraged to be independent, active and protective (Adair, 1992).

Adair (1992) proposed that this dualism allows women to retrieve their power because they are associated with evil, the body and nature whereas men are associated with good, the mind and culture. Moreover, Adair (1992) stated that the values that are associated with dualism evolved when men were identified as more rational than women during the enlightenment and this resulted in restricting both women and men's potential, for example, the portrayal of women is a manifestation of dualism which confines women as good or bad, virgin or whore and mother or mistress. Thomas (1995) explained that philosophy considers the body as primitive, natural and unconscious and that an outfit is what distinguishes each body.

Anthropology & Sociology

Thomas (1995) put forward that in the nineteenth century the attention of anthropology was focussed on the idea that dance belongs to the past and it was concerned to delineate humans from non-humans whereas the attention of sociology was focussed towards the problem of modernity being the historical shift from a modern society to an industrial market society. Additionally, the arts have been marginalised within sociology and if this is the case then dance has been marginalised first as an art, second as a practice and third as an activity viewed as a feminine mode of expression and representation, highlighting that dance has become a practice that places the body at the centre (Thomas, 1995).

Thomas (1995) described that the dualisms which direct the focus of anthropology towards the body turns out to be influential factors in the neglect of the body and dance from the focus of sociology. Moreover, Thomas (1995) went on to suggest that the concern that women should be brought into the critical frame to enable their voices to be heard has highlighted feminist writings that have added a new variety of aspects to the cultural experience. Adair (1992) explained that there is a contradiction in forming a woman's culture based on the body and ideas of feminine when they are distorted by patriarchal structures; from this we need to understand that culture is a collection of ideology and concept of women produced as a category within society.

Change & Meaning

Adair (1992) stated that the path that runs through contemporary dance parallels the growing awareness of women to have the right to instigate change and be able to be involved in the areas of society which may be social, political or economic. Despite this, women in dance have to deal with the connection it has with sexuality if they wish to put their own message across (Adair, 1992). Furthermore, Adair (1992) expressed that sexual meanings are extremely evident in both ballet and contemporary dance, for example when women become presented as desirable and this fits in with the demand on having the “perfect” body as it is assumed that women are identified more with the body than men. This connects to what Adair (1992) suggested earlier that Cartesian Dualism allows women to retrieve their power because they are associated with the body and men are associated with the mind.

SEXUALISED BODIES

The Displayed Image

Hannah (1998) proposed that humans have a primitive sex drive that is controlled by society and culture, nevertheless, the imagination is free. Adair (1992) stated that women are encouraged to believe that their desires will be achieved from presenting themselves as an attractive image in relation to the idea that men hold the power and their definition of importance is sex and money. Moreover, the display of the human body has had a massive impact on society today and we are now encouraged to view the body as a vehicle of pleasure as a result from this (Adair 1992).

Berger (1972) put forward that the presence of a woman can be so intrinsic that men tend to think of it as a physical emanation, for example, heat, smell or aura. Berger (1972) addressed that women are portrayed in a different way from men, this is not because the feminine and the masculine are known to be different from each other but because of the idea that the spectator is always presumed to be male and that the image displayed before him is presumed to be female this is designed to flatter him.

Berger (1972) expressed that our perception of an image depends on our own way of seeing, despite the fact that every image embodies a way of seeing to begin with,

furthermore, the art that existed in the past no longer exists due to its authority getting lost and what has taken its place now is the language of images. Berger (1972) stated that publicity allows us to see people who have apparently been transformed and as a result of this, they are now enviable, additionally, this is what constitutes glamour and publicity is the process of manufacturing it. Berger (1972) also stated that publicity is the culture of society today and broadcasts through images that society has belief in.

The Human Body

Hannah (1998) explained that the human body is an instrument that shares sexuality, a well-known key ingredient for human survival and desirable for pleasure and it also shares dance, which highlights behavioural needs and concerns. Additionally, Hannah (1998) stated that the dancer gains control of the body to be able to use it in whatever way they wish and the majority of people's intimate experiences of their bodies is what influences them to dance. Adshead-Lansdale and Layson (1994) suggested that the body is known as the primary position of an expressional and representation form that is associated with being feminine. Adair (1992) expressed that authority is based on how women are encouraged to use their bodies sexually in order to receive male approval and be rewarded for being "sexy". Some females were then seen for their sexual adventures rather than being noticed for their artistic talents and this seemed to fit in with the social role (Adair, 1992).

The Dancing Body

Adair (1992) addressed that the female dancing body is perceived as a "silenced body" that attracts many meanings, whereas the new dance form modern dance which is better known as contemporary has allowed silent images to become powerful and women recognised the potential and need to connect dance with a wider context. Thomas (1993) proposed that Isadora Duncan longed for sexual freedom and viewed repression as an obstacle to the liberation of women through the feminists of the sixties and seventies eyed up the sexual revolution with suspicion and feared that it made women more available. Additionally, for many women dance has often been regarded as a mute art of physical presence where they are reduced to with their bodies (Thomas, 1993).

Meanings Conveyed Through Dance

Hannah (1998) put forward that dance can demonstrate a human's sexual appeal by providing an exciting fantasy of a series of encounters that lead to mating and this is then acted out beyond the dance performer-audience exchange. Adair (1992) expressed that the meanings that are conveyed in dance are informed by sexual values and are interpreted as male. This is due to the ways in which women are displayed before an audience and the roles they have to undertake which means that a male perspective is emphasised as the majority of choreography incorporates the sexual relationships between men and women, for example, work from Paul Taylor or from the romantic ballets in the early days (Adair, 1992). From this, Martha Graham learned to convey a female perspective which threatened male dominance as it refused the typical female role that is subservient and expressed sensuality with a greater acceptance than men and this has become a benefit to women in dance today (Adair, 1992).

MALE GAZE

Gendered Positions

Daly (2002) addressed that in modern western culture there are gendered positions, despite the actual sex of participants, these positions are known as the one who sees and the one who is seen. Mulvey (1975) supports this by stating that there are two ways of seeing, the voyeuristic or the narcissistic. Daly (2002) explained that on one hand there is the one who looks, known as the spectator, and this role consumes and possesses the image that is on display being a position of power that is traditionally male. On the other hand, the one who is looked at is known as the performer who puts on a display for the spectator; traditionally a female position (Daly, 2002). This theory, which is better known as the male gaze, has had its obvious implications for dance and in return dance offers a development of it (Daly, 2002).

Berger (1972) addressed that men act and women appear, for example, men look at women while women watch themselves being looked at, consequently, the way that a woman appears to a man is what determines the way that she is treated and to be able to gain control over this the woman must contain it and interiorize it.

Male Gaze

Mulvey (1975) stated that the male gaze concerns how women are represented and simultaneously looked at and how their image is positioned and displayed to the spectator as sexual objects that plays to and signifies male desire. Thomas (1993) expressed that male gaze has been widely adopted in feminist theory, firstly being a very useful model but then becoming a problem such as assuming that men were not objectified. Mulvey (1975) explained that it proceeds on the assumption that it is always the men who holds the camera, brush or pen and that it is always the women that holds the pose. Despite this, when modern dance came into place the majority of choreographic pioneers were women and that in the dance world the male gaze is often brought to bear upon the members of one's own sex (Mulvey, 1975).

Mulvey (1975) explained that the male gaze emerged from film being a male point of view that highlights the female image becoming exploited and presented as stereotypes that are ideal towards the male fantasy. Furthermore, this reinforces the imbalance of power that lies between men and women; she argued that within tradition on narrative film, the woman can be displayed on two levels either as the erotic object for the characters around her or for the spectator in the audience (Mulvey, 1975).

BALLET & CONTEMPORARY

Dance As Female

“The display of women's bodies, the gaze of the audience, the desire and pleasure of both the female performer and of the audience explore the role these aspects play in the representation of women in order to locate meanings in dance” (Adair, 1992, p 62).

Adair (1992) addressed that there is an expectation that girls learn dance because it is a suitable activity or career path for them that is feminine, however, there are aspects of the art form that provide resistance. Thomas (1995) stated that in western theatre dance the body has been associated with the feminine body and that in classical ballet female performers have been the leading roles since the nineteenth century. However, the founders of contemporary dance were mostly women and that they created and controlled the productions of their dance images (Thomas, 1995).

Adair (1992) suggested that the image of a ballerina is a well-known idea that is popular for young girls to idealise certain feminine aspects of a woman and that the reason behind women not challenging this image is understood when it is recognised that a woman's socialisation does not neglect but compliments the role of the female dancer and that images embody the idea of feminine.

The Certain Look

Adair (1992) expressed that women portrayed as decorative and dependent in ballet and contemporary dance and they represent the ideal of femininity that exists today to hide their strength and autonomy due to the "ideal" requiring that to maintain it, a woman must not display any "unfeminine" characteristics so they do not spoil the image. Thomas (1995) proposed that these dance images can incorporate negative undertones, for example, the desire to attain the "perfect ballet body" which can lead to eating disorders and illnesses as anorexia and bulimia.

Adair (1992) explained that to begin training in ballet in the early twentieth century, each dancer must have a specific body shape that was ideally thought to be a wide pelvis, narrow neck, small rib cage and a relatively tiny skull. Adair (1992) stated that the body maintenance required from ballet dancers comes with extreme stress and strain of the need to feel that they have to achieve the high standards of technique and look that is required. This results in major pressures on women to conform to an ideal; moreover, constant use of dancing in front of a mirror usually results in a dissatisfaction of how they look because they are always striving for perfection (Adair, 1992).

Ballet & Contemporary

Cheney (1989) addressed that ballet dancers love the security of the positions and steps and the attitude that comes with it which is clear and consistent. Cheney (1989) proposed that contemporary dance moves away from the rules, structures and ideas from the past and ultimately redefines what dance is. Additionally, women who appeared in vaudeville as a showcase for their talents were known as the originators of contemporary dance and that these strong women were determined to make their statement in dance individually artistic outside of the conventions of ballet (Cheney, 1989).

Bull & Jennings (2004) put forward that the division that was once known between classical and contemporary dance is now in the past as there is a mutual agreement that each borrows and benefits from the other. Au (1988) explained that contemporary dance became a key influence for updating the image of ballet as it started off being perceived as an art form that lacks ballet's appeal and because of technology, television programmes and video recordings made dance even more accessible to the public and the audience of contemporary dance grew increasingly throughout the years. Moreover, it is most known for employing narrative styles that challenge the conventional story line as well as trying to puzzle the viewer to attempt to extract the significance of the work that's hidden through multiple layers of meanings shown through choreography that incorporates movements that come from outside the range of conventional ballet techniques (Au, 1988).

From this existing knowledge, a method consisting of an interview guide will be created and designed in the next chapter to find out whether this information is still apparent within society today by questioning five professional dancers that participate in ballet and contemporary on the key ideas that were highlighted above.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

Approach

As evidenced by Smith (2010), the research question, the strategy, the group that will be observed, the environment that the observation will take place and the influence of the researcher's presence is what determines the role that is best suited for the research approach.

Thomas et al. (2011) stated that qualitative researchers develop a case for the importance of the study by asking questions based on previous research and theories resulting in extending the knowledge of that particular area or filling in a gap. This research was qualitative by interviewing five female individuals on how they view themselves as well as how they are portrayed and then compared them to each other to see the relationship of what was shared and what was different. Smith (2010) put forward that in qualitative research, the research question is based on theories that the researcher wants to test. Fraleigh & Hanstein (1999) suggested that qualitative methods that observe dance are consistent within the nature of it by providing rich approaches for study from a variety of viewpoints such as aesthetic, historical and cultural. Adair (1992) stated that these factors are what affect women's position in dance.

The aim of this research was to contribute to knowledge and provide a richer understanding of how female dancers view themselves. Adshead-Lansdale & Layson (1994) stated that the methods which outline feminist research are shaped by the experiences of women from their own perspective.

Procedure

To begin with, the participants were contacted by email (Appendix A) and were given participant information sheets (Appendix B) and informed consent forms (Appendix C) to complete and furthermore, each participant provided consent which allowed them to be able to take part in the study. After that, interviews took place in December and were estimated to last around thirty minutes. Griggs (2010) is an example of making sure that a study is trustworthy and that the samples and

instruments are valid, to support this, a guide was be applied to the interview (Appendix D).

Participants

Thomas et al. (2011) expressed that qualitative research may be based on choosing participants because they have certain characteristics and the selection of them should be purposeful ensuring that a sample of those who will be most useful needs to be selected. The original intention of this study was to have current performers in the professional industry of both ballet and contemporary but attempts to recruit these participants were unsuccessful. However the participants that were used in the study were five professional female individuals who are and have been performers and now have other roles within dance. They have specialised in ballet and contemporary so this didn't invalidate their responses to my research question.

The study consisted of interviewing and recording each individual at a different time. Using five participants, as evidenced by Benn (1991), allowed for in-depth information to be obtained whilst offering a chance for evaluation that engenders detailed discovery. The names of the participants have not been used in the study. Ensuring the participants would be anonymous; it allowed them to feel more comfortable and to be able to share information as it would never trace back to them.

Instruments

The instrumentation that was used to collect the data was participant information sheets, informed consent forms, an interview guide and a Dictaphone. To ensure anonymity for the participants, the data collected was only available to the researcher and supervisor and the participants had the opportunity to read through the interview and edit anything that they had said once it was typed up and printed just in case they wanted to take anything out.

The participant information sheets and informed consent forms were required so that ethical validity was ensured (Gratton & Jones, 2004). "Qualitative research involves a number of ethical considerations simply because of the intensive personal contact with the participants. Thus, the participants need to know that provisions will be followed to safeguard their rights of privacy and to guarantee anonymity" (Thomas et

al. 2011, p356). Furthermore, by interviewing each individual in a suitable environment of an office, it allowed the participants to feel comfortable and at ease.

Thomas et al. (2011) emphasised that interviews are the most common source of data when conducting a qualitative study and the person to person format is the most effective way. They have a number of advantages over questionnaires such as the researcher having the opportunity to rephrase questions or ask additional ones to either secure valid responses or clarify them. The interview guide consisted of a mixture of questions which enabled a wide range of information to be given as well as giving the participants more freedom and flexibility in their answers, open questions allowed the participant to reply how they wished to with the opportunity to expand their answers and closed questions offered fixed answers (Smith 2010). The questions were semi structured; Smith (2010) suggested that this consistency of the questions towards the participants allows for the findings to have comparability and by guiding the interview it meant that the research problem would be answered throughout which Thomas et al. (2011) states that it encourages reliability and validity.

Smith (2010) expressed that the way we collect information from participants has a significant impact on their response and that by recording what is observed it allows the researcher to make sense of any meanings or interactions. For further reliability, a Dictaphone was used which Thomas et al. (2011) ensured that by using this method of recording data it has the obvious advantage of collecting the entire interview making it more efficient for the data analysis as well as being less time consuming than note-making.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and handed to the participants to verify them before being analysed. Smith (2010) addressed that by recording the interview and then transcribing, coding and interpreting the data, this offers an insight into the findings and provides a much clearer picture. Both this and anonymity will ensure confidentiality.

Thomas et al. (2011) addressed that even though the researcher had specific questions to ask, when analysing the data of qualitative research the focus shifts as

it unfolds. Key ideas were drawn out from each interview and the aim was to focus on what was shared and what was distinctive between each of them, these findings will challenge or reinforce previous research that has been analysed using the same procedure and it will back up or add to statements that have been made.

This was the method used to complete the study and from this, a comparative analysis of the role of women in ballet and contemporary dance will be made from interviewing the three contemporary dancers and the two ballet dancers by asking them questions about role, power, performance, body image and personal lifestyle in the hope to find the similarities and the differences between the two dance styles.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

RESULTS

Role

When asked about their background of dance, all of the interviewees have had either vocational or conservatoire training and two contemporary interviewees and one ballet interviewee progressed on to further education and completed a master's degree. All of the interviewees have also trained in their own dance style as well as other dance styles which makes it clear that they all have a range of experience. In addition, the difference between all of the interviewees is that they are all of different ages meaning that each of their experiences will vary due to that. For example, the earliest trainer graduated in 2007 and the latest trainer studied post graduate training in 1979.

When asked about their current role in dance, all of the interviewees said that they are currently involved with teaching; two of the contemporary interviewees and one ballet interviewee are currently teaching dance at a community dance organisation, the other contemporary interviewee just comes into contact with being a teacher and the other ballet interviewee teaches within schools. Another similarity is between two of the contemporary interviewees who said that they are also currently freelance dance artists and one ballet interviewee who said that she is a freelance dance teacher. Another similarity between the interviewees is that each of them are still specialising in their preferred dance style as well as the fact that they all started off performing and are now currently doing teaching.

Power

When asked if they felt society is gendered, there were mixed answers between the interviewees, a similarity was found between one contemporary interviewee and one ballet interviewee who both said that society was gendered "in the past" but isn't anymore and that it has "become a lot more even". However, the contemporary interviewee Person B said that we are unintentionally gendered because we are different and the ballet interviewee Person E was just straight to the point saying that when she used to dance society wasn't gendered but with the society that she lives in now, it's getting "more and more" gendered.

Another similarity was found between another contemporary interviewee and another ballet interviewee who both said that there is definitely a division between males and females with examples of “yeah of course there is a division between male and female” and “I feel a definite separation yeah”.

Three contemporary interviewees and one ballet interviewee all made a reference to women in society;

Person A: “there’s a lot of things that was once considered male dominated and now females can work and quite happily be very comfortable so I don’t think it’s really specifically gendered but we’re able to push the boundaries as female”

Person B: “it’s very difficult to get away from the stereotypes in terms of assuming that every nurse is a woman”

Person C: “so it’s not necessarily that women stay at home and look after the kids, it could be the other way around”

Person D: “I think females are more the ones that are seen to stay at home with the children but are still quite dominant”

When asked if they held the assumption that male is always superior to female, none of the participants felt that they did, the ballet interviewee Person E expressed that males “think that they’re superior” due to being strong but “being sensitive or sensible is a lot more behind women”.

There is a similarity between two of the contemporary interviewees in that they both accept that they are different to a man with different skills;

Person B: “I’m really happy to accept the fact that I am different to a man so that I have different skills” although “it’s quite nice to get a man to pick up your box for you when you play the weak girly”.

Person C: “we are individual whether we are male or female and we develop certain skills and knowledge within a particular field”

Whereas, on the other hand, the other contemporary interviewee Person A said that she likes to challenge the assumption and the ballet interviewee Person D said that it

should be “50/50” and that females “should get a say” rather than “just being in the background”.

When asked if they felt powerful as a woman in their current role, a similarity was found between two contemporary interviewees and two ballet interviewees in that they do all feel powerful as a woman in their current role;

Person B: “I’m my own boss”

Person C: “I make my decisions” and “it is usually me who is leading”

Person D: “you have control over what work you’re doing and how you bring money in”

Person E: “I always have in the dance world it’s quite feminine based even though the top person always seems to be a man”

On the other hand, the other contemporary interviewee said that she doesn’t feel powerful as a woman in her current role;

Person A: “no I don’t I feel that I am just me and this is me in the space and I’m quite open to working with whoever’s there really”

When asked if they have ever suffered professionally due to the men dominating the more high status jobs, two of the contemporary interviewees agreed that this has happened to them;

Person A: “if there’s a job going then men all seem to get it” and “if you’re a female and you’re asking for certain things, they’re always questioning it, you just feel like you’re being undermined”.

Person B: “I would say within dance there are fewer opportunities for me compared to a man” because most of the jobs out there are “looking for a male dancer”

Person D: “I suppose there still are more directors that are male than female”

Furthermore, one of the contemporary interviewees understands that people are “in a better position” than her but isn’t bothered about the gender and one of the ballet interviewees highlights that “most directors are male”. Another similarity was found

between the two ballet interviewees who both agreed that the dance industry is dominated by females;

Person D: “when you’re in performing arts it’s quite female dominated”

Person E: “ballet teachers are more occupied by women than men”

Performance

When asked have they ever been noticed for their sexual appeal over their artistic talents, none of the interviewees have experienced this in the dance style that they specialise in;

Person B: “I choose not to go for work that is of that content”

Person E: ballet is “very asexual” and “very innocent”

Despite this, the interviewees felt that this was apparent, but within the commercial industry;

Person A: “you notice a lot of that in auditions” with how “they play up to the director” and by “using her sexuality she’s got the job”

Person C: “no I think that’s more commercial”

Person D: the “commercial industry could have a play into it”

When asked if they perform for themselves or for an audience when they dance, a similarity was found between two contemporary interviewees and one ballet interviewee who agreed that they feel that they perform for both;

Person A: for themselves because “you like the role that you’re in” and for the audience because “they’re going to notice you”

Person C: “it’s always both” but “in my opinion it is made to be viewed”

Person D: for themselves because “when you are doing a technique class I think you are doing it for yourself” and for the audience “when you get into rehearsals”

Another similarity is between the other contemporary interviewee and the other ballet interviewee who said that they feel like they are performing mainly for the audience;

Person B: "I value the fact that someone's coming out to watch it so they've paid to come and see"

Person E: wants to feel like she's doing it for herself but "when you got hundreds of people it's hard to forget them"

When asked if they agreed with the idea that when women perform it is for male approval, none of the interviewees have experienced this in the dance style that they specialise in. Despite this, they all similarly think that it is involved within the commercial industry;

Person A: "if the job is for let's say Chorus Line or Chicago"

Person B: "some choreographers create work to seek male approval"

Person C: "I think that is a commercial one again"

Person D: "I think pop videos are quite sexually dominant within the females" and added that it's to do with "the outfits that they're wearing and the moves that they're doing"

Person E: "I think that's more in commercial dance".

When asked who they felt was in more control when dancing with a male partner, on one hand one of the ballet interviewees said that the man is more in control because she's "in their hands" and on the other hand one of the contemporary interviewees said that she is more in control because she's "quite bossy" and isn't "really a pushover" however she does feel that "it's really lovely to have that kind of guiding around there's something romantic about it". A similarity was found between one of the contemporary interviewees and one of the ballet interviewees who said that the power control between partners should be a "50/50" split;

Person D: "it has been quite even because you need that trust with someone if you're doing lifts"

Person A: “the power is shared” in contemporary whereas in “the old ballet’s you are reliant on your partner, he makes you look good he can put you on pointe, you’re on balance and you’re not off balance if he catches you”

When asked have they every performed a story line with sexual appeal by providing an exciting fantasy that potentially leads to mating, none of the interviewees have but all of their answers differed when asked whether they agree with it or not;

Person A: “we will always interpret it differently”

Person B: “it really depends on what the aim is”

Person C: “no, of course that could be the concept”

Person D: “dance can portray anything and it depends on the history of the piece”

Person E: “theres some choreographies these days that are created to have that element but the old classical ballets don’t have that”

Body Image

When asked if they felt they had to look a certain way for their current role, two of the contemporary interviewees gave a very brief answer of “no” whereas the other contemporary interviewee and the two ballet interviewees said they do;

Person A: when she’s working in a school she “tends to tone down” how she dresses so wears “a very basic kind of uniform” to present herself “in a professional way”, she also added that with “contemporary dance” you can “express yourself in any way” and that “in ballet” you “have to look a particular way”

Person D: “you kind of want to look smart/professional although with dance you are still in your jogging bottoms most of the time” and that looking a certain way is “more dominated in ballet”

Person E: “when I’m teaching I’m in sweat pants and comfortable clothes when I do my development officer role” and that the only time she feels like she has to look a certain way is “before a premiere”

When asked if they have ever suffered professionally from not looking a certain way, this had happened to one contemporary interviewee and one ballet interviewee;

Person A: when she was working with another dance leader who was “quite young, very enthusiastic, very brilliant” and “beautiful” and that when a suggestion was made by either of them, the director would say “yeah no problem fine” to this dance leader but then would say “we’ll think about it” to this interviewee

Person D: when she “auditioned for a couple of ballet companies” they wanted her “to be a little bit short” and another time she experienced it was when “all the people that got through were brown haired” and she wasn’t

On the other hand, the other interviewees have not experienced this;

Person B: she doesn’t go for “certain jobs” that are not her “cup of tea” or that she doesn’t “fill the bill for what they’re looking for”

Person C: it’s “more the commercial field” and that work for her is more about “saying what it needs to be saying” rather than who has “the latest haircut or so”

Person E: she always “had a costume” had her “hair a certain way” and it “was dictated to you how you looked”.

When asked if they agreed with the description of the ideal female dancing body that is said to have a wide pelvis, narrow neck, small ribs and a small skull, all of the contemporary interviewees did not agree with this;

Person A: “it relates more to a ballet company” because “everyone has to look the same” and within contemporary “it can be all shapes and sizes”

Person B: “I suppose your image of a ballerina is that kind of description isn’t it?”

Person C: “that’s probably the most stereotyped body figure, female figure, but certainly it’s not in contemporary dance”

Although all the ballet interviewees did agree with this;

Person D: “probably even a small pelvis as well”

Person E: “in some ballet establishments” because “it’s almost purely on how they look rather than how they dance”

When asked where do they think the pressure comes from having the desire to attain this ideal female dancing body which has created major problems for dancers such as the need to have strict diet and exercise that has sometimes led to disordered eating, one contemporary interviewee and the two ballet interviewees agree that this pressure comes from whoever’s leading;

Person A: “sometimes you get some teachers saying you’ve gotta lose weight” and that it comes from “early training”

Person D: she thinks it “comes from the teachers and directors” by telling them they need to “be a certain weight” but they need to “speak less about calories and more about diet and exercise”

Person E: “in dance a lot of the time it can be the director” and that now “it’s accepted that you can go to a doctor and change how you look”

Another similarity was found between the other two contemporary interviewees who agree that there is a self-pressure of wanting to look a certain way;

Person B: “seeing the history of a classical ballet and the kind of image that comes through with that” makes you want to “maintain that kind of air of perfection”

Person C: “it’s the kind of wanting to fit in to what is the current celeb” and that it’s seen most in “the commercial side”

Personal

When asked are they the same person in their everyday life as they are in their current role, two of the contemporary interviewees feel that they are;

Person A: “I think I’m just me you know”

Person B: “I’d say that I am” and that she’s “aware of attempting to be the same person” as it’s staying true to who she is and what she values.

Another similarity is between the other contemporary interviewee and the two ballet interviewees who all feel that they switch between different roles;

Person C: “at home with the family I’m a different person than when I’m leading a workshop”

Person D: “I’ve got professional Becky, teacher, dancer, wife and mum”

Person E: “I wear different hats for different jobs”

When asked do people react to them being a dancer differently inside and outside of professional contexts, all of the participants felt this way;

Person A: “people outside of dance view me differently, they see the black woman, dread locks and have an assumption of what I do” but “within a dance environment yeah I’m pretty much considered acceptable”

Person B: “if I tell people I’m a dancer there’s always those kind of comments which are very different to those within the profession” but “I think people outside of the sector have a very stereotypical view of it”

Person C: “yeah I guess in a dance field” but they don’t put you “on a pedestal”

Person D: “my friends treat me as Becky really, I don’t think I get treated as a dancer” but “when you’re at work you put on a very professional manner and then when you’re out with friends socialising you let yourself relax more”

Person E: “yeah I do in a way, if someone finds that you’re a dancer they sort of put a stereotype on you, they just assume you’re a bun head, you got your head in the clouds, you can’t count past 8”

The next chapter will compare the results above to the existing knowledge that was presented in the literature review to see if the information is still apparent within society today and to see what it means for women in dance.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

Gender

As discussed in the literature review, Thomas (1993) presents the idea of gender being culturally defined and that all of us are either male or female no matter how varied our experiences are in life. All of the participants agreed with this, for example “yeah of course there is a division between male and female” (Person C, Interview Transcript), “more and more” (Person E, Interview Transcript), “I think unintentionally we’re gendered because we are different” (Person B, Interview Transcript) and “it’s probably very difficult to get away from the stereotypes so in terms of you know assuming that every nurse is a woman” (Person B, Interview Transcript). Some felt that it was more evident in the past, for example “I think there’s a lot of things that was once considered male dominated and now females can work and quite happily be very comfortable” (Person A, Interview Transcript) and “I think we’ve become a lot more even over the last few centuries” (Person D, Interview Transcript). This suggests that gender is culturally defined as male and female but it has become a lot more equal in society today in terms of what men and women can do and women are not just seen as the ones that stay home with the children anymore which now challenges what Adair (1992) suggests, that being a mother or a homemaker is a woman’s primary role and that if they choose to work outside of this then it violates the male domain.

As identified earlier, Hannah (1998) states that men and women live their life on the assumption that male are always superior to the female. None of the participants agreed with this, for example “no I don’t, I think there are differences and I’m really happy to accept the fact that I am different to a man so that I have different skills” (Person B, Interview Transcript) and “No I don’t, we’re 50/50 we should be even we should both get a say in things rather than females just being in the background” (Person D, Interview Transcript). This suggests that the idea of men always being superior to the female is an idea that is not around today and that these women are happy to accept the fact that they are different to men with different skills. Furthermore, Person E (Interview Transcript) added “I think maybe they’re superior in strength but being sensitive or sensible is a lot more behind women” This also supports Adair (1992) who uses the theory of Cartesian Dualism to highlight that

females are expected to be dependent and caring and males are encouraged to be independent and protective.

Roles

As discussed in the literature review, Hannah (1998) states that men have dominated the well-paid occupations leaving women with the roles that have a lower status and Mulvey (1975) explained that there's still the assumption that men always hold the camera, brush or pen and that women always hold the pose. The majority of the participants agreed with this, for example "often there have been that male get more paid" (Person C, Interview Transcript), Person B said that within dance there were fewer opportunities for her compared to a man and that "there's quite a lot of women out there looking for work but yes I'd say like most of the choreographers that I know are men" (Person B, Interview Transcript), "if there's a job going then men all seem to get it" (Person A, Interview Transcript) and "I suppose there still are more directors that are male than female" (Person D, Interview Transcript). From a feminist perspective, this is problematic as it suggests that becoming a choreographer or a director within dance is not easy for females which was also evidenced by Person A (Interview Transcript) who said "in that industry you really do have to fight hard as a female".

As discussed earlier this then relates to the idea that it is male who is associated with power and status (Adair, 1992) and supports the idea from Hannah (1998) who expresses that male domination happens in dance when they protect women through partnering in ballet. The participants agreed with this, for example, "the old ballets you are reliant on your partner, he makes you look good he can put you on pointe, you're on balance and you're not off balance if he catches you" (Person A, Interview Transcript) and "I think it's really lovely to have that kind of guiding around there's something romantic about it" (Person B, Interview Transcript). Despite this, Thomas (1995) presents the idea that dance is viewed as a feminine mode of expression and representation. The participants agree with this with examples of "ballet teachers are more occupied by women than men" (Person E, Interview Transcript) and "when you're in performing arts it's quite female dominated" (Person D, Interview Transcript). This suggests that it only seems male dominant due to their

roles in ballet and that in fact females hold the power as dance is viewed as a feminine activity and in a broader sense is more dominated by women.

From this, as presented in the literature review, Hannah (1998) put forward the idea that a new form of dance known as Contemporary emerged because women wanted to escape the male control that's represented in ballet. The participants agreed with this, for example "in contemporary you get that 50/50 split where the power is shared" (Person A, Interview Transcript), "from my experience I feel it's been very 50/50" (Person D, Interview Transcript) and "that's kind of steering away from what the piece is about if I start focusing about the dominance, it's more about 2 dancers working together to create something that has relevance itself rather than having the idea of is it female or male" (Person C, Interview Transcript). This shows in contemporary dance, women feel a lot more equal when dancing with a male partner now as the power is shared. This also relates back to women feeling more equal in society today and supports Bull & Jennings (2004) theory that there is no longer a divide between ballet and contemporary as there is now a mutual agreement that each of these dance styles borrow and benefit from each other.

Male Gaze

As discussed earlier, Daly (2002) presents the idea that there is always the one who looks and the one who is looked at. The participants agreed with this with examples of "I value the fact that someone's coming out to watch it so they've paid to come and see so I value the place of the audience" (Person B, Interview Transcript), "performance is for an audience and you can't ignore them" (Person C, Interview Transcript), "I usually do feel like it's for an audience, you want to feel like you're doing it for yourself but when you got hundreds of people it's hard to forget them" (Person E, Interview Transcript) and "in my opinion it is made to be viewed" (Person C, Interview Transcript). From a feminist perspective, this shows that these women feel like they are performing to an audience that is not gender specific and it is something that they enjoy doing which challenges Mulvey's (1975) and Adair's (1992) theory that suggests that women are positioned and displayed to use their bodies sexually for male desire and to receive male approval. All of the participants agreed that this was more involved in the commercial industry. For example, "I think that's more in commercial dance" (Person E, Interview Transcript), "if the job is for

let's say Chorus Line or Chicago then they are going for the sex appeal" (Person A, Interview Transcript), and "I think pop videos are quite sexually dominant within the females" (Person D, Interview Transcript) whereas "some of the more traditional style performances dance are quite neutral" (Person D, Interview Transcript) and that ballet is "very asexual" and "very innocent like in some sort of fantasy world" (Person E, Interview Transcript). This suggests that women in theatre dance may no longer feel like they are performing to receive male approval even though the audience still might think so. In addition, sexual content is apparent within the commercial industry and is created for the purpose of male desire. This then challenges the idea that sexual meanings are extremely evident in both ballet and contemporary dance (Adair, 1992).

Sexualised Bodies

As discussed in the literature review, Hannah (1998) presents the idea that dance can demonstrate sexual appeal by providing an exciting fantasy that potentially lead to mating. Mixed answers from the participants were given, for example "I have never personally been in a performance where I have, they will show relationships but we will always interpret it differently but it's not always overtly sexual it's a subtle abstract connection" (Person A, Interview Transcript), "I've seen some choreography which is just really explicit and in your face for the sake of being in your face and that doesn't appeal to me but if something is trying to be clever, trying to create an experience or prompt you to think about what it is then I can kind of see the value in it" (Person B, Interview Transcript), "I created a piece that was a relationship piece and it was relevant that it was male female direct but it was more about longing between the 2 people it wasn't so much about the kind of sexuality" (Person C, Interview Transcript) and "there's some choreographies these days that are created to have that element but the old classical ballets don't have that" (Person E, Interview Transcript). This suggests that these women see the value in a piece with that narrative but that it doesn't need to be sexual and that making the piece more about a certain part of the relationship is acceptable.

As identified earlier, Adair (1992) expresses the idea that some women were noticed for their sexual adventures rather than their artistic talents. Again, all of the participants agree that this sits more within the commercial industry and that dancers

are chosen based on how well they look over how well they dance, for example; “you notice a lot of that in auditions, the person they’ve got is somebody who is not necessarily technically strong but they’ve got the looks” (Person A, Interview Transcript), “she’s using her sexuality she’s got the job” (Person A, Interview Transcript), “commercial industry could have a play into it but I think within ballet and contemporary it’s slightly different” (Person D, Interview Transcript) and “no I don’t think that has ever happened to me because I actively choose not to go for work that is of that content” (Person B, Interview Transcript). As discussed earlier, this supports Hannah’s (1998) idea that when a dancer performs what, when, how, why and who with, either reflects or challenges the expected male and female roles that are seen by society. Furthermore, one of the participants explained being unsuccessful at an audition because “the comment was that none of us were mature enough ‘cause we were all quite young and kind of girly” (Person B, Interview Transcript). This suggests that ballet and contemporary dance does not reflect society’s thoughts on sexualised bodies and that it is in fact the commercial industry that does with female dancers auditioning for music videos by performing choreography with a sexual content and getting accepted based on how “sexy” they look and how well they play up to the director with a sexual nature.

Image

As discussed in the literature review, Adair’s (1992) theory states how women are encouraged to present themselves as an attractive image to achieve their desires. Some of the participants have suffered professionally due to not looking a certain way, for example “there are certain jobs that I wouldn’t go for personally because they are not my kind of cup of tea or that I don’t fill the bill for what they’re looking for” (Person B, Interview Transcript), “when I work with another dance leader and she is quite young, very enthusiastic, very brilliant, she trained in sort of Brazilian dance but of course she’s very young, beautiful and if she suggested certain things the director would go oh yeah yeah yeah no problem fine and if I suggested something oh we’ll think about it” (Person A, Interview Transcript) and “I auditioned for a couple of ballet companies and they wanted me to be a little bit short for one company or another company was when all the people that got through were brown haired and I was blonde” (Person D, Interview Transcript). From a feminist perspective, this is problematic as it suggests that in society today, there is a

massive impact on how somebody looks. This could lead to women putting themselves under major pressure to look a certain way which also relates back to the health issues within dance as it could lead to depression or disordered eating.

As presented earlier, Adair (1992) expresses that when we consider the appearance of a dancer, we consider the images that we are confronted with in the media. Two of the participants highlight this with examples of “It doesn’t help that all the people on the TV have facelifts and boob jobs or whatever you know there’s like people not accepting how they look and it’s accepted that you can go to a doctor and change how you look” (Person E, Interview Transcript) and “again thinking more of the commercial side and the kind of what is the current ideal or in fashion for example I think that’s addicting, not just in terms of dance but generally I’m thinking about young girls, young women, it’s the kind of wanting to fit in to what is the current celeb” (Person C, Interview Transcript). From a feminist perspective, this is also very problematic as it shows that whatever image is presented within the media in society today is what women strive to look like and if this image looks completely different to females within the industry then they could go to extreme measures such as weight loss or surgery to try and look like the image that is presented.

As discussed in the literature review, Adair (1992) presents the idea that the early twentieth century, to begin training in ballet each dancer must have a wide pelvis, narrow neck, small rib cage and a relatively tiny skull. None of the participants agreed that this should be the ideal female dancing body but some agreed that it sits within ballet, for example “I don’t agree with it but I think that relates more to a ballet company because they have the Court ballet and everyone has to look the same” (Person A, Interview Transcript), “in terms of why does society, I suppose your image of a ballerina is that kind of description isn’t it?” (Person B, Interview Transcript) and “I would say probably even a small pelvis as well but then that’s probably ‘cause I come from ballet” (Person D, Interview Transcript). As discussed earlier this also supports Adair’s (1992) theory that the image of a ballerina is popular for young girls to idealise certain feminine aspects of a woman. However, the contemporary participant Person A (Interview Transcript) said “you’ve seen that kind of image for so long I think dance companies in Europe tend to not stick to that ideal stereotypical look”. As discussed earlier, this then related to Adair’s (1992) theory that constant use of dancing in front of a mirror results in a dissatisfaction of

how you look as you are always striving for perfection. The participants agreed with this with examples of “when you’re a young dancer and you’re in front of the mirror you notice the changes in your body” (Person A, Interview Transcript), “you become dissatisfied with yourself” (Person A, Interview Transcript) and “there’s quite a self-pressure isn’t there to be good” (Person B, Interview Transcript).

This “ideal” look has created major problems for dancers and as discussed earlier this also supports Thomas’s (1995) idea that the desire to attain such a body has led to eating disorders and illnesses such as anorexia and bulimia. All of the participants agreed with this with examples of “you notice how other people look” (Person A, Interview Transcript) and “seeing the history of a classical ballet and the kind of image that comes through with that then there’s and maintaining that kind of air of perfection” (Person B, Interview Transcript). The participants feel that this pressure comes from the teachers or directors, with examples of “sometimes you get some teachers saying you’ve gotta lose weight” (Person A, Interview Transcript), “I think that comes from the teachers and directors” (Person D, Interview Transcript) and “in dance a lot of the time it can be the director” (Person E, Interview Transcript). This suggests that being in this industry can be very strenuous on dancers and supports Adair’s (1992) theory that extreme stress and strain happens with dancers wanting to achieve the high standards of technique and look that is required. One of the ballet participants, Person D (Interview Transcript) emphasised that although dance is a profession that’s all about the body, teachers and directors need to be more careful how they speak to dancers and instead of telling them they need to be a certain weight and eat less calories they should focus more on diet and exercise and inform them that having the proper nutrients can be very beneficial to them as a dancer. This suggests that if the directors and teachers directed the focus to having a healthy diet rather than losing weight or eating less calories then dancers would not get as stressed and worried and would be at a healthy weight instead of being underweight.

Ballet VS Contemporary

As discussed in the literature review, Cheney (1989) presents the idea that on one hand ballet dancers love the security of the positions and steps whereas on the other hand contemporary dance moves away from the rules and structures. This is evidenced through the uniform of each dance style, for example “of “for a

contemporary dance company you can express yourself in any way you're quite free" (Person A, Interview Transcript), "ballet companies you tend to have to look a particular way again very squeaky clean with everything in place" (Person A, Interview Transcript), "contemporary is slightly different 'cause they have all sorts of shapes and sizes and I think within some jazz you get those at auditions with make up on, hair tied up, crop top, little jazz pants and that kind of look" (Person D, Interview Transcript) and the ballet participant Person E said "when I was dancing you had a costume, you had your hair a certain way so that was dictated to you how you looked" and "I think in some ballet establishments like say the Royal Ballet it's almost purely on how they look rather than how they dance". It seems that within ballet, dancers are told what to look like and the uniform is very neat and tidy whereas within contemporary there is no uniform whatsoever and dancers are allowed to express themselves in any way. As identified earlier, this also supports Au's (1988) idea that states that contemporary expresses feelings through dance rather than to decorate a display of technique. Furthermore, it is evidenced by Person D (Interview Participant) above that within jazz you dress sexually to get the part and the look is one that you are confronted with in the media. From a feminist perspective, this is very problematic as it suggests that there is a certain look that distinguishes each dance style from each other and the look comes from the way the dance style is presented within society, women should be able to wear whatever they want, they should be able to express themselves in anyway and that what they wear shouldn't choose whether they get accepted for a job or not.

These key findings relate back to the research question of "a feminist analysis of the role of women in ballet and contemporary dance" and will be concluded in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Correlating the key findings from the research, within society today, women are happy to accept the fact that they are different to men and have different skills as they have become a lot more equal and are not just seen to have the primary role of being a wife and mother. Despite the fact that men dominate the higher positions in dance such as directors, dance is seen as a feminine activity as well as having the majority of people that take part being female and that in fact, dance only seems dominated by males due to their role in ballet which undertakes partnering the female and guiding her around the stage, however, since contemporary has come into place it has enabled women to feel more equal now when dancing with a male partner as the power is shared for example when a female can now lift her male partner instead of it only being acceptable to be the other way around as it was in the early days.

The expectations of society include thoughts on women having sexualised bodies to perform for male approval. Ballet and contemporary seem to allow for something other than this as within ballet you are told what to look like such as wearing a certain costume or having your hair in a certain style whereas within contemporary you are allowed express yourself in anyway but neither of these styles are explicitly sexualised, although ballet still connects to the idea of “policing” the body to an extent. Commercial dance however may reflect the social situation as the choreography is created with sexual content for the purpose of male desire. It has also been discovered that within the commercial industry, dancers have suffered due to not looking a certain way and it seems that they are only chosen for auditions based on how well they look and how well they play up to the director instead of being based on how well they dance.

Lastly, the main key finding from the research that is most important was that choreographers and teachers have clearly had a better experience within dance than the dancers have due to many reasons. This is because it is when you are a performer that you deal with feeling unbalanced power whilst rehearsing with male dancers or the constant effort of trying to compete with a male for a certain job, you also have to deal with having to be “sexy” with the “ideal” look within the commercial industry to be noticed and you even have to deal with the constant struggle of trying

to maintain the “perfect” image that is presented within the media which leads to constant dissatisfaction of how you look.

This information could be useful towards a variety of roles within dance; to start with it could be useful for young female dancers as it shows them what to expect within the dance world, what to prepare themselves for and that by always striving for perfection to achieve the high standards of technique and look that is required it creates extreme stress and strain and can lead to being underweight. Secondly, it could be useful for teachers and directors as it shows them that they are the ones that create stress and put pressure dancers by telling them that they need to lose weight and eat fewer calories instead of telling them exercise with a good diet to stay healthy as it has led to serious health problems. Thirdly, it could be useful for dancers in general as it shows them how each style differs from one another and what they can benefit from each one.

To critically reflect on the success of the study, the overall strength was the interview guide. To begin with, significant literature was looked at which then enabled the appropriate questions to be created for the interview guide that made the data reliable and valid as the information was relevant throughout. The overall limitation however was the participants, even though they were involved within either ballet or contemporary, they didn't fill the criteria of being full time dancers as they were all teachers. As evidenced in the results, this showed that none of the participants that were interviewed had experiences with the issues within dance that were presented in the literature review. This suggests that to further this study and make it stronger, the next step would be to interview dancers as the majority of the results showed that these issues lie within the commercial industry.

To conclude, the key findings that were found from the results within the study definitely answer the research question of “a feminist analysis of the role of women in ballet and contemporary dance” by giving qualitative rich information that highlights that within dance, it is clear that the issues that were presented in the existing knowledge do not lie within ballet and contemporary or within the role of the teacher, choreographer or director but in fact the issues lie within the role of the dancer and are evident within commercial dance. This suggests that women can and

do have a positive experience in dance in certain roles but this success is not represented throughout the industry.

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APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE EMAIL THAT WAS SENT TO THE PARTICIPANTS

My name is Jade Trimnell; I am a final year student at Cardiff Metropolitan University currently studying a BA (Hons) in Dance. For my dissertation project I wish to conduct qualitative research by interviewing professional female dancers that specialise in contemporary and professional female dancers that specialise in ballet about their experiences as women in dance. The aim of my research is to provide a richer understanding of how female dancers view themselves, and how they feel they are viewed by others.

I have attached some further information regarding my study, if you are willing to participate then you will be asked to take part in one interview, lasting no more than approximately an hour, which will be arranged at a time and venue that is convenient for you. I would appreciate it if you could please get back to me letting me know whether you wish to participate or not and if you require any further information, please contact me via this email address. Alternatively you may contact my research supervisor Fiona Brooker via email: fbrooker@cardiffmet.ac.uk or phone: 029 2041 7079.

Yours faithfully,

Jade Trimnell
Cardiff School of Sport
Cardiff Metropolitan University
CF23 6XD

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Cardiff School of Sport Ethics Committee
Research Participant Information Sheet**

Project Title:

A feminist analysis of the role of women in ballet and contemporary dance.

This document provides a run through of:

- 1) the background and aim of the research,
- 2) my role as the researcher,
- 3) your role as a participant,
- 4) benefits of taking part,
- 5) how data will be collected, and
- 6) how the data / research will be used.

The purpose of this document is to assist you in making an informed decision about whether you wish to be included in the project and to promote transparency in the research process.

1) Background and aims of the research

Dance is often considered 'female' and key theories suggest a development of the role of women in dance in both how they view themselves and how they are portrayed in two very distinct styles such as ballet and contemporary dance. I want to contribute to this knowledge and provide a richer understanding of the way in which female dancers feel their identity is shaped by and shared through their practice.

2) My role as the researcher

The project involves me (Jade Trimnell), the researcher, interviewing two female individuals from a professional ballet company and two female individuals from a professional contemporary company.

3) Your role as a participant

Your role is to participate in the interview as honestly as possible. The interview includes open and closed questions about dance in general, how you are perceived in and out of dance and how you view yourself. You do not have to respond to every question should you wish not to.

4) Benefits of taking part

The information and findings we obtain from this study will shape practice and enable others to think differently. From this I will aim to understand more about how

women are perceived and how they view themselves. We will be happy to share this information to any of the participants of this study.

5) How data will be collected

The data will be collected from the interview by being recorded with a Dictaphone.

6) How the data / research will be used

In agreeing to become a participant, you will be allowing me to use your responses to the interview and include them within a larger set of data that also includes the data of other participants. Your personal data will be anonymous and will only be used for the purpose of this study. You will also have the opportunity to read through the interview transcript to make sure that you are happy with the information and that it can be used.

Your rights

Your right as a participant is that you are free to enter or withdraw from the study at any time meaning that you are in full control of the part you play in informing the research and what information is used in its final reporting.

Protection to privacy

Efforts will be made to hide your identity in any written transcripts, notes, and associated documentation that inform the research and its findings. Any personal information about you will remain confidential according to the guidelines of the Data Protection Act (1998).

Contact

If you require any further details or have any outstanding queries then please contact me via my supervisor.

Fiona Brooker
Discipline Director – Dance
Cardiff School of Sport
Cardiff Metropolitan University
CF23 6XD

Telephone: 029 2041 7079

E-mail: fbrooker@cardiffmet.ac.uk

APPENDIX C
EXAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your background of dance?
2. What is your current role in dance?
3. Do you think society is gendered? (male/female)
4. Do you live your life on the assumption that male is always superior to female?
5. In your current role, do you feel powerful as a woman?
6. Have you ever suffered professionally due to the men dominating the more high status jobs?
7. Some women have been noticed for their sexual appeal over their artistic talents, has this ever happened to you?
8. When you dance do you feel like your performing for yourself or for an audience?
9. Do you agree with the idea that when women perform it is for male approval?
10. When you're dancing with a male partner either in rehearsals or during a performance, who do you feel is in more control?
11. Dance demonstrates sexual appeal providing an exciting fantasy that potentially leads to mating. Have you ever performed a story line like this? Do you agree with it?
12. Do you feel like you have to look a certain way for your current role?
13. Have you ever suffered professionally from not looking a certain way?
14. The ideal female dancing body is said to have a wide pelvis, narrow neck, small ribs and a small skull, do you agree with this?
15. The desire to attain such a body has created major problems for dancers such as the need to have strict diet and exercise that has sometimes led to disordered eating, where do you think that pressure comes from?

16. Are you the same person in your everyday life as you are in your current role?

17. Do people react to you being a dancer differently inside and outside of professional contexts?