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Comments	Section
	<p>Introduction and literature review (25%)</p> <p>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).</p>
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CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS)

DANCE

2013-4

How is personal style influenced by technique within Contemporary dance practice?

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

Faith Lois Novello Jackson

st20009132

**HOW IS PERSONAL STYLE INFLUENCED BY TECHNIQUE WITHIN
CONTEMPORARY DANCE PRACTICE?**

Cardiff Metropolitan University
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ABSTRACT

How is personal style influenced by technique within Contemporary dance practice?

This research study explored the question through a mixed method design. The purpose of this research study was to discover the relationship between technique and personal style development, in order to reveal how dance training informs practice and performance, and which approaches may be most successful where the aim is to enhance a dancer as an individual.

Throughout this study the context of the question proposed has been explored through presenting comparisons between an autoethnography, interview data and research on the topics explored. The key findings of the study highlighted the close link between teaching strategies and the effects they have on a dancer's development; physically in practice through having awareness of essential dance techniques, and mentally with a mind-body connection ensuring a link between a dancer and their body as well as movement vocabulary. This research may usefully inform Contemporary dance students and teachers.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The context of this research study has focused on University level Contemporary dance practice and how technique training can be used to inform individual practice. The values of this identified dance course are in cohesion with the focus points of Bales and Nettle-Fiol (2008), working on “the inclusion of body-mind, or somatic, techniques into dance training” (Bales & Nettle-Fiol, 2008, p.viii). This type of dance training falls under the notion of formal practice however, formal dance training establishments have differing values; as noted by Bales and Nettle-Fiol (2008), some consider dance to be about discovering and others hold dance classes focusing on knowledge of technique. Because of these varying approaches the purpose of technique class will change depending on the approach taken. H'Doubler (1998), explains how education affects dancers in terms of mind-body connections by stating that if classes only focus on specific techniques and everyone working for the same goal, a sense of “conformity... [is shown which] takes over the creations of others with no effort to know or understand” (H'Doubler, 1998, p.29). This creates dancers who copy movements rather than adapting specific dance vocabularies to suit their bodies to show a personal awareness and individuality.

Within this research study the learning of technique is explored in terms of the influence it has on a dancer discovering a sense of personal style. As H'Doubler (1998), states within dance education the focus regularly revolves around “technical skill... [however in] dance as an educational and creative art experience” (H'Doubler, 1998, p.64) classes should focus on the ability to connect as an individual with movements, and a dancer should show presence and attentiveness to the mind and body through dance. Technique training ought to be accessible for dancers to gain ownership of their practice as an “instrument of expression, and complex... and valuable to those who” (H'Doubler, 1998, p.65) want to work in the professional context. The learning of specific steps should not be the only consideration if exploration is something that is considered a part of technique.

The research study compares information from a student's perspective alongside insight from the dance context and theorised research of technique, to achieve an understanding of what the aims should be in dance training in relation to discovering personal style. Within professional practice it is assumed that dancers should have undergone specific

dance technique training, however as Preston-Dunlop states (1998) it has been “argued that the style of the dance and the style of its dancers are distinct... how they [work] is... [related to] the personal style of the dancer together with the choreographic style... [which] makes the performance what it is” (Preston-Dunlop, 1998, p.2). In which case a dancer should be experienced with dance involving considered thought processes in relation to the mind and body to succeed in professional practice; this mind-body connection is further explored throughout the research study.

The study involves an autoethnography therefore focusing on my relationship with the idea of personal style. My experience of learning different dance techniques has lead me to discover my own personal approach within Contemporary practice, and I have been in a University environment that has encouraged this. At a young age I was taken to dance classes by my parents after they saw me dance around a shop breaking out into a mini routine that I had never been taught; my response to dance was natural. My predominant styles of dance were Street dance and Latin and Ballroom, I still regularly dance in the Street style. Compared to Ballet technique, Street and Latin/Ballroom are very different and although there are set rules in particular with Latin/Ballroom, there is more of an opportunity to dance in a personal way. My experiences of Contemporary, Jazz and Ballet technique have all been within school education. With Contemporary technique I feel I have had an opportunity to incorporate my Street dance background within this style; not literally through Street movements, rather attaching the energy and impulses that come from this style of dance and adapting this to suit my Contemporary practice. Within Street dance there is an opportunity to “fuse different elements” (BBC, Online, 2014), this is how I consider my Contemporary technique; an opportunity to combine components to form an overall practice. For this reason this research question is relevant to me and my practice as I feel I have achieved a sense of personal style, however it is important to realise how this was achieved, and the developments that can be made with this learning cycle. The following chapter will explore the origins of Contemporary dance and what informs technique decisions within the style, relating to the notion of aesthetics and performance, as well as learning and teaching.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction:

This Literature Review will explore the definition of Contemporary dance and where it originated from, the notion of aesthetics and expectations of dance performance, as well as the values of learning and teaching within dance practice; in order to discover how Contemporary technique is used as a tool for movement.

2.2 Defining Contemporary Dance:

In order to define Contemporary technique, elements that informed this style of dance must be considered. Modern dance has a part to play within the definition as the two styles are similar in many ways. Modern dance emerged in the early twentieth century, and the style mirrored the new found radical thinking for this period of time; influences of social, cultural, religious and political factors were hugely apparent.

Modern dance had a focus point of working as an individual and breaking away from set traditions within classical dance in order to promote self expression; artists created their own unique sets ways of performance and therefore shared very little in terms of movement material, they focused on discarding the idea “of narrative... [and used it] as the springboard for daring experiments with form” (Au, 2012, p.155). Legg (2011), categorises Modern dance artists into different sections they are; The Expressionists, The Originators, The Mavericks, The Next Generation, The Avant-Garde and discusses the development into Postmodernism. Within The Expressionists category fall artists such as Isadora Duncan (1877-1927); during this period of dance development a “clear systematic methodology based on original ideas had not, as yet, emerged” (Legg, 2011, P.14). This reflects the idea that the artists, although creating new approaches to dance did not follow methodical rules to movement; they were concerned with an expression of freedom.

An artist considered very influential within Contemporary dance is Martha Graham (1894-1991); whose technique is still used to date. Graham, as identified by Legg (2011), is categorised under The Originators; this title reflects how Graham approached Modern

dance and developed from pioneers such as Isadora Duncan, developing a more systematic approach that is still now practiced and prominent within Contemporary. When exploring the development of Modern dance into Contemporary, it is important to reflect on where each artist stemmed from in terms of dance practice and training. Graham was originally part of the Denishawn Company which is based under The Expressionists; however she turned away from this approach to movement in order to create her own style, discovering “a new way...[to use] the dancer’s body as an instrument of expression” (Legg, 2011, p.28). Material Graham created developed from the original idea of expressionism and freedom, but Graham took the idea further to create what she considered to be a solid foundation for technique. As stated by Legg (2011, p.28) “Graham intended that her method of body training should enhance intellectual and emotional growth as well as physical mastery.” It is evident that Graham had a clear focus on the thought process behind movement, therefore revealing a sense of freedom by allowing physical exploration to discover the emotional capacity of the body.

Merce Cunningham (1919-2009), is also very influential within Contemporary. Cunningham’s career started as part of Graham’s dance company and therefore was heavily exposed to dance as expressionism; however, when he later came to choreograph his own work, and form his own style it was “much more balletic than Graham’s...fast, light, ironic in tone and virtually devoid of ‘expressive’ or symbolic elements” (Layson and Adshead-Lansdale, 1994, p.188). Cunningham reflected emotion and freedom within his work, but in a different way to former artists like Duncan and Graham; he reflected the idea “that emotion comes from the fact that a human being is executing the movement” (Legg, 2011, P.165).

Although there is a contrast of techniques and approaches within the artists of Modern and Contemporary dance, it is apparent that they “have always considered themselves apostles of freedom” (Layson and Adshead-Lansdale, 1994, p.192). This idea of freedom is defined in different ways by each artist, either through movement, thought, or both.

As well as there being significant artists and pioneers who have influenced the development of Contemporary dance; another noteworthy occasion was the formation of British New Dance in the 1970’s. Mackrell (1992), describes this movement of dance to be a revolutionary time involving changing people’s perceptions of dance and exploring approaches to choreography; “fuelled by a range of political and artistic ideas” (Mackrell,

1992, p.1). British New Dance changed the general public's view on dance as it brought the sense of valuing all arts forms the same as one another. Mackrell (1992), describes the significant areas of interest within British New Dance including the idea that "dancers and choreographers should be given equal status" (Mackrell, 1992, p.3). This was reflected through the development of dance in Education and Institutions; an example of which is the London Contemporary Dance School. The institution first started as a company of dancers performing, however over time progressed in cohesion with British New Dance to focus on Contemporary technique.

Developing on from the history of Contemporary dance; recent choreographers are still attracting a wide range of participants and audience for this style of dance. A choreographer who has developed a notable presence in Contemporary dance is Hofesh Shechter; his work creates an empowering atmosphere through "animalistic [movement] ... which gives the choreography a fierce dynamic" (Roy, 2009a). Roy (2009a), also comments on the fact that Schechter is informed by the idea of freedom, whether it is present or not. This reflects the thought process that Contemporary dance first derived from, and is another example of how dance artists and performers have shared values of the style of dance; which is the expression of freedom.

Something that Schechter evidences in his work is the progression in the style to include cross-cultural movement approaches. An example of a choreographer who has engaged with the process of involving different styles of dance with Contemporary is Shobana Jeyasingh. Her work explores both Contemporary and South Asian dance. In her choreography, as stated by Roy (2009b), bharatanatyam dancing is occasionally present, and she represents "ideas about crossing boundaries, travelling between centres and margins, displacement, diversity and so on" (Roy, 2009b). Jeyasingh's work has been noted as "revolutionary" (Schmidt, 1996). But the idea of freedom and the notion of making individual choices, which have been evident throughout Contemporary dance history, remain identifiable, as Jeyasingh expresses the idea of diverse culture.

2.3 Aesthetics and Performance:

Within dance the idea of aesthetics is something that is recognised; the definition of aesthetics involves an evaluation of the visual aspects; in this case dance performance, and aesthetics of the dancer. As stated by Cohen (1983, p.12), “the meaning of aesthetic has varied with eras and nations and personalities.” Aesthetic considerations differ greatly between cultures due to social expectations and values, that it is hard to compare what is aesthetically important in dance when evaluating different styles. Kaepler (2003), provides a way to distinguish aesthetic values between different cultures, producing varying styles of dance, by thinking of aesthetics as “evaluative ways of thinking” (Kaepler, 2003, p.153). However, within Western Culture; which Contemporary dance falls under, the definition of aesthetics involves a consideration of beauty.

Traditional aesthetics of how a dancer should look within Western Culture relates to the influence of Ballet, and how the general public perceive dance to be. Aesthetics within Ballet are incredibly codified, from the look of the dancers and their costumes, to how they are performing and quality of movement. Dixon (2005), considers the idea that ballet dancers possess little self-confidence when exploring dance creatively due to “Improvisation rarely [being recognised within] classical dance training” (Dixon, 2005, p.85). Therefore in some cases Ballet dancer’s movement can be restricting in terms of the fact the dancers all learn and practice the same phrases and style of movement as an ensemble, and do not necessarily gain a chance to enhance creative dance abilities as an individual.

However, Contemporary dance does not have set expectations for dancers such as their looks; in most cases, choreographers will choose dancers who best fit the type of dance they are portraying (Preston-Dunlop, 1998). As well as this contrast in appearance, dancers within Contemporary are encouraged and applauded on expressing themselves as an individual, bringing internal factors out through external ways. Unlike Ballet, within Contemporary technique improvisation is regularly explored. Schwartz (2000), discusses the fact that due to the heightened “self awareness in improvisation [it is essential for] mind-body feedback” (Schwartz, 2000, p.43) to be constantly engaged with, resulting in improvement of quality and attentiveness to movement as an individual.

In which case it would appear that Contemporary dancers have a strong sense of agency within their practice, developing into performance as they are expected to portray emotions and have a sense of individuality. As Preston-Dunlop (1998, p.71) states, “Dancers are known for their uniqueness, for what they offer the dance beyond good dancing.” This indicates the importance of maintaining a sense of agency as a dancer in order to stand out in performance; bringing an extra quality to enhance the aesthetic value of the dance. As well as there being an importance of having an enhanced mind-body connection in Contemporary dance; physicality and athleticism should also be noted as important (H'Doubler, 1998).

Penrod (2005, p.3), states that “contemporary aesthetic ... calls for greater athleticism”. The reason for this is because contemporary dances have high impact on the body, challenging aspects such as stamina and muscular strength. Angioi, et al (2009), explain how Contemporary dancers must have “a large reserve of power ... [for movements that last] ... just a few seconds...and...muscular endurance” (Angioi, et al., 2009, p.475-476). This shows how a Contemporary dancer must have an understanding of the body and fitness in order to present capability of technique within performance, to meet anticipated thoughts on the aesthetic qualities of Contemporary dance.

Social expectations of a dancer by the general public involve thoughts of dancers in a stereotypical way, such as having great flexibility and being able to perform impressive tricks. “Within Western theatre dance, dance, the art of moving body, is made to be seen” (Butterworth & Wildschut, 2009, p.331). Therefore dance in some contexts is available purely for an audience to admire technical skills. Contemporary dance can also involve technical skills in a way that reflects an emotive quality in performance, rather than presenting moves for an audience to be impressed by; movements and phrases are created with intention, and not just dancing for the sake of a display. As H'Doubler (1998), explains, sustaining energy and “tension between opposing muscles...is the basis of technique for expressive movement” (H'Doubler, 1998, p.83). This shows there is a relationship between physical capability and expression of a dancer within performance, which must be considered.

Although it is explained that Contemporary dance focuses on a sense of freedom and expression as an individual, within performance there is still a structure to the dance; for instance through specific phrases that must be performed. However, Contemporary

encourages a dancer to find the movement potential through an engagement with thought processes and reflecting this externally by movement. Dance as art cannot be separated from aesthetics as for each style certain expectations are anticipated and met. Hardt (2011), comments on the idea that even though fusions of varying dance styles are being combined within Contemporary dance most work will refer to “Western artistic dance tradition” (Hardt, 2011, p.28). This shows that although Contemporary dance is broadening in terms of movement material, there are still set conventions within the style of dance, relating to the history of Contemporary. Within Contemporary most performances will either communicate a significant idea or story through emotive choreography, or will be abstract and show a conscious decision of thoughts purely based on performing movements; this is due to the fact that within “Contemporary dance... there is a continuous linkage between bodies and the environment” (Ribeiro & Fonseca, 2011, p.72), therefore Contemporary performances are focused on elements connecting a dancer with the dance.

Within dance different opinions will identify with varying factors of what is vital in performance. A consideration of this is the idea of virtuosity; in this context it concerns possessing skills in reference to technical training and performance qualities. Sell (2010), comments on the idea, that although some dancers are technically talented and capable of advanced skills, it does not mean that they are “engaging or expressive as a performer” (Sell, 2010, p.251). Being an expressive performer is a quality that comes from within; it is about being so involved with what is going on at that moment in time, and possessing the knowledge of where the movements and content of the piece derived from. As stated by Smith-Autard (2010), a way of reflecting this possession of knowledge is through the use of Laban’s analysis of movement. Through acknowledging a movement and identifying aspects such as “qualitative, spatial or relationship content... [it would result in] movement [expressing] ...the intention” (Smith-Autard, 2010, p.20), of the choreographer. Showing a connection between dancer and dance, as each movement would depict an expressive purpose.

In order to create a successful performance in terms of aesthetics and physical skills, many factors involved with this outcome result from the learning and teaching of technique. As a dancer the approach to Contemporary technique involves a consideration of phenomenology and somatic practice; the ideas of which represent the thought process

engaged with when dancing. As Kleinman (1968, p.126-127), states phenomenology refers to “the aesthetic experience as it occurs...[reflecting] what is going on as it is happening”. These ideas are important for dancers as Preston-Dunlop (1998), comments on the idea that a dancer should be in harmony with the movement vocabulary they are performing. And therefore phenomenology assists with the mind-body understanding.

Eddy (2009), highlights the importance of somatic practice as it allows the dancer to explore the body through the attentiveness to feelings of movement, in order to gain a greater understanding of conscious thoughts within dance. To achieve this, the practice works on increasing “both sensory and motor awareness” (Eddy, 2009, P.53). Bales and Netti-Fiol (2008), also comment on somatic practice as a way to improve and inform the understanding and awareness of dance performance, as it works on avoiding habitual behaviour and finding a way to create more useful “neuromuscular patterns” (Bales & Netti-Fiol, 2008, p.90).

The use of somatic practice and phenomenology are linked to Contemporary dance due to the fixation of freedom; these theories consider releasing any tension at that moment in time to focus purely on what is happening in relation to mind and body. As explained by Dixon (2005), this fixation is what the pioneers of Modern dance wanted to determine a connection between. And therefore the outcomes of using somatic practice and phenomenology remain true to Contemporary dance’s approach towards movement.

Another way of achieving a sense of harmony and balance between dance and dancer is for the dancer to have an understanding of kinaesthetic practice and intention. Preston-Dunlop (1998), states that kinaesthetic practice involves the understanding of sensations such as sight and touch, and possessing a strong sense of awareness as an individual body, and a body within the space. In relation to this idea of awareness from a dancer, H’Doubler (1998), comments on how the body is used as a tool for movement, and therefore a dancer must engage the mind for expression through movement of the body, and “train the body to be responsive to the expressive mind” (H’Doubler, 1998, p.70). This engagement with the mind and body is vital for a dancer’s performance to portray intention, as “without intention the dancer is just not there” (Preston-Dunlop, 1998, p.59). This would result in material being repeated that is lacking a certain performance quality, involving a connection between dancer and movement.

2.4 Learning and Teaching:

As stated by Kimmerle and Cote-Laurence (2003), “a teachers main objective is to facilitate student learning...to develop independent learners” (Kimmerle & Cote-Laurence, 2003, p.3). Kinaesthetic awareness is a result of independent learning and dancers must feel the connection as an individual. When engaging with this practice dancers take ownership of their body and knowledge that they have acquired through classes, and use “past experiences... [to] build upon” (Kimmerle & Cote-Laurence, 2003, p.3) in order to develop their dance practice. For students to be successful with kinaesthetic learning it is often helpful for the teacher to provide feedback; this would aid the dancer with their self assessing of the body to enhance practice and performance. It is necessary to provide this feedback during the practice and correction phase, as this is when the mind connects with the body, in order to create an image to perform physically (Kimmerle & Cote-Laurence, 2003).

In order to achieve well considered learning, different teaching strategies are used which help dancers in different ways. As identified by Gibbons (2007), Mosston and Ashworth’s spectrum suggests eleven strategies. The styles focus on the idea of decision making shifting between learner and teacher. They range from style A which is very teacher led; teacher deciding class content and what the students should be doing at all times, with the students acting in response appropriately to information provided, to allowing students to become more independent with their learning as an individual, and exploring tasks with others; leading to style K where the learner has full responsibility over choices (Gibbons, 2007). The spectrum “liberates the teacher by providing more options for presenting the subject matter... [and] uses a series of teaching strategies... [for] reproduction and production learning” (Gibbons, 2007, p.8).

In relation to the idea of independent learners as commented by Kimmerle and Cote-Laurence (2003), if valuable teaching should result in forming an independent student, Mosston and Ashworth’s spectrum of teaching is very beneficial. As there are such a range of styles, good judgment from the teacher can lead to appropriate teaching methods used; for example, within a class of beginners the teaching style A may be of best use, in order to give the learners a basic understanding as an introduction to dance. However, for a class of dancers who are studying the subject within an Education setting, for example as an A-Level, style D may be more appropriate as it allows decision making with the use

of feedback; this could be provided by the teacher, but also from working as a group within the class peer feedback could be provided to enhance learning (Gibbons, 2007).

Another example of a teaching framework is recognised by Smith-Autard (2002), as the 'dance as art' model. Within this model there are three main focuses; "creating, performing and appreciating" (Smith-Autard, 2002, p.28). The framework for this model highlights the importance of the process of dance, provided through a "discovery approach" (Smith-Autard, 2002, p.24), where the student develops independence with learning.

Through these examples of teaching methods it is apparent there are existing strategies available which work on enhancing a dancer's understanding of the process of dance, which would allow the learner to discover a connection between body and movement vocabulary. As described by Paskevaska (2005), the process of learning dance firstly involves a capability to perform steps and set phrases, and then leads to an ability to analyse and evaluate how the body moves. This learning cycle allows an understanding to form in terms of consideration to technical and physical skills within performance, by connecting the mind and body. These learning cycles engaged with by the student dancer must be considered when reflecting on the development of dance skills, as well as teaching strategies that can be used.

When teaching dance; as demonstrated through the different teaching strategies that can be employed, students are encouraged to improve dance technique and develop a clear understanding of the body and mind through a sense of ownership, and awareness of them self as an individual. Kimmerle and Cote-Laurence (2003), state that "an experienced dancer demonstrates consistency in performance, self-monitoring capabilities, and adaptability" (Kimmerle & Cote-Laurence, 2003, p.116). These factors of evaluation and attentiveness to practice would result in an informed knowledge of dance. However, the teaching style used within a class, may either allow, or hinder a student from developing a sense of ownership when dancing.

This idea of ownership relates to the notion of personal style. This is something that can not necessarily be taught; nevertheless appropriate teaching strategies can guide student's to learn more about themselves as dancer's, which can lead to a dancer discovering a sense of agency. Teaching styles that purely focus on teachers giving direct instructions and students copying, may not offer a chance for this personal style to develop

due to conforming to set rules of learnt material, however, as stated by Gibbons (2007), if a teacher uses numerous strategies in order to allow the students to learn practically, the students understanding of dance will mentally be enhanced through encountering learning cycles and different approaches towards dance in terms of the mind and body. Thus learning detailed movements as well as appreciating how to improve practice, and gaining independence and confidence.

2.5 Conclusion

Through distinguishing the approaches and thought processes towards Contemporary dance technique and the aesthetic values of dance within performance in this chapter; it is beneficial to conduct this research study to discover further information on what the purpose of learnt technique is within Contemporary dance and how it can influence a dancers sense of individuality, in order to determine if this idea of personal style is something that is valued within performance.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative Research:

Qualitative research was the chosen approach for this study. Qualitative research involves the presentation of descriptive information (Qualitative Research Consultants Association, 2013, online). This choice of method allows for “written narratives...to present findings” (Longhofer et al., 2012, p.32). This meant that detailed accounts could be explored to present data; this is relevant for this specific study due to the exploration of social and cultural contexts. The decision between choosing either qualitative research or quantitative depends on the appropriateness of the method in relation to the research question. Strengths in using qualitative research meant mixed methods could be used in order to form data (Silverman, 2010). As well as this using qualitative research allows participants a chance “to supply answers in their own words” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.6). This was appropriate and effective for the research study in order to have clear accounts to analyse. A weakness in using qualitative research would be that due to presenting peoples individual opinions, the data collected may be seen as biased; however this was overcome with ethical considerations, through asking interviewees set questions based on research findings.

3.2 Method:

A mixed method design was identified for this study. In this case, two methods were utilized, the results of which were analysed together. This approach is supported by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007).

The first part of this study involved the use of an autoethnography. As explained by McCormack (2012), autoethnographies entail “writing that analyses personal experience...to understand social and cultural issues” (McCormack, 2012, p.182). The autoethnography recorded within this research focused on an individual account of Contemporary lessons within University through the use of my logs. The logs focused on reflecting on aspects such as class content and teaching strategies used, personal approach applied within class, the acknowledgement of learning techniques and cycles as an individual, as well as an account of personal feelings at that moment in time. In order to

ensure reliability and validity when conducting this autoethnography, templates for these logs were adapted from those used within the SSP6042 Performance Technique module within the Dance course (see Appendix A), as their validity has already been proven and they have shown to be an effective tool to record personal experiences. The research was conducted over four weeks, of which the first week was a pilot study “a small-scale, preliminary procedure to test the methods to be used in the main research study” (Gratton & Jones, 2010 p.286). Carrying out a pilot study is important in order to realise any improvements that could be made before carrying out research to make sure detailed, relevant data, is formed. One point that was acknowledged as a result of the pilot study was that a personal feelings section should be added, providing a greater understanding and account of that moment. It is important in terms of reliability and validity when conducting autoethnographies, to describe the experience factually and in detail to present to the reader a believable account (Ellis et al. 2011, online).

The second part of this mixed method design was the use of interviews. As identified by Silverman (1997), the use of interviews provides an opportunity to generate “empirical data about the social world...[through] special forms of conversation” (Silverman, 1997, p.113). The interviews for this study were arranged with current Contemporary choreographers; the choice of these participants came from the notion of placing the research project in a professional context. Ensuring reliability and validity for these interviews focused on creating questions drawn from the literature review, which allowed conversations to be entirely relevant to the topic being explored; this method of data collection is advantageous as the person being interviewed “can seek clarification over questions that may be unclear” (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p.156). Interviewees were also encouraged to be as honest as possible, whilst being interviewed in a comfortable atmosphere where they felt they could converse.

3.3 Participants:

As the research study involved an autoethnography, considerations for being a participant involved being comfortable with sharing personal thoughts and feelings on the topic being explored, and to be able to place individual thoughts within a wider context (Gratton & Jones, 2010). These considerations can be seen as limitations, however through recognising the aspects that need to be included within autoethnographies, strengths can be drawn from using this type of research method, as it gives the reader an opportunity “to

understand... through a sense of almost 'being there' with the researcher" (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p.207). The only other participants identified within the research method were those chosen to be interviewed. The selection criteria of the participants considered identifying three current Contemporary choreographers within the Cardiff area, in order for the arrangement and completion of interviews to be manageable and realistic. As well as this, the selection of the three choreographers was "purposive... [and] chosen to illustrate a particular situation" (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p.116). This situation came from the idea of their work being accessible, and a possible career path to lead onto from University level, through an individual perspective in relation to the autoethnography section of this research project. Participants were provided with detailed information sheets (see Appendix B) and a consent form (see Appendix C) in order to ensure clear understanding of what would happen. To ensure the information collected was reliable, the interviews were recorded through note taking and the use of a Dictaphone. Additionally, all of the participants were asked the same questions during the interviews, which provided the opportunity to further confirm the reliability of the data.

3.4 Ethics:

The ethical considerations made within this research project vary for the two chosen methods. For the first part regarding the use of an autoethnography as the logs were written based on Contemporary lessons, the teacher of the classes was told in advance so that they were aware of being a passive participant; this meant that their only involvement was that their provided feedback was responded to within class and reflected upon in logs, however they were anonymous to the study, and instructions in the class were the only things discussed. Another important consideration for the ethics of using an autoethnography is making sure information is not biased. It is acknowledged that autoethnographies are based on the fact that the person conducting the research is writing about something personal to them, however, rather than just describing specific moments, they should be analysed (Ellis et al. 2011, Online). This issue of being biased has been dealt with by providing both factual and personal accounts within logs, in order for analysis to be conducted in detail, in relation to the context of the research.

Addressing the ethical concerns for the interview method focused on making sure participants were fully aware of what the research study involved, and how they would have a part to play in the study. As well as providing information sheets and a consent

form, they were also fully aware they had the option to stop participating at any point, and that the study was anonymous; in terms of anonymity participants are referred to as Participant 1, 2 and 3. As Gregory, (2003), states consenting to take part in a study “involves more than merely assenting to...consent [must] be fully informed and voluntary” (Gregory, 2003, p.37). This ensures the study is ethically correct. As well as these points another ethical consideration was that if interviewees wanted to read the transcript they participated in to confirm information, they were given the opportunity to.

3.5 Data Analysis:

The data analysis for this research study involved comparing interview transcripts with an autoethnographic story, and literature review information. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) explain, analysing qualitative data involves separating information into categories for organisation and comparison. Through doing so a discovery of different contexts; professional, student and theories, relationships with specific areas of exploration, related to technique and personal style was made, which are presented in sub-headings in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.0 RESULTS

Throughout this results section, analysed data from the interviews conducted for this research project will be presented. The chosen questions identified within these interviews were used through a deductive process; this begins with “an established theory... and seeks to see if the theory applies” (Hyde, 2000, p.83). In this instance key themes that were covered throughout the literature review were recognised, leading to the formation of questions in order to see if participants responded in a set way to the themes. Each section has been explored with the focus of comparing similarities and differences between the three participants.

4.1 Approaches and Feelings towards Contemporary Dance:

Through conducting the interview each participant provided information on their individual thoughts on Contemporary dance. The participants who took part in this study have trained at Dance College providing them with a chance to explore Contemporary dance, and they are all established current Contemporary choreographers. A common idea about why the choreographers were interested in Contemporary referred to a sense of freedom, expression and having a connection with the body that is permitted within this style: Participant 1 explained that even though she has “studied other styles as well... [there is] something about Contemporary dance and that... freedom of expression” that she was particularly interested in. Participants 2 and 3 shared a similar thought process commenting on being a person involved with what is happening; Participant 2 sharing that he liked “to feel connected as a human being” and that his work always reflects “the human condition or connect with the human condition in some way”. And Participant 3 explained how the route of movement “is always to the body” and within her work it is important that “you’re inhabiting the body as a person”. Although as stated, all three participants reflect on a sense of freedom, Participants 2 and 3 were very exact with their examples showing how the style of dance has a connection with the mind and body of a dancer as an individual with experiences, within their practice.

4.2 Preparation of Dancer (Importance of Mind-body Connection):

In response to this question all participants agreed that enhancing a mind-body connection was important when working with dancers in terms of making sure the dancers were engaged; Participant 1 said it is “not just the physical training its supporting their mental preparation for performance as well”. Participant 2 commented “never just being about... steps...” because otherwise a performer isn’t “in the moment”, and Participant 3 stated she finds it important to discover “something today”, reflecting an engagement.

4.3 Aesthetics of Dancers:

A further point that all participants had in common within their practice was related to their choice of dancers. All participants were clear that choosing dancers was closely informed by the piece that was being created, and what was required of the dancer within the context of the work. Participant 3 however, was the only choreographer to explicitly say physical appearance had nothing to do with her choice of dancers as she stated “it’s never been the physical, I can work with anything physically”. On the other hand, Participant 1 explained how although decisions are not purely based on a dancer’s appearance “sometimes aesthetics might come into it... [which] is sometimes dictated by... what media” is being used; nevertheless this comment stills reflects on the idea that the piece itself determines the choice of a dancer. Participant 2 stated the idea that he liked “somebody who is willing to take risks... [and] who can bring something different”. This reflects the concept of choreographers wanting to find dancers who are dedicated and interested, in what the intended project is they are auditioning for. In agreement Participant 1 said; “it’s more about their commitment to the work”, and Participant 3 saying that “top of the list is that they want to be there”. This shows that the participant’s were in agreement that a dancer’s approach and commitment to the project was more important than the aesthetics and look.

4.4 Personal Style of a Dancer in Professional Practice and Performance:

The responses to the question of personal style presented similarities between Participants 2 and 3 as they both commented on the idea that personal style was to do with piecing together experiences of dance to form a personal approach. Participant 2 stated; “it’s seeing those different things that are out there taking what’s right for you... taking as much as you can from as many different sources and stimulus’s you can”.

Similarly Participant 3 said “it is important the choices that people make their histories...that comes from who they are”. The fact that the participants share this same thought on personal style can reflect both choreographers’ styles of work, as they state to reflect on their dancers as people, and their experiences. However, in contrast to this, Participant 1 again referred to the projects needs and that sometimes it is about “looking for people who are very individual... [and other times people] being flexible enough to be able to work with other people”. This shows the idea that within her practice it is important to be versatile.

4.5 Styles and Importance of Technique:

The participant’s responses to the question of whether the knowledge of styles of technique was important within their professional opinion varied. Participant 1 referred to aspects of technique such as “body control and co-ordination”, stating that in her opinion although technique isn’t the “priority... it has huge value”, she stated it did not matter to her if the dancer went through formal training or not; so long as they possessed these technical skills. Participant 2 was in agreement with Participant 1 regarding dancers needing to be knowledgeable of technique as he explained that he didn’t want to be “limiting [his] creative urges as a choreographer... by the fact that [he’s] limited by others technical demands”. Participant 2 also drew on the idea that “technique is just one of the tools of being a performer”, which reflects the idea of Participant 1 stating technique isn’t the “priority”, as there are other elements to performing, and what is done with the technical knowledge in practice. Participant 3 clearly stated that the experience of formal technical training was irrelevant to her and it is more “inspiring when they give back”, therefore reflecting on the idea that for her, dancers being engaged and trying is more important than a specific training course that was undertaken by the dancer.

4.6 A Dancer’s Ownership of Movement in Professional Practice:

Upon discussion of the topic on how important a dancer having ownership of movement is, all participants stated that their choreographic work is influenced by the dancers in some way or another. Participant 1 explained how within her work “everything comes from the concept so the dancers are part of the initial conversations”, which automatically gives a dancer a sense of ownership by being engaged with the process, and having clear knowledge on the work being created. Additionally, Participant 1’s dancer’s also have

“freedom to create” movement. Participant 2 focused more on performance qualities of a dancer to gain ownership “if you bring yourself to it and you perform it... you as the performer are imbuing that material with an essence of yourself”, meaning the dancer must work with movement on themselves and not copy anyone else. Participant 3, similarly to Participant 2 referred to performance, however she also commented on the whole process and how it informs performing; “they have all this history with the material and then they are able to make choices during performance”, this statement reflects the idea of “making it believable... that you’ve lived with the language... [so] it’s not a surface language it’s something... natural to you”.

4.7 The Teaching of Technique/ Should Ownership Be Encouraged:

From answering this question, it was discovered that Participants 2 and 3 had a similar thought process about what they feel is important in the teaching of technique with reference to ownership. Participant 2 explained that in his opinion “you do need to have a grounding in the basis of technique... until [this] you can’t play with it”. He also stated that “technique [isn’t] the final goal”, rather it is a tool to develop a sense of ownership within performance. Participant 3 had a shared opinion by stating that she “wouldn’t have a career in dance had... [it not been for] guidance” within technique training, to gain knowledge. Highlighting the two participants importance on understanding technique as a dancer; but also Participant 3 explained how to her ownership is about a dancer “being present”. Participant 1 reflected on the teaching of technique in a different way to the other participants, as she felt that “technique... should start from individual rather than... [being] placed externally”. Her approach therefore shows a clear approval that ownership of a dancer should be encouraged, through giving a dancer a chance to explore; after the initial stages of learning aspects such as “body co-ordination, body control [and] things like that”.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.0 DISCUSSION

This discussion will explore comparisons between the mixed data collected throughout, as well as introducing an autoethnographic account of Contemporary technique classes, in order to decipher an answer to the opposed research question for this study.

5.1 Preparation of Dancer (Considering a Mind-body Connection):

When I arrive in class today I am very tired, and know I am going to have to really focus in order to gain energy and concentrate. After taking my coat, shoes and socks off, I am ready to start the class. I choose to stand towards the back of the room as I am tired; standing at the back always feels like a safety barrier when I am not feeling confident. The heating in the studio is on so the room is quite warm, I am thankful for this as starting class in a freezing cold room is always more challenging and restricting on my body.

We are first instructed and guided through warm up sequences we use at the start of classes to prepare us. One phrase that is based on the floor is particularly difficult today, as lying down instantly makes me more tired, and my body is aching. Whilst working through the warm up our teacher notices that the class in general is lacking a lot of energy; everyone is feeling the effects of third year this week. After commenting on this she gives us an example of imagery to help wake us up; “imagine your body is full of little lights shining out in the room”. After hearing this I really focus on connecting my mind with my body, and imagine my body is radiating light and energy; internal energy reflecting externally through pulses. When going through other phrases I then improve my performance through considering points such as lengthening and extending throughout my body, and feeling power from this energy; physically filling space in the room, and mentally being focused, present and feeling connected with my body.

In relation to preparing dancers as facilitators, and focusing on a mind-body connection, the participants interviewed within this study considered this connection in terms of making sure their dancers were engaged with the process of their professional work. In particular relevance to the idea of preparation Participant 1 stated that as well as preparing her dancers physically it is also important to support “mental preparation for performance” (Participant 1, Interview 1, 2014). It is evident that all the participants considered a

harmony between mind and body to be relevant within their choreographic practice, in order to work with dancers who are able to perform with a considered approach based on the context of the performance.

Comparably, research explored within the literature review of this study revealed the significance of phenomenology and somatic practice within Contemporary dance practice. Somatic practice as mentioned in Chapter 2.3 focuses on a dancer's awareness and understanding of how their body is moving, with a consideration of how it feels (Eddy, 2009); phenomenology is the reflection of a movement experience as it happens in that moment of time (Kleinman, 1968). These approaches reveal the value of a mind-body connection, and that an understanding of these concepts should be encouraged within dance training and performance, in order to achieve well considered practice from dancers.

Within my practice I have found that being encouraged to consider tools such as the use of imagery as a way of exploring somatic and phenomenological processes has helped me by giving me confidence with movements, and connecting my mind and body through considered thought processes. Being encouraged to attach thoughts to movements has informed my practice in a positive way as I try to perform with intention, and remain present in the space by considering the process of what I am doing; and therefore I consider enhancing a mind-body connection to be an important aspect of technique classes as it has assisted with the development of my dancing abilities.

5.2 Aesthetics of Dancer:

After warming up with phrases standing in the centre of the room, we then move to the corner of the studio to travel in a diagonal line performing a jump sequence. I am automatically engaged in what we are doing as we are doing something new, and I always find performing movements such as jumps exciting as I try and challenge myself to get higher, or have more range than the time before whilst flying through the room. For this short phrase we are facing the mirrors which are positioned in the opposite corner to where we are standing. As the mirrors are in this position my eyes draw attention to myself in the mirror however I do not analyse how I am looking too much, only when we are ready to perform the phrase do I observe myself throughout to assess my technique. In class we rarely perform using mirrors so it is interesting to see myself dancing, through observations

I am able to see if my positioning is how I think it is; this time I notice as I am jumping that that even though I think my leg is very straight it does not look it, and decided that I was probably not lengthening through the back of my leg. Although I am disappointed that in some ways movements are not how I expect them to look it means that I have an opportunity to identify areas for improvement to apply in future practice.

Through placing the idea of aesthetics of dancers within a professional context, the participants interviewed were clear in stating in Chapter 4.3 that choosing dancers was related to the requirements of the project as opposed to searching for a particular look, unless the project involved this. This reveals that they consider a dancers approach to movement and engagement with the process to be more important than the basic look as a person.

Within dance as art there are certain aesthetic expectations that cannot be avoided, demonstrated by the literature previously discussed. As explained by Cohen (1983), these aesthetic expectations differ for various social and cultural groups. However, in relation to the response that the professional choreographers provided through interviews based on the question of aesthetics, Preston-Dunlop (1998) supported their view that choreographers select dancers on the basis of their suitability for the project. This shows that in most cases each choreographer has an intention of who they want to work with when creating their project before hand, which may or may not be related to aesthetic qualities and seems to be more focused on their approach to working. By having an awareness of the body and knowledge of dance technique a dancer is equipped with a foundation to work within a professional performance context.

As described in my autoethnographic account, in technique class and performance I do not consider how I look aesthetically as a person; instead I think about how my movements look when performing and focus on connecting my body with the space around me with intention. In order to observe myself I find it interesting to use mirrors as we rarely do, and often my reaction to what I am doing is different to what I think it would be. I think it is useful to be offered the chance to observe my performance within technique classes, whether it is through using mirrors or video recording, as this provides a chance to see from an outside perspective and note if there are any areas for improvement through informed movement principles such as energy or lengthening and extension and acknowledging correct technique. As the use of observations highlights to me areas that

need to be improved in my practice, this shows that I am concerned with aesthetic considerations in order to achieve a good performance. I feel that over time within class I have gained a greater understanding on how to use technique tools to inform movement and now when I note areas that need to be improved, I do not get frustrated as I realise the process of correction is a learning cycle, and continuous steps need to be taken by acquiring the knowledge on how to move and perform, in order to get to a stage where personal style can be incorporated through a sense of a natural connection with the movements. This considered approach and engagement to improve practice relates to the requirements the participants explained they feel is essential for dancers to have.

5.3 Style and Importance of Technique:

After the travelling sequence we move back into the centre of the room to recap previous week's material. At this point I am feeling much more alert and do not mind where I stand in the class; as people move towards the back there is space at the front and I stand in the free position at ease. Because I am standing at the front I feel I need to make sure I am attentive to what I am doing; I do this by getting lost in the movement focusing on what is happening and the feeling of them, as I develop through the phrase I connect internally by considering how I am working in the space as an individual, and reflect this externally as I make full use of the free space around me whilst moving. Because the sequence we are performing has been a phrase that we have focused on and practiced in detail, I feel confident with what I am doing as I automatically know where my body moves to through transitions in the dance. I also feel happy with the knowledge of my basic technique awareness; I consider making sure my weight is in the correct position and engaging my core. Through this sense of comfortableness I am able to consider elements such as the use of imagery and applying varying dynamics to enhance my performance. One movement involves stretching out the opposite arm to leg to create a long line in the body, to achieve this I imagine a piece of elastic being pulled in opposite ways to create a sense of lengthening.

By asking the question of whether or not technique and the knowledge of certain styles is important for dancers, the participants interviewed within this study showed varied opinions on the subject matter. As explained in Chapter 4.5 Participant 1 and 2 shared the opinion that it was important for dancers to have a basic understanding of technique in order to succeed in a professional context, however they both commented on the fact that

technique is not the only element that needs to be considered within performance. Participant 3 however felt that formal training was not important within her experience of working with dancers, and providing a dancer is attentive to what is happening that is all that matters. Although the choreographers noted that formal technique training is not the most important aspect of dance practice and performance, there was a shared opinion that technique should form a basis for a dancers training, surrounding their expectations.

It is noted in Chapter 2.2 with reference to Legg (2011), that throughout the development of Contemporary dance it is necessary to consider where each pioneer came from in terms of dance training. As previously explained all pioneers were technically trained and had a secure knowledge and understanding. This is important as even though within Contemporary dance the notion of freedom is sought after, the dancers that were historical within this movement were all technically able, thus showing the significance of technique training. This research shares similarity with the interviewed participant's opinions of techniques relevance in professional practice and its importance, as it is explained how technique should form as an underpinning for dance training.

When considering technique training within class I believe understanding and acknowledging dance technique to be incredibly beneficial in performance and practice. When I first began University dance training I found learning new Contemporary techniques to be quite challenging as it took me a while to figure out how I should be moving in terms of aspects such as releasing and using breath, and I found this took away freedom of my movements; however due to regularly experiencing and practicing this style of dance I am now at a stage where I am comfortable with my technique ability. As presented in my autoethnography for me technique works as the starting point for performing movements, which corresponds to what the interviewed choreographers explained about technique. This knowledge allows me to move through movements providing self confidence and security whilst dancing as I am aware of how to position myself and dance with ease. Developing on from this I then consider the attachment of movement principles, and working with specific ones in a way that feel natural to me, such as creating strong impulses with the use of dynamics thus encouraging ownership within my practice.

5.4 A Dancer's Ownership of Movement

After practicing the phrase the class split into two for a chance to perform in front of each other; as I am performing a phrase that I feel confident with I imagine I am on stage and allow my body to fill the space around me whilst maintaining focus and presence, therefore I direct my focus out and remain attentive to what I am doing, reaching full potential with each movement such as the leap in the air to the side, and I am enjoying the opportunity to dance and perform. As I am performing a familiar phrase I find it easy to attach my own dynamics and approach to certain movements, for example I decide to put my arm in front of my body with an explosive energy to create my own personal approach; through doing this and being given the opportunity to explore with what I think feels natural I gain a greater ownership of movement and feel a sense of achievement. After performing the teacher applauded us; “excellent, you all maintained openness in the body and energy”. I always like to hear feedback in class as I find it interesting to discover an outside perspective, and this time as there was a sense of familiarity with the phrase everything was really encouraging, so I am feeling positive ready for the rest of the class.

In response to the focus of a dancer having ownership with movement all interviewed participants had a shared value that their dancers should be engaged, and that they influence the choreographic work in some way or another. As previously mentioned in Chapter 4.6, Participant 1 referred to the choreographic process in terms of dancers having ownership, whereas Participants 2 and 3 focused on applying ownership within performance. Although this does not mean a dancer should change set movements, they believe it is important for a dancer to feel in harmony with what they are performing as an individual, and having the ability to do so, as Participant 2 (Interview 2, 2014) stated it is about being able to give “an essence of yourself”.

In support of the comments made by the participants in regards to feeling connected to the movements that are being performed as a dancer, research discovered in the literature review revealed the significance of intention in performance to enhance practice. Sell (2010), noted that being technically able does not necessarily lead to a considered and engaging performance. This engagement is what the interviewees referred to in terms of dancers claiming ownership within performance.

My thoughts on ownership of movement are reflected in the autoethnography; I consider this aspect of practice important due to its influence on performance. Through giving myself permission to explore and approach movements with my own decisions, my confidence is increased within performance as I allow the moves to feel natural on my body and not placed. This shows similarities between the participants' statements and research found through literature, as in my practice when considering ownership I relate to engagement and intention of movement to achieve this sense. As explained I also respond to feedback which shows that at times I like to have reassurance that I am achieving what I set out to do, I find it useful to hear external feedback to inform development of practice and engagement.

5.5 The Teaching of Technique/ Should Ownership Be Encouraged:

The next challenge is to learn a new sequence. Whenever learning something new I find it beneficial to observe the movements clearly in order to understand where they are coming from and how the body needs to move, as well as listening to any instructions. The phrase involves lots of challenging movements that require a lot of concentration to perform; as the teacher is demonstrating I observe the way the body should be positioned for certain movements, and where energy comes from to perform them. After learning a section of the dance we perform as a class; although I feel fairly confident performing, I know that the movements do not feel natural on my body and that this would probably reflect in performance. The teacher gives us feedback noting that "sections of this look quite fragmented as you have learnt something new". It is suggested that we concentrate on a specific movement principle to help with a mind body connection, and also to think of kinaesthetic awareness in order to draw attention to body positioning in the hope to improve fluency.

The participants interviewed in this study had a shared opinion that ownership should be encouraged within teaching technique. All participants were very clear that without technique training; whether this is particular styles of technique or basic body awareness and positioning, other aspects cannot be developed. From this understanding and knowledge dancers should then be encouraged to claim ownership in terms of feeling connected with their body, mind and movements.

In support of the idea that dancers should be encouraged to consider ownership through teaching, Kimmerle and Cote-Laurence (2003), discuss the idea that facilitators should aim to encourage independence from their students; this independence would naturally lead to a dancer showing ownership within practice and performance. Within Chapter 2.4, methods that are currently used in teaching were explored evidencing clear examples that there are many established strategies that aim to encourage independent learning, justifying the importance that within teaching ownership should be encouraged. Preston-Dunlop (1988), comments on the idea of kinaesthetic awareness which allows a dancer to achieve a clear mind-body connection; this is also a note that teachers should encourage their students to understand in order to attain ownership.

Through my experience of dance training and practice in Contemporary classes I have been given the chance to explore the use of different strategies to enhance my ownership of movement. As an example the use of kinaesthetic practice; which was noted in the literature review of this study, is something that is used regularly to tune the mind in with the body and helps me achieve a connection with movements to suit me as an individual. By also being encouraged to attach an individual choice of a movement principle in class; which refers to the idea of independent learning, I can identify with something that I am comfortable with to work on a phrase and take ownership of what I am doing. This has impact on my personal performance style as I can work with movements and phrases that feel natural on my body which shows a greater mind-body connection.

5.6 Personal Style of a Dancer:

The specific movement principle I decide to work with is energy; within this my own personal approach is instinctively related to impulses of movement, through this I find a way to adapt the phrase to suit my body with the aim of enhancing fluidity. When I first performed the phrase without considering a chosen principle my body felt stiff and placed into positions, however now I am thinking about the use of energy I extend my arms and legs into the space drawing attention to the sensation of this in my body. I jump back with an impulse feeling energy in my core like a knock backwards, and focus on the way my body flings into position and develops into a fluid transition to the next movement, I feel connected with what I am performing.

When asked the question related to personal style of a dancer, a significant idea that was identified by the interviewees was related to placing together various experiences with dance to form this sense. The idea of dance experiences relating to personal style strongly links to ownership as a dancer, as an overall need to achieve these points is to think as an individual to make movement and performance choices.

The connection between personal style and ownership is also evidenced in Chapter 2.4. In this chapter the link between these two ideas is supported through the relation to teaching and technique training, showing that through a dancer gaining opportunities to explore as an individual within class, personal style can be achieved by acquiring ownership in practice and performance. This creates a critically thinking dancer and enhances a sense of agency whilst being engaged with the process using “past experiences” (Kimmerle & Cote-Laurence, 2003, p.3) to form a greater knowledge.

As previously stated with reference to my technique training I have been in a position where I have been encouraged to explore as an individual in class which has helped with my sense of ownership, as represented in my autoethnography learning cycles occur when I am provided with the chance to suit movements to my body, this helps to achieve a greater mind body connection. Noted in my autoethnography is the idea of my instinctive movements relating to impulses; this reflects the statements that the interviewees discussed involving placing together dance experiences to form a personal style. My previous dance experiences have included Street and Hip-Hop dancing; these styles of dance include sharp moments and a sense of internal energy that is extended out through the body. Through becoming comfortable with the notion of working as an individual within technique class and claiming ownership, I have gained a greater confidence with performing and expressing my instinctual movements, thus allowing phrases to feel natural on my body. This has been achieved through my technique training being based in an environment that promotes dancers to claim ownership, which for me shows the importance of facilitators working with teaching methods that allow for independent learning to take place. I have also found that understanding core technique training is an important stage before exploration as the two piece together to inform overall performance techniques and to challenge my instincts. Within my technique training I value approaches to movement rather than specific codified steps at all times; this relates to Chapter 2.3

which explores the notion that within Contemporary dance considerations of the style relate to a dancers engagement and attentiveness.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.0 CONCLUSION

Through conducting this research study the key findings that have been discovered are the clear relationship between teaching strategies employed by the facilitator and the amount of ownership a dancer has leading to the notion of a personal style. Within the broad spectrum of dance technique training there are many tools that can be used to provide opportunities in technique classes for dancers to work as an individual and to encourage self discovery, thus leading to dancers being more likely to develop a sense of agency. It is noted throughout that the understanding and knowledge of basic technique is important before any exploration can begin, as this serves as a foundation for dance practice and performance; however if a technique class focuses too much on specific rules and didactic teaching, dancers can lose the sense of presence as an individual and connection with the movement rather than developing a personal style. This information is useful for the development within Contemporary dance, as effective teaching strategies and learning methods for technique class can be recognised to assist dancers in gaining personal style.

The strengths of this study are by including a personal account of being in a technique class, the connection between the classes' content, teaching strategies and the prompted response has been well illustrated. A limitation would be that since there is a focus on just one experience from a particular dance environment that allows for personal style to be part of a class, different strategies and their impact have not been closely explored. This limitation could be overcome and the study would be developed by asking other dancers from different dance training environments that are studying Contemporary dance to carry out a similar process of recording logs and feelings based on class experiences and learning. This would broaden the opportunity to identify and compare a range of teaching contexts and how they affect dancers positively and negatively to see how personal style can be encouraged. This study could help with the development of dance technique training within Higher Education in particular in order to show how students engage with methods that are employed in teaching, which would assist both facilitators and dancers in terms of developing independent student learners.

As this study involved a mixed method design and included an autoethnography it meant that personal feelings were compared to theorised topics on the subject of technique. I

found this to be quite an organised process due to the focus of the interview questions being based on key subjects from the literature review, therefore forming a clear link between the two, which then lead me to find significant examples in my technique logs that related to the data collected through the literature search and interview process. Using this style of study meant that I was able to discover as a student how technique teaching strategies inform my dance practice, thus giving me an understanding on how the context of dance teaching affects training. This study has helped me recognise the processes within technique class that are beneficial to me in terms of developing a sense of personal style, and also how my individual practice has been enhanced through being in an environment that encourages ownership.

This study has proven to be a valuable learning experience for me as I have gained knowledge and awareness on how my technique practice has improved throughout training. I have realised the importance of fundamental movement skills and being aware of the body as a whole as a base for dance practice; from this movement tools and principles can be employed to enhance a mind-body connection and to discover a sense of personal style. I also believe through conducting this study that if traditional codified technique is the only focus within dance class, a sense of personal style is diminished and therefore there would be a lack of guidance based on discovering a mind-body connection. This may result in a dancer only being able to perform set movements that are copied or reproduced without a sense of ownership. Consequently they would lack the ability to explore as an individual to create a natural performance. Personal awareness and individuality is something that professional choreographers identify with when working with dancers as presented in the results, meaning to succeed in the professional context ownership in dance should be achieved.

In conclusion to this research study as well as considerable links being presented between technique training and teaching, it has also highlighted the idea explored within the literature review that the style of Contemporary dance permits a sense of freedom and personal style, thus this should be reflected within technique classes. The importance of facilitating this sense of ownership during Contemporary dance training will allow students to make the transition into professional practice as individual, skilled performers.

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APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A
LOG TEMPLATE**

Personal account of Contemporary technique class

DESCRIPTION - account of class content - teaching techniques	REFLECTION - personal approach towards class content - learning technique/cycle

Personal feelings:

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics approval reference number: (13/05/171U)

Title of Project: How is personal style affected by technique, and what is the importance of technique in performance?

Participation information sheet

Background:

This research project is based on discovering how technique influences a dancer; whether it enables a dancer to enhance personal style, or if it can cause an opposite effect by suffocating a dancer's personal approach. The importance of learning set techniques will be explored, in terms of the way specific factors contribute to a dancer's performance.

Why you have been asked to participate:

The reason that you have been asked to participate in this research project is to gain a professional opinion from you as a current choreographer about what you feel is important when picking dancers to perform your work. Your views will be sought on approaches to movement through personal exploration and style, and physical ability through set techniques that have been acquired; and how you feel these factors impact performance.

What would happen if you agree to be a participant?

By agreeing to be part of this research project you will be asked to partake in a one on one interview, which shall be recorded through notes and a Dictaphone. Within the interview you will be asked questions from your perspective as a professional choreographer on factors such as; the impact of training and learnt technique on performance, and desired qualities you look for within a dancer when choosing them for your work. The interview will be guided through set questions and you will be encouraged to be as honest as possible in order to achieve reliable data; the information you provide will be based on your personal thoughts, but will help to form a professional view on the importance of dancer's technique and style.

Are there any risks?

There are no risks to participating in this research project. As you will be required to partake in an interview this will be arranged at a time best suited to you, and place. All information you provide within this interview will be kept anonymous and only used to inform data analysis for the research project.

What happens to the results of this research?

The results collected from this interview will be recorded and analysed, grouped with data from other interviews and will be written up without identifying you.

What happens next?

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to read and sign the consent form provided with this information sheet, in order for an interview to be arranged.

Contact details:

If you have any queries about this research please feel free to contact me or my project supervisor:

Faith Jackson

St20009132@outlook.uwic.ac.uk

Fiona Brooker

fbrooker@cardiffmet.ac.uk

029 2041 7079

**APPENDIX C -
CONSENT FORM**

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Ethics approval reference number: (13/05/171U)

Title of Project: How is personal style affected by technique, and what is the importance of technique in performance?

Name of researcher: Faith Jackson

Participant to complete this section Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet, and I understand what the study involves

2. I am aware that my participation in the study is completely voluntary and I am allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if I choose to

3. I agree to take part in the research study

4. I agree that the interview I partake in can be recorded through the use of a Dictaphone and notes

Participant's name:

Participant's signature:

Date:

**APPENDIX D -
ETHICS STATUS**



Cardiff
Metropolitan
University

Prifysgol
Metropolitan
Caerdydd

06/03/14

To: Faith Jackson

Project reference number: (13/05/171U)

Your project was recommended for approval by myself as supervisor and formally approved at the Cardiff School of Sport Research Ethics Committee meeting of 26th June 2013.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Brooker

Supervisor

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