A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of

Professional South African Ballet Dancers'

Subjective Performance Experiences

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Abstract

Extensive research into the lives of professional ballet dancers has been conducted by the psychological and medical fields, but much of this research has focused on problems in the environment, sometimes in a way that further pathologizes dancers. Professional ballet is a highly demanding performance area, yet little research into ballet dancers' performance lives has been conducted, which further shapes perceptions about this population. This study explores how South African professional ballet dancers' performance lives are shaped by discourse, and how they draw on available discursive resources to construct their subjectivity and create meaning, and to what ends, in relation to performance. Findings suggest that dancers are caught up in several powerful, dominant discourses, some of which may position them in ways that cause subjective harm, but that alternatives do exist. Insights into the complex web of intersecting discourses surrounding ballet are offered, and questions posed to create possibilities, but ultimately, dancers must decide which positions they want to claim or resist, as they continually form their subjectivities.

Keywords: Ballet dancers, peak performance, Foucauldian discourse analysis

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Ballet is a performance area where physical athleticism and various forms of artistry intersect (Klockare, Gustafsson, & Nordin-Bates, 2011). For centuries, ballet dancers have held their audiences' attention and respect, based on how effectively they weave their ability to tell a story and convey emotion, with a display of rhythm, musicality and physical mastery, into a lengthy and strenuous performance (Koutedakis & Jamurtas, 2004). They are required to make physical, emotional and time commitments to become successful and function within a highly-demanding environment (Twitchett, Angioi, Koutedakis, & Wyon, 2010). Few aspiring dancers reach professional levels (Roncaglia, 2006), and those that do are in an ongoing battle to retain their positions and earn promotions, within a ballet company (Myhill & Steele, 2012). Dancers who succeed, must continually work hard to build the strength and stamina needed to perform in a way that intentionally masks their physical efforts (Ramkumar, Farber, Arnouk, Varner, & McCulloch, 2016). By examining how professional ballet dancers draw on discourses surrounding their context, which shape their subjective experiences and identities, it may be possible to gain insight into how they form meaning, and make use of this knowledge in their performance lives, which is the aim of the current research.

Context

Ballet

Ballet is a highly specialised physical art form with a legacy stretching back to the 14th century (Lee, 2002; Wulff, 2008). Its continued relevance today is due to its continual adaptation to changing societal norms, and, as the art form has evolved, so has the ideal physique, and behaviours of ballet dancers (Benn & Walters, 2001). Despite some evolution, ballet has typically been synonymous with discipline, structure, and rigorous, precise technique (Diana, 2016). Within the broader dance community, classical ballet is considered a fundamental dance form, the technique and mastery of which can aid in learning other dance

styles (Wulff, 2008). Its continued popularity, globally, suggests that it provides value for audiences and performers (Alpert, 2011; Fisher, 2007a; Fisher, 2007b). Research has revealed numerous positive outcomes of taking part in ballet, such as improved fitness and physical conditioning (da Silva, 2015; Twitchett, Koutedakis & Wyon, 2009), cognitive development (Bläsing, Tenenbaum, & Schack, 2009), and a range of other intrapersonal and psychological benefits (Draugelis, Martin, & Garn, 2014; Sevdalis, & Keller, 2011). Music is typically used when dancing, which has been found to facilitate learning and emotional regulation, amongst other benefits (Panebianco-Warrens, 2014; Shaughnessy, 2009). In practice and performance, ballet also offers opportunities to learn various, transferrable life skills (Hanrahan, 2005).

Ballet has been under extensive critical focus as well, and problems linked to it have been prominent in the academic and anecdotal ballet literature (Brace-Govan, 2002; Gray & Kunkel, 2001). Linked to the ideal ballet body, the prevalence and causes of eating disorders (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Arcelus, Witcomb, & Mitchell, 2014), and other psychopathologies have been highlighted (Goodwin, Arcelus, Geach, & Meyer, 2014), as has the prominence of pain and injuries, arising through intense training (Smith et al., 2016). Financial pressures are also relatively common, and impact companies (Horwitz, 2004) and individual dancers (Kay, 2014) to varying extents.

Ballet in South Africa

Financial pressures have particularly affected South African ballet (Sulcas, 1996). With the birth of democracy, state funding for the arts, including ballet, began to disappear; this was somewhat controversial because the organisations under threat had been preferentially funded by the Apartheid government (Melville, 1994). At the time, Sulcas (1996) reported "the impending demise of ballet, opera, and classical music arts in South Africa due to state funding cutbacks" (p. 30). Shortly after, several prominent arts companies were forced to close, marking a difficult time for the ballet and performing arts communities (Sichel, 2000).

Several local ballet dancers fought to preserve and reinvent ballet in the country and managed to form a new company in 2001 (Poon, 2011), which grew over the next decade through various fundraising and talent development initiatives (Nkosi, 2009). However, financial security remained elusive, and offering a space for dancers to find consistent, paid work continued to be a struggle (Nkosi, 2009). Financial challenges are not limited to South African ballet dancers (Horwitz, 2004; Kay, 2014) but political developments here, including the government's changing funding policies, pose unique funding problems (Nkosi, 2009), which limit dancers' access to resources needed to function optimally.

Although the struggle for adequate funding and sufficient salaries for ballet dancers has continued, ballet companies have had to adapt in various ways and adopt creative fundraising approaches (Nkosi, 2009). For example, in 2013, a Johannesburg-based ballet company was identified by Harvard Business School to participate in a practical component of their Leadership Development Programme, aimed at exposing students to businesses in emerging markets (van Heerden, 2013). The company was encouraged to shift its identity from an arts company to a product-selling business, to tap into new markets (van Heerden, 2013).

Research Problem

A disproportionate number of references to ballet and ballet dancers in the academic literature and popular media are weighted towards negative, often stereotypical views (Croft, 2014; Fisher, 2007b; Ravaldi, et al., 2006), including the movie *Black Swan* (Aronofsky et al., 2011). These have framed ballet and the idealised, thin physique as promoting poor body-image and eating disorders (Benn & Walters, 2001; Ritenburg, 2010). Ballet is also regularly associated with injury, pain, and extreme competitiveness (Aalten, 2005). Dancers are positioned in much of the literature as obsessively controlling, yet oppressed and suffering, due to their participation in ballet, and linked to various psychopathologies, including perfectionism, neuroticism, narcissism and other undesirable behaviours (Brace-Govan, 2002;

Goodwin et al., 2014). Such views are not entirely unwarranted, but are one dimensional, and often fail to consider the nuances of ballet, including benefits that dancers experience, that enhance their well-being (Draugelis et al., 2014; Hefferon & Ollis, 2006). Performance has also been neglected in the academic literature about ballet dancers, compared to other high-performance environments, like sports, other performing arts, and the workplace (Klockare et al., 2011; Myhill & Steele, 2012). The current research intends to explore a South African professional ballet context to consider how these problem-focused views became dominant, and identify alternative perspectives through a social constructionist approach.

Paradigmatic and Theoretical Point of Departure

The social constructionist paradigm allows for considerations of how an individual's subjectivity is shaped by language and discourse, and how people's stories about their lives illuminate how their identities have been constructed (Willig, 2013). From this perspective and drawing on the work of Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1982; Foucault, 1986b; Foucault, 2002; Foucault, 2003a; Foucault, 2011), the dominant discourses that a culture subscribes to, usually impact these formations, enabling certain ways-of-being and disabling others (Parker, 1997). Social constructionists have argued that these dominant, often normalised discourses can potentially harm people and be oppressive (Willig, 2013). Rather than trying to fix a problem or person, proponents of social constructionism "argue that our 'vocabulary of self' can be challenged and changed by exploring and elaborating non-dominant discourses" (Burr, 2003, p. 94). Therefore, by examining dominant discourses apparent in professional ballet dancers' accounts, and elaborating alternative, less prominent views, we can become aware of how discourses shape dancers' identities' and subjective experiences, and illuminate other options. Using this approach, the following question, aim, and objectives will be addressed.

Research Question

How do top South African professional ballet dancers draw on available discursive resources to construct their own subjectivity and create meaning through the stories they tell of peak ballet performance? In addition, how do these constructions inform the enhancement of their performance and ways-of-being?

Aim

To construct how top professional ballet dancers in a South African context draw on discursive resources to form their own subjectivity and create meaning through the stories they tell of peak ballet performance. In addition, to draw attention to how these constructions inform the enhancement of their performance and ways-of-being.

Objectives

This endeavour seeks to highlight the dominant, often negative discourses that present ballet as problematic and seem to adversely impact ballet dancers. It also intends to draw attention to some of the less prominent, alternative discourses surrounding ballet that contribute towards peak ballet performance.

Data

Existing archival data in the form of interview transcripts will be subjected to Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) to identify discourses related to peak ballet performance, that top dancers draw on in constructing their identities. The transcripts utilised in the present study are based on interviews conducted during 2012 with four South African female ballet dancers, with varying extents of exposure to dancing *principal,* or lead roles (Myhill & Steele. 2012).

Rationale and Potential Value

A deconstructive exploration of professional ballet dancers' stories about their development and performance lives may illuminate the dominant discourses that shape their realities. These dominant discourses can diminish optimal performance and tend to present a

negative, yet limited view of ballet, that often becomes normalised (Ritenburg, 2010), which may then threaten the well-being of ballet dancers and jeopardise their professional careers. For example, extensive research has focused on linking ballet to body image problems and eating disorders, which raises questions about the dangers of ballet (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Anshel, 2004; Pickard, 2013). However, the prominence of these discourses may be contributing to the problem (Ritenburg, 2010), in the sense that young dancers are socialised to consider eating disorders common and even as signs of commitment (Benn & Walters, 2001). They may then conclude that they will not be taken seriously as dancers, without exhibiting some form of disordered relationship with eating. Without dismissing the risks and problems altogether, the unequal focus on undesirable aspects of ballet influences dancers' identity formation and behaviours, as well as how they are viewed.

On the other hand, a range of issues have also been found in other sport and performance contexts, and although references to them are apparent in the popular media (Ferguson, 2014) and academic literature, many studies seem weighted more towards psychological strengths and benefits (Crust, 2007; Harmison, 2011). These issues are also often addressed more optimistically and as factors to be managed (Rumbold, Fletcher, & Daniels, 2011). For example, research into weight and eating habits in various sports environments seems to focus less on pathologies and more on concepts like 'weight-management strategies' (Wilson, Drust, Morton, & Close, 2014), and 'nutrition to enhance performance' (Close, Hamilton, Philp, Burke, & Morton, 2016; Spencer, 2014). When disordered eating has been the focus, it is usually in relation to 'aesthetic sports' (Krentz & Warschburger, 2013). Eating disorders have also been prevalent in high-risk populations, such as adolescents (Piran, 1999; Revelas, 2013) and women in general over the past few decades (Annus, Smith & Masters, 2008; Podar & Allik, 2009), which indicates that they may arise from broader societal problems. This makes one question the extent to which these problems are attributable to ballet exposure alone,

despite the large body of such research in this environment. The disproportionate prominence of problem-focused studies in ballet research also leads one to speculate whether double standards have been applied to different performance contexts.

In addition to the negative discourses in ballet, alternatives do exist, but seem to have less of a 'voice' in the literature. As part of the social constructionist agenda, it should also be possible to highlight these alternative discourses that dancers currently draw on (Willig, 2013). Despite their lack of prominence, they are also likely of relevance to ballet dancers, as they form their identities and adopt strategies to enhance their performance. Deconstructing taken-for-granted and normalised discourses could create room for other discourses or "forms of resistance" (Foucault, 1982, p. 780) to become more visible and promote personal agency in performance settings. This may paint a different, more nuanced picture of ballet and professional ballet dancers, which could be valuable for aspiring dancers and current professionals, who have reported sometimes feeling misunderstood (Myhill & Steele, 2012). This study will also address the lack of performance-orientated ballet research and contribute to sport and performance psychology research.

Study Overview

Before seeking to fulfil the above aims and objectives, existing literature that pertains to the research question will be explored in more depth in the following chapter. This chapter will predominately explore recent studies involving ballet dancers. Select physiological research that provides useful insight will be introduced followed by a discussion of psychological research. The limited body of performance-orientated literature, and the similarly sparse ballet research that has been conducted in a South African context will then be reviewed, followed by a description of the few FDA studies focused on similar performance environments, particularly ballet dancers.

Following the review of existing literature, pertinent theory will be introduced, and key terms defined, followed by an engagement with the methodological design. This will further describe the paradigmatic and theoretical point of departure, explain the sampling and data collection methods, describe key aspects of the FDA process and explore important ethical considerations, including reflexivity. The results of the FDA will then be presented and discussed, drawing on relevant theory. Finally, the current study will be concluded, which will involve a reflection on its implications, strengths and limitations, as well as suggestions for future research, and final remarks.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has provided insight into the ballet context, globally, and in South Africa, and outlined the research problem that is central to this study. The theoretical and paradigmatic point of departure which is social constructionism, and more specifically the work of Foucault, has been briefly clarified. The research question that has been formulated to address the research problem was then indicated, and elaborated on, by specifying the study's aim and objectives, including the intention to use FDA to deconstruct the data. The value of conducting this research was then argued, which included a description of the apparent gap in ballet research, followed by an outline of the present study. The body of relevant literature will now be explored.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review literature that is relevant to the previously indicated research question. Most of the studies reviewed have been conducted in the last twenty years, due to the relevance of a large amount of available literature on ballet dancers. However, in areas where a sparsity of literature is apparent, older studies will be noted to provide a complete picture of that research area. Select physiological literature will clarify key health-related problems in ballet. Psychological studies that pertain to the current research will then be explored in more depth. The limited body of performance-related ballet literature will then be introduced, followed by the similarly sparse area of South African ballet research. Where a comparison will be illustrative, a handful of studies conducted in other performance settings, like music and sports, will be mentioned. Lastly, Foucauldian discourse analytic (FDA) research in high-performance groups will be discussed, before concluding the chapter.

Ballet Literature

Physiological Research

Though an exploration of the full body of physiologically orientated ballet research is beyond the scope of the present study, many physical challenges and problems faced by ballet dancers are linked to dominant discourses that impact the formation of their identities and other relevant psychological concerns. Various topics related to fitness and health, pain and injury will be outlined to provide a sense of the physical demands and problems ballet dancers must navigate. In addition, literature that describes how ballet training physically moulds dancers, will be introduced to illustrate the impact it can have on dancers' bodies and minds.

Physical fitness and strength. The fitness levels of ballet dancers, and the intensity of training demands in a professional ballet company, have been explored (Wyon et al., 2016):

The subjects had 30 hours of rehearsal and between 4.5 and 7.5 hours of ballet class per week. Typically they performed for 13 non-consecutive weeks, and danced in 7 to 10

performances per week. Performance demands were heaviest from late November to early

January, when they performed for 5 consecutive weeks (approximately 50 performances).

(Micheli, Cassella, Faigenbaum, Southwick, & Ho, 2005, p. 57)

Also monitoring workload within this context, Twitchett et al. (2010) found that physical

demands increased, and rest time decreased as dancers moved into higher ranks in a

professional ballet company; this progression has been linked to enhanced fitness (Wyon, et

al., 2007). Pursuing a professional ballet career requires rigorous training from a young age

(Hewett, 2012), to improve fitness (Twitchett et al., 2009), strength and balance (Pedersen,

Erleben, & Sporring, 2006), and flexibility (Quanbeck, Russell, Handley, & Quanbeck, 2017).

Dancers must execute specialised technical movements effectively (Bailey & Pickard,

2010) and maintain a particular ballet aesthetic, which is enabled through enhanced fitness

(Twitchett, Angioi, Koutedakis, & Wyon, 2011). However, despite the long training and

demands of performance, Twitchett et al. (2009) hypothesised that the trend of low body

weight in dancers is linked to calorific restriction, because ballet training alone does not

provide the calorific expenditure needed to maintain the desired physical aesthetic. In addition,

Koutedakis and Jamurtas (2004) indicated that ballet may not provide sufficient aerobic

exercise to build the fitness required for the workload, which can lead to fatigue and injuries.

Researchers have proposed that dancers would benefit from cross-training to increase fitness

levels and calorific expenditure, which many consider preferable to poor nutritional habits,

linked to various physiological and psychological problems (Twitchett et al., 2009).

However, this view is controversial in the ballet community; some see the value in cross-

training and embrace it (Koutedakis & Jamurtas, 2004) while others are concerned that non-

balletic forms of training may have an undesirable effect on ballet dancers' physical form,

compromising aesthetic quality (Twitchett et al., 2009). Micheli et al. (2005) discovered

significant physiological changes between the start and end of a nine-month long ballet

company's season, which they attributed to increased physical activity without sufficient calorific increases, and also noted similarities in body fat percentage between the dancers and averages for elite athletes in various sports.

Health, nutrition and problematic behaviours. The demand in ballet for a lean physical aesthetic (Pickard, 2013), but insufficient calorific expenditure, may lead dancers to consume low calorie diets and engage in problematic behaviours like fasting and vomiting (Thomas, Keel, & Heatherton, 2011). Health problems have been linked to these behaviours and low body mass index (BMI) scores, including low bone density (Burckhardt, Wynn, Krieg, Bagutti, & Faouzi, 2011), and menstrual problems (Łagowska & Jeszka, 2011). Wyon, Hutchings, Wells, and Nevill (2014) compared professional dancers and elite ballet student's BMI, and nutritional knowledge and attitudes, finding that professionals had higher BMI and better knowledge than the students. Correlations were found between low BMI, eating disorders and poor nutritional knowledge in both groups, but students also displayed high levels of distorted body image, leading Wyon et al. (2014) to conclude that adolescent ballet dancers are at a particularly high risk for developing eating disorders (Wyon et al., 2014).

Physiological researchers have explored the prevalence and patterns of various eating disorders in ballet dancers (Ringham et al., 2006), as well as related risks and causes (Thomas, Keel, & Heatherton, 2005), which have been debated in the literature (Arcelus et al., 2014). Psychological research related to these issues will be explored at a later stage in this literature review. Interventions to promote healthy behaviours for dancers and teachers have been proposed and assessed (Łagowska, Kapczuk, & Jeszka, 2014). Doyle-Lucas and Davy (2011) found that an intervention programme aimed at increasing knowledge of sports nutrition and the consequences of poor eating habits improved nutrition knowledge and helped dancers adopt healthier eating habits, but that some aspects of the approach were more sustainable than

others. They concluded that interventions should be integrated into training programmes over the long-term (Doyle-Lucas & Davy, 2011).

Ballet dancers have also been compared to athletes in other sporting contexts in relation to performance, health and nutrition-related problems, like menstrual disorders (Łagowska & Kapczuk, 2016). Low energy availability, menstrual dysfunction and low bone mineral density as well as resulting bone stress injuries have been found in female athletes (Tenforde, Barrack, Nattiv, & Fredericson, 2016). Zareva (2016) conducted a study comparing weight and BMI of ballet dancers and rhythmic gymnasts; ballet dancers had a higher average body fat percentage (14%) than gymnasts (8%) but a lower active body mass as well as a lower muscle mass percentage. Zareva (2016) concluded that these findings correlate with the physical requirements and movements of both ballet and gymnastics.

Research has also focused on various substance use and misuse behaviours including "binge alcohol drinking, cigarette smoking, appetite suppressant consumption, analgesic use, and actual and potential "doping" habits" (Sekulic, Peric, & Rodek, 2010, p. 1420). More than 20% of the female dancers smoked many cigarettes daily (Sekulic et al., 2010). Stein et al. (2016) reported that 8.7% of their sample of ballet dancers smoked cigarettes and that 9.4% had smoked previously. Most dancers recognised the health risks and negative impact of smoking on physical performance, and 80% reported working with a teacher or choreographer who smoked, which Stein et al. (2016) considered an indication that smoking rates are declining. This decline mirrors similar changes in the general population, and Stein et al. (2016) predicted it would continue as norms and behaviours of role models change. Fietze et al. (2009) investigated rhythm and quality of sleep in professional dancers over a three-month pre-performance rehearsal period, and found a reduction in sleep quantity and quality in dancers, whose initial measurements were already below average, and linked these changes to

declines in health. They recommended that dancers be provided with sleep education and schedules, especially during the pre-performance period (Fietze et al., 2009).

Injury and pain. The prevalence and nature of ballet injuries have been investigated extensively (Smith et al., 2016). Injuries to the lower extremity (Hodgkins, Kennedy & O'Loughlin, 2008) and scoliosis (Longworth, Fary, & Hopper, 2014) have been found to be common. Smith et al. (2016) recently compared injury prevalence rates for professional, pre-professional and recreational dancers through a meta-analysis. Across 19 studies they considered eligible, "7332 injuries in 2617 ballet dancers" (Smith et al., 2016, p. 5) were reported, indicating a prevalence of 280%. Smith et al. (2016) further indicated that the prevalence rate was 104% for pre-professional dancers and 463% for professionals, indicating that they face a high risk of injury. In a recent 10-year longitudinal study, Ramkumar, et al. (2016) found a rate of 1.10 injuries per annum in a ballet company; on average, each dancer sustained one new injury each year. According to Kelley, Micheli, Solomon, and Solomon's study (as cited in Ramkumar, et al., 2016), male soccer players experience an injury rate of 6.2 to 7.3 comparatively. In addition, Ramkumar, et al. (2016) indicated that overuse accounts for about 76% of injuries in ballet dancers; it has also been found to account for many injuries in various other sporting contexts as well (De Villiers & Koenig, 2004).

Bowerman, Whatman, Harris, and Bradshaw (2015) conducted a meta-analysis on the risks of overuse injury in young elite dancers and found it difficult to isolate specific factors. They found that dancers with a low BMI often had abnormal menstrual patterns and low bone density, but it remained unclear which of these factors, in addition to extensive hours of training, increased dancers' injury risk (Bowerman et al., 2015). Twitchett et al. (2010) indicated that short rest periods in relation to training seemed to increase professional dancers' risk of injury from fatigue. Physical fitness has also been associated with injury risk (Twitchett et al., 2009). In addition, screening programmes and interventions for identifying and

mitigating injury risks have been considered; providing dancers with 'whole body' conditioning instead of strengthening typical injury sites have been proposed to help them withstand the rigours of modern ballet (Allen, Nevill, Brooks, Koutedakis, & Wyon, 2013).

The impact of injury and pain on dancers has been explored. Paparizos, et al. (2005) found that magnification, linked to catastrophising, was significantly correlated with pain experiences in dancers. Anderson and Hanrahan (2008) explored the difference in coping styles between performance and injury pain in ballet dancers, finding that they seemed to not differentiate between the type and severity of pain and moderate their behaviour accordingly. They expressed the need for education to help dancers recognise when pain is routine, and when it signifies a potentially serious injury, so they can respond appropriately (Anderson & Hanrahan, 2008). Wilson, Quinn, Stratton, Southwick, and MacDonald (2015) compared injuries across various dance styles, including ballet, tap, jazz, contemporary, hip-hop, and ballroom; the lower body was the site of most injuries across all styles. Ballet accounted for a high proportion of injuries in young dancers, and its highly technical nature, the tendency for ballet dancers to push to the extremes of joint motion as well as dancing *en pointe* (on their toes) were linked to their high injury rate (Wilson et al., 2015).

Studies have also considered ballet dancers' injuries in relation to other sports groups, finding similar physical consequences of participating in ballet and various sports (Mayes, Ferris, Smith, Garnham, & Cook, 2016). Comparing ballet and modern dancers with gymnasts, Krasnow, Mainwaring, and Kerr (1999) found a greater number of hip injuries in young ballet dancers and gymnasts than in the adult population, and that perfectionism and stress are causal factors. Problems with responses to injury, including playing through pain and injury, as well as insufficient recovery time have also been found in other sport contexts, yet behaviours of such athletes have not been described with as much of a psychopathological focus as has been

the case with ballet dancers (Madrigal, Robbins, Gill, & Wurst, 2015). Psychological

dynamics related to pain, injury and embodiment will be explored shortly.

The above physiological section has illustrated the physical demands typically faced by

professional ballet dancers, and the increase in exertion required as dancers reach the highest

ranks. It has also noted the life-long commitment required, to build the necessary fitness,

strength and flexibility. The importance and development of the ideal ballet physique has been

introduced in this literature, and remains a highly dominant discourse in much of the literature

to follow. Of key relevance is the debate about whether the ideal ballet body can be produced

through fitness training alone or whether calorific restriction is required too. The link between

training, fatigue and injury has also been described. There are many overlaps between

physiological and psychological research in relation to various concerns, especially

psychopathological behaviours. Several factors have been compared to other sports, to position

ballet within this broader fitness context. Finally, it is also important to note that the literature

provided has been selected from a much larger body of physiological research, that indicates

discourses of 'health,' 'fitness,' and 'injury' are dominant in relation to ballet.

Psychological Research

Research considering various psychological concerns pertaining to ballet dancers is highly

relevant to the question of how ballet dancers construct their subjectivity and create meaning.

An extensive body of literature exists, covering personality and identity of dancers, and how

the concept of embodiment influences dancers' ways-of-being, including body-image and

eating behaviours. This literature will now be explored.

Personality and identity. Researchers have explored a range of topics related to

personality and identity, and questioned ballet's influence on dancers' well-being. Studies

have found dancers to exhibit 'unfavourable' personality traits, including Taylor (1997), who

made use of the MMPI-2 to compare a group of ballet dancers' profiles to all other available

profiles, and found correlations with people presenting with eating disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorder, as well as drug and alcohol addicts. Although this study is somewhat dated, it provides a good example of how ballet dancers have been generalised in problematic ways in the past and studied in an arguably simplistic manner. Studies have also explored how puberty can be disruptive for young dancers, highlighting the moderating role that ballet teachers play (Mitchell, Haase, Malina, & Cumming, 2016).

Loch (2015) explored how adolescent ballet dancers negotiated identity formation by exploring the stories they told of aspirational futures in ballet. She considered how they positioned themselves in relation to their ballet and academic pursuits and how they drew on discursive resources to explore multiple territories and possibilities of 'becoming' (Loch, 2015). Buckroyd (2001) critically examined the impact of ballet training on adolescents, and argued that traditional approaches often fail to develop dancers holistically. However, she also pointed out that ballet training has the potential to build creative and well-rounded individuals, if emotional needs are fulfilled, and destructive aspects of the environment, like envy and competition, addressed (Buckroyd, 2001). Furthermore, Pickard and Bailey (2009) described the powerful role of 'crystallising experiences' in ballet dancers' identity development; such experiences can inspire and motivate dancers throughout their careers, but their responses to these events determine whether they are enabling or disabling (Pickard & Bailey, 2009). Pickard (2012) also encouraged dancers to attach positive meaning to experiences, even unfavourable ones, by normalising, re-framing or denying them, if necessary, to derive benefits from even the most difficult moments.

A ballet dancer's career is typically short due to the physical demands involved, with many dancers retiring at a relatively young age (Willard & Lavallee, 2016). Studies have also explored the complexity involved in retirement. It can be voluntary or involuntary, with each impacting a dancer's identity and well-being differently; reasons include self-deselection due

to age, changing physical abilities, evolving interests and priorities, as well as injuries and redundancy (Roncaglia, 2006). Willard and Lavallee (2016) highlighted the importance of having a plan for life after being a ballet dancer, often involving initial distance, then a reintroduction to the dance world in a new role, such as teacher, or choreographer. They further indicated that having support within and outside of the ballet community can help retiring dancers cope with the typically difficult transition (Willard & Lavallee, 2016). Similar experiences have been found in other sporting environments, like gymnastics, suggesting the challenges in such life transitions are not exclusive to ballet (Lavallee & Robinson, 2007)

Gendered roles and identities of ballet dancers have also been critically examined (Adams, 2005; Turk, 2014). Exploring stereotypes and identity constructions that men in ballet can discursively draw from, Adams (2005) argued that the trend to draw on 'sport' discourses and 'masculinise' male dancers to make dancing seem less effeminate is ineffective and potentially marginalising for male dancers who are not willing or able draw on these dominant discourses. In fact, Adams (2005) suggested that legitimising dance as an activity for men is more a result of feminism than emphasising masculinity. Fisher (2007a) also cautioned against responding to harmful stigmas about men in ballet as "feminine, homosexual…fragile, weak" (p. 45) with a "'making it macho' strategy" (p. 46). Aligning ballet too closely with sports and masculine discourses is misleading because ballet is a refined art form, and ignores the multiple reasons men have for doing ballet (Fisher, 2007a). Fisher (2007a) argued that male ballet dancers take on a range of intersecting identities, but that all of them are brave 'mavericks' for being involved despite the stigmas and that this should be emphasised instead.

Social constructions of female ballet dancers at different life stages have also been explored. Turk (2014) considered how 'pink,' 'princess' and 'girliness' discourses currently being sold to young girls is impacting their identities. In relation to such discourses, ballet is "an agent of a culture that limits girls' imaginations and consciousness" (Turk, 2014, p. 482).

However, after analysing several ballet books directed at young girls, she argued that some "texts intervene in princess culture's appropriation of ballet, and stage important questions about ballet's role in contemporary girls' culture" (Turk, 2014, p. 484). The pink and girly culture being sold ignores critical aspects of ballet, such as the history, musicality, artistry and story-telling as well as the physicality, strength and sacrifice involved (Turk, 2014). Turk (2014) believes the image of ballet should be redefined to reflect its complexity.

Gray and Kunkel (2001) studied the identities of pre-professional and professional female ballet dancers, who spoke of an escape through dance, and being lost in thought, leading Gray and Kunkel (2001) to describe them as "fantasy creatures" (p. 15). Dancers saw themselves as 'artists' rather than 'people' and described how their "life is subsumed by the art" (Gray & Kunkel, 2001, p. 19) because they relinquished other aspects of life in a form of "sacrificial transcendence" (p. 19), to participate in a world of beauty. Due to the technical demands of professional performance and dancers' descriptions of themselves as instruments, or parts of a machine (the company), a theme of "mechanization" (Gray & Kunkel, 2001, p. 18) emerged. Dancers experienced objectification, and seemed like property, or servants of the company, which led Gray and Kunkel (2001) to highlight their "commodification" (p. 18). Lastly, because an ideal ballet physique in female dancers seemed to require a "stifling of sexuality" (Gray & Kunkel, 2001, p. 19), dancers experienced "infantilization" (p. 19). Gray and Kunkel (2001) concluded that ballet dancers' experiences were dominated by negative themes and questioned whether a more encouraging atmosphere, and balanced emphasis on both technique and artistry would be more suitable for individual dancers and ballet companies.

Fisher (2007b) considered how the image and identity of professional ballerinas has evolved since the nineteenth century. Although revered by some, in other circles "she has become suspect as a creature who may be obsessed, exploited, and retrogressive in light of the egalitarian strides women have made or are still trying to make" (Fisher, 2007b, p. 3). Feminist

critiques demonised ballet at the end of the last century and depicted dancers as forced into ballet like slaves, and physically and psychologically damaged (Fisher, 2007b). Although there are still problems to be addressed and boundaries to be pushed, Fisher (2007b) argued that alternative views of ballerinas exist, and that depicting them as subservient, fragile and powerless may be out of date with how the 21st century ballerina views herself:

> Despite her history of stereotyping and attacks against her, the ballerina continues to evolve, embracing both her conventionally "feminine" side and her steely "macho" physique and resolve – embracing the conflict and finding a transcendent power in doing so. Today's ballet women even occasionally appear as tough as they are. (p.14)

The popular media contains many examples of ballet dancers being stereotyped as physically and psychologically unwell, including in the movie 'Black Swan' (Aronofsky et al., 2011). According to Croft (2014), the feminist movement has been pivotal in questioning taken for granted assumptions in ballet, which has enriched understanding and created a platform to initiate change in the community. However, many critiques vilified ballet and described it as a hopeless site for challenging patriarchal norms and practices, while asserting a binary relationship between male and female dancers, in which the former exemplified strength and the latter dependence. Early feminist research on ballet in the 1980s drew on 'gaze theory,' which explored gender in limiting ways, and stripped the female ballet dancer of agency, by depicting her, not as active participant, but "able executor of the master's designs" (p. 209). This problem-focus over the past few decades in the media, and society generally has impacted the perceptions of dancers, teachers, and audiences (Croft, 2014).

Embodiment. It is impossible to separate psychological concerns, and ballet dancers' identities from the concept of embodiment. For many dancers, ballet is not an activity you engage in but who you are, and the body is inextricably linked to that identity (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Wainwright & Turner, 2004). Much available research on the topic has

focused on problematic aspects of ballet culture and their impact on dancers' relationships with their bodies (Brace-Govan, 2002). The literature also reveals an interconnected relationship between the socially constructed body, body image and dissatisfaction, and psychopathological traits like disordered eating and perfectionism (Pickard, 2013). Associations have also been found between dancers and athletes who display signs of perfectionism, indicating that these problems are not unique to ballet (Flett & Hewitt, 2014).

   Identity and the socially constructed body. According to many studies, ballet dancers have a complex and often obsessive relationship with their bodies, and focus intensely on its weight and aesthetic appearance, which tends to impact their body image, and consequently their physical and mental health (Benn & Walters, 2001; Wainwright & Turner, 2006). Dancers' bodies are intertwined with their careers, which they experience as an overwhelming 'calling' (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Jackson, 2005). In this context, training to develop remarkable physical abilities can be addictive, and injury can both affirm, as a 'badge of honour,' and disrupt dancers' balletic identities (Wainwright, Williams, & Turner, 2005). The role of identity within a ballet context is key to preventing injuries and other health problems, and interventions often fail if socio-cultural and psychological dynamics are ignored (Aalten, 2005; Noh, Morris, & Andersen, 2007).

   Those in positions of power, like teachers and company directors, influence how the ideal body image and normative behaviours are constructed in ballet, which shapes dancers' experiences (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Benn & Walters, 2001). A pertinent example of this is the profound impact that George Balanchine, co-founder and director of the New York City Ballet, had on ballet (Ritenburg, 2010). He has been described as "one of the most renowned and influential choreographers of twentieth-century ballet" (Ritenburg, 2010, p. 71), and shaped how ballet is constructed, by demanding an anorexic-like physique from his dancers, which is widely considered to have influenced the ideal ballet body in the ballet world

for the past several decades (Ritenburg, 2010). This process of construction is not static, and like broader concepts of beauty and strength in Western society (Green, 2000; Nerini, 2015), the norms and ideals of ballet have continued to evolve. Many would argue that although ballet dancers are still expected to be thin, a more athletic than anorexic build is increasingly becoming the preferred norm (Benn & Walters, 2001; Myhill & Steele, 2012).

Researchers have drawn on the work of Pierre Bourdieu to better understand the socially constructed, complex relationship dancers have with their bodies (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011). Applying Bourdieu's work to ballet illuminates connections between "the ballet 'habitus,' embodiment, dance performance and identity" (Turner & Wainwright, 2003, p. 273). 'Habitus' refers to "the ensemble of attitudes, dispositions, expectations and taste that individuals share as members of a field" (Turner & Wainwright, 2003, p. 273) and emphasises the role of social practice in dance. Institutional and company norms influence the habitus of individual dancers (Benn & Walters, 2001; Pickard, 2013), and the body becomes an expression of it, highlighting the importance of embodiment (Wainwright & Turner, 2004). Values and daily actions, which reflect ballet's culture, are socialised and imbued in ballet dancers from a young age, creating pressure to conform (Pickard, 2013). Habitus therefore informs how dancers treat their bodies, which impacts their body image, and approach to nutrition and injuries (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011). Bourdieu recognised human agency in the practices and strategies people employ, but noted that institutions also shape, produce, and constrain agency and identity (Green, 2000; Pickard, 2012). Within the field of ballet, like most other social structures, bodies are assigned value or capital based on their aesthetic appearance (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Pickard, 2013; Wainwright et al., 2005).

The body can be viewed as a tool that enables a dancer's career, but doing so also distances it from a dancers' self-identity, and suggests that it can be controlled by ignoring pain and injury, through willpower (Price & Pettijohn II, 2006). On the other hand, relating to

the body as more than just a biological object – as a functional, embodied social entity, allows for thought, will and action to be embedded (Jackson, 2005). The body is not merely a blank canvas for social imprint, but part of an interconnected, complex relationship with the self (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011). Dancers' relationships with their bodies seems to involve a paradox; the body is a vital element of a career in dance and should be treated with care and respect, yet at the same, dancers are required to push their limitations for the sake mastery, (Pickard, 2013; Wainwright & Turner, 2004). Many dancers consider the physical boundaries they experience as challenges to be overcome through rigorous training, which is why their bodies are simultaneously strong and vulnerable (Wainwright & Turner, 2006).

Injury, pain, and ageing. Health and manifestations of pain and illness are linked to the interaction between dancers' bodies and the social structures and practices of the ballet world (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Benn & Walters, 2001; Turner & Wainwright, 2003). Injury and pain are embedded in ballet culture (Aalten, 2005; Wainwright & Turner, 2006), and various aspects of the environment have normalised these experiences (McEwen & Young, 2011). As a result, dancers struggle to differentiate between inevitable training pain and injury pain, that signifies a serious problem, and even if they can, they are often socialised to respond in avoidant, stoical ways (Anderson & Hanrahan, 2008). Dancers treat their bodies ruthlessly and consider overuse, pain, and injury to be necessary risks, and even signs of commitment (McEwen & Young, 2011; Wainwright et al., 2005). According to Wulff (as cited in Aalten, 2005), all dancers know that "if you want to be good, you have to suffer" (p. 63); however, they do not always consider pain negative, because there is a "heroic aspect" (p. 63), where it can signal hard work and physical improvement, and be welcomed. Therefore, despite the problems associated with pain and injury, they also legitimise a dancer's identity (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; McEwen & Young, 2011; Pickard, 2013; Wainwright et al., 2005).

In seeking to understand this complex relationship, Turner and Wainwright (2003) noted that "injury is mediated through the social bonding of dancers into a professional ballet company" (p. 269). Dancers' social membership within the company offers emotional strength which protects them from "tension, fatigue, illness, emotional stress, and injury" (Noh et al., 2005, p. 86). These social bonds are important protective factors for the company and individuals within it, but are also so strong and deeply entrenched in a dancer's identity that ageing and retirement are very difficult to navigate (Turner & Wainwright, 2003). Injuries pose a temporary or permanent threat to a dancer's career, and therefore identity, so they might ignore them and risk aggravation, for different reasons at different times (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Wainwright & Turner, 2006). Younger dancers may take such risks because of a perceived urgency to prove themselves and fear of missing opportunities (Aalten, 2005), while older dancers might ignore pain and injury because it could signal the end of their dancing career (Wainwright & Turner, 2006). However, avoidance 'silences' the body, which may exacerbate the problem and create a dynamic in which the body disappears from awareness and becomes 'absent' (Green, 2000; Turner & Wainwright, 2003). Researchers view pain and injury as forms of communication from the body that dancers should listen to; increased awareness can lead to improved self-care, richer engagement with the body's impact on a dancer's identity and career, and enhanced movement and artistry, which are important for a dancer to reach the highest ranks in a company (Aalten, 2005; Jackson, 2005).

Body image and dissatisfaction. Ballet's history and traditions were initially passed down orally, then through photographs and videos, but the existence of the internet has increased access to resources that shape a dancer's self-formation (Green, 2000; Nerini, 2015; Pickard, 2013). Globalisation has amplified the impact of the idealised ballet body on dancers, and lifted physical and technical standards as well as audiences' expectations (Swami & Harris, 2012). This is part of "the Western 20th century transition to the 'cult of slenderness'" (Benn

& Walters, 2001, p. 139). For women, femininity in a masculine dominated society can be an elusive ideal, but its continual reproduction further reinforces the established norm (Brace-Govan, 2002; Swami & Harris, 2012). Due to the aesthetic demand in ballet, dancers are theorised to have two bodies – their perceived and tangible one, and the ideal image they conceive (Kaplan, 2009). The interaction and distance between the two impacts dancers' body- and self-image (Benn & Walters, 2001). The closer a dancer's existing body image is to her ideal, the higher her body satisfaction and self-esteem is to likely to be (Kaplan, 2009). However, despite low BMI percentages, most ballet dancers expressed that their ideal body was lower than their current weight, and that their perception of the ideal ballet body was even lower than their own ideal, so this relationship is often not harmonious, (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011). Many dancers said they would not strive for thinness in the same way if they were not participating in ballet, and some felt the ideal should change (Kaplan, 2009).

The 'unattainable' aesthetic and technical demands can cause dancers to experience body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem, which can lead to disordered eating and other psychopathological behaviours (Aalten, 2005; Benn & Walters, 2001; Green, 2000). Poor self-esteem can also reduce a dancer's motivation and impact performance (Price & Pettijohn II, 2006). This dynamic is seen elsewhere, in youth sports, where physical traits are linked to performance despite being mediated by habitus and behaviour (Pickard, 2013; Piran, 1999). Body image distortion also appears to be an issue in society more broadly, and there is evidence that women's magazines, including those promoting fitness, have been idealising a very thin body and reproducing harmful, dominant discourses for decades (Markula, 2001). Dancers compete for selection by "gatekeepers," who hold subjective ideals that continually influence the standard, but who are still influenced by the culture's norms (Benn & Walters, 2001; Green, 2000; Pickard, 2013). Balanchine's 'anorexic look' has influenced ballet's ideal body for decades and demoralised dancers (Ritenburg, 2010); if having realistic expectations is

linked to happiness, pursuing his unrealistic and unattainable expectations has caused many dancers unhappiness (Benn & Walters, 2001). According to Benn and Walters (2001), dancers also experience contradictory messages, such as when adequate nutrition and health are verbally encouraged, but thin dancers who appear to have poor eating habits are promoted, leading to problematic behaviours being sanctioned by the system.

Michel Foucault's concepts have been used to illustrate the power of surveillance and the link between controlled discipline and behaviours adopted to attain an ideal ballet body (Green, 2000; Kaplan, 2009). From this perspective, ballet is authoritarian, and dancers must comply (Brace-Govan, 2002). Their docile attitudes and submissive responses are also evidence of cultural hegemony that has been absorbed and mirrored by dancers from a young age, as they learn that thinness signifies commitment and self-control and the absence of flesh are admired and rewarded by the system (Pickard, 2013). Although the dynamic between tradition and evolution in ballet is complex, Benn and Walters (2001) assert that "it is the unquestioning, subservient way in which this is done, sometimes even accepting abuse and unreasonable behaviour, which has been criticised as 'silent conformity'" (p. 140).

Some have questioned and challenged the construction of the body in ballet (Green, 2000; Kaplan, 2009). Benn and Walters (2001) proposed that stakeholders reconsider the ideal aesthetic and empower dancers by teaching them to be critical instead of accepting the norm, despite noting that some traditions will be easier to change than others. Dryburgh and Fortin (2010) also believe that certain aspects of ballet should change for dancers' health and well-being, and the artform's long term sustainability, but that this can be done without invalidating everything about ballet. Awareness of anatomy and nutrition should be prioritised (Benn & Walters, 2001), and the causes of body dissatisfaction and poor self-esteem better understood, to reduce health risks, where possible (Price & Pettijohn II, 2006). Alterowitz (2014) has also questioned authoritarian teaching styles in ballet and expressed that "the construction of the

ballet dancer as a docile subject in opposition to an all-knowing instructor might impede ballet's progression" (p. 8). She proposes a democratic approach to teaching ballet that is grounded in feminist principles, and encourages collaboration (Alterowitz, 2014). By being more reflective, dancers can examine the relationship between ballet, their body and their dancing, leading to a better integration of mind, body and self (Jackson, 2005).

Causes of body image problems. Norms and the impact of various aspects of the training environment, including attire, mirrors and constant surveillance have been debated in the literature, (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010; Green, 2000; Price & Pettijohn II, 2006).

Surveillance. Ballet dancers are typically under the constant surveillance of teachers, company directors and audiences which can be considered a form of discipline by the social institution (Green, 2000). Once dancers are aware of what is valued aesthetically, they tend to internalise the gaze of others and modify their behaviour to conform (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010). Self-surveillance is a form of socialisation that can cause dancers to become pre-occupied with their body and threaten their joy of dancing (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010; Kaplan, 2009). Dancers also observe their peers in a form of lateral surveillance, and compare themselves to each other; however, this may happen less as dancers mature and learn to consider judgement less important (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010).

The impact of gaze varies depending on the context, how the message is conveyed and by whom, as well as the age and current confidence levels of the dancer. It can be positive if it makes dancers feel worth watching and reminds them to be healthy, honour their bodies and engage in self-care (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010). It can also motivate and provide structure, helping them "conform to a prescribed codified technique which gives them a sense of power and satisfaction" (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010, p. 96). A more judgemental and harsh form of surveillance linked to demands of an unattainable 'ideal' body can be damaging if it leads to low self-esteem and psychopathological behaviours (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010; Green, 2000).

Mirrors. The use of mirrors in dance classes provides dancers with a constant view of themselves and their peers, and encourages dancers to conform to the balletic ideal (Diehl, 2016; Radell, Adame, Cole, & Blumenkehl, 2011). Dancers' bodies are objectified when they compare their physical selves to the image in the mirror, leading Radell, Keneman, Adame, & Cole (2014) to consider it "an instigator of a poor body image" (p. 175). Concentrating too much on their reflection may also cause dancers to disassemble and isolate certain parts of their body based on the visual stimulation, which can lead to a distorted image (Kaplan, 2009). However, the relationship a dancer has with mirrors can be complex (Radell et al., 2014). There is also a debate about whether mirrors aid technical improvement or inhibit performance (Radell et al., 2014). Many dancers value its presence because it helps them self-correct and develop technically (Radell et al., 2011). Others argue that over-reliance can cause dancers to miss opportunities for proprioceptive feedback, disconnecting them from their somatic senses to the point that they become 'absent' from their bodies, which may limit their learning and potentially cause injuries (Diehl, 2016).

Attire. Attire can impact teachers' efficacy, choreographers' visual messages, and dancers' training and performance experiences (Price & Pettijohn II, 2006; Tomic-Vajagic, 2014). Dancers are often required to wear skin-tight clothing, which can contribute to body dissatisfaction and related health problems (Tomic-Vajagic, 2014). Price and Pettijohn II (2006) found adolescent dancers' body image to be lower when leotards and tights were worn and higher when wearing loose clothing, displaying less skin. Dancers may feel physically exposed and distracted in tight clothing, and less satisfied with their performance as a result (Price & Pettijohn II, 2006). However, a dancer can experience freedom or discomfort, depending on their current body-image and self-esteem, which fluctuate over time and in different contexts (Tomic-Vajagic, 2014). In the classroom, some consider tights and leotards necessary to assess form and alignment, provide technical advice and intervene to help dancers

avoid injury, while other argue that they accentuate body features, promoting self-consciousness and weight-loss behaviours (Price & Pettijohn II, 2006).

The body of literature focused on embodiment, and body image and dissatisfaction is extensive. Research has focused on numerous problems associated with ballet from many angles, including in the context of broader societal norms. The role of ballet's norms in dancers' body-image and eating problems has been well covered, as has the impact of teachers, gatekeepers and other dancers on those norms. Although many of the problems still seem to exist, the literature indicates that norms and cultural influences have changed over the past few decades, as has the construction of the ideal ballet body and how dancers relate to it to some extent. This particular area of study has been well researched, and without denying the risks and challenges faced by ballet dancers, it seems like there are other perspectives on the topic that may produce an alternative picture worth considering.

Eating behaviours. Insufficient nutrient and calorific intake can lead to fatigue and poor concentration, which may then lead to injuries (Aalten, 2005). However, there seems to be a lack of awareness and consensus about the risks of poor nutrition in the ballet world (Benn & Walters, 2001). Nutrition-related messages from outside the dance community are often distrusted while communication from teachers is trusted because of their legitimised role, even if their advice is problematic (Pickard, 2013). Regarding nutritional interventions, Benn and Walters (2001) found that despite increased knowledge, health messages are still being blocked by socio-cultural powers in the dance community. Such communication is influenced by deeply entrenched cultural taboos, and a gap between rhetoric and lived experience is apparent (Benn & Walters, 2001; Kaplan, 2009; Pickard, 2013). According to Benn and Walters (2001) this is the power and role of ideology in maintaining oppression and evidence of how institutions and social systems legitimate their control over individuals. The role and impact of coaches' nutritional knowledge on athletes has also been considered because of their

strong influence (Botsis & Holden, 2015). Botsis and Holden (2015) noted that the nutritional knowledge of most athletes, particularly adolescents, is also inadequate, which suggests that lack of nutritional awareness is not limited to ballet dancers but may be a problem concerning the broader physical performance community. Despite this, the eating-related academic literature seems more focused on problem discourses in relation to dancers (Ravaldi et al., 2006) and on topics like 'optimal nutrition for enhanced performance' with sports athletes (Close et al., 2016; Desbrow et al., 2014).

Ballet company cultures seem particularly slow to change and reluctant about new ideas that threaten tradition. As professional dancers become teachers, choreographers and directors after retirement, they carry their learnt traditions forward, perpetuating the cycle (Benn & Walters, 2001). Developing some form of disordered eating behaviour is considered inevitable in a professional ballet environment (Kaplan, 2009) and thinness is often rationalised because of ballet's focus on aesthetically pleasing physical 'lines,' optimal elevation and partnering work, including challenging lifts (Benn & Walters, 2001; Pickard, 2013). However, teachers are increasingly expressing concern about dancers' health which Benn and Walters (2001) considered a significant sign of hope. Dancers, particularly pre-professionals, are also becoming more informed; however, Benn and Walters (2001) questioned whether this indicates real change or "merely youthful optimism since the pressures of the profession have not yet been experienced" (p. 145).

Literature on disordered eating in ballet dancers reveals inconsistent results due to inadequately sized samples of different populations and different variables being studied (Arcelus et al., 2014). Schluger (2010) also noted that "longstanding covertness, denial, and resistance from the insulated dance community add to the difficulty of uncovering critical information about eating disorder etiology and risk factors" (p. 126). It must be noted that

appearance is not always indicative of health; a thin dancer with optimal nutritional habits can be healthier than one with a higher BMI who is malnourished (Benn & Walters, 2001).

Many studies have explored eating disorder risks in ballet dancers, which involve a complex interplay between biology, culture and individual characteristics, including perfectionism, and body dissatisfaction (Kaplan, 2009; Ravaldi, et al., 2006). Penniment and Egan (2012) found that perfectionism was mediated by exposure to "thinness related learning (TRL)" (p. 14) in dance class, through which dancers realise that being thin is considered more attractive (Annus & Smith, 2009). Thomas et al. (2005) hypothesised that self-imposed pressure to be thin was compounded by external environmental pressure. Both studies questioned whether more perfectionistic individuals placed themselves in highly competitive environments and were more likely to succeed as dancers for longer, which then increased TRL exposure and eating disorder risk, or if exposure to these environments and messages led them to become more perfectionistic (Penniment & Egan, 2012; Thomas et al., 2005). Goodwin et al. (2014) explored the relationship between perfectionism and eating psychopathology in a broader group of dancers, including ballet dancers. They found that conscientious perfectionism or high standards did not play as direct a role as self-evaluative perfectionism, or self-criticism in predicting eating disorders (Goodwin et al., 2014)

Reported trends in the academic literature on disordered eating in ballet dancers suggest that concern over the links between ballet and eating disorders is warranted; however, other studies have argued that participation in these activities alone is not a direct cause of eating-related pathologies, with various other dynamics playing an influential role (Revelas, 2013). Thomas et al. (2005) noted that "despite heightened genetic vulnerability and environmental pressure, the majority of ballet students do not exhibit eating disorders" (p. 264). Penniment and Egan (2012) also noted that because dancers involved in research are from different environments, it is difficult to isolate exact causal factors. In addition, Francisco, Narciso, and

Alarcão (2012) and Toro, Guerrero, Sentis, Castro, and Puértolas (2009) found that problematic eating behaviours were more related to specific dance school and home environments than general sociocultural groups, and Toro et al. (2009) argued that parents and coaches should "avoid criticisms, disapproval, comments or jokes about the body, weight or food and should act with care and empathy" (p. 48). Due to the above factors, the prevalence of disordered eating in ballet dancers has been debated. Some studies have found that adolescent ballet dancers may be at increased risk for eating disorders (Dotti, et al., 2002), while others noted both groups displayed similar attitudes and behaviours, and concluded that adolescent ballet dancers were not necessarily at a higher risk (Toro et al., 2009). Risk factors in both groups included eating and performance pressure from dance or sports coaches, body weight dissatisfaction and avoiding showing one's body (Toro et al., 2009). Most adolescents in both groups also idealised a lean physique and low weight, aimed for a good diet, and displayed low self-esteem and perfectionism (Annus et al., 2008; Anshel, 2004).

Ringham et al. (2006) found similar eating patterns in anorexia nervosa patients and ballet dancers, such as preoccupation with weight, lack of nutritional awareness, unhealthy weight-loss methods and menstrual dysfunction. Eating disturbances in ballet dancers have also been compared to rates found in other physical activities (Ravaldi et al., 2003). However, when the problematic side of eating in sports has been discussed in the literature, it is often in relation to aesthetic sports (Krentz & Warschburger, 2013) or limited to particularly at-risk groups like female athletes (Smolak, Murnen, & Ruble, 2000; Spencer, 2014). Many sports and fitness contexts emphasise thinness or muscularity, which can lead to body image disturbances and problematic eating attitudes and behaviours (Markula, 2001). As in ballet, pressure to be thin is also mediated by self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction in these contexts (Francisco et al., 2012). Some sports overtly require controlled eating habits, and despite research acknowledging that adverse health risks might result from them, the language generally tends

to be more pragmatic (Close et al., 2016). Nutrition-controlling behaviours are constructed as understandable and acceptable in sports like cycling (Haakonssen, Martin, Jenkins, & Burke, 2015) and horse-riding (Wilson et al., 2014).

A recent meta-analysis study aimed to accurately identify the prevalence of eating disorders among dancers, including in ballet (Arcelus et al., 2014). Initially 91 relevant articles published between 1966 and 2013 were identified, with 58 being excluded due to language, small sample sizes, and a lack of clear definitions, relevant measurement tools and peer review (Arcelus et al., 2014). The 33 remaining studies were fully analysed, but Arcelus et al. (2014) noted that several limitations were still apparent, including non-homogenous samples, with some clearly defining their population and others including a mix of dance styles and age groups. Different variables were also measured using a range of tools, and many studies did not make use of a control group (Arcelus et al., 2014). Despite these difficulties, Arcelus et al. (2014) presented the following prevalence rates of eating disorders for dancers in general and ballet dancers, which seem to be the most accurate available:

Table 1

Prevalence of eating disorders in ballet dancers and dancers

	Ballet Dancers (%)	Dancers (%)
Eating Disorders (Overall)	16.4	12
Anorexia Nervosa	4	2
Bulimia Nervosa	2	4.4
Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified	14.9	9.5

Although many studies have drawn attention to relevant issues and informed important debates, research focused on socio-cultural and psychological concerns of ballet dancers, particularly females, has often framed them in unduly problematic ways. Although contextual challenges may cause psychological harm, it is also worth considering whether negative conclusions have been reached because of how questions have been framed, paradigms and methodologies have been used or even because such outcomes were desired. It is also possible that problem-focused research has highlighted unfavourable aspects of ballet and ballet

dancers while ignoring favourable and beneficial factors. Neglecting the probability of more nuanced dynamics may have led to the environment being framed in a one-dimensional way. Several studies discussed have described paradoxes apparent in ballet dancers' lives, such as the simultaneous strength and fragility of their bodies and minds.

Much of this literature draws on discourses that marginalise ballet dancers by defining them as oppressed, physically and emotionally stunted, psychopathological, and self-involved. As noted, in some cases, research that has intended to highlight and mitigate problems or 'fix' dancers may have unintentionally exacerbated the issues by reproducing dominant discourses. However, increasing amounts of social constructionist and discourse-focused research have distanced problems from ballet dancers and considered the defining role of language and dominant discourses in shaping their subjectivities. Constructions of ballet and ballet dancers are also not static, like society more broadly (Burr, 2003), and while some studies refer to ballet as intrinsically problematic, and dancers as stuck in negative stereotypes, others that highlight the socially constructed and evolving nature of ballet, dancers and the ideal ballet body and focus on alternative discourses are progressively becoming available.

Performance Research

Existing literature orientated to performance dynamics of ballet dancers is of key importance to the present study's research question. This study is focused on how dancers construct their subjectivity, but also on how these formations impact their performance lives. Research that has considered various performance concerns of ballet dancers, dancers and other high-performers (Hays, 2017), such as anxiety, the role of psychological skills as well as the impact of mental toughness on optimal performance will now be described to further clarify the apparent gap in the literature.

Performance anxiety. Walker and Nordin-Bates (2010) investigated professional ballet dancers' performance anxiety experiences, including the impact of internal aspects like self-

confidence, feelings of control and coping skills as well as external factors, like peers and feedback. Anxiety was perceived as either somatic or cognitive, with the former facilitating performance and the latter debilitating it (Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010). Walker and Nordin-Bates (2010) also found an inverted-U relationship between somatic anxiety and performance, meaning that too much or too little could be problematic. In contrast, cognitive anxiety had a negative linear relation with performance, meaning that too much psychological tension impacted performance adversely (Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010). Anxiety often increased with age and rank, but successful dancers developed more effective coping strategies in response (Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010). Dancers used various strategies to retain a sense of control and manage tension, like herbal medications, superstitions and psychological skills, including thought-stopping, self-talk and imagery (Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010). Measuring the impact of psychological interventions, Noh et al. (2007) found that relaxation training alone or no training did not help dancers improve their coping skills and reduce stress and injury rates as effectively as a broad-based coping skills approach, combining positive self-talk, imagery, and relaxation. However, according to Walker and Nordin-Bates (2010), although psychological interventions can potentially help dancers manage stress, the culture seems resistant to outside approaches, especially associated with sports. Increased buy-in from stakeholders may facilitate psychological interventions.

Performance anxiety experiences of ballet dancers have also been compared to other performing artists, like musicians. The interaction between performance anxiety and imagery (Finch & Moscovitch, 2016) has been considered in a music environment separately with some similarities to ballet and other performance environments noted. Musician's experiences of anxiety have also been studied in relation to 'flow' (Kirchner, Bloom, & Skutnick-Henley, 2008). "Flow" is a state of total immersion in and intense focus on an activity that was introduced by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and has since become an important concept related to

optimal performance. The role of stress and performance anxiety in various sports has also received attention, with Hamidi and Besharat (2010) finding that striving for perfection was associated with self-confidence and negative reactions to imperfection were associated with cognitive and somatic anxiety. Psychological stress-management interventions have been undertaken in these environments as well (Rumbold et al, 2011). This indicates that perfectionism and anxiety are not limited to ballet and dance environments, despite strong associations.

Psychological skills. Ballet is a performance art, yet the literature about performance mechanisms and challenges is sparse. Research on psychological skills in ballet dancers has focused predominately on the use and impact of imagery. Skilled ballet dancers were found to effectively make use of kinaesthetic imagery for the execution of *pirouettes* (Golomer, Bouillette, Mertz, & Keller, 2008), which helped them envision movement and better prepare, and facilitated their overall spatial experience. Fish, Hall, and Cumming (2004) found that professional ballet dancers made use of imagery for both cognitive and motivational reasons and that focusing on mastery of movements contributed to self-confidence, which influenced performance anxiety. Ballet dancers' use of imagery has also been compared to athletes, and non-athletes; Di Corrado, Guarnera, and Quartiroli (2014) found no difference in imagery ability and vividness between a group of female dancers and karate athletes, but found that both groups were more skilled in imagery use than non-athletes.

Although there is a lack of literature on ballet dancers' use of psychological skills, studies have explored them in relation to dancers and other high-performers more broadly, including ballet dancers (Hanrahan, 2005; Hays, 2017; Nordin-Bates, 2012). Klockare et al. (2011) explored how dance teachers use psychological skills, including goal setting and imagery, and their impact on dancers' development. Creating a task-orientated climate and focusing on learning was found to help dancers develop "group cohesion, self-confidence, and anxiety

management" (Klockare et al., 2011, p. 277). Teachers considered positive reinforcement preferable to harsh criticism, but indicated that task-focused critiques can help dancers realise their potential if an optimal climate had been created (Klockare et al., 2011). Teachers highlighted the importance of mental preparation before a performance, providing evaluation afterwards and emphasising effort more than performance outcomes (Klockare et al., 2011).

Many performance psychology concepts are relevant to dancers, and there are also several aspects of dancing that pose unique challenges, including the combination of athleticism and artistry, as well as the involvement of music and complexity of performing to subjective audiences (Hanrahan, 2005). In addition to imagery, Hanrahan (2005) found evidence that self-talk and self-reflection, as well as concentration and confidence-building techniques may be of value to dancers, and that some use a variation of these, often without formal exposure and training (Hanrahan, 2005). Nordin-Bates (2012) compared the relevance of sport psychology concepts within broader performing arts environments (Hays, 2017). In addition to similarities regarding disordered eating, injury and pain and perfectionism, performance concepts that were as relevant and applied comparably in both contexts included expertise development through deliberate practice, motivation, and flow experiences (Nordin-Bates, 2012). In each broad context, differences in relevance and description were found regarding personality, confidence, self-esteem, anxiety and various psychological skills (Hays, 2017; Nordin-Bates, 2012). Nordin-Bates (2012) also pointed out that some aspects of a performing arts environment are unique, and not relevant to sports; these include dynamics surrounding memorisation, creativity, the role of an audience and expression of emotions.

Wellness, flow and optimal performance. Also concentrating on the broader category of dancers, including ballet dancers, Draugelis et al. (2014) lamented that a growing body of research has focused on ill-being and injury whilst very little research on dancers' well-being is available. This led them to explore the psychosocial predictors of well-being and how to

promote them in a dance context (Draugelis, et al., 2014). Having a task-orientation and strong self-concept as 'a dancer' was related to various types of engagement, including confidence, vigour, enthusiasm and dedication (Draugelis, et al., 2014). Although an ego-orientation was linked with higher levels of worry and concentration anxiety, other factors were found to mediate the effect of anxiety, including self-confidence (Draugelis, et al., 2014). Promoting well-being as well as "recognizing effort and rewarding improvement" (Draugelis, et al., 2014, p. 8) were suggested to help dancers develop a positive self-concept.

Hefferon and Ollis (2006) identified several potential facilitators or inhibiters of 'flow' that are relevant in and some even unique to a dance environment. These include absorption in and enjoyment of a task, self-confidence and belief in skills, music and choreography, engaging in a pre-performance routine, costumes, make-up and stage setting, as well as interpersonal relations (Hefferon & Ollis, 2006). Thomson and Jaque (2016) compared dancers to opera singers and athletes in terms of overexcitability and flow, which are thought to aid optimal performance. Although all groups expressed finding subjective value in internal flow experiences, dancers displayed higher levels of overexcitability and therefore flow, than the other two groups (Thomson & Jaque, 2016). Dancers experienced more psychomotor and imaginational forms of overexcitability in particular, which are strongly linked to flow experiences (Thomson & Jaque, 2016). Flow and its links to mindfulness and mental skills has also been applied to a sports context (Kee & John Wang, 2008).

In contrast to many other high-performance environments, the body of knowledge regarding performance dynamics of ballet dancers is sparse. Topics related to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders and other psychopathologies have been studied extensively and sometimes repeatedly, which has contributed to the dominance of these discourses surrounding ballet dancers and constructed how ballet and ballet dancers are known in society. Although these problems may be legitimate and important, the present study has chosen to also

focus on alternative discourses, many of which relate to performance concerns. Just as ballet dancers can be compared to other performers regarding harmful factors (Hays, 2017), there might be alignment with beneficial aspects of high performance as well.

Ballet in South Africa

A general lack of research on ballet in a South African context is apparent, necessitating the inclusion of older studies to effectively outline the existing body of literature. It is possible that some research conducted elsewhere pertains to South African ballet dancers, but there are also unique challenges here (Nkosi, 2009). In this context, the paucity of performance-focused research is particularly notable, but studies on many topics are limited.

Physiological Research. Arguing that medical practitioners did not have sufficient knowledge about dance-related injuries, Triegaart (1987) suggested that dancers' training demands and physiological needs should be better understood. Myburgh, Berman, Novick, Noakes, and Lambert (1999) investigated the physical effects of poor nutrition and found that dancers with menstrual irregularity had a lower resting metabolic rate.

Psychological Research. Personality and development experiences in South African professional dancers have been researched, to identify and better understand the qualities needed to become a top performer. This includes van Staden, Myburgh, and Poggenpoel's (2009) proposed model for psycho-educational development, aimed at providing dancers with "a holistic perspective on their identity" (van Staden et al., 2009, p. 26) and promoting mental health. The negotiation between identity as a dancer and broader self-identity was highlighted, as was the impact of perfectionism, surveillance and others' expectations (van Staden et al., 2009). The influence of career transitions, support systems and coping strategies was also noted (van Staden et al, 2009). Lastly, van Staden et al. (2009) outlined challenges that dancers in this setting face and indicated the need to explore similar models, particularly those used in

sport psychology, to discover more about their relevance in dancers' personal and professional development.

Mirroring research on eating disorders conducted internationally, le Grange, Tibbs, and Noakes (1994) considered the implications of being diagnosed with anorexia nervosa in a ballet school. Despite highlighting concerns, they were encouraged to note that some teachers built strong relationships with dancers, were aware of the dangers involved in pressurising them to lose weight and maintain a thin physique, and willing to take steps to mitigate these risks (le Grange et al., 1994). In addition, students' commitment to a professional dancing career seemed like a reinforcement to avoid excessive weight-loss, which could lead to their expulsion from the school and threaten their careers (le Grange et al., 1994). They speculated that "a commitment to dancing, as opposed to dieting, seems to exceed any secondary gains that could be derived from having an eating disorder" (le Grange et al., 1994, pp. 375).

Studies have also focused on eating disorders in adolescent ballet dancers. In response to the paucity of research at the time, Montanari and Zietkiewicz (2000) compared disordered eating in age-matched ballet dancers to 'normal' adolescents. Referring to speculations of malnutrition and "covert eating disordered behaviours" (p. 31) that appeared in the popular media, and a "conspiratorial silence" (p. 31) in the ballet world, they sought to obtain confirmatory evidence. Findings included higher drive for thinness, preoccupation with dieting and interpersonal distrust in dancers compared to samples of 'normative' adolescents, and similarities between their sample of adolescent dancers and individuals diagnosed with anorexia and bulimia (Montanari & Zietkiewicz, 2000). Expressing concern about the health of young ballet dancers, they called for further research into this population's eating behaviours, and educational interventions around the dangers of eating disorders and poor nutrition (Montanari & Zietkiewicz, 2000). They acknowledged that although social norms surrounding weight and aesthetic expectations of audience might change over time, other

aspects of ballet, including partnering work and lifts might maintain the status quo because higher BMIs in dancers could lead to demands for greater strength and energy expenditure and potentially increase injury rates (Montanari & Zietkiewicz, 2000).

Performance Research. Few studies have investigated performance dynamics in this context. Myhill and Steele (2012) explored South African ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness and found indications that it plays a similar role for them compared to athletes, but also several unique aspects due to dancers being both athletic and artistic during performance (Myhill & Steele, 2012). Several paradoxes of their lives as performers were found, such as loving ballet but also finding it challenging and that they require strong support systems but must drive their own careers (Myhill & Steele, 2012). In addition, they needed to focus on themselves but also found competition with peers to be beneficial and aimed for perfection but experienced enhanced performance with maturity and the ability to let go of unrealistic expectations (Myhill & Steele, 2012).

Developing a thick skin was important for dancers to cope but so was remaining open to feedback to improve and they needed to navigate different challenges within practice and performance environments (Myhill & Steele, 2012). Lastly, dancers' complex relationship with confidence and anxiety was highlighted (Myhill & Steele, 2012). This study of South African ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness seems to be the only available example of the concept being studied in relation to professional ballet dancers. In contrast, the broader body of literature into mental toughness and peak performance in various sport environments is large (Bull, Shambrook, James, & Brooks, 2005; Crust, 2007; Gucciardi, Gordon, Dimmock, & Mallett, 2009; Harmison, 2011).

Panebianco-Warrens (2014) applied Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, by exploring the role of music in professional South African ballet dancers flow experiences of and whether it contributed to enhanced performance and well-being. Aspects of flow were apparent, and

music contributed an important and unique dynamic compared to other types of performers (Panebianco-Warrens, 2014). Panebianco-Warrens (2014) noted that some dimensions of 'flow' were more predictive of dancer's flow experiences than others, including "merging of action and awareness; autotelic experience; loss of self-consciousness; sense of control; time transformation; challenge-skill balance; total concentration; unambiguous feedback; and clear goals," (p. 73) with the first three being most relevant.

Although no South African performance literature comparing dancers to other groups of performers is available, one study has evaluated the relevance of sport psychology concepts within a music context (Steyn, Steyn, Maree, & Panebianco-Warrens, 2015). Musicians were provided training that involved a combination of two prominent sport psychology theories – Psychological Skills Training (PST) and the mindfulness-acceptance-commitment (MAC) approach – and the training was found to have relevance in this context (Steyn et al., 2015). In contrast to a control group that received no training, improvements in self-confidence, performance anxiety, concentration, relaxation and motivation were noted within the experimental group that did receive training (Steyn et al., 2015). This led Steyn et al. (2015) to conclude that the concepts within the two sports psychology approaches mentioned above, are relevant and meaningful within a music context. Although a similar investigation has not been conducted with South African dancers, the relevance of these concepts within another performing arts context indicated that they may also be applicable in a dance environment. In the South African research literature related to ballet dancers, there is a clear lack of recent studies overall, but even more so in terms of psychological, and specifically performance-orientated studies. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how top South African ballet dancers draw on discursive resources to construct their identities, and how these formations impact their performance lives.

<div style="text-align:center">Discourse Analytic Research</div>

Although few studies on performance with South African ballet dancers exist, it is also apparent that few qualitative and particularly discourse analytic studies have been conducted in this context. In ballet research, various related concepts like social constructionism and the ideas of Foucault have been applied, because of their relevance to ballet dancers.

Social Constructionism and Ballet

Many studies have made use of a social constructionist lens to highlight the socially constructed nature of ballet dancers' identities and bodies (Jackson, 2005; Loch, 2015; Ravaldi, et al., 2006; Wainwright & Turner, 2006). Gendered constructions of ballet dancers have also been considered (Adams, 2005; Croft, 2014; Fisher, 2007a; Fisher, 2007b; Gray & Kunkel, 2001; Turk, 2014). Such research has indicated that many aspects of ballet are evolving, and illustrated how socio-cultural norms within a ballet context and broader society shape the lived experiences of dancers. It is also important because it draws attention to how dancers use of discursive resources impacts ballet's norms in turn.

Social Constructionism, Ballet and Foucault

The ballet-focused academic literature has drawn on the work of Foucault, whose concepts have provided a framework for critical stances to emerge (Ness, 2011). Researchers have highlighted the dominant discourses that influence ballet dancers, including the constraints they are under and problems that emerge as a result (Fisher, 2007b; Pickard, 2012). Drawing on Foucauldian concepts, studies have argued for improved training approaches and proposed alternative ways-of-being that may empower dancers (Alterowitz, 2014). Foucault's views on power and the impact of surveillance have also contributed greatly to understanding key aspects of ballet dancers' lives (Benn & Walters, 2001). The 'gaze' of various stakeholders is internalised, leading to self-surveillance and potentially also various physical and mental health issues (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010). Foucault's concepts of ascetic discipline and training

'docile bodies' (Green, 2002) has contributed to research into dancers' embodiment (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Brace-Govan, 2002), and ballet's aesthetic ideals (Pickard, 2013) which impact dancers' body image and dissatisfaction, as well as eating behaviours (Benn & Walters, 2001) and injuries (Wainwright et al., 2005).

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis Research and South African High Performance

As discussed, an exploration of the existing ballet research in South Africa reveals several gaps in the literature. In addition to the general paucity, no available studies seem to have taken a discursive, or even social constructionist approach to studying ballet dancers in this country. In any case, Burr (2003) describes how social constructionist research is anti-essentialist and therefore findings are not generalizable, because they are "historically and culturally specific," (p. 7). Therefore, Foucauldian discourse analysis studies conducted elsewhere cannot be assumed to be relevant here, though commonalities are possible.

This approach has been relevant to several studies involving sports and performance. Pringle and Markula (2005) examined the pain and injury experiences of male rugby players, as well as the discourses of 'masculinity' that impact them. In addition, Kavoura, Ryba and Chroni (2015) traced the discourses through which female Greek judokas articulate their sporting experiences and explored how they construct their identities through the negotiation of sociocultural beliefs and gender stereotypes. They discovered that gender power dynamics were apparent in the sports context and that the athletes negotiated between agency and accepting pre-existing subject positions, but that the latter often proved more powerful than the former, which contributes to the reproduction of patriarchal power (Kavoura, et al., 2015).

A handful of studies have also utilised Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore the world of dancers, and including ballet dancers specifically. Whitehead and Kurz (2009), taking a feminist poststructuralist approach, explored how pole dancing has been reconstructed as a recreational form of aerobic exercise after being associated exclusively with strip clubs for

many years. They focused on how issues related to empowerment, objectification and sexuality are managed by recreational pole dancers (Whitehead & Kurz, 2009). Irving and Giles (2011) analysed interviews with professional contemporary dancers to consider the ways they negotiated their identities in relation to dominant and alternative discourses surrounding the "valid dancing body and aesthetic" (p. 371).

Most relevant to ballet dancers is Ritenburg's (2010) Foucauldian genealogy of the ideal female ballet dancer's body. She explored how its social construction has evolved over the past several decades by analysing photographs of principal ballerinas appointed to the New York City Ballet by Balanchine between 1960 and 1983, contemporary magazine articles on the topic, and children's books about ballet (Ritenburg, 2010). The study highlighted key influences on ballet, how these have been normalised by those in the industry (Ritenburg, 2010). Attempts to resist dominant discourses may in fact have contributed to their reinforcement (Ritenburg, 2010). Descriptions of a dancer's ideal body and 'typical' identity, can play complex and diverse roles in dancers' lives. This suggests that discourse analysis through a Foucauldian lens can potentially illustrate the nuances and subtle dynamics impacting these high performers, and draw attention to the ways that dancers are continually constructed by and construct the discourses surrounding and influencing their world.

Implications of Literature Review

It is apparent that globally, the prevalence and consequences of poor body image and eating disorders have been linked to the extreme aesthetic focus of activities like ballet (Alexias & Dimitropoulou, 2011; Arcelus et al., 2014). Various physiological and psychological problems associated with ballet have also been identified in the academic literature (Aalten, 2005; Brace-Govan, 2002; Noh, Morris, & Andersen, 2007) and popular media (Aronofsky et al., 2011). Such factors and the real sacrifices dancers are called to make are important to consider in the stories dancers tell about their past development and current

performance lives. However, the preponderance of literature highlighting these dominant, and often negative aspects of dance has contributed to various negative stereotypes of ballet dancers being formed and reproduced (Clabaugh & Morling, 2004). Studies that have proposed various benefits of taking part in ballet are too limited to have as much dominance as the problem-focused literature (Draugelis et al., 2014).

Little research has been aimed at uncovering discourses that ballet dancers draw on in forming their identities and enhancing their performance. Furthermore, few studies available seem to have focused on ballet dancers using a discursive lens, especially in a South African context. Van Staden et al. (2009) suggested that further qualitative research can be of value to better understand the lives of ballet dancers. They further indicated that insights from sports psychology may be valuable to consider in relation to the personal and professional development of dancers (van Staden et al., 2009*).* The present study's intended focus on the discourses related to performance enhancement and well-being is a response to observations within psychological ballet research that insights from sports psychology may be valuable (Draugelis et al., 2014) for exploring ballet dancers' stories. After all, "overall, the same mental skills used in sport are beneficial for dancers" (Hanrahan, 2005, p. 127).

The lack of academic research into performance dynamics indicates that the ballet dancer is being neglected in this regard. Dominant discourses surrounding health, pain and injuries, embodiment and the ideal ballet body, as well as disordered eating are prominent while other perspectives on how dancers construct their subjectivities and create meaning are lacking. The world of professional ballet is challenging, but considering how successful dancers construct their identities and manage to perform at optimal levels on a consistent basis may contribute to an alternative picture of ballet dancers being painted and offer new insights into ballet and the lives of ballet dancers. How the present study intends to do so will be described shortly.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the available literature on ballet dancers, including physiological research that clarifies the physical demands faced by dancers. Various psychological studies have been considered, including those on personality, gender, and embodiment, the last of which includes many concerns, related to body image and eating disorders. Performance research in ballet dancers has been discussed, as has South African ballet research; both areas have indicated apparent gaps. Discourse analytic research in ballet has also been explored, including studies that have drawn on Foucault's ideas and a handful of FDAs. Lastly, I reflected on the implications of this review for the current research. Important paradigmatic and theoretical foundations for engaging with the following few chapters will now be outlined and discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The focus of this chapter is the various, interconnected theoretical perspectives in which the current research is located. Broad paradigms and movements, such as postmodernism, poststructuralism and social constructionism, as well as the assumptions they make about language, the world and people will be introduced. The thinking and work of Michel Foucault, which provides important insights of relevance to this study, will be described and discussed. Topics will include his views on power, discourse and knowledge, and how he theorised individuals, including the dynamics involved in negotiating identity and subjectivity. This will be followed by a consideration of how this theory applies to the study of discourse and concluded with a brief exploration of Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA).

Theoretical Movements and Paradigm

According to Parker (2005) we need to engage in theory to "reflect on how we produce empirical work and how we write it up" (p. 148). This provides a frame of reference for the approach taken, encourages knowledge-based (epistemological) reflection and helps link findings to a broader context (Parker, 2005). In addition, because much of this theory provides a foundation for engaging with the following chapters of the current study, another intention of this chapter is to make the research and its findings more accessible to a broader audience by describing the theoretical points of departure and clarifying key terminology.

Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

Postmodernism refers to the broad movement during the second half of the 20th Century, that debated and critiqued Marxism, humanism, and structuralism – the belief that language was governed by a general set of rules (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008), and other aspects of the modernist movement including its ethos of progress, belief in a correct way of doing things and associated practices of "control and normalization" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xxiv). The debates were responding to social unrest in 1960s France (Willig, 2013), which

demonstrated the need for a new socio-political model because the existing ones could not account for the complexity of social life and flow of power (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Various protest movements that opposed the established social order and its inequalities began to voice frustration and spread globally, and this vantage-point of critique became known as poststructuralism, which tends to be used interchangeably with postmodernism (Parker, 2005). Many focused on the concept of power and its dynamics, expressing the need for a more flexible model (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008).

Poststructuralist thinkers contend that there is no single objective truth to be discovered and no internal essence to human beings that exists outside of social relations and language (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). In Western society at least, we are living in a postmodern, plural world in which technological advancement and the growth of mass media and social communication, have made many different forms of knowledge more accessible (Burr, 2003). The role of disciplines like psychology in defining normal and forming prevalent 'truths' about people and reality started to be critically examined (Hook, 2013). Questions about how modern psychology had developed and its relationship with power were asked (Hook, 2013), and its implications for people were considered (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). The subject needed to be decentred (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984) from the illusion of coherent integration and stable, essential personality (Hook, 2013): "The project of positivism formed the very regime of production through which a psychological subject appeared" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 94).

The political status of issues like health, education, gender, sexuality and normality were exposed (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Here politics refers to "relationships of control, authority and subordination" (Hook, 2013, p. 13). Emphasising politics may seem out of place in psychological research because the field's political nature has traditionally been played down, with researchers presenting themselves as objective observers (Hook, 2013). In mainstream

psychology, the individual was also separated from and prioritised over the social, which made it difficult to observe how the individual is formed by socio-political power (Hook, 2013). These approaches are critiquing mainstream psychology and its role in producing knowledge (Willig, 2013), not suggesting that all psychology should be rejected (Hook, 2013). Psychological knowledge and practices often involve "asymmetrical relations of power" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. ix), which can be contested by taking a critical stance to the ways in which power and politics influence our assumptions (Hook, 2013). Taking such an approach to the formation of ballet dancers through social interactions and power relations will enable assumptions about them to be explored, and challenged with alternatives.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is a multidisciplinary paradigm associated with poststructuralism that takes a critical stance towards what is taken-for-granted (Willig, 2013), and highlights how historical and cultural contexts shape knowledge, identity and subjectivity (Burr, 2003). Social constructionists reject the idea that the world and people have a particular 'nature' to be discovered, arguing that this essentialist thinking may trap and pathologize people (Hook, 2013). Without denying a material world, social constructionists argue that people are produced in specific socio-economic contexts, so knowledge is based on a subjective perspective and objective facts do not exist (Burr, 2003). Social constructionists often engage with oppressive and damaging aspects of mainstream psychology (Hook, 2013).

Social constructionists have debated how best to analyse the ways phenomena and people are constructed (Burr, 2003). Approaches are not neatly differentiated and defined, but include discursive psychology, critical psychology, deconstruction, narrative analysis and FDA (Burr, 2003). Some have argued that a combination of these would be most beneficial (Fairclough, 2003). Amongst them, two main schools of thought are apparent, often distinguished by the extent to which individuals are considered to have personal agency, or freewill. In micro-

sociological analysis (often associated with discursive psychology) the focus is on language use as linguistic performances and how individuals, as social agents, interact to construct reality (Willig, 2013). The other, which focuses on the macro-processes of interaction (often associated with FDA), seeks to explore how language and 'discourse' create divisions and rules, regulate aspects of the world, and shape individuals, who are therefore considered to have less agency (Burr, 2003).

Language and discourse. During the 1980s, social constructionists rejected the structuralist, positivist stance that language is a transparent, value-free medium "structured independently of our intentions" (Parker, 1999, p. 5) and through which we express thought, and began to study how language "is organised into patterns of discourse" (Parker, 2005, p. 88). From a poststructuralist perspective, "the person cannot pre-exist language" (Burr, 2003, p. 47) because it constructs people and the concepts, categories and thoughts available, so has tangible consequences. Our understanding of the world is based on how conceptual frameworks have been reproduced within different cultures, in the past and present (Burr, 2003). Meaning is produced, maintained and contested through language (Willig, 2013) Social constructionists focus not only on language, but also on social interaction as productive of knowledge: "when people talk to each other, the world gets constructed" (Burr, 2003, p. 8).

Debates about language in psychology are also debates about subjectivity (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Poststructuralists argue that identity is temporary and shifting, because if language provides meaning, which is continually changing, then alternative meanings and constructions are possible (Burr, 2003). People construct meaning out of the discursive resources available to them, including statements about the world and behaviours (Parker, 1997). According to Parker (1997) "these sets of statements are 'discourses,' and in the process of using discourses, people find themselves caught up in meanings, connotations and feelings they cannot control. As well as moving language, then, people are moved by

language" (p. 480). This 'turn to discourse' shows how we use, but are also used by language (Parker, 2005). However, discourse is more than just language, and refers to "patterns of meaning which organize the various symbolic systems human beings inhabit" (Parker, 1999, p. 3), and each claim to represent 'the truth' (Burr, 2003). Discourses are related to "the practices through which certain objects, concepts and strategies are formed" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 101) and can be linked to institutional divisions of knowledge.

Identity. Social constructionism and other forms of critical psychology challenge our dominant views and stereotypes that reflect and reinforce social patterns and power relations, which have become interwoven with popular discourse (Hook, 2013). Psychological attributes, like beliefs, motivations and personality, which many believe originate in our minds, are denied to us, and only available through language and discourse (Burr, 2003). Social constructionists prefer to focus on 'identity,' which is conferred through the social realm and "achieved by a subtle interweaving of many different threads" (Burr, 2003, p. 106) like age, class and gender. These identities are not considered to be accidental, but influenced by various socio-political dynamics (Burr, 2003). At the same time, various alternative discourses are available to a person, each offering different identities and ways-of-being; therefore, we are not necessarily determined by discourses, but our behaviour is shaped in response to them, when we either claim or resist what is discursively available (Burr, 2003). Situated within this postmodern and poststructuralist perspective, and taking a social constructionist stance towards language and discourse, the current research will explore how professional ballet dancers' identities and subjectivities are formed through such processes.

Foucault's Contribution

Michel Foucault was one of the poststructuralist thinkers who questioned the nature of power and its impact on people (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Foucault proposed that power could distort 'truth' and that better understanding its effects could provide important insights into

concepts like patriarchy and capitalism (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Foucault illuminated how power produces truth, and how our 'truths' about ourselves and the world are linked to various institutional practices which aim to "know and manage human individuals" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. ix). Foucault approached the study of discourse in two distinct ways – critical and genealogical (Willig, 2013), which he considered not to be completely separable (Foucault, 2011). The former took a critical stance to identify the systems of power that shape discourse and reality, while the latter aimed to explore the historical processes through which discourses formed and organised objects in the world (Foucault, 2011). He viewed power, not as repressive but productive of knowledge, and critically examined psychology's role in forming the social world we are immersed in (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). In considering various objects, Foucault (2002), wanted to know what had "ruled their existence as objects of discourse" (p. 45) and argued that we needed to consider discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 54). Foucault's conceptions of power, discourse and knowledge, and the analytical approach inspired by them, will disturb and expose the dominant 'truths' in this ballet context, and allow other possibilities to be identified and elaborated (Willig, 2013).

Discourse and Objects

The 'objects' created through discourse include everything that we comprehend to exist in the world and refer to (Parker, 1999). Foucault (2002) indicated that an object "does not pre-exist itself" (p. 49) but is created through discourse, and all objects exist through particular, imposing historical conditions, or "rules of formation" (p. 41). Foucault (2011) lamented how discourse has been made to appear as a small, insignificant bridge between thinking and speaking in Western society. For Foucault (2002), a discourse is a regularised "system of dispersion" (p. 41) involving the interrelation between "objects, types of statement, concepts,

or thematic choices" (p. 41). All societies control how discourse is produced and distributed through "a complex group of relations" (Foucault, 2011, p. 49).

Dominant discourses. Foucault believed that what counted as 'truth' was influenced by societal institutions and that some versions of reality would be considered more common sense than others, depending on the cultural and historical context (Willig, 2013). This influences social relations (Willig, 2013), because "the power to act in particular ways, to claim resources, to control or to be controlled depends upon the knowledges currently prevailing in society" (Burr, 2003, p. 68). Power is accessed through discourse when people define an object or person; when the world is defined based on the interests of only some and people are defined in oppressive ways, power inequalities are revealed (Burr, 2003). It is therefore accessed when people talk about peak ballet performance or ballet dancers, and the pictures formed are influenced by institutional structures and power relations.

Alternative discourses. An awareness of how we have come to understand ourselves can help us question how legitimate these 'truths' are (Willig, 2013). This also illuminates discourses that have been marginalised and gives "voice to those whose accounts of life cannot be heard within the prevailing knowledges" (Burr, 2003, p. 78). This can help us challenge prevailing discourses, which are always under threat from differing views that bring various possibilities for acting (Burr, 2003). However, "discourses which explicitly challenge existing social institutions, will be strongly resisted" (Burr, 2003, p. 110) and so negotiating identity typically involves conflict as knowledge is either claimed or resisted. By focusing on how discourses regulate 'the truth,' shape our social world (Willig, 2013) and mould us into who we are (Foucault, 1986a), we can see the relationship between power, discourse and knowledge, which Foucault was particularly interested in (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Considering how discourses regulate 'the truth' about ballet dancers and their performance

contexts will allow less prominent ways of being to be illuminated, which dancers may use to challenge existing 'norms,' should they choose to.

Power, Knowledge and Truth

The concept of power in Western society is often defined as prohibitive and in relation to state administrations and legal systems, which Foucault (2003a) considered to be a "wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power" (p. 307) that was nonetheless common. Foucault (1986b) suggested that we think of power as a technical force that "produces domains of objects and rituals of truth," (p. 205) and therefore reality, instead. In suggesting that power is exercised through discourse (Willig, 2013), Foucault was referring to it not as a possession or property, but "an effect of discourse" (Burr, 2003, p. 68) available to anyone, that "operates *through* individuals by acting upon their actions" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 94). Foucault's views on power and knowledge unsettle the concept of 'truth;' many of the truths in our society are linked to scientific, biomedical and patriarchal discourses, but if we accept the availability of multiple other discourses, we see the instability of having one reality (Burr, 2003). This applies to our knowledge about ballet dancers.

Discourses are also closely tied to "institutional and social practices that have a profound effect on how we live our lives" (Burr, 2003, p. 75). Foucault did not see the emergence of certain discourses as manipulated intentionally by powerful groups, but rather that the conditions of possibility, practically and socially, were ideal for some versions and not others; however, he did think that discourses, once formed, could be used by the relatively powerful to further their own interests (Burr, 2003). He cautioned against finding a causal link between specific social conditions and the emergence of related discourses (Willig, 2013) and saw the possibilities for discourses emerging and becoming appropriated as unpredictable, so he refused to make any sweeping judgements (Burr, 2003). Nonetheless, we may be living in

certain ways, some of which may be harmful to us, not through choice but the influence of powerful social institutions and groups (Burr, 2003, p. 74).

Foucault (2002) indicated that what we accept should be questioned, and clarified that we need not reject all forms of knowledge and 'facts,' but that "the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed" (p. 28) and their origins considered. Simply exploring our assumptions is also not sufficient; the value of the exercise lies in attempting to change perspective from viewing something "as 'a given' . . . to seeing it as 'a question'" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xix) to be explored. This is not aimed at arbitrating between existing possibilities but at freeing up options (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Foucault questioned major knowledge domains and how they defined what we must accept; the processes that created these domains were exposed and their fragility revealed, which made their transformation a possibility (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). These domains frame what we understand about ballet dancers, so exposing them may allow for shifts in perspective.

Power relations. Discourses "position us in relations of power" (Parker, 1999, p. 6) because the way some topics are socially represented, has implications for how people, including dancers, are treated. Foucault (2002) said that these complex relations are "established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns" (p. 49) and norms. Analysing power this way can reveal how people "exercise power over others" (Foucault, 2003b, p. 135); however, there are seldom clear separations "between those 'on the side of power' and those 'on the side of resistance'" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, ix).

The will to truth. As mentioned above, every society has a "regime of truth" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 316) that defines which discourses it accepts and presents as truthful. There is also "a battle 'for truth,' or at least 'around truth'" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 317) involving the rules that define and separate facts and falsities, and attach "specific effects of power" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 317) to what is considered true. The regime of truth currently prevailing in Western society

can be linked to "the formation and development of capitalism" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 317) which has extensively impacted socio-economic life, including ballet. According to Foucault (2003a) the issue is not about challenging what people think "but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth" (p. 317). When we step back and consider "this will to truth which has crossed so many centuries of our history" (Foucault, 2011, p. 196) we see a system of constraint and exclusion that has relied on the support of institutional practices.

Institutions. Discourses reinforce institutional practices, social relations and material structures, and these also, in turn, legitimise and influence discourses, and both shape how people think about and live their lives (Foucault, 2011). For example, people can access various discourses through education, but various constraints, like access, mean that "education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry" (Foucault, 2011, p. 206). Ballet education seems to be no exception. Foucault related discourse to a range of marginalised social groups and connected them to certain practices in their context, which allowed him to identify "links between institutional practices and the construction of subjectivity" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 93). This study proposes to study these dynamics in ballet.

Disciplines. Large bodies of knowledge can be described as 'disciplines' (Willig, 2013) – fields like "medicine, science, psychiatry, biology, economics" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 99), that define the practices that form particular objects, including in a ballet environment. In this way, "disciplines operate as 'regimes of truth'" (Parker, 2005, p. 3) that control how discourse is produced by acting as an "anonymous system at the disposal of anyone who wants to or is able to use it" (Foucault. 2011, p. 201). According to Foucault (1986c), disciplines must "neutralize the effects of counterpower" p. 209) and resistance by creating divisions and "hierarchical networks" (p. 209).

Disciplines and biopower. Over the past century, various cultural, disciplinary and institutional practices have emerged (Willig, 2013) in response to various societal evolutions, like industrialisation, that have allowed certain discourses to circulate, which have produced "the individual of contemporary western industrial society" (Burr, 2003, p. 69). The disciplines of today emerged in response to demographic changes in society, including a rapid population increase and technological advancements that enhanced production (Foucault, 1986c). Existing sovereign powers could not manage the increasing complexity, necessitating a new mechanism of power that could be integrated into "the productive efficiency of the apparatuses from within, into the growth of this efficiency" (Foucault, 1986c, p. 208). According to Rabinow and Rose (2003), Foucault used the term "'apparatus' to mean a device orientated to produce something . . . whose purpose in this case is control and management of certain characteristics of a population" (p. xvi).

The disciplines had to solve the problems that arose from this rapid growth, like health, sanitation and fertility (Foucault, 1986c). During this time, we have come to be understood as "living beings whose very vitality, longevity, morbidity, and mortality can be managed, administered, reformed, improved, transformed" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xii). These concerns and practices can be grouped together by the term 'biopower' which highlights their biological nature, but also how aspects of life can be shaped to achieve certain political ends (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Biopower marked a shift from repressive prohibition to mechanisms that enabled "the formation of the self through techniques of living" (Foucault, 2000b, p. 89). In this new "field of biosociality . . . self-government, self-regulation, and self-responsibility" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xxx) were promoted as the state, or central administration's scope was increasingly limited relative to the growing complexity of society.

Foucault cautioned against considering the state in its current form as having developed without a connection to and concern for individuals, and suggested that it is a "structure in

which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns" (Foucault, 2003b, p. 132). According to Foucault (1986c), if the "the economic take-off of the West" (p. 210) was made possible through capital accumulation, the methods of accumulating and controlling people allowed for a "political take-off" (p. 210) compared to previous forms of power. In fact, his view was that both forms of accumulation could not be separated, as solving "the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them" (Foucault, 1986c, p. 210) was not possible.

A discipline differs from an institution or apparatus; however, various institutions, including schools and prisons, have appropriated disciplines because they are useful means of exercising power (Foucault, 1986c). According to Foucault (1986c), "the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate" (p. 212) and are bound up with power relations in society that can be linked to the marginalisation of certain groups. Disciplines aim to exercise power at the lowest economic cost possible and achieve maximal social effects in terms of in terms of intensity and extension (Foucault, 1986c). In fact, Foucault argued that the capitalism enabled the conditions that allowed 'disciplinary power' to emerge (Foucault, 1986c). These social conditions and societal developments they enabled, also impact ballet and dancers.

Disciplinary power. According to Foucault (2003a), seventeenth and eighteenth-century monarchies developed several important "state apparatuses (the army, the police, and fiscal administration)" (p. 307). Even more significant was the shift from 'sovereign' to a new form of 'disciplinary' power through which people are managed, and controlled by willingly submitting themselves to their own and others' scrutiny (Burr, 2003). Foucault considered its techniques to be more "effective and efficient" (Burr, 2003, p. 72) and "less wasteful"

(Foucault, 2003a, p. 307) than previous ones. Disciplinary power and its procedure "allowed the effects of power to circulate in a manner at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted, and 'individualized' throughout the entire social body" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 307). Discipline creates individuals and regards them "both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 188). Foucault (1986a) described how disciplinary power sought to explore the human body, break it down and rearrange it, and also "defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies" (p. 182) and behaviours. It aims to increase the body's skills, capacity, usefulness, and its own domination over it (Foucault, 1986a). Discipline, and the following techniques of disciplinary power, are all relevant in ballet.

Training. Foucault (1986b) describes how "'strict discipline'" (p. 188) emerged as "an art of correct training" (p. 188) in the early seventeenth century: "The chief function of the disciplinary power to is to 'train' . . . It 'trains' the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 188). More attention was paid to the body, to manipulate and shape it, and ideally, the body "obeys, responds, becomes skilful, and increases its forces" (Foucault, 1986a, p. 180). Foucault (1986a) indicated that various regulations were imposed and "always meticulous, often minute" (p. 183) techniques used, many reminiscent of armies, schools, and hospitals, which were important in that they defined a "mode of detailed political investment of the body, a 'new microphysics' of power" (p. 183) that spread out broadly into the population.

To prevent chaos in society, political forces aimed to create "the mechanism of the perfect army, of the disciplined mass, of the docile, useful troop, of the regiment" (Foucault, 1986a, p. 185). According to Foucault (1986a), this "military dream" (p. 186) extended into broader society, to mould the masses into "meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine" (p. 186) through "permanent coercions" and an "indefinitely progressive form of training" (p. 186) that sought "automatic docility" (p. 186). The concept of docility refers to a body that may "be

subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (Foucault, 1986a, p. 180). In Western society and probably more broadly, the human body had become the target of strict demands, limitations and, prohibitions (Foucault, 1986a), as would the ballet body.

Foucault (1986b) described how schools became "pedagogical machines" (p. 190) of training, that were obligated to produce healthy bodies, qualified professionals, as well as obedient and moral citizens. This environment made possible continuous oversight and observation, as well as "progressive objectification and the ever more subtle partitioning of individual behaviour" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 191). In fact, Foucault (1986b) suggested that these "disciplinary institutions" (p. 191), began to employ "a machinery of control that functioned like a microscope of conduct" (p. 191) and became an "apparatus of observation, recording, and training" (p. 191). Other "simple instruments" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 188) used include continuous normalising judgement and regular examination, both familiar in ballet.

Surveillance. Foucault (1986b) indicated that, discipline works through coercion, which is made possible by observation; it induces "effects of power" (p. 189) and "maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (p. 199) because of his "compulsory visibility" (p. 199). Disciplinary power, on the other hand, "is exercised through its invisibility" (p. 199). This dynamic was modelled on an ideal military camp, according to Foucault (1986b) in which "power would be exercised solely through exact observation" (p. 189), wherein each gaze would form part of a powerful network that "supervised one another" (p. 189), and the concept influenced how prisons, asylums, schools, and hospitals were organised. Foucault (1986b) suggested that the ideal disciplinary apparatus would involve "hierarchized, continuous, and functional surveillance" (p. 192) and while its broader, insidious expansion was related to the mechanisms of power that were linked to it, its extended reach also helped disciplinary power become "an 'integrated' system, linked from the inside to the economy and to the aims of the

mechanism in which it was practiced" (p. 192). It was also organized as a multiple, automatic, and anonymous power" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 192).

The efficacy of this form of surveillance as a means of social control can be illustrated by the concept of 'the panopticon,' an architectural invention first created during the 1800s in which a watchtower was placed at the centre of a prison building with prison cells arranged around it in a circle (Burr, 2003). This vantage point allowed a guard to effectively monitor all inmates, and furthermore, because the prisoners could not see the guard and therefore know when they were being observed with certainty, they began to monitor and regulate their own behaviour (Burr, 2003). Foucault suggested that in a similar way to the prisoners being watched, surveillance becomes internalised by all in society, including dancers, who then display self-discipline by managing their behaviour based on prevailing norms (Burr, 2003).

Normalising judgement. According to Foucault (1986b), disciplinary powers also maintain order by defining current norms and repressing various nonconforming behaviours by using "particular forms of judgement" as punishment (p. 193). This "art of punishing, in the regime of disciplinary power" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 195) functions through its perpetual presence and distinct operations: It differentiates, provides ideals, measures abilities, and hierarchizes according to value – some researchers consider ballet to be a clear example of this (Green, 2002). More broadly, the "concrete nature of power became visible" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 305) within institutions involved in the mental and behavioural normalisation of individuals. For example, "The Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching with the introduction of a standardized education . . . it is established in the standardization of industrial processes and products" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 199).

Such disciplinary punishments needed to enforce a certain order, and environments like the army, schools and workplaces were governed by strict rules that organised and regulated activity and time, speech and behaviour as well as the various bodily functions (Foucault,

1986b). The norm was also reinforced through various, subtle procedures "from light physical punishment to minor deprivation and petty humiliations" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 194). Like surveillance and in conjunction with it, normalisation emerged as another powerful instrument for the control of a rapidly growing population (Foucault, 1986b).

Examination and documentation. The examination became a central procedure for defining individuals as objects and effects of power (Foucault, 1986b). According to Foucault (1986b), it is a "space of domination" (p. 199) in which "disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects" (p. 199) through "hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgement" (p. 199). The examination enabled the "disciplinary functions of distribution and classification, maximum extraction of forces and time, continuous genetic accumulation, optimum combination of aptitudes" (Foucault, 1986b; p. 199).

Foucault (1986b) indicated that in addition to surveillance and normalisation, documentation was also used to "capture and fix" (p. 201) individuals, and writing became another form of power "in the mechanisms of discipline" (p. 201) as a result. The "apparatus of writing" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 202) constituted the individual as an object to be described and analysed, not to identify generalisations but to "maintain him in his individual features, in his particular evolution, in his own aptitudes or abilities" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 202), through a system of comparison that allowed phenomena to be measured and facts to be characterized.

Government

Foucault (1982) did not consider exercising power to necessarily imply either violence or consent and described it instead as "a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult . . . in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely" (p. 789). It makes available ways-of-being within a range of possibilities, and exercising power involves "guiding the possibility of conduct" (p. 789). Therefore, Foucault viewed power not as "a confrontation between two adversaries" (p. 789)

but related to "government" (p. 789) in a broad sense. This is linked to various strategies for influencing behaviour (Foucault, 2000a). According to Rabinow and Rose (2003), "the growth of the apparatuses of the state, the development of the disciplines of administration and civil service, and the rise of professionals is intrinsically linked to projects, plans, and practices to conduct the conduct of subjects" (p. x), including those who take on the identity of 'professional ballet dancer.'

Subjects. In addition to examining the flow and impact of power and discourse through society from an historical point of view (Willig, 2013), Foucault was also interested in how these developments had constructed individual subjects (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). He was not seeking to "write the history of *who we are*" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xx) but develop an analytical technique that could illuminate how "*our relation to ourselves*" (p. xx) has been shaped, and investigate the process through which people became subjects (Foucault, 2003b). Discourses do not define the "thinking, knowing, speaking subject" (Foucault, 2002, p. 60), but create a set of possibilities out of which a subject may be determined (Willig, 2013). Just as power constrains discourse, which then defines certain rules for forming objects, now subjects are rarefied: "none shall enter the order of discourse if he does not satisfy certain requirements" (Foucault, 2011, p. 203). Some discourses, including those shaping dancers, are open and offer a range of possibilities for subjects while others are stricter and forbidden for many people – "they are differentiated and differentiating" (Foucault, 2011, p. 204).

Subject positions. Discourses create objects in multiple ways and "offer positions from which a person may speak the truth about objects" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 102), which in turn create specific vantage points, each of which show a certain version of reality and define "a moral location" (p. 102). The subject positions and representations that discourses invite us to take up cannot be avoided but we can accept or try to resist them (Burr, 2003). If we do accept or are not able to resist a subject position, then we are "then locked into

the system of rights . . . and obligations that are carried with that position." (Burr, 2003, p. 111), which define how we act. Many different subject positions are offered, taken up and resisted all the time, and this process defines us all, including ballet dancers (Willig, 2013). According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008), subject positions influence a person's beliefs and perspective about truth. The subject is "a position maintained within relations of force" (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2008, p. 94), that emerges within a field of possibility. Our positions have implications for our negotiated identity and exercise of power (Burr, 2003).

Subjectivity. By providing us with subject positions, the discourses we are embedded in also provide us, including dancers, with subjectivity (Willig, 2013). By taking up a position in a discourse and subjectively experiencing reality from that viewpoint, a specific range of concepts, narratives and ways-of-being are presented (Burr, 2003). While these positions and subjective experiences often involve a commitment to "the categories of person to which we are allocated and see ourselves as belonging" (Burr, 2003, p. 119), subjectivity is complex and can entail a multitude "of continuous and discontinuous forces, states and feelings" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011, p. 95). We may negotiate our subject positions to some extent, but the process is strongly influenced by the discourses at our disposal and positions on offer, so the subjectivities available to us may be experienced as limiting or even harmful, and as providing little space for negotiation due to complex power relations (Burr, 2003).

Subjectification. Subjectification refers to "the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject" (Foucault, 2003b, p. 126), within a specific moral context and according to some form of "ethical goal" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 99). Ethics, in this case, does not mean a certain personal philosophy but refers to the process of engaging in self-regulation and certain practices to achieve a variety of transformative objectives (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Foucault became interested in this process of self-formation (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Foucault's (2003c) objective was "to sketch out a history of the

different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves" (p. 146), and question this knowledge as particular "truth games" (p. 146).

Truth games and technologies. The "intellectual and practical techniques" (Rabinow and Rose, 2003, p. xxi) individuals use to form themselves have not emerged randomly and but are always connected to certain practices and "the places and spaces, the apparatuses, relations, and routines that bind human beings into complex assemblies of vision, action, and judgment" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xxi). These 'devices' or 'instruments' can be applied to "the government of self and others" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011, p. 99). Each trains and modifies individuals in different ways, in terms of skills development and the acquisition of certain attitudes (Foucault, 2003c). Foucault (2003c) described four types of 'technologies' that function as games of truth in the process through which we are shaped, but indicated that they do not necessarily function in isolation.

Firstly, "technologies of production" (Foucault, 2003c, p. 146), make it possible to "produce, transform, or manipulate things" (p. 146). Secondly, Foucault (2003c) indicated that "technologies of sign systems" (p. 146) allow us to use signs, symbols and shared meaning to produce language. These first two are linked to the fields of science and linguistics respectively, but the last two held Foucault's (2003c) attention: "technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals" (p. 146) and "technologies of the self" (p. 146), which allow people to engage in various "operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and a way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (p. 146).

Technologies of power. According to Rabinow and Rose (2003), Foucault thought of an 'apparatus' as a strategic formation of various elements that defined and regulated "targets constituted through a mixed economy of power and knowledge" (p. xvi), which was "articulated by an identifiable social collectivity" (p. xvi). Such assemblages may have been

constructed as an initial response to particular historical challenges, but prove to have broader relevance over time, and so are "turned into a technology of power" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xvi) that is applicable to other cultural and historical contexts. Technologies of power aim to "govern human conduct at a distance" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011, p. 99).

Technologies of the self. Foucault (2000b) considered how the subject had been formed in various contexts and historical moments "as a possible, desirable, or even indispensable object of knowledge" (p. 87) and how experiences of oneself had been organised. Foucault (2000b) defined these 'technologies of the self' as procedures and techniques found in every society, that are "suggested or prescribed to individuals" (p. 87) to help them determine, maintain or transform their identity to certain ends, "through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge" (p. 87). According to Rabinow & Rose (2003) self-construction generally takes place in relation to certain authorities, truths and values, which constrain possible "models of selfhood" (p. xxi); however, a degree of "self-crafting" (p. xxi) is always required in which one exercises power over oneself (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011).

Agency. The perspective of people as products of discourse has raised several questions about personal agency (Willig, 2013). If our thoughts, speech and actions are influenced by broader, powerful discourses, then how we perceive ourselves is a product of our socio-cultural context and not a reflection of our hopes and intentions (Willig, 2013). If we are nothing more than "the manifestations of prevailing discourses" (Burr, 2003, p. 121), this implies an inevitability about, and lack of power over our situation. This is an extreme position, shaped by determinism, that discourse is afforded more agency than people, and one generally denied by social constructionists (Burr, 2003). Foucault's views seem to have been misrepresented; while he is often associated with a strong focus on the power of discourses in shaping the world, his concepts still allow room for personal agency (Burr, 2003).

Despite the role of discourses in constituting us as subjects, we are still human agents, capable of critical thinking and historical reflection, of analysing the discourses surrounding and forming us, and making choices about which subject positions to accept or resist (Burr, 2003). People, including dancers, simultaneously make use of and produce discourse, and are constructed by it (Burr, 2003). Therefore, Foucault saw change as possible through giving voice to marginalised discourses and situating them as alternatives that can offer us different identities and possibilities for acting and experiencing the world (Burr, 2003). However, this should be aimed at challenging existing knowledge and views, which may be oppressive, and exploring possibilities for less damaging positions, not at forcing a particular alternative identity on someone, as this would be oppressive as well (Burr, 2003).

Change is not easily accomplished because of how dominant discourses and powerful social structures support the establishment and oppose resistance (Burr, 2003). Nonetheless, Foucault (2003b) asserted that power does not determine but makes available possible options and "at the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (p. 132) which allow the subject to escape "pure determination" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011, p. 94). Foucault (2003b) suggested that "the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days" (p. 132) is to discover and "promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries" (p. 132).

Many of Foucault's ideas that have been discussed, including those related to power, discourse, governmentality and subjectivity will be used to guide the analysis of how professional ballet dancers construct their identities and ways-of-being. His thinking about biopower, institutions and disciplinary power, including its techniques of training, surveillance, normalising judgement and examination will also be drawn upon when

discussing what the analysis reveals about the discourses and disciplines surrounding dancers lives in relation to peak ballet performance.

Discourse Analysis

Several research approaches are available within a social constructionist paradigm (Willig, 2013), all of which assume "the constructive force of language" (Burr, 2003, p. 24). The present study's intended focus is on how professional ballet dancers produce meaning through language, so discourse analysis is indicated (Parker, 1997). However, several approaches to discourse analysis exist due to methodological disagreement (Willig, 2013), so the field has been described as "highly fragmented" (Potter, 1998) and containing a "bewildering variety of approaches to the study of texts" (Parker, 1999, p. 3).

Discourse and meaning

Nonetheless, discourse analysis is about having "a sensitivity to language" (Parker, 1999, p. 2). It has also been described as a process that is learnt by doing, which is difficult to define in certain terms, but important principles include abandoning preconceptions, challenging assumptions and taken-for-granted meanings, and a focusing on providing a persuasive, insightful and critical account that is clear and well supported by the data (Tonkiss, 2012). It is also important to look for patterns in a text "against a cultural backdrop" (Parker, 1999, p. 2) because context influences meaning more than particular words do. According to Parker (1999), "discourse may be studied wherever there is meaning" (p. 1) and a text is "any tissue of meaning which is symbolically significant for a reader" (p. 3) including writing and visual images, amongst other forms. We can 'deconstruct' various texts and reveal how discourses create a certain version of reality and construct our identities and ways-of-being (Tonkiss, 2012). Analysing discourse can also be "useful for showing how powerful images of the self and the world circulate in society (and in psychology), and for opening a way to question and resist those images" (Parker, 2005, pp. 88-89).

Discourse and psychology

Within the field of psychology, some discourse analysts are interested in examining how discourse has constructed reality in a way that has led dominant psychological views about the world and people in it to be regarded as common-sense (Parker, 1997). However, Parker (2005) suggests that researchers attempting to do this refuse to "individualize the phenomena" (p. 5) being studied, "essentialize" (p. 5) what is described and "psychologize" the explanations provided (p. 5). Discourse analysis will not reveal hidden, objective truths (Willig, 2013), but does allow us to consider the "intimate connections between meaning, power and knowledge" (Parker, 1999, p. 6) and how they influence our views, including those about, and belonging to, ballet dancers.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA)

FDA is concerned with the ways in which discourses, and the material and social conditions in which people are immersed, impact their experience of the world, and has been applied to research on identity, power relations and social marginalisation (Willig, 2008). It focuses on macro-processes of interaction (Burr, 2003), as previously described. Proponents of it often criticise approaches that focus purely on linguistics for shifting attention away from power relations in prioritising how language is technically organised and assuming that all participants in a situation have equal status (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008).

In considering how Foucault's work can help us examine ballet dancers' subjectivities and identities, it is important to note that defining a strict approach and rigid methodology would be contrary to what he proposed (Willig, 2013) and that he would "have been wryly sceptical about the growth of 'Foucault studies' and the related attempt to discipline his thought and turn it into an orthodoxy" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. vii). What Foucault contributed was less of a methodology and more a movement of critical thought (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xv) that was not focused on 'judging' from a moral position, but creating "possibilities within

existence" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. vii). However, according to Parker (1999), "the kinds of analysis that have made use of Foucault's work have tended to fracture texts into different discrete discourses which then hold positions for speakers" (p. 3).

Foucault was also particularly interested in points of conflict and contradiction, which he analysed because the formation of one usually indicates that "something prior" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xviii) has taken place to provoke uncertainty and difficulty. According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008), when objects and practices in discourse become 'problematic,' they are more "visible and knowable" (p. 99), which exposes "knowledge/power relations" (p. 99), and allows the enquiry to be grounded in "the wider politics of the present" (p. 101). They also invite us to think differently "by taking up a position outside our current regimes of truth" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 101). Exploring the discourses related to ballet dancers' performance lives will allow for positions to be taken up outside of current assumptions and truths about them and ideally lead to alternative understandings and possibilities for dancers.

Conclusion

This chapter has embarked on an exploration of the various movements, paradigms and theories that shape how the current research is being approached. The postmodern and poststructuralist movements, and their implications for research have been introduced. Situated within such perspectives, social constructionism has been outlined, and key aspects of it, including the role of language and discourse have been noted. Foucault's work, including his views on power, its implications for social life, and the how it is impacted by institutional and disciplinary structures, has been discussed. This also entailed a focus on Foucault's ideas about personhood and the implications of these for subjectivity and agency. Following this, discourse analysis, and FDA, have been outlined with a view to contextualising the methodology and research design chosen, which will now be described.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

During this chapter, the research question, aim and objectives will be revisited. The paradigmatic and theoretical point of departure that was outlined in the previous chapter, will then be briefly reiterated. This will be followed by a description of the research design, including the sampling and data collection procedures followed in the present study. Foucauldian discourse analysis will then be explained, in terms of the method to be followed and its implications for the analysis. Relevant ethical considerations will also be outlined, including an engagement with the researcher's voice, positionality and reflexivity.

Research Question

How do top South African professional ballet dancers draw on available discursive resources to construct their own subjectivity and create meaning through the stories they tell of peak ballet performance? In addition, how do these constructions inform the enhancement of their performance and ways-of-being?

Aim

To construct how top professional ballet dancers in a South African context draw on discursive resources to form their own subjectivity and create meaning through the stories they tell of peak ballet performance. In addition, to draw attention to how these constructions inform the enhancement of their performance and ways-of-being.

Objectives

This endeavour seeks to highlight the dominant, often negative discourses that present ballet as problematic and seem to adversely impact ballet dancers. It also intends to draw attention to some of the less prominent, alternative discourses surrounding ballet that contribute towards peak ballet performance.

Paradigmatic and Theoretical Point of Departure

As indicated, the theoretical paradigm at the core of this qualitative study is social constructionism, which is concerned with how social reality is constructed and its implications for human experience (Willig, 2013). It will allow me to explore how professional ballet dancers' subjectivities are influenced by language and discourse (Parker, 1999), and allow what is taken-for-granted to be "rendered problematic" (Burr, 2003, p. 29). From this view, meaning evolves, so "an infinite number of possible meanings or constructions" (Burr, 2003, p. 56) are possible. Therefore, dancers' identities and subjectivities are considered fluid.

Discourse Analysis

Through discourse analysis, the ways discourses construct professional ballet dancer's identities and stories can be critically examined (Parker, 1997). It will also illuminate power dynamics, linked to dominant discourses that enable some subjectivities and ways-of-being in this ballet environment, while excluding others (Foucault, 1982), and alternative discourses that may be less prominent, but valuable for meaning-making (Parker, 1999). Events can be represented in various ways through language, so any object, including 'peak ballet performance,' may be shaped by many discourses, each painting it differently (Willig, 2013).

Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA)

Discourses differ in their stability, extent to which they shape knowledge and the world, and the variety of representations they enable, because of power (Foucault, 2011). When speaking about power, Foucault (1982) was referring to how discourses produce suitable contexts for some versions of reality and not others, which reinforce current social structures and power relations. Despite this, alternative constructions are always available through language, but may have been marginalised (Parker, 1999).

Research Design

Influenced by the work of Foucault, FDA has been chosen as the method for this study because of its focus on discourse, and the relationship between an object and the social structures surrounding it (Parker, 1999). It will allow me to examine how professional ballet dancers' subjectivities are shaped by power relations (Foucault, 1982), and how dancers construct the object 'peak ballet performance,' by deconstructing selected texts (Parker, 2005).

Sample

As indicated, any material where meaning is found, including written, visual and physical texts, may be subjected to an FDA (Parker, 1999). The present study will analyse existing archival data in the form of interview transcripts (see Appendix A), to answer the above research question. The four transcripts to be analysed were collected as part of a previous interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study (see Appendix B), about professional South African ballet dancers' perceptions and experiences of mental toughness (Myhill & Steele, 2012). At the time, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed. The seven participants were identified through purposive sampling, which involved approaching a South African ballet company to request access to dancers in its employ. A former principal dancer was also contacted directly by the researcher. A company representative gave permission (see Appendix C) for company members to be involved, and facilitate arrangements with six dancers, which was necessary due to scheduling demands. Once potential participants had been identified by the company, they were emailed to request their involvement (see Appendix D). All dancers contacted agreed to participate, and each provided informed consent prior to their interview (see Appendix E).

The interviews took place in June and July of 2012. At the time, three of the participants had only recently begun dancing professionally and had *corps de ballet* status, the most junior rank of formal employment in the company. Three participants had exposure to dancing

principal roles, with two having been formally appointed as principals, the highest rank in the company. The former dancer had recently retired from dancing professionally after a long career as a principal dancer, but was still involved in the industry as a ballet teacher. This combination of participants was deliberately sought at the time to gain insight into whether dancers' experiences differed throughout their careers. In terms of inclusion criteria, the participants had to have experience dancing ballet professionally, and the six current dancers had to be employed by a ballet company. The experience required to reflect meaningfully on the topic depended on the dancer's rank, with the younger dancers having an average of two years' experience. The three dancers with principal exposure had more extensive experience, but were also at different stages in their careers; one had extensive experience as a principal; another had recently been promoted formally to the rank after several years of exposure to such roles; the third had gained experience performing principal roles, but had not yet been formally promoted. As each dancer's career had spanned a different number of years, the main criteria for inclusion was that they had danced principal roles professionally.

The interviews, which were conducted by the researcher of the current study, were semi-structured and involved discussing several open-ended questions (see Appendix F). The interviewing style was informal and conversational in nature. The interview questions focused on what being a ballet dancer entailed for them, their development, how they experienced ballet culture, as well as factors that had enhanced or detracted from their success. The questions aimed to gain a general view of their lives as ballet dancers and elicit stories about their broader experiences. Only the final question was explicitly related to mental toughness. Each interview was 60 to 90 minutes long, and was audio recorded. All recordings were then transcribed in detail, creating seven documents of 18 to 42 pages, which totalled over 180 pages of data. These were then subjected to an IPA. The IPA differs in several ways from the FDA involved in the present study, which will be indicated shortly.

Data Collection

As mentioned, several archival interview transcripts collected during the previous IPA study constitute the data for the present study. Analysing data that has been studied previously is justified because the research question, theoretical assumptions, and method of analysis in the current study differ from the initial project (Willig, 2013). Recognising that data can provide different knowledge and insights depending on the research question, Willig (2013) compared research to constructing a building where the "same bricks (the data) could be used to build a number of very different buildings" (p. 62). During the initial IPA study, the interviews produced extensive, rich data, and not all could be included. Therefore, the current researcher will re-use a portion of the data, to answer a new research question, through a different paradigmatic lens, using an alternative form of analysis. This decision was also informed by the limited availability of principal ballet dancers, and resulting value of the data, and ethical concerns linked to maximising the benefit derived from the information.

As the data had already been collected, little activity regarding data collection was required. However, the previous research was conducted at another university, and the transcripts intended for analysis are the intellectual property of that institution. Therefore, the university and supervisor involved in the initial study were contacted, and consented to the reuse of the relevant information (see Appendix G). In addition, further exploration of the data was not explicitly covered in the initial consent form. Permission was only obtained for the initial study. Therefore, a representative of the ballet company was approached (see Appendix H) to request permission to contact the dancers previously involved, which was provided (see Appendix I). Following this, contact with the seven participants was attempted (see Appendix J), to obtain their informed consent for the current study (see Appendix K).

Five of the participants agreed to the relevant data being re-used, and the other two, having left the company, were not successfully contacted. Both were previously part of the corps de

ballet group. The three senior dancers were still with the company at the time of contact and all provided informed consent, as did the former dancer. The third junior participant was no longer with the company, but contact was made, and consent provided. However, because four of the five transcripts were linked to dancers with principal experience, the decision was made to proceed with only those transcripts, to specify the study's focus. The data involved in the present study are therefore transcripts of interviews with female ballet dancers who have performed in principal roles, and reached the peak of their profession, to varying extents. As for the previous IPA study, large sample sizes of texts are not needed for a FDA, where an in-depth exploration is required (Burr, 2003). Therefore, four transcripts offer sufficient data. In fact, the amount of information involved might be considered extensive for a FDA, but as each transcript includes valuable insights throughout, the full texts will be analysed.

Data Analysis

In preparing the transcripts for analysis, an additional consideration has been addressed. In an IPA, like FDA, "the way in which something is said can affect its meaning" (Willig, 2013, p. 350). Therefore, transcripts should include detail such as pauses, speech errors, changes in emphasis or volume and other non-verbal communication. The IPA that was carried out during the initial study sought to understand the participants' experiences and required fine detail in the dancers' responses, but not the interviewer's. However, because discourse analyses are considered co-constructions (Willig, 2013), researchers making use of approaches like FDA are encouraged to include fine detail for both the interviewer's questions and comments, and the interviewee's responses (Burr, 2003). Therefore, the recordings and transcripts have been revisited to provide finer detail for the interviewer's questions and responses as well.

Researchers embarking on a FDA are encouraged to abandon preconceptions as far as possible and not look for specific answers, but let the data speak for itself (Tonkiss, 2012). Any assertions made need to be "grounded in textual evidence and detailed argument"

(Tonkiss, 2012, p. 412). This does not mean the aim is an objective description, but a critical, insightful and useful account, that is well supported by the data (Tonkiss, 2012). FDA draws attention to conflicts and contradictions (Parker, 2005) that disrupt the coherence of a piece of discourse, allowing insights into the text's internal hesitations or inconsistencies, and the way that the discourse excludes alterative accounts" (Tonkiss, 2012, p. 414).

Various approaches to conducting a FDA have been suggested (Parker, 2005), because the procedure for this type of analysis is considered subjective and somewhat intuitive (Willig, 2013). Due to Foucault's anti-structuralist stance, defining a rigid procedure would contradict key aspects of his approach (Foucault, 2011). As such, no compulsory procedures have been defined. However, empirical standards must still be met, and academic conventions satisfied, by making methods and theories used explicit (Parker, 2005). Therefore, although FDA researchers are encouraged to use some discretion, several procedures have been suggested. In the present study, procedural guidelines recommended by Willig (2013) will be followed when analysing the data from a Foucauldian perspective. Having integrated the procedures proposed by several others, Willig outlined six stages to consider when analysing discourse.

During the initial stage, articulations of the object 'peak ballet performance,' including both implicit and explicit constructions will be identified (Willig, 2013). Secondly, these constructions will be situated in wider discourses, and historical and cultural contexts (Willig, 2013). In the following four stages, Willig (2003) indicates that ramifications of these constructions are explored: The third stage involves assessing what is being achieved by each discourse; subject positions offered by each discourse will be in focus during the fourth stage; in the fifth stage, possibilities for action allowed by the discourses, constructions and positions will be explored; lastly, subjectivity, and the experiences, thoughts and feelings allowed by various discourses, will be considered in the sixth stage (Willig, 2013). Further detail of the analysis process will be provided in the following discussion chapter.

Ethical Considerations

Like the previous study, ethical considerations have been prioritised during the current research. A full explanation of the new study's aim and requirements was communicated to all dancers, and informed consent provided based on this. This clarified the voluntary nature of their continued participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I indicated that steps would be taken to ensure the avoidance of harm to participants. Although the risk of harm to the participants was small, participants were provided with steps to take if problems arose, which have not been necessary to take in the previous or current studies thus far.

Confidentiality has been central to the current process, as it was during the IPA when, the current researcher assured participants that their identities would be protected. Each had been interviewed by the researcher, making anonymity impossible in the current research; however, no names or personal, identifying information are included in the transcripts, nor will they be in the report, to protect dancers' identities from readers. During the initial study, the company involved needed to manage logistics because of scheduling demands, so participants' involvement was known to a few company employees; however, this was explained to participants prior to the initial study and consent was provided accordingly.

Participants were also informed that the data may be used for further research, when they provided consent for the present study. The possibility of publishing the present study's findings after the project's completion was also communicated. Upon completion of the report, feedback, including insights that might be relevant to dancers, will be provided to all participants and a company representative. This forms part of efforts to make the research available and accessible to the participants and broader ballet community (Parker, 2005). After the study's finalisation, the data is to be retained for 15 years in the psychology archives (room 11-24), a requirement of the University of Pretoria. Participants were informed of this when obtaining their consent for the present study (see Appendices I and K).

Quality

Validity and reliability concerns are considered irrelevant for discourse analysis (Willig, 2013). However, to address quality issues and meet empirical standards, considering the inherent subjectivity involved, findings are typically assessed according to internal cohesion, reasonableness and evidence for findings (Tonkiss, 2012; Willig, 2013). To enhance credibility of the analysis process and outcomes, a reviewer, who is familiar with FDA within psychology, has been tasked with reviewing the current researcher's initial analysis, to assess whether the findings can be considered sound, justified in the data and related to the participants' descriptions and stories (Parker, 2005). Further clarity about the reviewer and how we related during the analytic process will be provided shortly, and the review process and its outcomes will be discussed in the following chapter. Quality is also enhanced when a researcher attends to their subjective involvement in forming knowledge (Parker, 2005).

A Reflexive Position

Social constructionists acknowledge that a researcher will always have a perspective and influence on their research, so engage with their subjectivity and involvement, rather than suppressing it in the pursuit of objectivity, as done in positivist methods (Parker, 2005). Furthermore, there is an inherent interaction between the participants' stories and the researcher's experience of meaning found in the text during a discourse analysis (Willig, 2013). According to Parker (1999), analysts become "part of the text" (p. 8) and need to be accountable for their representation of it and their role "in the construction of meaning" (p. 8). Reflexivity is important because of the unequal power relations in psychological research, in which the researcher is typically in an empowered position (Macleod, 2013). Power relations inform the research process, because the exercise of choice is power (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011). Therefore, a researcher must become "an active self-reflexive agent"

(Parker, 2005, p. 157) because their identity and subjectivity are also socially constructed through various contexts and discourses.

The psychological researcher's position. Through a social constructionist lens, the relational nature of human subjectivity is vital in knowledge formation, and should be treated like "an invaluable and essential aspect of research" (Parker, 2005, p. 27). Reflexivity is not just a self-reflective exercise, but positioning the researcher within a socio-historical context is important (Parker, 2005). The focus is not on researchers' feelings and confessions but exploring how institutional relationships form subjectivity (Parker, 2005). Considering the researchers' position is important because it also informs their subjectivity, which "has enabled some things to happen in the research" (Parker, 2005, p. 30), while excluding others. Critical psychological researchers, should not claim that research unfolds spontaneously, but question the conditions that enable some outcomes over others (Parker, 2005). In daily interaction, everyone, including those in a research context, participates in "either reproducing the way the world is or transforming it" (Parker, 2005, p. 13).

Interpersonal dynamics are influenced by power relations and institutional structures, so it would be naïve to suggest that relationships between the researcher and participants are unlimited and open (Parker, 2005). Such dynamics, and the researcher's choices have moral implications and political dimensions, that must be accounted for in the choice of topic, questions posed, and processes followed, (Macleod, 2013), because rather than it being a neutral science, "power 'runs in the veins' of psychology" (Hook, 2013, p. 14), and impacts all knowledge produced, and practices engaged in. Considering this, the current researcher will describe pertinent aspects of her own context and the interviews (Willig, 2013).

The researcher's voice. The researcher's subjective expressions of engaging with the analysis are often captured in a research journal, which Parker (2005) suggests can help create distance from the research, which enables reflection; however, this approach, like others, still

shapes subjectivity. Nonetheless, moving away from what is being studied can help researchers consider how their subjectivity has been formed (Parker, 2005). Rabinow and Rose (2003) noted that for Foucault, "thinking was action, and action was motion – and as a thinker and as a person, Foucault sought to be in motion" (p. xxii). They (Rabinow & Rose, 2003) further indicated that he valued and practiced detachment, the attempt to "to detach oneself from oneself" (p. xxii), because this distance enabled motion, which in turn allowed "a recurrent activity of self-detachment" (p. xxii).

During the current research, distance has been important as the researcher is enmeshed in the context and has occupied various positions participants, and data, which will be elaborated shortly. To promote distance, enable reflection and question assumptions, the researcher has used a journal to track the process, and adopted a third-person writing style during the initial chapters (Parker, 2005). However, a third-person style is also a hallmark of positivist research reports (Parker, 2005). According to Parker (2005), this allows the writer to hide their perspective, and limits what we may learn about the research. It enables researchers "to talk with the anonymous voice of authority, using the passive voice" (Macleod, 2013, p. 532). These were not the reasons the current researcher adopted a third-person style; reflexivity has been prioritised and subjectivity engaged with, despite communicating in this way (Parker, 2005). Nonetheless, the third-person voice has been useful for creating distance to reflect, so far. However, engaging with and describing the analysis in this way seems inauthentic.

This disconnected position has become untenable because the discussion of a discourse analysis is an interactive process that continually shapes the analysis and emerging knowledge (Parker, 2005), and describing the interactions between the data, theory and reflexivity in a third-person voice will likely be tedious. According to Parker (2005), voice influences researchers' perspectives and using a first-person voice may illuminate dynamics that are seldom valued in traditional psychological research, so has been suggested as more appropriate

when reporting this type of research. To authentically describe the research process, present an argument grounded in data, link findings to relevant theory and clarify my reflexive engagement, I am reclaiming my first-person 'voice' (Parker, 2005).

My cultural and historical context has shaped many aspects of the current research, and is therefore the context out of which it has emerged as well (Foucault, 2002). I choose to engage with how specific, important events in my personal history have framed my approach to the research, interpersonal dynamics, data, and theory. I choose to describe my emotional investment (Parker, 2005) in the topic and the process of the analysis in my first-person voice "to take responsibility" (Parker, 2005, p. 20) for my decisions and to claim accountability for the ways my context, position, and subjectivity influence the knowledge created.

My reflexive engagement. Before engaging with the analysis, I will briefly describe relevant aspects of my personal background, and epistemological influences and assumptions. I will indicate the multiple positions I occupy in the research process and my relationships with the participants and data. This will locate my point of departure for the analysis and clarify my perspective. Reflexivity is also a way of tracking the research process; the data, my reflexive engagement and theory will likely interact with each other as the analysis progresses and knowledge is formed (Parker, 2005). Therefore, further reflexive insights will be incorporated into the discussion of the analysis, to clarify this process (Parker, 2005).

Personal history and context. Discourse analysts have been cautioned not to be self-indulgent or reductive, and shift focus away from the research (Macleod, 2013). However, Parker (2005) indicated that in some cases, a researcher's account of their research journey can offer clarity to the report, but "only if that journey is used as a narrative device to draw attention to the way certain aspects of the research have been highlighted and other aspects left by the wayside" (p. 35). In changing to a first-person voice, my aim is not to extract and communicate internal experiences through a self-reflective exercise, but to turn outward and

consider the social relations and institutional influences shaping my identity, and therefore subjectivity (Macleod, 2013). How had 'I' come to be located within this research project, in this institution, at this time? Going forward, I will also consider how I impact the research and how the process influences me, personally and professionally (Parker, 2005).

I was drawn to study ballet dancers because I spent a significant portion of my life being "a ballet dancer," which influenced my identity. This exposure has shaped my engagement with both the initial and current research projects, in various beneficial and limiting ways. I danced from the age of three until seventeen and loved ballet, even though aspects of it were challenging and my relationship with it was sometimes complicated. When I was eleven, I was diagnosed with scoliosis – an 's' shaped curvature of the spine. This impacted most of my decisions over the next few years, including those related to ballet. Having scoliosis changed my perspective about ballet; instead of being deterred by the thought that I would have to stop one day, it energised me to make the most of the time I could dance.

Not long after the diagnosis, I persuaded my parents to let me go to The National School of the Arts (NSA) for high school, to do more ballet and other dancer styles. Around a similar time, in late 2001, I auditioned for the newly formed South African Ballet Theatre's (SABT) production of 'The Nutcracker.' I was cast as a 'mirliton,' a role in the production usually done by professionals. However, at that time, the company had recently been formed, so was lean and fighting for survival, which meant that there were not enough dancers. I had not realised these dynamics at the time – I was just grateful to be on the State Theatre stage, even though I was thirteen, intimidated and still unsteady after only a year of pointe work exposure. It was a "crystallising experience" (Pickard & Bailey, 2009, p. 169), even though the price was putting up with pain and exhaustion, for a few hours, twice a weekend, for several weeks. The experience was overwhelming, but encouraged me to work harder. I took my dancing more

seriously, got involved in competitions, and through being a finalist in one of them, became a member of the SABT academy, which was also a new initiative.

The academy was started to nurture and train aspiring dancers, to provide the SABT with a talent pipeline. In this environment, we were taught and mentored by the company's principal dancers and given chances to perform, including in some of the company's productions. Between NSA, my own studio, and the academy, I did a lot of ballet during high school. When I was seventeen, the scoliosis reached a severe enough curvature to require corrective spinal fusion surgery, which confirmed that I could not dance anymore. This event also significantly influenced my life in many ways including setting me on a more academic path. In addition to the physical challenges involved in the surgery, the experience also left me confused about my identity. If I was not a ballet dancer anymore, then who and what was I? These questions and my personal context, in part, led me to study psychology.

After my undergraduate degree, I began my career in an organisational and people development context, and because I enjoyed the exposure to high-performance in corporate environments, I chose sport psychology as an elective in my psychology honours year. I also decided to explore ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness for my honours research. Due to my ballet exposure and relationships with dancers, I could access current and former professionals to find my participants; in the group were role-models, previous teachers and peers. My exposure to ballet from a young age, and the identity of a ballet dancer that was made available to me, has shaped my life in many ways. Even though I could not dance professionally, ballet was and still is an important part of my life. Despite my physical problems, ballet has given me opportunities and memorable moments. I was challenged in this context and grew because of it. It helped me develop self-confidence, discipline, drive and resilience, which have been transferable and helpful in other areas of my life.

Epistemological assumptions. As mentioned, researchers taking this approach should avoid reducing subjectivity to something internal to the researcher (Parker, 2005, p. 25); theory can help us expand our versions, and see subjectivity as institutionally formed (Parker, 1999). Parker (2005) suggests researchers should consider assumptions about research, and the ways institutions pose constraints that open up or shut down options. Specific theoretical and epistemological frames are always drawn upon during the research process, which influence our questions, decisions and interpretations (Parker, 1999). Several broad theories have influenced the steps I have taken, and the most important will now be introduced.

Sport Psychology and High Performance. My exposure to sports psychology and several high-performance environments prompted me to seek further learning. This informed my focus on sport psychology, and topic choice for the initial research project – professional ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness (Myhill & Steele, 2012). My supervisor at the time was studying mental toughness, which also influenced this choice. Sport psychology, and particularly the approach I was taught – Psychological Skills Training (PST) (Weinberg & Gould, 2011) shaped my questions, views about and relationships with the dancers, and interaction with the data during the IPA, which influenced the study's findings.

During Masters, I was further exposed to sport psychology and offered alternative theory – the mindfulness-acceptance-commitment (MAC) approach (Gardner & Moore, 2007). This further learning led me to question how these theories related to performance enhancement, in terms of impact and context, and if one was more useful for ballet dancers. The research has evolved in a different direction since I asked those questions, as my focus has shifted from finding definitive answers to exploring possibilities. Instead of seeking clarity, I aim to explore how problems and possible solutions are constructed. However, although my views have been broadened by other theory, my identity as a researcher and focus on performance enhancement is still influenced by sport and performance psychology.

Social Constructionism and Discourse. During my Masters training, I also became interested in various social constructionist approaches to therapy and research (Willig, 2013). This led me to ask more open questions about how dancers' identities and subjectivities are formed through discourse and relations of power (Foucault, 2011). When considering various questions about performance during my training, I recalled portions of the data from the initial study that shed light on some of them. I realised that deconstructing these texts from a Foucauldian perspective could illuminate dancers' performance dynamics, and that I could explore how peak performance is constructed by discourses in ways that either enable or challenge dancers' success (Hook, 2013). Foucault's conceptualisation of power and dominant discourses (Foucault, 2003a) seemed relevant for engaging with this sometimes-controversial environment, in which dancers are praised or vilified, based on the discourse being been drawn on. Foucault's views on transformation through discourse, by finding alternative constructions (Rabinow & Rose, 2003), were also persuasive.

Professional ballet is a difficult dream to pursue, and achieving the highest ranks is even more challenging (Roncaglia, 2006). However, during the interviews, the dancers had offered statements highlighting how meaningful their careers had been, no matter the length and despite the difficulties (Myhill & Steele, 2012). I wanted to illuminate the discourses that made such perspectives possible, even more so when I began to engage with the problem-focused literature. My context and opinions also influence which literature I considered relevant, truthful, flawed or damaging, but I tried to gain as broad a view of research on professional ballet dancers as possible. I found numerous examples of ballet being vilified in the academic journals (Brace-Govan, 2002; Fisher, 2007b) and noted that many studies focused on the pitfalls and stereotypes of ballet (Clabaugh & Morling, 2004; Ritenburg, 2010), while few explored the complexities and benefits involved (Draugelis et al., 2014). I noted the prominence of research on psychopathology (Goodwin et al., 2014), including eating disorders

(Arcelus et al., 2014; Ringham et al., 2006) and physical problems (Smith et al., 2016). Dancers were often positioned as oppressed and even complicit in their own disempowerment (Gray & Kunkel, 2001), and given subject positions of 'slaves' who objectified themselves for the benefit of the gazing other (Brace-Govan, 2002). Depictions in the popular media that frame ballet dancers as problematic (Aronofsky et al., 2011) also seem to have achieved a 'common-sense' status, inside and outside the ballet world.

The extent to which the popular media and some academic studies have focused on the risks and problems in ballet e frustrated me. However, I wondered whether my response was motivated by a desire to deny the problems and blindly defend ballet or whether I was noting legitimate issues in the literature. I concluded that these studies raised relevant questions and concerns, but I objected to the way dominant discourses, that painted dancers in a problematic light, were presented as unassailable truths, emboldened by the powerful positions of psychology and medicine (Hook, 2013). From an admittedly limited perspective, I also noted that similar topics in relation to various sports seemed to often be tackled with more pragmatism and leniency (Close et al., 2016; Rumbold et al., 2011), and wondered why this was the case. From a social constructionist perspective, differences between ballet and other high-performance contexts are related to how they are constructed in the social realm (Foucault, 2002). Dominant discourses related to societal values shape how ballet is constructed (Foucault, 2003a), and can create a limited, distorted view of ballet and ballet dancers. FDA, as a methodological tool would allow me to draw attention to the effects of these discourses and challenge them by highlighting alternatives (Rabinow & Rose, 2003).

The researcher's position. My position as a researcher in the psychological field entails inevitable power relations and implications for my relationships with others involved in the research (Macleod, 2013). However, although the power inherent in the researcher position is important to acknowledge, Parker (2005) suggests that "patterns of privilege are more

complex" (p. 27). The interpersonal dynamics at play are important to reflexively engage with, in the context of the current research (Parker, 2005).

My positions and relationships. I have occupied various positions during the initial, and current research. I took on the position of 'interviewer' (and 'transcriber') during the initial data collection phase, and interacted with participants, who in some cases were also former teachers, peers and role models of mine. I have taken on the position of analyst in both projects, and during the current study, I have included comments produced by myself as 'the interviewer' for analysis because I contributed to meaning formation during the interviews (Macleod, 2013), including constructions of 'peak ballet performance.' I mention these positions to highlight the complexity involved and that these dynamics may shape the research process and outcomes, posing some challenges and some benefits. Therefore, I am subjectively involved, as all discourse analysts are (Parker, 2005), and my subjectivity been influenced by my occupying various positions in the current research.

Relationships with the participants. My shared history with some of the participants will have influenced the interviews, and the current research (Parker, 2005). Out of concerns that too much detail may identify the participants, I will explain broader characteristics and relations. Two participants were role models, whom I had grown up admiring. One of them was also a teacher at the SABT academy when I attended, so I had formed a relationship with her within the ballet world, when I was a dancer. Two of the participants attended NSA when I was there; one was a few years ahead, and the other around my age. Although one dancer did not know me personally, I had previously interacted with all four in different contexts. However, when the interviews took place, I had been distanced from the ballet world because of my physical challenges. Therefore, the relationships were not strong and familiar, despite some shared history. I still got the impression that knowledge of my ballet background put the

dancers at ease, and I felt surprised and grateful about their openness. However, this background may have enabled unquestioned assumptions.

In addition, although I was in an empowered position as a psychological researcher, I was also intimidated by interviewing people I admired, and unlikely to challenge them, which influenced our discussions, and therefore the data. However, we discussed a range of sensitive issues in the interviews, so the dancers' voluntary candour seemed to mitigate this. Our interactions were also influenced by my framing the initial research through a sport and performance psychology lens, and further by my focus on mental toughness, and by implication, psychological strengths. Taking this approach, as opposed to exploring pathologies and problems in ballet, may have also helped create a space where the dancers could express themselves to someone positioned as a supporter. I had not had much direct interaction with participants since the initial interviews, and have deliberately maintained distance during the current research, other than obtaining informed consent, to create space between the participants and I, so I can effectively step back from the data and analyse it.

Relationship with the data. In addition to the theoretical influences described, my previous roles as interviewer and co-constructor of meaning (Parker, 1999) inform my approach to the data analysis. In addition, I am re-engaging with a text I have previously approached from another perspective. These dynamics have enabled and disabled the current research in different ways; some of these will be considered shortly and in the following chapter. When I collected the data, I had not been actively involved in ballet for several years, so I was more removed from the context when the interviews took place than I had been as a dancer. In addition, I had never been a professional ballet dancer, so could not relate to the dancers in that way, which helped mitigate my influence on the data.

In addition to my experience with ballet, my knowledge of the previous study influences my data analysis in the present study. My past involvement with the data enabled an informed

decision to explore it again, because I was aware of the dancers' nuanced stories that were rich with alternative perspectives but also impacted by common, sometimes negative, perceptions (Myhill & Steele, 2012). However, I must continually question the effects of my previous engagement with the data on the current FDA, which may result from drawing on that knowledge or actively resisting it, consciously or subconsciously (Willig, 2013).

Nonetheless, I am taking steps to distance myself from the data during the analysis. Firstly, taking a social constructionist stance changes my assumptions about the data and the social interactions that produced it, and helps me to see the information in new ways (Burr, 2003). Secondly, being a principal ballet dancer is even further removed from my experience, which helps me approach the transcripts with an open mind. Upon reflection, I realised that this attempt at creating distance further informed my decision to only select the principals' transcripts for analysis. Thirdly, although I was involved in collecting the relevant data, this took place over five years ago, which creates temporal distance. These factors offer some distance from the topic and data, although not enough to ignore my impact entirely.

Relationship with the reviewer. Another distancing technique I have chosen is bringing in the perspective of another person to review my analysis. The reviewer lectured me during my Psychology Masters training. Having been at the same institution and exposed to similar academic thinking, we share epistemological views. She used FDA, discursive psychology and positioning theory for her PhD, so has a broader perspective of discourse analysis.

An insider/outsider position. My previous ballet exposure positioned me as an 'insider,' because of my familiarity with this ballet environment. This position has provided some advantages and created other limitations, and will probably continue to do so (Löytönen, 2008). Advantages have included that during the interviews, the dancers could discuss their experiences with someone who understood their world, to some extent, because most were aware of my involvement in ballet when they took place. This helped me build rapport, which

seemed sufficient because the dancers were open about their lives and ballet, including some personal and sensitive matters, such as experiences with disordered eating and other negative aspects of their environment. This added depth to the data, because although the aim of the interviews was to explore mental toughness, it was important to give the dancers room to describe all aspects of their lives, including the problems. However, a limitation of my proximity was that the dancers and I may have taken aspects of this context for granted.

Eppley (2006) describes how researchers cannot be complete insiders, when studying other people; to conduct research and interpret information, one must step back and be an outsider. However, shared positions and experiences can often be found between a researcher and participants, so a researcher is typically not a complete outsider either (Eppley, 2006). Therefore, neither insider, nor outsider status, is fixed; both are historical, social constructions that are fluid, both exist simultaneously on a continuum (Eppley, 2006), and both are required for critical thought (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). In grappling with my insider/outsider status, it is helpful to accept this paradox. The relationships and positions involved in the current research create difficult dynamics and conflicted subjective feelings for me. As an insider, I may compromise critical thought and the academic quality of the research, but as an outsider, although more conducive to take the critical stance that empirical standards demand, if I say unpopular things, they might not be well-received by the dancers and others in the ballet community, which will make me feel like I have let them down. Therefore, I aim not to blindly defend and romanticise ballet, considering the potential problems, but to highlight alternative perspectives, which receive less attention, but offer meaning and benefits to dancers.

My reflexive approach. According to Parker (2005), reflexivity can provide further insight into an analysis, but may be approached in different ways; it can be "included in the report as one of the subsections of the 'analysis' and marked as 'reflexive analysis,' or put in the discussion as part of a reflection on the process of *carrying* out the research (or both)" (p.

138). My use of reflexivity is intended as a way of creating distance, engaging with my subjectivity, and tracking the research process, including key shifts in my assumptions (Parker, 2005). Parker (2005) has indicated that truth is enmeshed with the researcher's position, and the conditions and evolving context in which knowledge is being produced; how it is constructed is as important as the final insights. I wanted to clarify my background and point of departure before proceeding to the analysis, but intend to integrate further reflexive engagement into the presentation and discussion of the analysis in the following chapter, to show how my position, subjectivity and assumptions may have influenced interactions and continue to shape my interpretations (Parker, 2005).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined key methodological aspects of the present study. After re-visiting the research question, aim and objectives, the paradigmatic and theoretical point of departure was discussed, building on the theory outlined in the previous chapter. The research design of the present study was then described, including the sampling and data collection procedures, and an engagement with how the previous IPA research impacts the present FDA study. Re-analysing the same data from a different perspective was also justified. The FDA process was then explained in more detail. Ethical considerations and their implications were described, including issues around quality, as well as the voice and positionality of the researcher. This included an initial engagement with reflexivity, and clarity about how and why reflexivity will be integrated into the discussion of the analysis to follow. This chapter has focused on the methodology and design of the current research to provide context for the remaining chapters. The analysis will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will describe the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) process, including descriptions of the initial phase, review process and final phase, and clarify my discussion approach. I will then engage with the eight discourses identified, by introducing each by describing initial phase findings, indicating the reviewer's suggestions, and more extensive insights from the final phase of the FDA. Theory will be considered, and reflexive engagement offered, as relevant, throughout. My engagement with the discourses will be followed by an integrated discussion of my final thoughts, to clarify my arguments.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis Process

According to Parker (2005) a qualitative analysis is "a series of interpretations that are open to question" (p. 146), which does not offer 'results' like quantitative research. As such, this FDA unfolded in several phases. The knowledge that emerged through this process cannot be separated from the process itself (Parker, 2005), which informs my approach to this discussion. I identified several discourses that female ballet dancers seem to draw on to describe their lives. Multiple constructions of peak performance were described by the dancers, each offering different subject positions and identities, and opportunities for action and subjectivity. Before exploring the FDA process, my overall approach will be outlined.

Rabinow and Rose (2003) described how Foucault constantly asked questions about the work he was doing, the direction it was going, and its implications. Foucault (2002) also reflected, "without the questions that I was asked, without the difficulties that arose, without the objections that were made, I may never have gained so clear a view of the enterprise to which I am now inextricably linked" (p. 18). Foucault's words resonated with me as I came to terms with an analytic process that was illuminating, confusing, and contradictory, and considered how to describe it. It has been full of lessons, doubt, and moments of epiphany, but each experience led me to this point, where I can now reflexively consider how I arrived

here (Parker, 2005). Therefore, as mentioned, reflexivity will be woven into the FDA discussion to account for this process of knowledge formation.

Initial Phase

In approaching the FDA, I tried to immerse myself in the data and avoid imposing my previous understandings on the data. I would never be able to switch my subjectivity off, but I tried to focus on the data and the dancers' own words. I tried to restrict myself to engaging with the data initially, without interpreting meaning and relating insights to theory. An early challenge was defining the object to answer the research question – I considered defining it as 'ballet,' ballet dancers,' or 'ballet performance,' but my interest in dancers' subjective optimal performance experiences, informed my choice of 'peak ballet performance.' Despite Willig's (2013) guidelines, the process was experimental at first, until I found what worked.

Once familiarised with the four transcripts, I identified possible constructions of the object 'peak ballet performance,' and discourses that could account for them (Willig, 2013). In addition to explicit constructions, I considered references to 'performing,' or 'ballet performance,' and other synonyms for, and implicit constructions of 'peak' performance, (Willig, 2013). I began to see the effects of the discourses, and what the dancers were achieving in each one (Willig, 2013). I also identified potential subject positions, and their implications for practice and subjectivity (Willig, 2013). Many discourses seemed to impact this ballet context, and many data extracts seemed to be relevant in multiple, creating overlap.

During the initial phase, some discourses were incorporated into others, including a discourse of 'fantasy' into 'performance,' and 'lifestyle' into 'career.' Some were distributed into several others, like 'normality,' 'time,' and 'perfection.' Once I settled on the most prominent eight interacting discourses, I further reduced and refined the analysis. These eight were 'psychological,' 'sport/physiological,' 'aesthetic beauty,' 'performing arts,' 'financial/economic,' 'educational/training,' 'career/life goal' and 'challenge/competition'

discourses. When engaging with these discourses through the FDA, all seemed to overlap, with others. I created several, progressively refined visual models to explore, and extend my interpretations (Appendix M), which evolved with my perspective, in a circular process, and helped me step back from the detail in the data to consider a broader perspective, and was essential for critical engagement. It also enriched my understanding of how broader societal discourses shape this ballet context. Despite previously intending to include a final version of the model, it became more a conceptual tool, that helped me reach a point where a verbal description of the discourses seems most relevant.

Review Phase

After the initial phase, I provided transcripts and my FDA to the reviewer, with a description of the process. After several weeks, she offered substantial input, clarifying that her thoughts were based on her "narrative, storied perspective." This differs slightly from my focus, which helped me consider the data from new perspectives (Parker, 2005). The reviewer's feedback and reflections prompted numerous questions, that set me on another journey to gather further insights. She encouraged me to "go deeper, unpack the constructions further and make them come alive - get personal with them and name them," because she found their general names impersonal. I realised that, in distancing myself from the data, I limited my engagement with it, even though this distance had previously helped me to reflect.

I wanted to avoid romanticising the dancers, and using indulgent language, and for the analysis to be "reasonable" (Tonkiss, 2012), so I had deliberately given discourses general names and limited my interpretations. But this still led me to a certain form of subjectivity, which impacted the data. The reviewer reminded me that through reflexivity, I could work with my subjectivity to deepen my engagement. She also encouraged me to revisit key concepts in the theory, including Willig's (2013) six-stage, integrated method for FDA, advising that I move away from rigid definitions. She saw many overlaps in the discourse and

constructions, which she found exciting, and suggested I link the discourses and constructions to see how they "fit into others," and into broader 'webs' of societal discourse.

Theory Phase

I explored more theory, including original FDA sources, to enrich my understanding, and help me consider new perspectives. I engaged more with Foucault's (1986b) original work, and Parker's (2005) suggestions for current practice. In reading Foucault's (1986a) ideas on power, knowledge, discourse and society, I realised how my experience of his ideas had been influenced and potentially distorted by other authors' interpretations of them. His concepts linked to disciplinary power seemed particularly relevant to ballet. Engaging with this theory expanded my view, and made me more aware of how power, broader societal discourses, like patriarchy and capitalism, as well as disciplines, like psychology and medicine, were shaping this ballet context (Parker, 2005). Therefore, I will draw on theory, mostly linked to Foucault's ideas, to discuss notable aspects of the FDA.

Final Phase

The final phase involved re-engaging with the eight interacting discourses, including the 'web' of broader societal discourses shaping the context. I settled on a conceptual model of a dancer's subjectivity as formed through a journey of sequential and increasingly difficult 'levels.' To grapple with the issues in a discourse and position herself as having mastered its challenges, a dancer must have also done so for all the preceding discourses, in a sustainable way. Each discourse builds on and requires some maintenance of the dancer's positions within the previous ones. Fewer aspiring top professional dancers proceed through each 'level,' as new subjective issues are introduced. Successful dancers are exposed to an increasing variety of constructions, subject positions, and other resources to form their identities. This analogy of dancers' formation of subjectivity seemed fitting because dancers

spoke of 'pushing to the next level,' often, in relation to their minds, bodies, aesthetic quality and artistic performance. This conceptual model informs the FDA discussion's structure.

In response to the reviewer's suggestions, I considered issues, renamed and tried to personalise each discourse, and engaged more deeply with the data. However, despite the new discourse names, the general ones will still be used, for clarity. I was encouraged by the overlaps and differences in our views, indicating some reasonable constructions, but also our subjective involvement. Some constructions were noted in different discourses by each of us, revealing connections in the complex web. After confirming the eight discourses, I clarified their effects and strategies, and selected the most prominent and relevant three constructions in each, to explore further. Following this, I reconsidered the subject positions, practices and subjectivities involved in each construction. Engagement with theory was entwined in this process; exploring one provoked questions about the other, leading to further insight. In fact, interactions between the data, theory and my reflexivity were ongoing, and difficult to isolate.

FDA Presentation and Discussion

Data extracts of the participants' contributions will be provided as evidence throughout the discussion, and will be italicised in all cases. Occasionally, extracts have been edited for readability, provided that doing so did not alter meaning. These extracts will be attributed to an undifferentiated 'dancer' or 'dancers,' and may refer to one, or more dancer's descriptions. On the rare occasion that something I said, when positioned as 'the interviewer,' is illustrative, I will indicate it. I have decided not to specify the dancer who spoke for two reasons. Firstly, there are few principal dancers in South African ballet at any time, and providing information about them, in conjunction with extracts elaborating their position, may identify them to readers. This approach seems necessary, considering this small, specific group of participants. Secondly, this FDA is more focused on the discourses surrounding ballet dancers' performance lives, than each dancer's personal context. As all dancers in the

current study are female, the pronouns 'she,' and 'her,' will be used interchangeably with 'the dancer.' 'The company' refers to the professional ballet company the dancers are affiliated with. 'Peak,' in terms of performance, are interchangeable with 'optimal,' 'high,' and 'top.'

In discussing each discourse, I will outline the initial phase analysis findings, highlighting key constructions and effects. I will then engage with the reviewer's suggestions, and explain how the respective discourse evolved during the final phase of the FDA. This section paints a fuller picture of the discourse, and the ideas and beliefs found within it, that create a certain view of the world, and people in it. To this end, the subject positions provided, possibilities for action made available, and implications for subjectivity, including experiences, thoughts and feelings, will then be considered. Findings will then be related to theory, as relevant, to further illuminate important aspects of each discourse, and the interconnected web of discourses that surround this context. I will also offer some insights from my reflexive engagement with each discourse, and commentary on the overall analysis process.

1. Warning: Danger Ahead – A Psychological Discourse

Initial phase. This discourse accounts for personality dynamics and cognitive abilities, and references to mental health, including psychological resilience. Dancers described professional ballet as *a very emotional environment*, which is *very stressful* and demanding. Within it, peak performance was constructed as mentally difficult to achieve because *it's tough in all areas – your ego, your personality* and *takes a huge knock on your emotions*.

Reviewer's suggestions. The reviewer experienced this discourse as one in which dancers must accept the challenges, and the environment, which is a "psychological warzone" - within it, "you are a ballerina" and you "live, eat, sleep, breathe ballet." She noted that dancers compare themselves to a perceived norm, and saw peak performance being constructed as regulated by a "psychological checklist," and only possible through "a life of perfection." She suggested this might be an overarching concept as it is "everywhere" in the dancers' accounts.

She also observed an "exciting alternative construction" of optimal performance being enabled through "self-care," and "support." Lastly, she noted several "contentions" surrounding performance, involving conflicts between constructions of "strength, training, willpower, perfection" and those of "support, nurturing, self-care."

Final phase. 'Warning: Danger Ahead' refers to the focus of the discourse, but is also an indication of what lies ahead on a top dancer's path. It is full of reasons not to do ballet and emphasises the potential harm. Situating 'peak professional ballet performance' within a psychological discourse allows dancers to claim or resist various subject positions associated with psychological dynamics. These issues become relevant at an early age, and remain so throughout a dancers' career, because of the psychological discourse's dominance.

A psychological warzone. Constructing performance as immersed in a psychological warzone highlights the risk of developing *psychological problems, like personality and eating disorders* and dangerous behaviours. In this construction, ballet is a threat to well-being, but pathologies also threaten a dancer's career. It allows dancers to consider the relation between ballet and mental health, and demands that they defend and justify themselves, even while positioning ballet dancers as pathological and reducing their complex lives to a warning. In a psychological discourse, the demands of ballet can lead to *mental breakdowns* and the development of identities and practices framed as problematic, like being *neurotic*, behaving like *a control freak*, or displaying *a little bit of OCD*. One dancer speculated that *maybe because you feel so not in control... All the time, you have to try and control everything else*.

Foucault suggested that truth can be distorted by power, because of how societal institutions, and socio-economic processes shape how concepts like 'normal' and psychopathology are represented in discourse, and how people, including ballet dancers, are treated (Parker, 1999). "Psychology itself is powerful" (Hook, 2013, p. 13), and implicated in normalisation, including definitions of a healthy personality (Foucault, 1986b). Psychology

insists on certain stereotypes, and descriptions of ballet dancers, that reflect and reinforce social patterns and power relations (Hook, 2013). Currently, many of these stereotypes seem to pathologize dancers, by positioning them as perfectionistic, neurotic, and suffering from eating disorders. However, dancers can still resist or claim these positions.

In this construction, dancers can be positioned as mentally strong or ill, and sane or crazy. In fact, *you have to be a bit crazy, in a way, also, to be a dancer, because of what you're doing, and, what you're putting your body through*. Positioned in this construction, dancers engage with psychological aspects of injuries, including subjective isolation, which can lead dancers to *get depressed*. Not being able to dance is subjectively frustrating for a dancer, so *often you will dance until the injury is the worst that it is at... 'Cos you just don't wanna stop*. When you must take the time off, returning can also be subjectively tough: *I do have physical pain, but a lot of it is psychological as well, where I don't wanna push too hard because I'm scared I am gonna injure my ankle again*. Being injured can also position dancers to appreciate ballet more: *You're not crying because it hurts, you're crying because you know you're gonna get taken out... and that's when you sit, and realise... this is what I wanna do*.

In this warzone, dancers subjectively experience *criticism all the time - people are basically telling you, every day "no, no, no, that's wrong," so, to be able to stand there, and take it, and be like, "ok," you definitely have to have a completely different mindset*. Dancers are placed in a restricted position; they must cope to remain, and if they cannot, leave. Learning to cope in this environment contributes to dancers' subjective experiences of personal development and is linked to behavioural maturity, so, *getting up and continuing* despite pain, complicated emotions, and harsh feedback, is framed as taking *a bit of mental strength*. A dancer's background shapes *how you're going to deal with* challenges; people who are positioned as having *had more hard times*, may subjectively have *that strength to push through*. In this environment, *lots of people c*ry, because, when positioned as *tired* and

exhausted, dancers experience themselves as *a lot more emotional*. However, through their behavioural practices, dancers must appear strong, regardless of feelings, like one dancer, *who would never cry in front of anybody* because you *have to be strong in front of people*.

   A psychological checklist. The 'psychological checklist' construction positions a dancer as reduced to personality traits and cognitive abilities, against which to assess an individual's suitability to enter the world of ballet and access the identity of a ballet dancer. For example, dancers are positioned as needing *intelligence*, because *there's a lot of memory required.* Positioned as *a sponge,* dancers subjectively experience pressure to learn quickly, retain information, and recall it correctly as they perform, so *it's not for the people who weren't clever enough to study.* Top dancers are positioned as totally committed people, who display perseverance, and subjectively enjoy doing ballet despite the challenges, which they find energising. Being a 'perfectionist' and 'driven,' are also described as non-negotiable.

   Dancers also referenced personality differences amongst themselves. For example, dancers are positioned as different to negate technical ability in the casting process because there are *different roles for different personalities*. This may also allow dancers to distance themselves from unfavourable characteristics they perceive, but do not want to directly associate themselves with. Dancers are offered various rigid and binary positions by this construction, like secure or insecure, and normal or abnormal. One dancer asserted *I'm quite normal [laughs], If I compare myself to some people, some other dancers,* implying that subjectively, the others are 'abnormal,' but her laugh creates uncertainty over whether she experiences herself as normal. Dancers are in limited positions in this construction, because although they can claim or resist them, they can only do so within clear boundaries.

   Contradictory subjectivities were apparent, involving some dancers embracing certain positions, while others rejected them, for example, the subject position of 'confident.' Some participants described most dancers as *more outgoing and more open to things*, and indicated

that *you have to be confident, as a dancer.* On the other hand, one dancer positioned herself as *a scaredy-cat* who is *a little bit more reserved.* Through her behavioural practices, she said she can *fake well* despite these subjective feelings: *People see me in a certain way, but I'm not like that... I'm not a very confident person... I really am not – it's a struggle every day.* Dancers' views on and experiences of confidence differed, but they all agreed that behaviourally projecting confidence is essential for all ballet dancers.

According to Parker (2005), the researcher's experiences can be insightful if they show how interpersonal discomfort leads to making "something that was hidden or implicit more visible" (p. 30). During her interview, one dancer, through her words and demeanour, seemed hostile towards psychology. At the time, I felt defensive; my stated focus was on mental strength and positive dynamics in ballet. I had asked her whether mental skills training could benefit ballet dancers. She said *it's different for different people* and *you couldn't just, um, put it in one little basket.* I agreed by saying that "the number one thing" in sport psychology is that "there's no formula." She went on to say *you can't generalise,* as people's problems are complex – they may be issues from their childhood or from experiencing a recent, unrelated trauma. In fact, she expressed that *there's so many things that impact who you are today and what you might be tomorrow... So there's no little formula at all, definitely not.*

If she had a negative view of psychology, I wondered how I could show her I was 'different,' and not focused on problems. But in hindsight, I was not different, because I was linked to psychology, so power relations were at play. When I re-engaged with the transcripts, I again experienced frustration; however, this time, with psychology's history of pathologizing dancers, and tendency to place people in boxes, which this dancer was resisting. Social construction had changed my epistemological views. Now that I could better see the connection between power and psychology, the dancer's response made more sense. This was a profound realisation for me in critically considering the power of psychological knowledge

and its effects on subjects, including participants and psychological researchers *It must be quite hard studying to be a sports psychologist, thinking about all that*, she concluded.

   Self-care. The reviewer's perspective was helpful for spotting this alternative construction. Although I knew that for many dancers, *you dance for yourself* and *worry about yourself all the time,* because I was in a defensive position about dancers being pathologized, I had assumed that being positioned as *selfish* might be considered problematic. I had not considered that it could enable behaviours that benefit and facilitate performance. This position was normalised and embraced by most dancers, as a disclaimer and justification, which allows them to engage in self-focused behaviours with less subjective guilt: *It has to be like that because you're focusing on your body, and your career.* In a self-care construction, these behavioural practices are framed as self-regulating and responsible, because looking after one's body and mind enables consistent, optimal performance. In fact, self-regulation is linked to mental toughness, from a sport psychology perspective (Gucciardi et al., 2009).

   Dancers must proactively develop mental skills, through self-management: *You work for little goals all the time*. For some dancers, *you have to coach yourself, all the time*, which gets *exhausting*, but *visualisation's a big thing - you must go through it in your mind, and you must see yourself doing it perfectly.* Self-care is also linked to a strong support system, which may be contradictory to selfish behaviour: *If I have free time I like to spend it with my family and my friends. That's my hobby.* Resisting or claiming these positions – of 'selfish' or having *an incredible support system* – is complex and ongoing, and related to other contextual factors, like performance seasons and the stage of a dancer's career. These conflicting demands put dancers in a catch-22 position, where focusing too much on either, can harm a dancer and her career. The concept of self-management relates to Foucault's ideas about biopower and disciplinary power's practices aimed at forming the self through techniques of

self-government (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Through a self-care construction, dancers' self-regulatory practices are explained and justified in this broader context of discipline.

2. Superhumans in Tutus – A Sport/Physiological Discourse

Initial phase. This discourse constructs performance as *physical,* like *aerobics.* Ballet dancers need *physical strength* and *stamina.* In a sports discourse, a top dancer must have the right genetic features, which are then moulded into the form of a ballerina through extensive training. A dancer strains her body, which must be healthy and fit to pursue peak performance. In this discourse, the physics of the lifts and jumps involved demand that female dancers be light, but strong, to perform optimally. Attention is also drawn to the functionality of the dancer's body, which is touched by partners and adjusted by teachers. This discourse justifies dancers' obsession with their bodies because it is the instrument of their endeavour.

Reviewer's suggestions. The reviewer saw peak performance being constructed as a "physical sport," - dancers, positioned as "superstars," train their bodies, and deal with individual and team dynamics, and as something "dangerous" – in the physical sense, but also because so much, including a dancers' identity, relies on a fragile and aging body. Dancers engage in risky behaviours to reach their goals, including an ongoing "fight with food," and physically "pushing the limits," she noted. She also identified a construction of optimal performance as caught up in "boundary crossings:" From the human realm into one of "supernatural powers," crossing physical boundaries in training, and managing the boundary between ballet and life outside it. There also seemed to be a boundary in a dancer's mind and one defining her body's limits, which she seemed determined to cross.

Final phase. The reviewer's input showed me that I had been limiting this discourse because of my involvement in ballet; I would not have described dancers as superhumans to avoid putting them on pedestals, but still shaped the analysis in other ways as a result. Constructing ballet as a sport highlights the dancer's physical body, which must be cared for,

and may be framed as fit and healthy, or unwell and injured. It is important to note that during the interviews, the topic, mental toughness, could have informed dancers' descriptions of ballet in this light. I decided to further explore the 'danger,' and 'boundary crossings' constructions in the final analysis, and their implications for subjectivity.

A physical sport. Dancers construct top performance as *like any sport*. Being positioned as a top performer is contingent on luck; you need biological features that *you either have or you don't – turnout, certain physical attributes.* According to most dancers, *you're born with facility,* which suggests that a dancer's body must be naturally functional and fit for this purpose, with long legs, wide ranges of hip and knee joint motion, and *amazing feet.* This physical potential is also framed as unique; top dancers possess 'superhuman' abilities and are positioned as special or unusual - *there are those freaks of nature that are amazing.* However, positioned as athletes, dancers must still train their bodies to realise this potential, which legitimises and normalises the strenuous training required for optimal performance: *We put our bodies through such extreme things, just as other sportsmen do*. Dancers also compare their 'perfectionism' to other athletes, like golfers, who *hunger after that perfect shot.*

In addition, this construction frames dancers' lean and muscular physique as essential for various steps, like *a huge, big jump that you have to put so much force and power into.* This explains why dancers *push so hard* to build *muscle*, fitness and flexibility, and their weight-loss: *You're eating normally, but you can't help but lose weight because there's so much physical work being done*. Training can leave a dancer feeling *physically exhausted,* but many also *love the physicality about it.* Emphasising the physical body's strength implies that dancers must be young and healthy, which positions them as continually running out of time. Ballet dancers' physical peak is usually in their twenties, so they may subjectively experience their careers as limited by time and an aging body, which explains their intensity and urgency.

According to Foucault (1986a) "discipline produces subjected and practised bodies" (p. 182) through training and normalising judgement, which are central to ballet and impact dancers' subjectivities: Being continually judged against an ideal, encourages them to internalise this ideal and manage their behaviour to achieve it. This is how discipline shapes and manipulates 'docile bodies.' According to Foucault (1986a), with the disciplines, the "art of the human body was born" (pp. 181-182). He describes the "ideal figure" (p. 179) of the 17th century soldier, who was visibly identifiable through his movements:

> Out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly though each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit; in short, one has 'got rid of the peasant' and given him 'the air of a soldier.' (p. 179)

The ballerina's physical transformation, achieved through training, can be described similarly.

Dangerous. Constructing performance as 'dangerous' allows dancers to subjectively engage with the physical threats and experience bravery by overcoming them. Being moulded through ballet training is *tough on your body*. A dancer's body is positioned as a map of pain and injury; this explains *the pain* dancers *go through.* Dancers are also positioned as having *such high pain thresholds*, which may help them subjectively cope, and *get used to* the pain. However, *knowing your limitations* is also important because *you are in different kinds of pain all the time, and you have to be clever* about whether it is *good or bad pain*, because bad pain can indicate injury. In this construction, ballet poses a threat to a dancer's body and *eventually something will go,* but dancers also normalise injuries: *You can't tell me one sport anywhere in the world doesn't have any injuries.* For significant injuries*, the only way it's gonna heal is if you stop doing whatever made it hurt in the first place*, but positions dancers as powerless; *you're doing as much as you can – you're doing physio, you're icing it - there's nothing you can do.* While most dancers subjectively respond to injury by feeling frustrated,

some isolate themselves, and experience depression. Others take control: *I used to want to know what caused it, and then you prevent it from ever happening again.* Dancers are positioned as persevering, even when injured: If you must take time off, *do Pilates, or yoga, or something that's still active and keeps your mind going – whatever you need for your body,*

Positioning the dancer's body as fragile also highlights how injuries threaten her career and identity; injured superhumans are 'just human' when they lose their 'superpowers.' Therefore, a dancer's body is paradoxically strong and fragile, as she subjectively relies on, but also intensely pushes her body, to become a top performer. Subjectively, passing time, pain and injury continually threaten her career, if it requires athleticism, but are also inevitable in this context. This explains why dancers either attend to or ignore pain and injury, depending on severity. Dancers must invest in their bodies through *healthy* behavioural practices, because *if you don't look after yourself, you're gonna be injured. You're not gonna last. You're not gonna have that energy to perform your best.* This includes eating what will *give you the most energy,* staying *hydrated*, getting enough rest, and avoiding alcohol and smoking, because *you can't breathe properly.* In this construction, dancers with eating disorders are positioned as *a problem* because *if you're not eating, your muscles have no power.* Most participants distanced themselves from eating disorders. The biomedical discourse offers only one perspective on illness, but is prominent in Western society, and influences whether a body's deficiencies are highlighted, or dismissed (Burr, 2003). This larger societal discourse impacts dancers' local contexts, and common perceptions of ballet dancers in broader society. The biomedical discourse influences whether they are positioned as 'problems,' or healthy, and their behaviours are described as dangerous, or understandable.

Boundary crossings. This construction suggests that dancer must cross various boundaries to realise peak performance. It allows dancers to justify and feel comfortable subjecting their bodies to the physical touch of others: *There's some positions and things you have to do with*

them that are so personal, and, he's touching you everywhere. But it doesn't feel like that –
for a dancer it's just, the norm. They also subjectively experience loose interpersonal
boundaries: *We're so open to each other – we'll tell each other the most personal details.* This
construct creates a boundary marking their body's abilities and limits, which most dancers
subjectively feel determined to constantly push, and cross; *you need to have that toughness*
within in yourself to be able to... To go beyond. For example, doing the splits is not enough –
you should be doing splits off a chair. Dancers also perceive a mind/body barrier, that they
'cross' when physically exhausted: *If your mind gives up... You have no chance. If your*
mind's strong, you'll be fine. This construction also creates a boundary between 'normal,' and
human, and the realm of having something 'extra' – having 'supernatural' powers. Lastly, the
female dancer is typically positioned in relation to Western ideals, which demand she live up
to gendered constructions of feminine beauty, informed by a broader societal patriarchal
discourse. However, her physical athleticism and muscles are associated with typically
masculine constructions, creating a potential boundary to subjectively grapple with, between
feminine and masculine gender roles and norms (Croft, 2014; Ravaldi et al., 2006).

3. A Ballet Body – An Aesthetic Beauty Discourse

Initial phase. In this discourse, performance is constructed as *a visual art* which must be
appealing, based on prevailing norms. A professional performance should be *beautiful* and
well-polished, which explains dancers' focus on physical lines and developing an elusive
quality. Ballet performance is also constructed as *pure* – it must *be a certain way*, and has
been *for centuries*. Despite these traditions, this discourse also constructs the ideal ballet
body, and notes how it evolves. It justifies the expectation that dancers *look good* and have *the*
right body – thin and toned, with muscle, and the assessment and categorisation of ballet
bodies, according to this visual ideal.

Reviewer's suggestions. The reviewer saw peak performance being constructed as 'an obsession,' linked, again, to perfection, and dancers' 'fighting with food.' She saw these concerns as enmeshed, and embedded in ballet, and wondered whether behaviours considered an "unnatural preoccupation with food and body image for 'normal' people" were viewed as "overkill" or "normal" in ballet. To her, ballet is a "love affair" for dancers, involving external beauty but also "inner turmoil," which impacts their identities and psychological health.

Final phase. Obsessive perfectionism and the fight that dancers have with food is prominent in this discourse, but so is the construction of ballet as a work of visual art, which allows dancers to justify subjecting their bodies to extreme behavioural practices, to meet and exceed the set *standard,* and subjectively experience less shame in the process. This discourse positions a dancer as willing to go to any lengths to have 'a ballet body' *because of what you're required to look like on the stage*, in addition to its required functionality.

A visual art. This construction allows dancers to highlight that because ballet is *a visual art, you must have beautiful lines, everything has to be perfect*. A top dancer needs a thin, muscular body, but must also attend to detail to create a certain aesthetic quality in her dancing, essentially *being soft and dynamic at the same time.* Furthermore, *you're either doing it or you're not, it's that kind of thing*, which again puts dancers in a restricted position with few options. The whole production is a work of moving, visual art, into which a ballet dancer must seamlessly fit and play her role, for the collective to be visually pleasing: *You're working for the corps to look good – everybody's thinking about the same thing*. This construction positions dancers as objects to be consumed, which can cause subjective detachment between a dancer and her body, and allow her to treat it harshly, with less guilt. A living human being is positioned as a product that is valued based on its external appearance, which can also create subjective difficulty for a dancer – feeling pressure to meet expectations, and devalued if you do not. Audiences, as consumers, have expectations that

must be continually met; ballerinas must be beautiful and graceful to be revered. They must mask their hard work and make their performance appear *effortless* – your *upper body has to be totally soft, like you're just doing something really easy.*

Being thin is justified in this construction, because it enables dancers to jump higher and create certain 'lines,' - *if your thighs are a bit bigger, in a tutu it doesn't look good, because it changes the shape of your body*. Lighter dancers are also positioned as easier to lift, making both male and female lead 'look good' – so achieving 'thinness' allows a dancer to subjectively experience pride in her contribution. The aesthetic ballet ideal is currently influenced by Western standards of feminine beauty, and dominant patriarchal and capitalist discourses in broader society. Gendered issues are bound up in this construction of performance, and dancers' subjective body-image problems and eating disorder experiences (Ravaldi, 2006). Societal ideals change, so although ballet is highly traditional, it is still influenced by broader prevailing and evolving norms. Currently, *you have to have a healthy body – you can't be too thin or too big;* this ideal, which was very thin until recently (Fisher, 2007b), may be reflective of and influenced by wider fitness and health trends, linking this construction to the sports discourse: *It became such a thing, as like, you have to be thin thin thin thin to be a dancer, but it's really not like that anymore*. I also observed a shift in what was considered an ideal ballet body, from skeletal to thin, but toned.

The performing, ethereal ballerina is subjectively what attracted many dancers to ballet and provided them a mental image of their goal: *You just look at them with such... Beauty and- and gasping at what they can do*. Several described memories of watching ballet as a child and thinking it was *spectacular*: *I just loved... Loved the whole look of things. I used to think they'd be on-stage, and when they go off-stage, they don't stop dancing. You know, the story just continued, you just didn't see.* In this construction, ballet was love at first sight for dancers, and in pursuing and achieving the ideal, a ballet dancer shows her passion and

commitment, which subjectively legitimates her identity. Through various behaviours and habits, a dancer moulds her human body into a ballet body. Foucault (1986b) described another key technique of disciplinary power – continual, hierarchized, surveillance; through compulsory visibility– in the studio, facing mirrors, on-stage, facing an audience, and in private, it coerces dancers to regulate themselves according to certain norms. Power is exercised in ballet, as in broader society, through a network of gazes that supervise each other, and then the individual dancer begins to observe and regulate her own behaviour (Burr, 2003).

An obsession. Peak performance is constructed as more than a goal – an obsession. Ballet is pure, and specific, which sets a high bar for dancers, and again positions them with few options, if they want to claim this identity. Dancers also indicated they "can't change the status quo," which suggests a resigned position, where they either subjectively accept it, stay, and must engage in strict behaviours, or reject the demands, and leave the environment. Top dancers positioned themselves as perfectionists - *it's not just your technique that you think must be perfect. Your body must be perfect, which is impossible, because even when it looks really good, you think 'oh well, you can still work on this.'* Dancers say a performance must be perfect, and there is, subjectively, no room for error or deviation, so they must get it right and cannot get it wrong; if they do, they feel frustration and berate themselves, but if they get it right, they can experience pleasure and motivation to keep working. This position explains dancers' sculpting their bodies through extensive training and controlling their eating patterns. When positioned as obsessed with perfection and her *aesthetic appearance – with having a good body*, subjectively, everything matters - *body alignment,* how muscles process each movement and *those little things that you can't quite pinpoint*. However, dancers also say perfection is impossible, making it unlikely that a dancer will ever subjectively feel good enough. She is subjectively aware of her body because she is *standing in front of mirrors*

with... Skin tight clothes, all the time; you are seeing every single part of your body, all the time. If there's a like, a little lump or bump anywhere, you're seeing it.

Foucault (1986a) referred to the techniques used by disciplinary powers as minute and meticulous. In addition to referring to the religious origin of this focus on detail, Foucault (1986a) highlighted its political significance by describing how Napoleon's obsession with detail helped him organise and govern in a way that allowed him to see even the smallest occurrence: "A meticulous observation of detail and, at the same time, a political awareness of these small things, for the control and use of men, emerge" (p. 185), as well as "a whole set of techniques, a whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans, and data" (p. 185) which created 'the modern human.' This reminded me of influential people in ballet, like Balanchine, who demanded an 'anorexic look' from 'his' dancers, which is considered to have shaped the ideal ballet body for decades (Ritenburg, 2010). Based on stories of how Balanchine wanted to see dancer's bones and obsessed over "every bulge" (Benn & Walters, 2001, p. 149), it seems as if Balanchine shared Napoleon's obsession with small details, and like the 'modern human' emerged out of the conditions described above, it appears that the modern ballerina was created out of similar conditions.

A fight with food. Becoming a top dancer is achievable, only through certain ways-of-being, and her relationship with food is positioned as central, within a visual discourse. While *some people are naturally thin, and some people just aren't*, food typically nourishes a dancers' athletic body, but may jeopardise her visual form, if she cannot get the balance right. This tension positions dancers in an ongoing struggle: *I've struggled with my weight. Especially when you're growing up and you're going through puberty, and all of that, then it was such a big deal*. However, it becomes normalised, so one day, *it's not a big deal anymore*, but *a way of life*. Nonetheless, if a dancer puts on weight, *someone calls you up and says you need to watch your weight*. However, *it also goes the other way as well, if you get*

too thin you also get called up, because you can't be the other extreme, as well. Therefore, a

dancer is subjectively preoccupied with food and experiences pressure to account for her

eating habits, whether problematic, or not: *I have quite a fast metabolism, so I'm not... I don't*

have a specific diet, or I don't starve myself. I'm quite lucky in that way - I eat whatever I

want. However, most dancers take actions to control their eating in pursuit of the ideal, and

there are implications for getting it wrong, either way, especially on-stage: *I do sometimes*

think 'ok, well, we're coming up to a show, maybe watch what you eat a bit.'

There are contradictions in how dancers position themselves. Some acknowledge *there's*

the unhealthy way, but distance themselves from it; *it's not at all what our company's about.*

One dancer said *the best companies in the world – if you are too thin, they will not hire you,*

because then they know already there's a mental problem, there's a physical problem. You're

weaker than the other dancers. Therefore, being positioned as having an eating disorder can

threaten a dancer's career. However, others situated them as more common: *Every girl in the*

company has an eating disorder to a certain extent. Not that they are anorexic or bulimic, but

they are all obsessed with their bodies, and will do whatever needs to be done. This

construction links to the psychological discourse's construction of danger and pathology and

the sports discourse's focus on physical strain.

The reviewer suggested I further explore my personal connection to this discourse, which

encouraged me to more deeply consider several factors. I spent many years pursuing and

maintaining 'a ballet body,' which was an important foundation upon which I built my ballet

identity. I never experienced an eating disorder, although when I heard the dancers' stories of

engaging with food, I realised that some 'disordered attitudes and behaviours' were present.

Nonetheless, one of the reasons I was drawn to study them, was out of frustration at the

stereotypes of ballet dancers circulating in the academic literature and society (Clabaugh &

Morling, 2004). I hoped to elaborate other versions of ballet dancers in response. I also

wondered why ballet dancers get singled out over weight obsessions, when those involved in various sports, and women in general, exhibit dieting behaviours.

These views made me subjectively defensive about the issue, which the reviewer picked up on. However, I could not deny that these problems exist, especially when the dancers had described struggles with food and weight in the interviews. I was fortunate to never have been told to lose weight, as a dancer, but also aware of people close to me who had, and the subjective damage these conversations caused. This led me to grapple with my position as researcher further; I felt torn between different interests and demands, because of my insider/outsider status, even though I aimed to create as honest a picture as possible, and try to account for my subjectivity. I did not want to further pathologize ballet dancers, or deny the potential for harm involved. I also considered my responsibility in telling this South African ballet story. Could I highlight views different from the stereotypical, negative ones, without diminishing or denying the pain that people have lived through?

My aim has been to prioritise the dancers' views, because they managed to achieve what many others, myself included, could not, but it is impossible to escape how discourse positions me and shapes my subjectivity. I realised the power of dominant discourses in shaping our truths, and that we are all situated within them, including the dancers and ballet, and myself and this research. I found my discomfort in approaching a world that was familiar and personally meaningful, but flawed, was not unusual. According to Hamden (2009), "to gain a more complete view and understand the context surrounding the 'inside,' one needs to step out of one's comfort zone to experience the associated and inevitable discomfort" (p. 378). Furthermore, "only by persevering in the face of discomfort can one hope to properly appreciate the insider perspective" (Hamden, 2009, p. 378).

4. Adventures of Story-tellers – A Performing Arts Discourse

Initial phase. In a performing arts discourse, pursuing peak performance is at the core of a dancer's subjective experience. Performances must be consistently of the highest possible standard for a paying audience; *it has to be a good show*, which justifies dancers rehearsing *all the time,* even though *rehearsals are never enough.* In addition, *performances are live*, so unpredictable, and *sometimes things just don't work*, which makes them *scary* and anxiety-provoking. Ballet performance is a moving *visual art form,* in this discourse, and individual dancers are components of the overall production. Drawing on this discourse allows dancers to distance ballet from the realm of sports, and emphasise the various other components of ballet. It also allows them to engage with *the magical side* of ballet.

Reviewer's suggestions. The reviewer noted overlaps in this discourse, with others, and saw it as "a storied discourse" - the dancers told stories of "getting it right," of "pressure" and "struggle," and stories comparing "real life" to being on stage, performing. She also saw stories about identity, including accounts of having "supernatural powers" versus "being normal," and being "right versus wrong," and wondered about the implications of "human error" if dancers are positioned as superheroes. The reviewer noted dancers' descriptions of "fighting" with, for, and in performance, which raise images of war, and link this discourse to the psychological warzone construction. In her view, dancers have many roles to play when positioned as a performing artist, which all contribute to their subjective feelings of pressure.

Final phase. This discourse highlights that for a dancer, *the ultimate, is performing,* because she can subjectively *have some incredible moments on stage,* and experience *an amazing feeling,* that *you can't describe in words* but is *the reason why I do what I do.* Through it, she can access peak performance, her subjective purpose, that makes everything else worthwhile, and enables her pursuit of perfection. However, being positioned as accountable to a paying audience is *very stressful*, yet explains dancers' perfectionism. The

live nature of performance also justifies a dancer's obsession with practicing; she is positioned as obligated to get it right, live on stage. Therefore, dancers are in a conflicted position, which creates complex subjective feelings towards ballet; despite loving performing on stage, most also feel overwhelmed by the pressure and sometimes want to walk away backstage, or romanticise being hit by a bus to avoid it. However, a top dancer acts to challenge these thoughts: *I would feel like I let myself down if I didn't, go out there and do it.*

Performance art. Constructing performance this way highlights what being a top performer in this environment entails. A ballet dancer, positioned as a performing artist must do many things at once; *you have to use your feet, your legs, your arms, your head, your body... And then you still have to bring the emotional side into it and use your face, and be soft, doing really hard movements.* Top dancers must be more than technically impressive; in action, they do *tricks, move with expression*, display *artistry,* and tell stories. They also *have to be musical*, and subjectively, *music helps as well – your body will take over, and just do what it's supposed to do.* Positioned as story-tellers, dancers must persuade their audience *to feel it, just as much* as they do, by *capturing an essence* and 'conveying' it through silent *acting.* In fact, *it's very much about the stories that you're telling – that's one of the most important things,* and why *it's an art, still*. The complexity involved in interweaving these multiple components puts a dancer in a pressurised position, with high expectations on her.

To be 'a star,' dancers must earn principal roles; *it's every dancer's dream to be doing 'the main role,' – I mean, that's what you push for.* As dancers improve, based on the ideal, they are given more prominent exposure, but also subjectively experience increasingly higher expectations; they are positioned in a continual battle to reach the top. A dancer is also positioned as a part of an overall production: *There's times when you are all dancing together, and if one person goes wrong, it can mess up the whole dance. I mean, everything will just fall apart from then - you have to really work as a team.* Despite the challenges, dancers also learn

necessary skills in this context: *You stand with your arm up until it's blue, and you can't bring it down, 'cos everybody's in a line. That starts to teach you the stamina in your brain.* Performing is also constructed as an adventure, which positions a dancer as an adventurer. This allows her to subjectively experience being on-stage as exciting, and performing ballet as a joy, despite the pressure and fear: Y*ou just have to trust in yourself and believe in yourself, and just enjoy what you're doing. 'Cos if you enjoy it, the audience will enjoy it*. Highlighting that ballet is artistic and emotional, enables dancers to distance it from sport. Dancers position themselves as story-tellers and actors, which allows them a sense of magic and fantasy in performance, that *completely takes you to a different world* and offers a *chance to escape your own life,* where *you get to not be yourself for a while,* and sometimes even *forget that you're dancing or performing.* This enables dancers' subjective experiences of flow, or getting lost in the moment: *I have no idea of how the steps were, or what I did. I don't hear anything – I don't hear the audience, I don't hear the people... I'm just living in my own world.*

   Framing ballet as a physically demanding, visual art in motion, further justifies dancers' investing in their bodies, as the instrument of their performance. However, a dancer must also mask her hard work on-stage, which is *where the effortlessness comes in, where you just need to dance, and perform and let it happen, and not have that brute force that you would have in the studio*. This also put dancers in a contradictory position; hard work is virtuous, but must also be hidden. Patriarchal gender constructions – particularly of femininity, may shape these expectations of dancers. The ballerina is under strict demands, but not 'allowed' to publicly take credit for her efforts; she is expected to devalue her achievements by behaving as if her performance is easy, but still relied on to always put *the extra touch on*. Constructing performance as demanding and stressful, again draws attention to dancers' complex relationship with confidence. In this construction, dancers' claiming, or resisting this position impacts their performance. For example, claiming it may allow a dancer to subjectively feel

more confident: From the *first step onto stage, you're commanding everybody, and this is your stage, and this is your space, and you're there to perform*. However, not all dancers express subjectively feeling confident, but still feel obligated to display confidence, because *if you don't think you're good, nobody else will. So you present yourself as thinking you're good, meantime… You actually don't have the confidence at all.*

Where a sport discourse clarifies the urgency created by an aging body, this discourse allows dancers to position themselves as artists. Dancers subjectively experience artistry as linked to maturity – *you learn out of your life experiences* – so it improves with age. This positions dancers in a dilemma: When young and physically strong, they are less mature and developed as artists, but when they have developed their artistry by experiencing life, their bodies are weaker. This tension between physical and artistic performance, leaves a dancer in a constrained, and conflicted position, where prioritising one may limit the other, and the length of her career depends on how long they overlap: *At some point they will overlap and then you have to try and not stay too long, so people go "oh my goodness, she's lovely, but she can't dance anymore."* In this way, others' views contribute to the maintenance of disciplinary power in this context, where a dancer behaves according to these.

Foucault (1986b) indicated that the effects of surveillance are enhanced by defining norms to measure individual abilities against, and countering non-conformance with judgement as a form of punishment. Just as power became visible in institutions focused on normalising people's minds and behaviours, like the military, schools and work environments, it is apparent in ballet. Like these broader environments, which needed to create and enforce order, ballet is regulated by strict rules, and expectations. When dancers step onto stage, they position themselves as available for scrutiny, to be measured not just against the norm, but the ideal. As a result, dancers subjectively experience this environment as harsh and critical, but carefully regulate their behaviour, to deliver optimal performance, which brings them joy.

Live. In this construction of performance, *you can never predict what's gonna happen, because it's a live thing*, which increases a dancer's subjective experiences of pressure. When *things can always go wrong* and *weird things can happen,* dancers are also positioned as powerless, because, despite preparation, some things are out of their hands. In live performances, dancers need to *do their best in the moment* because they subjectively feel *judged always on the present*, according to the views of others. Dancers reference the uncertainty of performance to justify their behavioural attempts to control the uncontrollable and explain such behaviours, if they impact other parts of their lives. A dancers' subjective superstitious beliefs and behaviours may be attempts to retain a sense of control amid chaos. Dancers spoke of subjectively accepting mistakes as inevitable, but this contradicts other assertions that everything must be perfect. From this contradictory position, they insist on perfection, but also that nothing ever will be – *you're striving for it, even though you know it's not possible*. While the dancers evoked 'being human' to explain things going wrong, this is difficult to reconcile with dancers' experiencing pressure to be superhuman. Yet, for many dancers *being able to let go of something and move on is so important*, subjectively, for the remainder of the performance, *as much as you wanna control everything*.

Dancers, positioned as experienced, know that *it's not ever gonna be perfect*, and try to prevent their mistakes from ruining their confidence: *You can slip and fall on your face, but can you get up, and still continue with that confidence? Not going "oh my god, I just fell."* One dancer described how mistakes can subjectively relieve the pressure of perfection: *If I'm in a performance, and something goes wrong, I'm like "thank God it's gone wrong, because now, I can just get on with the show."* When positioned as having made a mistake, a dancer must, subjectively, *throw that out the window, and be great,* when she is next on-stage. When they are placed in an experienced and mature position, dancers may perceive letting go to be easier. For example, after spending a long time *constantly trying to please everybody,* one

dancer realised: *"I can't please you all... I'm trying to please myself and feel like I've been true to myself, and I've done my best. If you like it, you like it. If you don't, you don't."* Another described how, when she positioned herself as less concerned about *how the performances went*, she *started dancing better;* even if a performance is *a complete mess, life will still go on tomorrow.* This 'bigger picture' perspective allows dancer to experience less subjective pressure because *it is only ballet.* Another said, *I try to remind myself "I'm not a brain surgeon, if the turn doesn't work... Nobody's gonna die, the turn just didn't work."*

Within this construction, dancers experience performance as anxiety-provoking. Being positioned as a live performer motivates a dancer to learn to cope with the pressure of being on-stage, in front of an audience, executing a complex, technical and multifaceted performance, because there is *always gonna be anxiety*. However, dancers also experience nerves as normalised, but delicate aspects of performance, which puts them in a precarious position: *Healthy nerves* enable performance, while *unhealthy nerves* can derail it. When dancers are positioned as anxious, but it is normalised, they allow themselves to *be nervous - it's good to have those butterflies and adrenalin* – but *must turn it into positive energy*. However, dancers experience this as *a fine line, 'cos sometimes you can be so nervous, you don't perform well. You have to be able to control your nerves* and *compose the energy*.

Professional. For top dancers, performances are not just instances of live physical artistry, but professional shows, attended by paying audiences, who expect consistency, so *you have to have those good shows, all the time*. It does not matter whether *there's a 1 000 people, or 5 people, they paid the same price, they need to receive the same product*. There are so many positions for dancers to take up in this discourse, which can lead them to feel subjectively overwhelmed. Positioned as a professional, a dancer must meet the demands of live performance, because *you have to carry a ballet for two and a half hours*. A dancer subjectively perceives little room to respond to her experiences in this construct; *if you're*

tired, or something goes wrong, they can't push pause. Subjective pain experiences must also be accepted or ignored, because if *you're in front of an audience, you can't tell them, like, "sorry guys, I'm so sore, I can't- I have to stop." You have to push through that.* Behaviourally displaying perseverance positions dancers as resilient, which helps them subjectively cope. Dancers must also fight to bring the energy sometimes, when they perceive their nerves as not strong enough to create adrenalin, but *feedback from the audience* subjectively helps; *it pushes you – if there's a great vibe and energy.*

Being positioned as a professional also justifies a dancer's perfectionist thinking and related behaviours; her performance must be as flawless and high-quality as possible for her audience, because, subjectively, she *can't let them down.* This further explains the lengths dancers go to, physically and mentally, to achieve the highest peaks of performance: *You always want to build to make your next performance better,* However, in contrast, one dancer pointed out that *as soon as you put that pressure on yourself, that's hectic - you can do a lot of damage thinking that people are expecting certain things.* In this construction, positioning a dancer as appealing, from an audience's perspective, is a subjective matter of *who you prefer, and who has that x-factor* - a talent or quality that makes them special, which dancers again, have limited control over. However, constructing ballet performances as professional also frames them as products to be developed, managed, marketed and consumed.

5. Return on Investment – A Financial/Economic Discourse

Initial phase. This discourse relates to financial and economic concerns. From this perspective, a ballet production is constructed as expensive - it *costs a lot of money*, which places a dancer in a position of responsibility, in which she experiences pressure to dance well to attract *a paying audience.* Positioned as professionals, in relation to South African ballet's recent history, dancers subjectively feel frustrated by financial challenges, in terms of funding the company and their own remuneration. This discourse also allows dancers to emphasise

that ballet is a passion; because dancers' salaries are low, they can position themselves as motivated by love, not money. However, dancers lamented that, despite their best efforts, performance is constructed as something that *still boils down to money*. The financial discourse also reminds dancers that ballet training from a young age is *not a cheap hobby*, and that they relied on their parents' willingness to 'invest' in their potential ballet career.

Reviewer's suggestions. The reviewer found this discourse "very impersonal," and "detached," but thought this may describe it. She saw performance being constructed as something that puts dancers on a "tightrope," involving a "paradox of perfection": Although so much in ballet is about the self - a dancer's mind, body, beauty, and her relationships with perfection, training and food, and she must rely on her abilities, being able to perform is still contingent on the availability of money. The financial discourse insists that everyone, inside and outside ballet, is controlled by "a higher power – money." The reviewer also noted that dancers compared their local context to overseas locations, in terms of finances and resources.

Final phase. This discourse also seems impersonal and detached to me, and puts dancers in a precarious position. Although dancers globally seem to experience financial challenges (Kay, 2014), dancers in South Africa position themselves as having even fewer resources, which may lead to more acute subjective experiences of financial pressure. This discourse acts as a reality check, and a reminder that despite dancers' dreams, and passions, they are positioned in various, complex ways by financial systems and broader capitalist discourse.

A paradox of perfection. When performance is constructed as a paradox of perfection, financial pressures simultaneously necessitate, and threaten, the pursuit of perfection. Ballet dancers are positioned as dependent on capitalism, but also as economic commodities that the company makes use of, as resources, in a ballet production, which is framed as a consumable product. Paying audiences, positioned as consumers, can *critique the product as it's coming in*, and value for money determines whether tickets will be sold, and if contracts can be

offered to dancers, allowing them the identity of 'professional ballet dancer.' Therefore,

dancer and company are positioned as reliant on each other to exist. This construction also

further justifies dancers' obsession with perfection; they must execute a performance well, to

sell tickets, which enables it all to exist. Therefore, all dancers, but especially principals, are

positioned as responsible for the company's continued success and operations, and, as a result,

their own career opportunities, which can lead to subjective feelings of being burdened. This

construction also allows dancers to highlight the high cost of productions, which means that

no matter how perfect a performance, *that money's not necessarily gonna come back in ticket

sales*. Nonetheless, a ballet company is still positioned as a business that must be financially

viable, and therefore, *our main problem is funding*. This construction positions dancers as

reliant on capitalism, a broad societal system, that is out of their control, so may also

subjectively feel powerless. This paradox places them in an impossible, catch-22 position, in

which they must do their best, but performing as a top dancer is still beyond their control.

In South Africa, this construction provides a language for dancers to engage with South

African ballet's story of rebirth, necessitated by specific financial challenges that are not as

prominent overseas, where these dancers subjectively perceive there to be more funding,

better remuneration and improved resources: *The environment they work in overseas is better.

Like in Canada, I had- there's two physiotherapists every day.* In contrast, here, *just keeping

the company alive is hard enough,* let alone providing extra resources. This puts dancers in an

insecure position, where they must continually work for financial stability – their own and the

company's. But being positioned as a top South African dancer also has advantages. While

most dancers subjectively idealised overseas ballet contexts, one dancer noted that over there,

the companies are so big, you tend to be a number; however, because the local company is

smaller, *the principals here get to do a lot more, than if you were, say, at the Royal Ballet.*

Different ballet contexts might differ in terms of standard, but according to one dancer, *we*

can compete on an international level, which positions the local dancers as 'good enough,' and may lead to subjective feelings of pride, that encourage dancers to keep working hard.

In this construction, this professional ballet context is being shaped on a broader level, by neoliberalism, "a global economic movement founded upon the notion that only through the freeing of markets and market-based relations can the individual—indeed society itself— achieve freedom" (Newman, 2014, p. 604). It is closely linked to capitalism (Newman, 2014). According to Newman (2014) "income inequality and political disenfranchisement" (p. 609) are also increasing globally because of "neoliberalism's top-down lived economies" (p. 609). Consumers' access to ballet, and therefore the sustainability of the industry "would become untenable, if not unsustainable, under the weight of widened income inequality" (Newman, 2014, p. 609). South Africa is already considered "one of the most consistently unequal countries in the world" (Bhorat, 2015). Therefore, the financial challenges ballet dancers subjectively experience, are not incidental, but linked to these conditions. In addition, 21st century ballet dancers, positioned within a global economy and the internet age, are increasingly more enabled to access similar environments in other countries, remotely or through travel. This may have led dancers to perceive that *overseas there's more money for it.* Dancers' subjective comparisons to overseas contexts are about more than financial support: *There, more people go and watch ballet. Here, not too many people go and watch ballet. It's helped out by the government, we're not helped by the government.* Positioned this way, dancers expressed subjective doubt that the *arts in general is much of a priority* in South Africa, which can make them feel underappreciated and frustrated.

Newman (2014) noted that "the marketization and commercialization of sport is symptomatic of a broader transformation brought about by the rise of global neoliberalism" (p. 604). The same is likely true for ballet. Capitalism not only puts pressure on dancers; the capitalist economy created the conditions that led to the emergence of disciplinary power, and

its "techniques of submitting forces and bodies" (Foucault, 1986c, p. 211), including training, surveillance, normalising judgement, examination and documentation. These techniques are apparent within ballet institutions, including companies, schools and systems of ballet education, that create syllabi and examination structures, to produce ballet dancers. Therefore, ballet's operations are also impacted by current financial and economic societal conditions.

For love, not money. Ironically, this detached discourse also allows dancers to construct peak performance as pursued out of love, and not for a financial reward. Dancers can position themselves as passionate about ballet to explain their involvement, because *there's no funding, so you don't get paid an amazing salary. It's not like you do it because you're gonna make a fortune*. Positioned as passionate, dancers are enabled to make sacrifices and compromises related to finances and put themselves through pain, possibly with less subjective guilt and more resilience to cope with the pressures. Dancers are also positioned as naïve and 'living in their own world' because of their romantic view of ballet, despite the insecure financial position it puts them in. This can lead a dancer to subjectively feel indignant, but she can also claim this position to emphasise her self-sacrifice: *I used to feel very offended about it, like "I'm not in a fantasy world." But we do, we do to a certain degree. We do work for like, next to zero pay*. While subjectively, *those things are hard, and they do play a huge role in your life,* this construct allows dancers the view that life is *not about that*, and to ask *would I be happy, earning a huge salary, sitting in front of a computer every day?* For most dancers, the answer is *I don't think I would be.* Therefore, although reliant on a financial system, dancers also seem to position themselves as 'rebels of capitalism,' because they resist such ideals.

However, capitalism also shapes the context in more complex, but subtle ways. A discourse of sacrifice and martyrdom, linked to religion for centuries, and has become entwined with capitalism over the past two centuries, and accounts for concepts of obedience

and docility (Foucault, 1986a). It is apparent in dancers positioning themselves as sacrificing financial security for ballet. However, by not only engaging in self-sacrifice, but positioning themselves as doing so for love, dancers also evoke a romantic discourse, which is also entrenched within Western societies, and linked to patriarchal constructions and capitalism. But due to the dominance of capitalism, a lack of money also threatens a dancer's career, putting her in a vulnerable position. Therefore, this construct highlights that despite being positioned as driven by love, not money, dancers compete to climb the ranks, and *the higher you get, the more you get paid*. Therefore, when dancers are positioned as competing for roles and ranks, capitalism seems to be formative of their environment.

Not a cheap hobby. A financial discourse also enables a construction that positions top dancers as produced through lifelong training, which is *expensive, ja… It's crazy*. A dancer is positioned as reliant on her parents to fund her dream, and they are positioned as her first investors: *I wouldn't have been able to do anything if I didn't have them, paying for everything. All the money they had to spend on buying me pointe shoes, and costumes for this competition and, you know, everything.* In this position, dancers' subjective aspirations of becoming professionals are only viable if they convince their 'investors' of their prospects. If a dancer positions herself as an aspiring professional, she should attend extra lessons, and ideally a specialised school. Parental investment in a ballet dancer's career can be compared to enabling a talented and aspiring sportsman, doctor or accountant. Later, the company assumes responsibility for funding dancers who prove to be good returns on investment.

Neoliberalism, capitalism and patriarchal discourses hierarchically position people in relation to socio-economic resources, which either enable or limit access to hobbies, like ballet. In considering these positions, I was confronted with the privilege involved in ballet, and reminded that my own access to ballet was facilitated by available financial resources, which may not be the case for everyone who aspires to be a ballet dancer. Future top

professional dancers must be favourably positioned, socio-economically, in addition to psychologically, physically and aesthetically. This is not to say that people from various backgrounds cannot be dancers – I have been aware that companies in South Africa have invested in outreach programmes and an array of other initiatives to enable access and transform. However, these conditions do constrain what is possible for people, which has implications for the 'identity' of South African ballet.

Socio-economic positions also refer to the right social conditions, including geographic location, and family exposure: *My Mom always took us to the ballets, so we went to watch a lot.* Having a mother who is both financially enabled and willing to invest time and energy is also critical: *My mom – she did everything. She took me everywhere, did whatever I needed to be done.* This may allow dancers to subjectively feel supported, valued and encouraged – when younger, but also as professionals, as some dancers indicated. Therefore, a dancer's socio-economic context influences the type of resources she can access, which either facilitate or damage her journey to the top: *Your environment, your teachers, the people you surround yourself with... Definitely have an effect on what the product is gonna be.* Being positioned in a strong support system, that can offer alternative resources, financial or otherwise, also shapes a dancer's subjectivity – she can perceive herself as in a stable enough position to 'choose' to make the sacrifices required to become a top professional dancer.

6. Schooled – An Educational/Training Discourse

Initial phase. This discourse frames top performance as only attainable through extensive training from a young age. Through this discourse, dancers' potential can be subjectively 'judged' based on whether they have *talent – a gift*, but it must then still be *moulded* through *the correct training*. In this discourse, a dancer's *teacher is extremely important.* It also constructs performance as enhanced through dancers being outside their comfort zones, and exposed to new environments. For some dancers, such experiences 'put them in their place,'

but motivate them to work harder. This discourse emphasises that the process of forming a top dancer is not predictable or formulaic; influences and contexts enable and disable different possibilities for each dancer. However, a solid *education in dance* is constructed as essential.

Reviewer's suggestions. To the reviewer, this discourse is about the "road to success;" it constructs peak performance as only attainable by following a long path - a "journey to perfection." She experienced the dancers as "superheroes" with "supernatural abilities and powers," who are 'born with' rare talents and gifts, that are only given to some. The reviewer also noted dancers' descriptions of overseas training contexts as 'better,' and of the pressure in formative training environments as "dangerous," linking this discourse to the danger construction in the psychological discourse.

Final phase. The construction of a ballet dancer's long journey of perfection - to peak performance highlights the sustained dedication required. The name of this discourse has a double meaning, relating to a dancer's journey – 'schooled' refers to the schooling process, and the experience, described as subjectively important, of being outside her comfort zone, and 'put in her place.' Dancers positioned at the top saw such experiences as subjectively helpful for avoiding complacency and arrogance, which they described as limiting growth. In this discourse, dancers can subjectively engage with their 'origin story,' including their experiences of enablement, facilitation, and crystallising moments in a learning context.

Gifted. In this discourse, peak performance is constructed as possible, only for those who possess 'talent' - *you can't just pick anyone off the streets, and teach them to be ballet dancer.* This is linked to a dancer's identity, which is enmeshed with ballet; a top ballet dancer is positioned as special, and born to dance, because she has a rare *gift – something that, is only... Given to a handful of people. In this construction,* talent is vaguely defined, but dancers positioned as talented seem to have physical characteristics associated with patriarchal norms and capitalism, cognitive abilities that are linked to psychological norms, and 'personality

traits,' like the willingness to work hard, and train, also linked to capitalism. These personal ingredients allow a dancer to access the ballet education and training that will facilitate her pursuits. If this discourse positions a dancer as a superhero, and constructs her journey to peak performance as her origin story, this construction allows her to subjectively experience this gift as the source of her superpowers, and this path as her destiny from birth. This links to the construction of a psychological checklist in the first discourse. These gifts position a dancer as having potential, and therefore, worthy of being trained, which leads teachers to display interest and nurture their growth. Being positioned this way also shapes a dancer's subjectivity - an important crystallising experience (Pickard & Bailey, 2009) is having her potential recognised and invested in: *She saw talent in me, which made me feel quite confident – that someone who was so, like, amazing and had really made a name for herself, saw something in me. So then you start thinking, "maybe I can be a ballet dancer."*

A journey of perfection. In this construction*, talent's not enough*, and peak performance requires extensive, lifelong training because *it just doesn't come like that [clicks fingers]*. A journey construction emphasises that without potential being *moulded correctly, you can have all the facility in the world, but you'll never be a dancer*. Positioned as superheroes, ballerinas, performing on-stage at their peak, may seem effortless and invincible, but this construction is a reminder that even superheroes must train: *Even if you have everything, you can't just use it, you have to push yourself, and say "I have to do this, and I have to do this" and every day, it's a mental thing of saying "I have to work today."* Through this construction, a professional dancer can subjectively engage with her developmental origin story, that enabled her career in ballet. However, dancers position themselves in different ways, in relation to ballet, in these narratives. Some described their subjective experience of ballet as an instant connection: *I loved it, and I knew I wanted to do it; from as early as I can remember, that's what I wanted to do from the beginning*. Several also described how they

grew up with going to the ballet - it was part of my life, since I can remember. However, others subjectively experienced their relationship with ballet as more complex. One dancer *thought ballet was so restricting* at first and *wasn't really interested*, because *it was hard*, and *a pain. It just irritated* her, *especially syllabus work*. But despite this, she *fell in love with ballet in the end.* These dancers' subjective experiences of falling in love with ballet may be shaped by a romantic discourse, which is prominent in Western society.

This construction also allows a dancer to subjectively consider her formative learning experiences, and how these shaped her origin story. With peak performance framed as the destination of a journey, this construction allows a dancer to describe her first few chapters, including how she, and other key characters are positioned, and to what effects. For example, dancers emphasise that *from the beginning, you have to have a good teacher*, positioning them as critical. This positions a professional dancer as formed through being a disciplined student; she submits herself to be *moulded with the correct training and correct teachers*, who must provide structure and enforce *strict discipline*, framed as essential for success, because most dancers *have to work really hard to get it*. Teachers must also offer rich knowledge, *good technique,* feedback, and guidance through examinations, competitions, and other challenges, to promote growth. However, these experiences, especially e*xams, are very nerve-wrecking, 'cos you know somebody's sitting there, judging you and you're gonna get... Physical points out if it, and you can fail or pass.*

Being positioned as disciplined may help dancers subjectively cope with the extensive physical training that aspiring dancers require, and professionals find normal – *you have to have ballet – intensely*. In addition to *an understanding of the discipline that is needed*, dancers also require *self-discipline to do well* because *a teacher's not gonna keep pushing you.* Being positioned as a self-disciplined professional, may help a dancer subjectively accept *that a certain standard is required*, and that she must *be knowledgeable,* and behave

according to strict rules and constraints. These relationships of obedience between dancer and teacher remind me of Foucault's (2003) description of a monk and his master, where no element of the monk's life "may escape from this fundamental and permanent relation of total obedience to the master" (p. 165). Foucault (2003) called it "a sacrifice of the self, of the subject's own will" (p. 165) and stated that "the monk must have the permission of his director to do anything, even die" (p. 165). Anything done without permission is theft, and the monk can never be autonomous, even when he is a director: "He must keep the spirit of obedience as a permanent sacrifice of complete control of behavior by the master. The self must constitute itself though obedience." (Foucault, 2003, p. 165).

Taking up an obedient and 'self-disciplined' position may help dancers maintain focus and commitment, to consistently work hard. It may offer subjective *drive*, without which *lots of talent* and *potential* do not matter; *even if you have the facility and a teacher, if you don't have the want, then what's the point?* In this position, *routine's very important*, subjectively, for dancers, as is *repetition - you only get better doing something if you repeat it often and often, often, often, often, correct this, do it again, do it again, do it again. The more you do something, the better it will be.* Another dancer referred to the '10000 hours' principal available within the training discourse. To dancers, outsiders do not *understand why you're always doing the same stuff, over and over and over again,* but one dancer explained these behaviours in relation to her subjectivity: When *you pull off those four turns, the feeling that you get – that's something you hunger after all the time.* However, *it must still be fun,* subjectively, so teachers must also facilitate the required passion, by providing opportunities to learn and perform on stage, and exposing dancers to resources and inspirational role models: *He would make me watch ballet DVDs from one of the great ballet companies, and said, "look at these girls, they're doing this – you should be doing it as well - he had a big*

effect in my career. Access to images and discourses that shape how a dancer should be, has been enabled by the internet, and globalisation, which exposes them *to everything overseas.*

When a dancer is positioned as an aspiring professional, this construction also justifies her choice to attend a specialised art or ballet school, because there's *trained teachers there, and they also had all the history, and anatomy, and everything else that comes with dance - you do dancing during your schooling hours as well.* Most dancers described the subjective experience of choosing to attend such a school as important in their journey; as *a big deal for my parents - I think that's, when they thought "ok, well, she's very serious about this.* This position also allows dancers to subjectively consider global resources for ballet training: *Overseas they're very fortunate to have the specialised schools, where you're handpicked, and you get trained from such a young age to be... Of a certain standard.* However, in South Africa, they perceive fewer options, and *they're not schools, like overseas, like Royal Ballet or Paris Opera or American Ballet,* where *a more extreme and intense schooling* is available, and *you can create somebody that's amazing.* Some dancers subjectively feel isolated in these conditions: *South Africa is very... In its bubble like that, with ballet. It's not very exposed to the rest of the world,* but also acknowledge that *to get the right teachers, the facilities. I mean, to build a studio or open a studio is... A ridiculous amount of money.* As a result, dancers are subjectively aware of what is out there, but their socio-economic positions constrain their access, which can feel frustrating. This links to the financial and performance discourses.

Foucault (2011) saw education as a way of controlling and monitoring how discourses, and related knowledge and power, are appropriated by people. This applies to ballet; like mainstream education, ballet institutions are machines of training, examination, and documentation, aimed at producing healthy, useful ballet bodies and qualifying dancers through objectifying them and individualising their behaviour (Foucault, 1986b). The examination of individuals, against an established norm is, in a sense, "the ceremony of this

objectification" (Foucault, 1986b, p. 199) and, documentation records and fixes dancers in their individuality, to characterise features and measure gaps in abilities.

Like the psychological and financial discourses, this construction positions parents, typically mothers, as important sources of practical and emotional support. Some dancers' subjectivities are shaped by a struggle that can emerge in these relationships: *You get those ballet moms that... Push you, and make you do things at home that are gonna better your career*, through perceived micro-management of a dancer's behaviour, that *in a sense would help you.* However, these behaviours can lead to situations *where it destroys the relationship,* because subjectively, *you don't always need it from them* when *you've got it from your teachers.* Some dancers are also positioned as teachers, and mentors within the company; they subjectively consider this dynamic *dangerous,* because if *the kids have moms that push them and, sort of run them... When they join the company, they kind of fall apart 'cos they're not able to do it themselves. And that's a problem.* However, positioning themselves within their relationships with their mothers, the subjectivity described by all dancers, is that *I was never pushed, never had a ballet mommy that was like "you have to do this, you have to do that."* Instead, positioning themselves as self-driven was important for shaping subjectivity – being given opportunities to decide helped dancers feel empowered: *Whatever I've done, my mom's always said, "it's your choice to do it, and if you really feel like you don't want to do something, you don't have to do it."* However, despite choices and ideal approaches, the path to becoming a professional ballet dancer does not offer guarantees.

Experimenting with the comfort zone. In this construction, subjective moments of discomfort and disappointment were described as key experiences, that knocked dancers down a few pegs, but motivated them to work harder: *I learned more from things that I didn't get, than things I did.* For a dancer, being positioned as *taken out of my comfort zone* is experienced as *hard, but its good as well* because *it definitely improved me as a dancer.*

Dancers described subjectively experiencing increased growth through events like taking part in overseas competitions that were full of 'better' dancers. Being positioned as comfortable was considered problematic because, subjectively, *if you're in the same environment all the time, you get very comfortable – "ok well, ja, I'm like- I'm the best," and it's terrible to say, you should never do that, but it's- it's human nature.* However, this process is also framed as random, because subjectively uncontrollable outcomes and difficult experiences can either lead dancers to be driven with a renewed determination, or feel overwhelmed, and give up. In this construction, teachers must provide tough feedback, that when appropriate, positions dancers in relation to challenging, but reachable goals, that subjectively push them, gently, but continually, out of their comfort zones. Dancers positioned as disciplined and committed may subjectively enjoy these experiences: *If a teacher shouted at me, I loved it, I... Thrive off it.* They may *love getting feedback* find it validating: *If I don't get a correction, I almost feel "why aren't you giving me a correction?" I need the corrections.* Not getting any feedback can create worry, because *I feel a bit like… "Was it like, really bad, that you're just not giving me anything?"* This construction therefore justifies tough feedback as necessary for growth.

7. Professional Dreamers – A Career/Life Goal Discourse

Initial phase. This discourse allows dancers to justify the pursuit of peak performance by constructing it as a calling, or alternatively, a career. Dancers are positioned as *passionate about* ballet, which allows them the subjective thrill of performing. Ballet is also constructed as *a lifestyle*; *once you're hooked in, ballet's it* – dancers are positioned as immersed within it and subjectively experience it as *an obsession*, that *doesn't let you go quickly*, and demands that they *fight* for it. Constructing ballet performance as a career calling allows a dancer to position herself as a professional, which justifies her hard work to 'climb the ranks.' Ballet is legitimised, because it is how a dancer earns a living. This discourse also normalises the sacrifices dancers make; they are more acceptable when made in pursuit of a career.

Reviewer's suggestions. The reviewer experienced this discourse as a "dream" or "love affair" discourse; achieving the highest levels of ballet was constructed as "more than a goal" – "an obsession." Perfectionism, and identity seemed prominent in it, to her. She suggested that I could "offer these discourses a lot," because of my exposure to and "love for ballet."

Final phase. Within a career discourse, a dancer is positioned in a love affair with ballet, which is subjectively so intense, that a dancer dedicates her life to it – just like the monk, or a nun, who totally submit themselves to a lifestyle of obedience. A dancer is positioned as obsessed with achieving her goal of perfection, which impacts her identity, and subjectivity. The career construction offered by this discourse legitimises a dancer's choice to pursue ballet professionally. Ballet is constructed as more than a cherished hobby, but a career path, which positions a dancer as a professional. These constructions of ballet, as a calling, lifestyle and career, explain a dancer's obsession with perfection in performance.

A calling. In this construction, dancers position themselves as 'called' to this path, which allows them to subjectively experience drive to be the top dancer and think of it as their 'dream.' Being positioned as called may also enable them to make the required sacrifices, and disclaim responsibility, with less subjective guilt or shame, for any undesirable consequences. This construction allows dancers subjective experiences of lacking choice and the ability to resist ballet, which is positioned as powerfully magnetic. Constructing performance as a calling allows a dancer to continue the narrative of her ballet journey, and account for her subjective memories of watching role models on-stage and falling in love with ballet. Such experiences can inspire a dancer to take actions to get there herself. Then, when a dancer is positioned as a young professional, subjectively, *being on that big stage, is inspiring, alread*y. She can draw on her subjective memories to emphasise the significance of such moments:

That feeling of like... "I remember watching, everyone else on this stage, now I'm on this stage," like... That was already like, tick one. This constructs role models as important for

recruiting dancers into ballet, and into all the broader societal discourses noted. They are also valuable for young professionals: *Try and surround yourself with the best,* but also *watch the best dancer in the company and say, "ok, she's doing that - I'm going to do that."*

In this construct, ballet training and performances are constructed as *fun,* and being positioned as a top dancer enables the subjective experience of *an incredible life* – they *would do it all over again.* These narratives are also important in dancers' origin stories. Positioning dancers as in love, passionate about and obsessed with ballet, allows them to subjectively justify willingness to invest time and make sacrifices; i*f you're passionate about something, you will fight for it, and you will drive yourself to do it*. Drive is essential – without it, *there's no ways you can make it,* but *when you have that hunger, sometimes you'll push just a little bit more,* and *you'll fight, and you'll work, and you'll sweat, but you will make it.* Positioning themselves as driven enables dancers to work hard, and *what makes you do it all the time.* But a seasoned, professional dancer is positioned slightly differently: Her subjective experiences of love for ballet are more than an infatuation, like it is for many aspiring and young professionals. Hers is, subjectively, a deeper, and committed love that makes her want to work hard for it, despite the difficulty, and even when the butterflies have worn off. Many of these positions and subjectivities link to the broader Western romantic and religious discourses, highlighted previously, which are also linked to capitalism.

A lifestyle. In this construction, *ballet is an obsession... And can take over your life completely*. Being positioned as obsessed about ballet, allows dancer to justify their intense relationships with ballet, creates subjective willingness to adjust everything else to accommodate it, and enables dancers to display commitment and prioritise ballet unapologetically, and continuously: *Everything you do revolves around ballet in some way*. It also enables dancers to persist in the face of challenges, and subjectively 'provides' dancers with the energy to sustain their fight for so long. A dancer is also able to access the identity of

a professional ballet dancer through this position, by engaging in normative behaviours, that become habituated, and formative. This links with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, as described in the literature chapter (Pickard, 2013). This identity, within this construction, positions dancers as enmeshed with ballet because *everything about ballet is a way of living.* However, in this construction, adopting a professional dancer's ways-of-being is only possible for those who are positioned as having the right body, mind, and training. Subjectively, developing the behaviours and habits of a professional *only comes with experience.*

Role models are again important, this time for their role, as experienced dancers, in providing an example and guidelines of what a ballet lifestyle requires, psychologically and physically, to younger and inexperienced dancers. Younger dancers are positioned as ignorant, but understandably; *you don't know everything – there's like, secrets and tricks to making your feet look better, and making your pointe shoes work in the right way, and you don't know any of that coming out of school.* This position enables a dancer to seek help: *The best thing you can do is really go and ask – can you help me? Can you show me what you do with yours?"* Not all experienced dancers are positioned as reliable and willing to help; some resist being positioned this way, and are instead subjectively perceived as *really horrible*, and likely to say no. However, most are experienced as *really open to helping you, and sharing things with you.* This may be how constructions of ballet's culture and norms have been passed down over decades and centuries; by showing the next generation how to be.

This construction also illuminates how ballet *takes so much from you*, and *impacts on other areas of your life*. As an obsession, ballet makes demands of dancers that puts them in a constrained position, in relation to life outside it. As a result, subjectively, having a social life *really is hard* for ballet dancers, and for most, *their social life is within the company, because you understand each other. You understand the times, you understand when you're tired, and when the right time is to go out.* This forces dancers to sacrifice time with other friends, and

family, in the pursuit of perfection. A dancer is positioned as a martyr in this discourse, which enables her subjectively, to justify her sacrifices as necessary for a cause she believes in, because she was called. However, this position, and these behaviours can also be subjectively experienced as mistakes, that are regretted and resented, if priorities change or consequences are experienced as too costly. This highlights the complexity of a professional dancer's subjective relationship with ballet: *I love it, and I hate it in the same- same way.* It also shows how the religious and romantic discourses again, seem to shape ballet.

Being positioned as obsessed about ballet can also be *unhealthy if it's the only thing in your life*, and obsessive subjectivities and behaviours, framed as dangerous. Experiences of finding 'balance,' and a life beyond ballet were described as important to develop the maturity needed for principal roles. In addition, when subjectively, *everything revolves around ballet* a ballet dancer's identity can become consuming and totalising: *When I stopped dancing, I didn't know who I was* because *your whole life – this is your dream, this is what you've worked towards, and then you're not that anymore.* For dancers who are, subjectively, still anticipating that day, thinking about *not being in this profession, it scares me to death.* I was still committed to my ballet identity, when I was forced to stop dancing, just before leaving high school, so related to this discourse. The personal challenge of having to reconstruct my identity after my surgery was more difficult than the physical ones. That journey is one of the reasons I initially decided to do research about dancers – to make sense of losing something so important. Through my engagement with the dancers and ballet literature on identity (Roncaglia, 2008), I realised that my experience was not uncommon, but also that I could reclaim, and reframe it, through my position as a ballet researcher (Willard & Lavallee, 2016).

A career. Constructing ballet as a career legitimises dancers' hard work, pain, and sacrifices made in their pursuit of top performance, by likening it to other demanding career paths. Positioning her as a professional provides a dancer with the means to pursue peak

performance: *It is a full-time job. This is where we earn our living*. It requires dancers to be *there from 9 till 5 every day,* and invest time, energy, and anything else that *goes with the trade.* This extends the financial discourse's construction of ballet as a paid job; it is a career pursuit, so many dancers, subjectively *love every day at work*. This construction allows dancers to grapple with 'work/life balance,' and their priorities inside and outside of work. It also attends to occupational dynamics and stressors, like performance pressures and interpersonal relationships with colleagues. For example, positioned as part of an organisation, dancers can subjectively draw strength to cope from knowing *that everyone else there is also struggling, so you're all doing it together. It's not just you*. Subjectivities related to emotional support are also enabled: Dancers who *want support from other people* must also *give support*, which *in this industry, is so nice to have,* particularly on tough days - *you need to help each other up, see each other's strengths*. However, work contexts are framed as interpersonally complex, and problems and conflicts still subjectively experienced, because *obviously there- [laughs] there's days when it isn't like that – girls can be nasty*.

A career construct also allows dancers to compare professional ballet to other vocations: *It can be related to... Different corporate environments*. This allows dancers various subjectivities in relation to similarities and differences, to justify and defend ballet. For example, one dancer described internal organisational competition as *a general thing, it's not necessarily ballet,* and as understandable *if two people are fighting for the same job opportunity*. In addition, on tough days, they might *feel like, I suppose, anybody else would in a normal job – like, "ah, do I have to today?"* Despite indicating similarities, the dancer seems to subjectively consider ballet as 'not a normal job.' However, others describe ballet as *very different from a lot of other jobs,* and subjectively experience ballet culture as unique: *Like rugby – they have their own culture and we have our own culture*. Positioned within a career construct, a dancer can also subjectively experience how, like other organisations, a

ballet company *has its own culture too – we're quite small and people aren't as bitchy; overseas that was harder*. One dancer expressed feeling *very fortunate that we are a very close-knit family, and we work very well together*, and indicated that international guests describe dancers here as *so friendly*. Positioning herself and the company this way allows her the subjective view that overseas, *companies are bigger and there's even more competition,* and *a lot more 'ratty-ness,'* so people *aren't as friendly*.

In this construction, a ballet company sells products, in the form of ballet productions, which positions dancers as resources, and the individual dancer as part of a team, that must work together to execute a performance. Positioning dancers as part of *a hierarchy*, ranked according to skill and seniority, can subjectively provide goals: *if I'm corps de ballet now, then if I get promoted at the end of the year, you feel like you've accomplished something.* However, one dancer resisted this position, arguing that hierarchies create complicated interpersonal dynamics, even though she experienced other options as limited. Another clarified that although *it should be, like respect people have earned - they've been there for a long time and if you're coming in, you're still learning the ranks*, sometimes *people just demand it, and that's not nice*. Disciplinary power's techniques are apparent: Through training, literal hierarchised surveillance, and normalising judgement, professional dancers discipline themselves and each other.

8. Superheroes Under Pressure – A Challenge/Competition Discourse

Initial phase. This discourse constructs ballet performance as *extremely difficult* because there are *so many things you have to think about, at one time*. Being positioned as a professional ballet dancer subjectively puts a dancer on difficult path, involving technical challenges, physical pain, disappointments and tough criticism; it *is not an easy life,* and they are like diamonds, that can only be produced through heat and pressure. The environment is constructed as *harsh* and unforgiving, and professional ballet dancers are positioned as

superheroes, who must overcome the impossible to have stories told of their triumphs. With peak performance constructed as a goal that only a few achieve, *healthy competition* can be subjectively motivating. However, because dancers are positioned as competing against each other, subjectivities and behaviours linked to unhealthy competition, like jealousy and hurtful comments, are possible. In this discourse, challenges are, subjectively, not just experiences to endure on the path to peak performance, but *important* for dancers; *the challenge makes it worthwhile*, and entice dancers to *push*, and 'put themselves through the things they do,'

Reviewer's suggestions. The challenge discourse contains many descriptions of pressure, struggle and difficulty, which the reviewer linked to the psychological discourse. The pursuit of peak performance, from this perspective is not for 'normal' people, but for superheroes, in her opinion; dancers say 'normal people' would react differently to the challenges they continually face, suggesting that they do not consider themselves normal for putting up with such a harsh environment, and "very hard life." She saw perfection as important in this discourse too – dancers compete against themselves and other dancers to achieve it every day.

Final phase. This discourse accounts for the accumulated pressure introduced in each of the previous seven discourses. A challenge discourse engulfs the entire ballet context and insists that top dancers must be positioned in some way, within each discourse. Pressure and struggle are subjectively entwined with a dancer's life, yet so is perseverance. To me they are like superheroes, so I will borrow the reviewer's description. This discourse constructs peak ballet performance as exclusive, and only possible for someone positioned as having the right mind, body, look and training, an x-factor quality and ability to cope on-stage, live, as well as love for and commitment to ballet. The subjective pressure of perfection and being on stage seems to increase as a dancer's career progresses, and is exacerbated by a financial, capitalist discourse, positioning the dancer as a product. Being positioned as a top performer in ballet offers a rare and valuable experience. This discourse reminds us that there are more ballet

dancers positioned as aspiring principals than opportunities available, so competition is woven into ballet – with others, and *yourself - you push in rehearsals, and you build and build and build*, behaviourally, in response, to keep getting better. When positioned at the top, a dancer also subjectively endures ongoing challenges related to constructions within the previous discourses, but can cope, and ideally thrive, in this difficult, complex, and contradictory life.

 Difficult. Ballet is constructed as technically difficult, and a ballet context as stressful, in studio and on-stage. When positioned as a professional dancer, subjectively, *there are a lot of hardships,* and *a lot of disappointments all the time*; one dancer expressed that *there were more unhappy moments than there were, amazing moments, but I would do it all over again.* When positioned as an aspiring top dancer, subjectively, there are many obstacles in the way, but she must display total commitment. She subjectively endures physical and emotional stress in pursuit of her goal, so in this construction; she is also positioned as a masochist, who is addicted to the difficulty and pain, and a hero who acts by rushing toward, not away from, danger: *When you tell people what you go through, like "why the hell do you do this?" It's very hard... But you wouldn't do it if you didn't have that passion.*

 Being positioned as an experienced professional allows a dancer to subjectively engage with her shift in perspective when she transitioned into a ballet company: Through the eyes of a young, aspiring dancer, ballet is *glamorous,* but a professional dancer soon learns that *there's a lot more to it*, and for many, *it's not what they thought it would be.* Joining the company is subjectively *difficult; blood, sweat and tears is part of ballet, and it's no joke.* Being positioned as *strong-willed* may provide dancers the subjectivity needed *to push themselves to the limits you have to, to be a great dancer.* Dancers unable or unwilling to take up this position will struggle to push themselves, and *need to question if this is the right career* for them. If a dancer cannot subjectively cope with pointe shoes, she will not manage *a full-length ballet on stage, when your calf is in spasm, you can't feel your feet anymore, you*

actually have 4 blisters on your feet and you just can't take your shoes off. This construction again highlights how, positioned as professionals, dancers must hide their efforts during performance, and be graceful instead, because *you're not supposed to make ballet look hard, it's supposed to look like it's nothing.* However, *to really appreciate what ballet's about, you must come into the studio and see the hard work it takes, to make it look like nothing*.

Dancers are positioned as committed, despite the difficulty, which enables them to subjectively cope with hours of demanding training, involving relentless, critical feedback, aimed at pushing them to continually give more: *You're tired from rehearsals, you're trying your best and... You're told that you're not trying hard enough – "do it again, do it again, it's not good."* Committed dancers find ways to subjectively maintain an optimistic attitude when they are drained and having a bad day, to keep themselves going and overcome all obstacles. Commitment is linked to *getting up in the morning, being tired, putting on your clothes, going to work,* every day. When ballet is framed as full of relentless challenges and pressure to be better, dancers can also be positioned as secure and resilient, or insecure. Being positioned as insecure, you can *push yourself down because you think people are being nasty to you.* When positioned as secure, dancers subjectively know *you can't worry about what other people think*, and take criticism personally, or you will not cope for long. However, in practice, this is *very hard, especially when you're at that point of exhaustion... To understand that it's not a personal attack on you, it's- it's- it's the art form.* Also subjectively tough is *knowing that you did your best, but sometimes your best is not good enough.* But *you need to push through that to become even better, and in order to do that, those people are gonna have to do what they do.* The subjective view of one dancer, is that to cope, *you need to grow a tough skin*, because *that's what's needed in this industry*, which is *not a very nice thing, but that's how it is*. However, this is also subjectively considered easier said, than done by another experienced dancer: *I don't think everyone's skin's that thick. I think dancers are sensitive*.

Positioned as committed, most dancers subjectively perceive feedback, even when harsh, as necessary for them. This enables them to reframe criticism and use it to further motivate them; *it's not a negative thing. It might feel negative because all you're hearing is the negative stuff, but it is a positive energy that they're trying to get out of you.* In tough moments, *you need to take a step back and go, "ok... I understand what they're doing. I understand why that was said, I understand that they're pushing me, I understand that they see potential."* For most dancers, *you're not going to show how much it's upset you*. One dancer described being picked on *24/7* by *the ballet mistress, but had a rule - I would never cry in front of her, that I would not do. I never- I don't. I used to sit in the toilet and flush the toilet 6 times and cry in the bathroom.* Even though *it was a very hard year,* she said, *it did make me strong*. Many dancers considered growth a positive to be found in any situation, even *if something really horrible happens.* However, even superheroes still have bad days: *Some days... You're fine and another day you're crying because... It's just not the day for you to be shouted at.* There are many overlaps between the construction of difficulty and others, that highlight links between ballet and fighting or war – psychological warfare, physical torture, as well as fighting with food, and to bring the energy on stage. These factors, and financial pressures pose threats to a dancer's career and her pursuit of peak performance.

Competitive. Achieving peak performance is constructed as rare, and only possible through competing against other dancers: *I don't mind putting in that extra work and... Trying to be the best. And have a goal, you know... "I wanna be a principal one day, I wanna do this." And once you start seeing that happen, it motivates you even more*. Opportunities are scarce, so are positioned as competitors, they must fight, because *there's no guarantee* they will make it, even if talented. Seeing another dancer who is *better than you are,* can lead a dancer to think *ok, I have to work harder*. Dancers, especially principals compete over rehearsal time; if one has more time than another, *it's unfair – you want the rehearsal time,*

you wanna be the better one, you know. You wanna get the corrections. Being positioned as competitors elicits certain behaviours; *you're always looking in the mirror and you're always comparing yourself to other people - you're trying to be better than each other, you know, but in a fun way, that competitiveness.* For most dancers, subjectively, *it's good to compete* – as a child, *competitions were so much fun*, and helped them stay engaged and motivated.

Positioned as aspiring professionals, graduate dancers compete against each other for company contracts; they must succeed to perform, and perform to succeed, often against tough odds: *I loved it! I loved it... It was, ja, 12 of us fighting for one job.* When a dancer subjectively perceives herself to be 'winning,' *it helps with your... Self-confidence. If you know you're doing a little bit better than the other people, ah great, you push a little bit harder.* Dancers can simultaneously be positioned as friends, and competitors, which can lead these relationships, to be subjectively experienced as complex, and often fragile: *You compete, so yes, you might be friends, but you get cast for a role that she doesn't, she wanted it just as bad. There is a little bit of resentment – and the animosity against you, that's not a great thing.* Being positioned as a top dancer in this competitive arena allows a longer-term subjective view: *I've lost a lot of friends when I was coming up in the ranks – people that were my friends, and then when you start passing them, they're not your friends anymore.*

There are links in this construction to the educational discourse's 'comfort zone.' Being positioned as an elite dancer can enable opportunities to compete or attend summer schools overseas; dancers subjectively felt *blown away,* by *the standard of ballet there*, and realising *everyone there's better than you.* Dancers, positioned this way, described their subjective experiences; one *walked in with a lot of confidence* because she knew she was *one of the best dancers in the school,* but over there, she *was nothing compared to those dancers.* Another said *it opened my eyes,* and made her realise *I have so much work to do.* Some experience being outside their comfort zone as tough, but helpful: *I lost a lot of my confidence, which was*

a bad thing. But then it also pushed me... To push to that next level. However, positioned within a ballet context that is competitive overall, dancers subjectively perceive two types of competition - *you can have bad competition, you can have good competition.* Unhealthy competition, and jealousy can threaten dancers' careers, destroy relationships, and cause emotional harm to dancers positioned as the target of gossip: *The worst part, I think, is what people say behind other people's backs. I know that's been done to me a lot, when things have been said that aren't true. And then, um... I think that's damaging.* This does not mean a dancer, positioned as secure, cannot subjectively handle it, just that there is risk of harm.

Positioned in such competitive conditions, dancers subjectively think it is likely for others to *wish bad things* on them - *I'm sure they're like "don't let that turn work," because if it doesn't, the artistic director will say "well, she's not good enough so put... The second cast in."* Dancers positioned at the top, were also once young and ambitious, so subjectively, *it's terrible because I know, because I've been there.* However, those positioned as the perpetrator can also subjectively experience problems: *If you're one of those people that will do anything to get to the top, then um, it's dangerous.* Some dancers, subjectively think *if you become nasty about stuff,* it is probably *an insecurity thing.* Either way, all dancers subjectively considered important that it *has to be a drive for yourself, not to destroy others along the way – it can't be an ugly drive.* We think of human beings, including dancers, as different, according to intelligence, personality, and motivations, because we live in a capitalistic society, founded on competition (Burr, 2003). Competitiveness, whether it is subjectively experienced as healthy or unhealthy, is therefore not an essential human feature but a result of capitalism, because "within a market economy, competitiveness and ambition secure the survival of the fittest, according to their own natural abilities" (Burr, 2003, p. 75). This ballet context is no exception, and seems to exemplify these principles; ballet dancers are positioned, hierarchically, by capitalism as competitors for scarce resources.

Challenging. The challenges in ballet are subjective obstructions and barriers to entry by some, but for dancers positioned as 'destined' to be great, they are motivators that provoke them to push, to reach the top. Positioned this way, dancers subjectively experience disappointments as critical – *you either give up or you decide "ok, well then maybe next time,"* and act to make it happen. For many, being challenged is *good for them because they think "I'll show you, I'll do this better than what you thought I could do it"* and *if somebody says to you, "ok, your legs probably won't get any higher," well, they are going to.* Positioned as professionals, dancers are subjectively challenged by everything ballet entails to become the superhero who can withstand the pressure, through *resilience*. Challenges helped top dancers reach the highest rank, because when you are positioned as facing the impossible, *you're going to… do it.* However, peak ballet performance is constructed as not available to mortals: *A normal person would be like "oh my God, she was horrible to you – how can you stand there and just let her say all those horrible things?"* 'Normal' appears in all discourses, which is unsurprising, considering its connection to disciplinary power, and capitalism.

Dancers positioned at the top subjectively experienced the challenges and stress as continually increasing as their careers progressed, until they reached breaking point: *The older you are, you know what can go wrong, so you're more nervous about things that could go wrong, even though you have more experience to fix it. It's… weird*. But until then, the subjective challenge also drives them. However, some watched fellow dancers reach a new rank, after many successful years, but they could not cope with the new challenge: *She was fine to do solo roles and that, but when she got to do the principal roles, it was too much*. For a new principal, subjectively, *it's hard, because suddenly... There's so much pressure on you, because everybody's, like, "well she's a principal so why's her turns not working?"* Performance, constructed in this way create rigid and pressurised positions for dancers; often, subjectively, a dancer's only options are to embrace the challenge and keep going, or give up.

Peak performance is constructed as demanding in this discourse, and perfection as an impossible goal, yet some dancers position themselves as capable of achieving it, though their only options are to "try your best." But do dancers subjectively experience this as good enough, when their value is judged by others, based on the quality of their performance? Being in an impossible position, in which your best may never be enough, may be subjectively demotivating for some dancers, but for a few, it drives them to prove otherwise. The subjectivities of dancers positioned as having reached the top, include many years spent pushing themselves to their limits to improve, but *when you see those results in yourself, it's-it's an amazing achievement... And then you definitely look back and you go, "ah, well, I can't believe I was going through such a tough time... But look how much it helped me."*

Positioned in a competitive, Western capitalist society, dancers are subjectively rewarded by growth. The behaviours they display in the process – hard work, dedication, and self-sacrifice, are capitalist virtues. Dancers can experience their ballet journey as worthwhile, because these goals are difficult to achieve, which explains their responding to disappointment and failure with renewed focus and determination. For all principal dancers, subjectively focusing on their own journey, helped them cope with the challenges, and thrive in their formative ballet contexts. Many drive themselves to be at the top, to prove that they can succeed; *if someone says you can't, that's the best thing they can do*. In this construction, top professionals can subjectively experience themselves as tough and persevering, and take pride in their unique success of achieving the most senior rank, and perhaps even immortality, by becoming a legendary and renowned ballet hero to some.

Discussion of Discourses

The aim of this FDA process has been to explore top professional ballet dancers' accounts of performance, and expose the discourses constructing peak performance in this context, including dominant ones. The eight discourses presented are connected to each other in

various, complex ways, some of which have been noted. Through ballet, and these eight discourses, dancers are also recruited into a web of broader societal discourses, as we all are, in different ways. All these discourses are shaped by institutions, and linked to societal shifts like rapid population growth and industrialisation, and capitalism, biopower and disciplinary power that emerged as a result (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). These included a discourse of normality, linked to psychological individualisation and disciplinary power, shaping dancers' bodies, minds and lifestyles. In a similar way, a biomedical discourse shapes dancers' subjective views and practices related to healthy or injured bodies.

Current patriarchal norms also influence ideals of the ballet mind and body in the dancers' accounts, for example, female dancers' aesthetic ideal is connected to broader Western beauty trends, as evidenced by dancers' descriptions of cultural evolutions in ballet, in relation to similar societal shifts (Fisher, 2007b). Patriarchal gender constructions also seemed apparent in dancers' descriptions of working hard to meet expectations, but also being expected to do so gracefully and effortlessly, to mask her hard work. A romantic discourse shapes dancers' subjective experiences of being in love with ballet, and loving to dance on stage; it is also connected to Western patriarchal ideals and capitalism. Capitalism has also been strongly linked to competitiveness and idealising challenge, dynamics that are foundational to ballet, and currently valued in Western society (Foucault, 2003a). Throughout the discussion, a discourse of time was often apparent in the eight discourses, explained by the 'biological' time constraints on dancers and resulting urgency; biopower and capitalism also shaped how time is managed in Western society (Foucault, 1986b). Lastly, discourses of perfectionism, and hard work were woven throughout this discussion because of their power in ballet; both are shaped by disciplinary power, and virtues of capitalism (Foucault, 2003).

The influence on ballet, of major societal discourses and 'truths,' like patriarchy and capitalism, cannot be understated. It is important to remember that 'truth' itself is defined by

each society and that the current regime of truth profoundly impacts our representation of

reality (Foucault, 2003a). This truth regime is not based on ideology or separate from our

society, but rather "a condition of the formation and development of capitalism" (p. 317).

Therefore, capitalism shapes this ballet context, by shaping the world in which it exists. In

addition to the financial implications of capitalist systems, its vast and sometimes insidious

grip over societal institutions mould many aspects of 21st century ballet, including in South

Africa. Disciplinary power, and its techniques of training, surveillance, normalising

judgement, examination and documentation (Foucault, 1986c), has been formative in ballet.

In these discourses, dancers are offered various subject positions, which have implications for

their behaviours and subjectivities; many are constraining, offering few, binary options. Being

offered numerous positions and identities through these discourses may be overwhelming.

However, it may be that the multiple possibilities offered, help dancers subjectively cope, and

even thrive, when positioned in limiting and frustrating ways. She can be positioned as a

perfectionist, an athlete, a professional, a martyr or a masochist, depending on how each

discourse constructs peak performance; she must subjectively consider these positions'

effects, and what will enable fulfilment and satisfaction. So, while dancers have limited

control over the discourses that shape them, like everyone else, they can resist or take up

various positions on offer (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008), so their identities are fluid.

   However, these connections with capitalism, patriarchy and other dominant discourses

also raise complex questions, because of the oppression and harm linked to inequality. We

live in a capitalistic, competitive society, so when people are positioned as fighting to achieve

a goal, in sports, business or ballet, we may revere and praise them, but alternatively, also

vilify them, and the environment for the apparent problems, and accuse them of being

'complicit' in their own oppression. A capitalist discourse positions professional female ballet

dancers as martyrs or heroes, sick or strong, and regressed or empowered, depending on how

powerful discourses shape ballet, and peak performance. In Western, capitalist society, we either admire their dedication to overcoming obstacles, despite the pain and hardships, or accuse them of masochism and objectifying themselves. We celebrate what they can do, but also undermine their efforts by positioning them as fragile and easily injured, or psychologically pathological. And while the dancer may be able to question these powerful discourses and choose how to position herself, these broader discourses position us all, and shape how we experience ballet, and ballet dancers. This includes the few who, extraordinarily, were positioned within all these discourses in ways that enabled them to do what was needed, and subjectively persevere, to reach the peak of performance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the FDA process and clarified my approach to the discussion. I then presented each of the eight discourses, including the initial phase, reviewer's suggestions, and final phase While the initial phase description provided mainly an overview of the discourse, constructions, and effects, the final phase included a discussion of three key constructions, and a consideration of the subject positions offered by the respective discourses and constructions, as well as the practices and subjectivities they made available. Links between discourses and connections to broader societal discourses have been highlighted. Where appropriate, select theory has been drawn upon to broaden insight, and reflexive engagement has been offered to deepen the contextual positioning of the discussion and clarify some of my subjective views, which inevitably impact these findings. Lastly, I indicated some final thoughts on the analysis and discussion. This chapter has explored the FDA process and its findings. The following chapter will focus on the practical implications, strengths and limitations of the current research and conclude by suggesting possibilities for future studies.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I will reflect on selected aspects of the discussion and its wider implications. I will also consider the current study's strengths and limitations, including factors that I was mindful about, but which could not control. Following this I will propose avenues for further research in this field, and offer some final remarks.

Reflections on the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis Findings

Parker (2005) has suggested that "both reality and truth are always in themselves contradictory" (p. 27) because "what we find and the sense we make of it are always a function of what we thought we would find and the position we try to make sense of it from" (p. 27). Although I have tried to remain open to the unexpected, and tracked shifts in my assumptions, I cannot escape the discourses, and positions that shape my perspective, any more than other people can (Parker, 2005). The theories that are embedded in knowledge are typically in service of dominant discourses, so they largely form our socio-cultural contexts (Foucault, 2011). Other ballet researchers are then also shaped by their social and institutional settings, and how these define what types of knowledge are valued. Therefore, critiques are more focused on these dominant discourses and how they shape our 'truths' about the world.

Links to Literature

In the findings, dominant discourses, that shape the image of the professional ballet dancer, and performance, are apparent, and also visible in psychological studies on ballet. Feminist research exposed many of these discourses, but sometimes also constrained ballet dancers, by positioning them as disempowered. In addition, Foucault's concepts have been applied to dancers in the ballet literature, but having engaged deeply with them during the current research, I suggest that these have been misused in some cases.

Psychological literature. Research areas described in the literature chapter are indicative of powerful discourses, such as the psychological discourse, which forms our knowledge

about problems in ballet (Brace-Govan, 2002), like eating disorders (Arcelus et al., 2014; Ravaldi et al., 2006), and body image dissatisfaction (Radell et al., 2011). As psychology, and the knowledge it produces, has been influenced by positivism and structuralism (Burr, 2003), these endeavours may have individualised and pathologized dancers by devising techniques of measurement that would effectively discriminate "the 'normal' from the 'idiot', the 'intelligent' from the 'deficient,'" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 96). According to (Rabinow & Rose, 2003), traditional psychology has attended to matters internal to individuals, but ignored political issues of culture, economics, and social power, yet it produces powerful, 'generalisable,' but exclusionary knowledge, linked to how it prioritises people and views (Hook, 2013). Collins (as cited in Hook, 2013) contends that psychology's response to problems in the world, has involved "an erratic combination of ineffectual concern, wilful ignorance and willing collaboration" (p. 22).

Although psychology is often critiqued for marginalising people, I argue that in the case of ballet dancers, the focus has been extensive, but predominately shaped by dominant discourses, excluding alternative perspectives. Even though psychology is only one approach to knowledge, we need to be aware of "psychological imperialism" (Hook, 2013, p. 16) and how its norms shape dancers, and potentially create unrepresentative and skewed knowledge. A critical approach is suspicious of 'common sense,' and incorporates insights from other disciplines, like politics, economics, history and philosophy, to broaden the conversation (Hook, 2013). This has been done in the current research by including medical, physiological and sociological literature, and drawing on political, economic and philosophical theory in the discussion. This approach uses critical analysis, not to destroy the field, but challenge and transform it into the caring profession, that offers a rigorous method of gaining insight into people, that it claims to be (Collins as cited in Hook, 2013). Foucault (2002) suggested, not that we reject all existing knowledge, but that we question its origin, because he believed our

current social, political, philosophical, and ethical challenge is to liberate people from the individualisation imposed on them, and promote new forms of subjectivity (Foucault 2003).

Feminist literature. The critical psychology movement, including feminist studies, has exposed complexities in ballet, previously not considered by positivist research, such as the impact of power relations and the social-cultural context surrounding it (Croft, 2014). However, while new perspectives were exposed, and assumptions challenged, "early feminist critiques demonized ballet in the 1980s and early 1990s" (Fisher, 2007b, p. 5), leaving dancers in a defensive position (Croft, 2014). Some studies have blamed dancers for colluding in their own objectification and disempowerment in a patriarchal, capitalist society (Brace-Govan, 2002). When I first engaged with the literature, such totalising assumptions of ballet dancers, as disempowered and passive, frustrated me, because I saw the situation as more complex. Fisher (2007b) suggested that "the contradictions inherent in women's changing roles and the ultrafeminine aspects of the ballerina were not easy to figure out" (p. 5). Fisher's (2007b) study on the dominant discourses and constraints impacting ballet dancers, challenged some of the feminist research, arguing that she "found even more people who related to the theme of empowerment in ballet" (p. 5). She also described how ballet helped her "discover aspects of power, art, dedication, and spiritual resonance," and how for her and other women, it "symbolized resistance and independence" (Fisher, 2007b, p. 14).

However, she did acknowledge that this does not indicate a prevailing view, and suspected that beyond her conversations with dancers, old stereotypes and condemnations of ballet still circulate, change does not come quickly or easily in ballet (Fisher, 2007b). While feminist calls to abolish ballet seem to have subsided, "too many times the ballerina still seems a prisoner of past interpretations" (Fisher, 2007b, p. 13). Fisher (2007b) argued that times change, and questioned why the ballet dancer is persistently judged on "of her first impression" (p. 14). She also indicated that when no negative views are apparent, in groups

supportive of ballet, sometimes the "genuinely oppressive operations of the ballet world remain unquestioned" (p. 5), which constrains the female ballet dancer in limiting boundaries. Therefore, neither extreme view of ballet is fair or justifiable. However, Fisher (2007b) argued that negative views dominate, even though those who are favourable towards ballet see the ballerina's hard work that lies behind her effortless grace; they see how ballet is a career where women have participated and achieved on many levels. She wondered, "is there not a difference in suffering for totalitarian regimes and suffering for art?" (Fisher, 2007b, p. 5).

Dance literature. Dance research has also focused on the problems in ballet, including several studies that have drawn on the work of Foucault, including his concepts of disciplinary power, including training 'docile bodies' through surveillance and normalising judgement (Dryburgh & Fontin, 2010; Fisher, 2007b; Wainwright et al., 2005). In fact, according to Ness (2011), "no critic of phenomenology, arguably, has been more influential in prefiguring recent discourses on power, gender, and sexuality that have emerged in dance studies in recent decades than the philosopher-historian-critic Michel Foucault" (p. 19). When considered in relation to the findings of the current research, some interpretations of Foucault's concepts have created a skewed picture of both Foucault's ideas, and ballet dancers. According to Fisher (2007b), to detractors, the "ballerina's shiny surface unnecessarily masked whatever strength she had, and her technical mastery, achieved through rigorous daily routine, was confused with total submission to the multifarious technologies of power proposed in the schemas of Foucault and others" (p. 5).

Studies have drawn on Foucault's ideas to critique ballet, but several have cherry-picked concepts without conducting a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). Some studies have briefly mentioned his ideas, like Alexias and Dimitropoulou, (2011), when they say, only, that "classical ballet is an art, or according to Foucault, a 'technology of the self', requiring asceticism through which the truth about the subject's body is made clear" (p. 93). Alterowitz

(2014), who positioned herself as an ex-dancer, taking an anti-authoritarian stance, proposed more democratic principles for ballet training, said, "I started to see the ballet body in Foucauldian terms, as a 'docile body,' and to waver in my faith in ballet's ideals" (p. 9) but made no further mention of his concepts. Other studies (Benn & Walters, 2001) use Foucault's ideas to challenge ballet, described as "an authoritarian, power/achievement culture" (p. 140) that is "'cult-like' where participants comply with the regime" (p. 140). In reflecting on dancers' internalising, normalising and mirroring ballet culture, Benn and Walters (2001) describe dancers' "collusion in self-sacrifice and denial in subservience to higher ideals" (p. 140) and "adherence to behaviours controlling a particular body-type demonstrates a level of self-denial similar to the ascetic discipline, constant surveillance and martyrdom of monastic institutions as described by Foucault" (p. 146). They likened dancers' ignoring health advice and engaging in dangerous behaviours, to elite athletes taking performance-enhancing drugs for a moment of triumph (Benn & Walters, 2001).

Some researchers have taken a more balanced view (Ness, 2011), acknowledging that Foucault's concepts are useful for showing the cultural and historical specificity of ideas, and exploring the concepts of "discipline and resistance" (Pickard, 2012, p. 26), in relation to power. However, they also criticised the use of Foucauldian views and concepts, arguing that they limit possibilities for embodiment and agency; in response, some aimed to "challenge the portrayal of the body as 'docile,' which ignores the active role of embodied agents in social practices" (Pickard, 2012, p. 26). This is a criticism often levelled against Foucault, and FDA, and social constructionism more broadly (Burr, 2003), which will be explored further. Green (2002) examined the links between docility and normalisation, and how ballet's use of disciplinary techniques leads to dancers' unquestioning conformity, which 'limits their potential and threatens their well-being.' She expressed concern about dancers' descriptions of feeling empowered by achieving the ideal, but also acknowledged that she cannot define

the subjectivities of the dancers in her study, or dictate what is best (Green, 2002). However, she argued that while such experiences may be perceived as self-determined, the dancers may not be aware of how power and discourse shape their realities; creating awareness can be an antidote to docility more than suggesting dancers be less docile (Green, 2002).

While I agree that these dynamics are complex and often problematic, I suggest, like others, that in some cases, Foucault's ideas have been misunderstood (Fisher, 2007b). Firstly, is important to note that, despite the popularity of Foucault's views and the applicability of them to ballet, his concepts did not emerge from an interest in dancers and embodied movement, and he did not study "danced or choreographic subjects, objects, movements, or beings" (Ness, 2011, p. 26), but rather very different objects. While Foucault's concepts can unsettle problematic aspects of ballet, he was talking about everyone, not only ballet dancers, being caught up in their effects. Dryburgh and Fontin (2010) indicate that even though these ideas resonate with a ballet context, "techniques of surveillance and self-surveillance are an integral part of contemporary society and are present in numerous public places such as prisons, schools, hospitals, the army, shopping malls, etc" (p. 96). While dancers are still under pressure to meet aesthetic standards, striving for perfection, and achieving beauty ideals, is a pressure imposed on all women in Western society (Dryburgh & Fontin, 2010). Pickard (2013) described how, femininity has been linked to eating disorders through concepts like discipline and docility, where women become "habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, improvement" (Bordo as cited in Pickard, 2013, p. 12).

Secondly, some of these studies also seem to attach negative qualities to disciplinary power, but Foucault did not see it as exclusively negative, indicating that it orders and organises (Foucault, 1986b). Although some consider his work 'infused with suspicion,' Rabinow & Rose (2003) clarify his view: "'I do not say everything is bad,' Foucault answers to an interviewer who asks if he is doing history in order to find alternative solutions to

current problems, 'only that everything is dangerous'" (p. xxvii). He was reluctant to offer

value judgements, once saying discipline "arrests or regulates movements; it clears up

confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about" (Foucault, 1986c,

pp. 208-209). Power and discourse do not define a person, but offer a range of options from

which a subject may emerge (Foucault, 2002), and guide the potential conduct of people

through government, in a general sense (Foucault, 1982). Some discourses are open to anyone

and offer broad possibilities, while others are off-limits to some and far stricter about what

they allow (Foucault, 2011). His approach was not intended to define which is 'best,' but to

allow for other options (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). While Foucault stated the aim of

disciplinary power is to gain hold over docile bodies to use, transform and improve them, the

way it is used impacts how it shapes and forms objects, so Dryburgh and Fontin (2010)

argued that dancers use surveillance when normalising their bodies according to the ideal

ballet aesthetic, which can pose health risks, but indicate that using these techniques

differently might lead to different health consequences. Foucault "asserts that surveillance,

one of the techniques of power, can act as either a positive or a negative force" (p. 106),

which means that it "could contribute to the oppression as well as the emancipation of the

dancer" (p. 106). Surveillance can help dancers conform to the ideal body and technique,

which they may experience as rewarding (Dryburgh & Fontin, 2010).

Engaging with Foucault's ideas in more depth, Ritenburg (2010) explored how the body

of the female ballet dancer had been socially constructed in North America during the second

half of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st. Ritenburg's (2010) Foucauldian genealogy

examined the ideal ballet body, through photographs of "Balanchine ballerinas" (p. 74),

magazine articles from the 1990s, and children's books from a similar time, and she registered

concern about this ideal being 'frozen,' after noting parallels, over time, in all three. She also

noted the emergence alternative discourses, but cautioned that some of these may reinforce

the problems, by shifting responsibility to individual dancers, when educating them about nutrition and eating disorders, while not doing enough to challenge the truth of ballet's norms and ideals (Ritenburg, 2010). Ritenburg (2010) noted that the ideal female dancer's body has not always been constructed as long, slender and thin, referring to images from the nineteenth century that depict female ballet dancers' bodies as "fleshy, full-breasted, small-waisted, and wide-hipped" (p. 79). She suggested that further research should consider, firstly, how ballet training forms a certain physique, secondly, how ballet repertoires require certain physical abilities because of technical and aesthetic demands, and thirdly, where those demands come from (Ritenburg, 2010). My hope is that the current research has contributed to the last aspect, though questions remain about the relation between the ideal, and health problems in dancers. However, while these issues are complex, I argue that the ideal has evolved since the 1990s, and even in the past decade or so, as images of strong, more muscular ballet dancers began to circulate, rejecting and replacing the extremely thin ideal, popular in ballet, but also Western society in general. In fact, Misty Copeland, a principal ballet dancer at the American Ballet Theatre, and body positive advocate, who often draws on discourses of health, self-care and self-acceptance, has been quoted as describing "her ideal ballerina body – 'one that is lean but sinewy, with muscles that are long, sculpted, and toned'" (Thomason, 2017, p. 5).

Strengths and Limitations

The methodological approach. Discourse analysis has been criticised by traditional researchers who view only measurable, positivist research as empirically valid, which remains debatable (Parker, 1999). However, there are limitations of this research approach that warrant constructive criticism (Parker, 1999). Within a social constructionist paradigm, approaches that focus on macro-processes of interaction, like FDA, have been criticised for their focus on how prevailing discourse are formative of all features of a person (Burr, 2003). According to Burr (2003) critics argue that if "the person can be conceptualised only as the outcome of

discursive and societal structures" (p. 23), then "individual persons, either alone or collectively, have no capacity to bring about change" (p. 23), and so do not have agency. But Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) indicate that although Foucault was "reluctant to ascribe interiority" (p. 94), he "alludes to the 'soul' as that spatial dimension trapped within the subject of normalization" (p. 94). However, this was not sufficient for several critics, including Lacan, who turned to psychoanalysis "to respond to a number of absences within Foucault" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 94).

A major debate in social constructionism surrounds the question of whether people determine society, or if society determines people, with the latter implying that there is no human agency, and we are products of the context we are born into – "our class, age, gender, ethnic origin and so on all impose restrictions upon the kind of person we can claim to be" (Burr, 2003, p. 184). Burr (2003) points out that the dichotomy of individual and society is false, and that dividing the two is a result of human analysis, and also a construction. Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine (2008) described the criticism as not fair because even though such approaches challenge the concept of agency, they do not eliminate it. Critiques of humanism call for our understanding of human beings to be "'under erasure' – no longer stable, reliable or serviceable" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 106). Nonetheless, other discourse analytic approaches suggest that a Foucauldian approach would be enhanced by drawing on linguistic tools, to account more for people's roles in constructing society, while preserving key aspects of the approach, including its critical lens and focus on cultural and historical specificity (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011).

However, some contend that unanswered questions remain, for example, regarding people's emotional investments; the self becomes "an effect of language, fragmented and distributed across discourses and interactions" (Burr, 2003, p. 179). However, we can think of a person, both as constrained by, but also actively constructing their social world (Burr, 2003).

Regarding embodiment, Burr (2003) indicates that Foucault's ideas are useful for viewing "the body as a site of power relations" (p. 197), but acknowledges that they are limited in this way. However, she argued that many human experiences involve "the body as a way of knowing the world in a non-cognitive, non-representational way" (p. 197), including art forms like dance, which should be considered "extra-discursive" (p. 197) forms of expression. Because the body is elusive in relation to discourse, dance can "open up possibilities for resisting discursive power" (p. 198).

Foucault resisted the possibility of certainty, and a single truth; however, he did not suggest that truth is intentionally concealed, and that we should question its nature, but that it is historically and culturally contingent (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Agency is possible through his ideas about 'technologies,' as described in the theory chapter, which are "'truth games' in which participants engage in conflict, competition and power" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011, p. 104). Although technologies of power, through discourse, shape us, and are largely out of our control, technologies of self involve a subject engaging with their own subjectification and negotiating between various options, through claiming and resisting subject positions that form their subjectivity (Foucault, 2000b). This is also linked to the concept of 'government,' in a broad sense. Government can be likened to self-management, which is associated with disciplinary power; therefore, discipline helps an individual self-regulate. But self-regulation is also associated with mental toughness in the sports literature (Gucciardi et al., 2009). Therefore, through technologies of the self, enhanced by disciplinary techniques, dancers' self-regulation may be synonymous with mental toughness.

The current research. Reflecting on the current research, there are some clear limitations and constraints, some factors that I could be aware of, but not control and others that can be argued to be limitations or strengths, as well as aspects I consider strengths. A limitation of

my approach, from a Foucauldian perspective, is that genealogy and historicity were not addressed in the analysis, as I selected texts that were all produced in the same historical context. Therefore, I did not explore the evolution of discourse over time, even though I considered the historical formation of 'truths' about ballet. Furthermore, the method I followed, according to Willig's (2013) integrated six stages, is not thought to constitute a complete Foucauldian analysis; it does not address Foucault's concerns about genealogy and governmentality. As I only explored one interaction with each dancer, I was also unable to trace changes in their views and experiences. (Parker, 2005). I have not used triangulating methods, due to space, and other limitations, although other approaches would have enriched the research (Parker, 2005). For example, the concept of positioning may have been useful to address the inadequacies of an approach that does not theorise embodied experience (Burr, 2003). Furthermore, narrative techniques allow researchers "to witness, explore and support the emergence of a narrative" (Parker, 2005, p. 23) while also showing "how a form of narrative may be a function of certain sets of cultural-historical arrangements" (p. 23), but as I did not conduct new interviews for the current research, this was also not possible.

Another challenge relates to representing others' experiences. I have referred to the participants as co-researchers because of their contribution to the knowledge that the current research has produced. However, Parker (2005) suggests that our representations of others should ideally be talked through with participants, but notes that this is not always possible "especially where the analysis of meaning does not aim to privilege the immediate perspective of the speaker" (Parker, 2005, p. 139). I have not undertaken participant checking for several reasons. Firstly, despite conducting participant checking in the IPA study, this FDA study has made use of archival data; as the interviews took place five years before the FDA analysis, the dancers may not have sufficiently recollected the interviews or their context at that time. In any case, FDA is focused on examining language as it appears, with a view to analysing

discourse and its implications, and not on understanding what people really mean (Burr, 2003)

Secondly, as I have chosen to incorporate all extracts provided by the dancers, without

differentiating who spoke, it would be impractical to ask for their thoughts about the findings.

Furthermore, as I have indicated contradicting stances, a review process may become a debate

about the truth and validity of those views, which is also not the aim of this approach. Thirdly,

asking for the dancers' input may have opened up further layers of meaning, but the data was

already extensive, and the research is already complicated by my enmeshment and multiple

positions. Lastly, my seeking distance from the data and dancers to enable reflection would

possibly have been undermined by re-engaging in this way.

Parker (2005) also urged discourse analysts to carefully consider the implications of

anonymity and confidentiality. For example, hiding someone's identity restricts their voice,

frames participants as "fragile beings needing to be protected" (p. 17) and may also serve as a

way of protecting the researcher. However, despite changing paradigms between the IPA and

FDA projects, I assured each dancer that I would not reveal their identities when initially

obtaining consent for the interview, which influenced our interactions, and perhaps what

information they were willing to provide. Therefore, honouring this promise outweighed the

importance of reconsidering confidentiality (Parker, 2005). This study has focused on female

ballet dancers, and despite drawing some of these perspectives in, I have not engaged with as

many gendered issues in the analysis, as I would have liked. I have also not explored issues

relating to male ballet dancers' subjectivities, which are also important and valid, because of

my intentionally limited focus (Willig, 2013). However, Fisher (2007b) suggests it is possible

that "the liberation of the ballerina, and the acceptance of her dual nature, will open a

conceptual space for understanding the maverick males in ballet, who have their own set of

stereotypes to deal with" (Fisher, 2007b, p. 15).

Another potential critique of this study relates to how this type of research often works with underprivileged communities and disenfranchised peoples. I have been concerned about trivialising critical psychology, if these dancers are not considered a marginalised community by readers. But, while the ballet context I have explored involves privilege, and the value of exploring it from an empowerment point of view may not be immediately clear, I argue that ballet dancers have been treated irresponsibly and marginalised in other ways by psychology and medicine, and that these dominant views prevail (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). In addition, in a South African context, studying white ballet dancers, participating in a Western, and arguably European activity, may be considered problematic: "In a time where there are increasing calls for Africanisation both within educational institutions and elsewhere, 'whiteness' becomes equated with 'imperialism' and 'oppression'" (Macleod, 2013, p. 532).

There are also factors that are arguably advantageous or disadvantageous. I could have used pre-existing texts, reflecting natural social interaction, and be more distanced from the subject matter; instead, because of my various roles and subject positions in relation to the data, I am enmeshed in the context. Strengths and limitations of both approaches can be argued (Willig, 2013). In addition, the four transcripts were all lengthy, full of constructions, and saturated with meaning, which meant that much could not be included, which may be a constraint; however, the richness of the information can also be considered beneficial. I could have engaged with further theory, such as the work of Bourdieu (Pickard, 2013), Butler (Fisher, 2007b), and many others, to gain further insight, but I decided to aim for a more complete application of Foucault's ideas, considering space limitations.

Issues I could not completely control, included my standpoint towards people generally (Willig, 2013), and the dancers specifically, which impacts how I describe them (Parker, 2005). I could not control my positions in relation to ballet and the participants, so I tried to become more aware of them and their possible effects, but I may have over- or under-valued

my vantage point and the view it allowed me. However, by engaging with a reviewer to consider my analysis from another angle, my hope is that I made room for alternative perspectives, and possibilities for describing these dancers' experiences and subjectivities (Willig, 2013). There are probably still more ways of describing the issues involved. I am also aware that my representations of dancers will have an impact on readers that I cannot control, but I have tried to consider the ethical dimensions of the knowledge presented and its impact (Parker, 2005). I have made efforts to describe theory, and my findings, in an accessible way, so that readers outside the psychological field, including those in a ballet context, can engage with the knowledge; I consider this access an ethical issue (Parker, 2005). However, despite this, language in psychology and terminology used can be technical and not easy to consume without exposure, so there are limits to this. However, I will disseminate this information in a more concise and accessible way to dancers, and in an academic journal (Parker, 2005).

My views also impacted the decisions I have made, but I cannot 'control' the ways in which my views of the world have been shaped by power and knowledge. However, there were many possible routes I could have taken, so there is "always a risk that the wrong decision might be made as to what the key 'events' in the research were" (Parker, 2005, p. 21). But while I could have approached the research differently, once I had selected and secured the transcripts for analysis, I could not control the way I was enmeshed in the research, even though I could consider its implications (Parker, 1999). While I might have focused on other factors if my view was different, I may also have missed insights I have included. In addition, while I have taken a critical stance towards psychological knowledge, and tried to challenge my assumptions about people and the world, that derive from psychology, this is powerful knowledge, so working within the field but rejecting many of its traditional assumptions is challenging (Parker, 2005). I needed to challenge my own assumptions about ballet and avoid the perspective that there are commonalities between my

views and views of the dancers (Parker, 2005). While I cannot step out of my own frame of awareness, which has made reflexive engagement so important (Willig, 2013), I have tried to prioritise the dancers' views; for example, by including as much of their own words in the analysis and discussion, as possible. I also focused on tracing this research process, and my learning, rather than treating my assumptions as fixed (Parker, 2005).

Lastly, I have tried to resist the urge to "to fit things together as if that is the way to truth" (Parker, 2005, p. 15), particularly when contradictions were apparent, because "a discrepancy that we cannot make sense of – is not necessarily an 'error'" (Parker, 2005, p. 15). It may reveal different perspectives between people, that are "a function of such radically different lived realities and conflicts of political perspective that it would actually be a mistake to try and smooth over those differences using one overall covering account" (Parker, 2005, pp. 15-16). Societal groups are not homogenous and by focusing on instances when community members resist and challenge certain views, it may be possible to observe how the discourse functions, to create a certain picture of the world, and "obscure real structures of exploitation and oppression" (Parker, 2005, p. 16). To that end, I have tried to leave questions open, but it is impossible for me not to have views, which may influence the answers a reader arrives at.

Aspects of this research that I consider strengths include my clearly relating this study to psychology, even though several fields have also informed it (Parker, 2005). I grounded it in existing research and showed the gaps that exist, as well as the relevant debates, such as those involving psychological, feminist and dance research (Parker, 2005). I have focused on a specific context, with the hope of gaining "a much more immediate and concrete awareness of struggles" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 312), because problems and experiences in a South African context may not be universal. Regarding the analysis, I made my object, peak ballet performance, explicit, but also remained mindful of implicit and unsaid constructions in the analysis (Parker, 2005). I have tried to provide as much textual evidence in the form of data

extracts as possible (Willig, 2013), and been mindful of the detail in the words participants use to describe their realities (Tonkiss, 2012). I considered the links between the eight discourses presented, and with broader, powerful, societal discourses, as well as considered the relevance, and limitations of the knowledge produced (Parker, 2005).

I have positioned the participants and myself as co-constructors of meaning due to the interaction between our views and experiences (Parker, 2005), which is another reason why I have prioritised reflexivity; as a tool for demonstrating my contribution to this construction (Willig, 2013). As part of this, I have engaged with the implications of writing in first and third person voice, and used each at different times in the current research, to various ends. I addressed my subjectivity, including my emotional investment in the topic, and institutional background (Parker, 2005). In addition, I have clarified and explained the theory and "conceptual resources" (Parker, 2005, p. 138) used, which, along with my reflexivity, were integrated into the discussion, to open up further questions.

I have taken a critical stance, and presented an argument, which is open to disagreement and other plausible interpretations. However, I have also aimed to present a view that "makes sense in relation to the material and the chosen theoretical framework" (Parker, 2005, p. 10). I do not claim that these decisions, views and findings are superior to any others and would prefer my commitment to the current research to be "characterized by enthusiastic self-questioning rather than fanatical certainty" (Parker, 2005, p. 21). This research has been of great personal importance to me, and while there may be downsides to this stance, I take solace in Parker's (2005) assertion, that "all good scientific research is driven by a passion to explore particular questions and to persuade others of a point of view" (Parker, 2005, p. 144).

Suggestions for Future Research

Going forward, several limitations of this study open pathways for future research. This includes approaching ballet through other methodological angles; for example, discursive

psychology may better illuminate the ways in which dancers produce discourse and meaning. In addition, narrative-informed, action research with dancers has the potential to offer value to participants and the field. There are many other aspects of ballet that can also benefit from taking a Foucauldian approach. For example, there are gender dynamics and race issues in this context that have not been properly addressed in the current research. Other specified groups, like male dancers, as well as younger and aspiring professionals also have not been accommodated in this study. Regarding performance matters, there is still a lot of opportunity for research. At an early point, I had hoped to explore sport psychology concepts and the two schools of thought mentioned in the literature review – Psychological Skills Training (PST) and the mindfulness-acceptance-commitment (MAC) approach. It would be beneficial for both ballet and sport psychology to further explore how the concepts involved are taken up or resisted by dancers, and their impact on performance. Furthermore, the links between technologies of the self and disciplinary power, and with self-regulation and mental toughness in sport psychology seems significant, and are worth exploring further.

Concluding Remarks

My aim has been to provide, a comprehensive and nuanced description of peak performance, as subjectively experienced by professional ballet dancers' (Willig, 2013). FDA has allowed me to interrogate taken-for-granted assumptions, identify power relations involved in their positions and practices, and illuminate how they negotiate their identities, and subjectivities, while being exposed to dominant discourses and stereotypes associated with them in the academic literature, media and society in general. It also enabled me to examine alternative discourses for making sense of their world and experiences in it, making it possible to disrupt the existing, taken-for-granted culture of professional ballet. I encountered an epistemological struggle in reflecting on how to best describe these findings;

my focus on high-performance on the one hand, and my interest in issues like gender, and empowerment, on the other, seemed irreconcilable.

My exposure to high-performance contexts, which are largely influenced by capitalism, has shaped my subjective views ambition. Might life not be limited and disappointing if people never pursued challenging goals? Should a human being's potential for growth be stunted by remaining comfortable and 'safe,' and rejecting the competitive imperative insisted on by capitalism? In my experience, many worthwhile achievements are only realised through hard work and dedication, and I have come to see risks and sacrifices as necessary evils. These values and goals give people purpose, and meaning. Risks, sacrifices and heroism are also linked to noble discourses – a romantic discourse, for example, that are cherished in Western culture. However, the critical psychologist in me argues that capitalism is restrictive and marginalising. Capitalism and patriarchy's impact on gender issues and beauty ideals can cause harm. People surely need to be liberated from these 'truths,' including the elevated position given to competitiveness in capitalist society? Therefore, from this conflicted position, competitiveness seems paradoxical; simultaneously a driving force for dancers, and the root of some problems. How can I make sense of these contradictions?

How could I critique the influences of capitalism without undermining something as important to dancers as the role of competition and challenge? Who am I to suggest what is beneficial or damaging to dancers in the first place? In grappling with the purpose of this process and the knowledge gained, I was reminded that according to Foucault (as cited in Rabinow & Rose, 2003), "a critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest" (p. vii). Therefore, for Foucault, this exercise is not intent on changing minds and attitudes, but "challenging the political and economic regimes currently producing what we know as the

truth" (Foucault, 2003a), and examining how these regimes have been supported by institutional structures and practices, and social relations in shaping people's subjectivities and behaviours (Foucault, 2011). Increasing our awareness helps us question and challenge the legitimacy of the 'truths' we have come to accept, and consider alternatives, including "the voices of the mad, the delinquent, the abnormal, the disempowered" (Burr, 2003, p. 78). Depending on the discourse, ballet dancers have been positioned as such, in some way.

I do not presume to suggest that I have the answers to the questions that have been asked, including what is best for ballet dancers going forward. In considering the theory, and my personal and epistemological backgrounds, I have grappled continuously with the question of how to position myself in relation to ballet and the dancers in the current research, and how to frame the knowledge produced. I have not aimed to identify and describe an internal essence or provide an alternative, superior truth (Parker. 2005). I am not engaging with dancers to make changes; according to Rabinow & Rose (2003), it is not the researcher's role to "demand resistance where it is absent" (p. xxvii), nor tell people "what to do, what not to do, what to strive for, what to reject." (p. xxvii). Poststructuralist and social constructionist thinkers, like Foucault argue that identity is influenced by complex, socio-political dynamics, and is contingent, temporary, and fluid (Burr, 2003). Culture, and meaning is also not fixed, but always evolving, in this context and larger society, evidenced, for example, by changing norms around beauty, health and fitness. As such, many identities are available to dancers (Parker, 1999), which may overwhelm them, but also provide options, even in this constraining environment.

For Foucault, critical thought was also a way to create possibilities for existence (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). If we are dissatisfied with the status quo, alternative ways-of-seeing and ways-of-being are always available (Foucault, 2003c). Therefore, I cannot define 'the truth,' – current and preferred, for professional dancers in South Africa, but only provide questions for

them to explore if they want to challenge the discourses surrounding their lives and the positions, practices and subjectivities available to them, which have a great influence on the identities they take up. Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) suggest that "there is a sense of affirmation with which the subject manages to escape a pure determination" (p. 95), arguing further that "because power acts on possible actions there is always the possibility of acting 'otherwise'" (p. 95). In this light, a top ballet dancer moves around, and through different discourses, in a dance with the contradictions found in some, and escapes their constraints through masterful manoeuvres, to reach her ultimate goal – peak ballet performance.

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I have reflected on the findings, and considered their implications, in relation psychological, feminist, and ballet research. I have also reflected on limits of the chosen methodological approach and, and of this study, as well as its strengths, and factors out of my control. I suggested potential research endeavours that may build on the current research, and offered my final thoughts on the process, and findings.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Transcripts

Due to the length of the transcripts, they have not been included in this document; however, should they be required for examination, or other purposes, they can be made available.

Appendix B: Original Rhodes University ethics approval

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT • Tel: (046) 603 8500 / 8501 • Fax: (046) 622 4032 • e-mail: psychology@ru.ac.za

03 May 2012

To whom it may concern

This letter is to verify that Ms Claire Myhill (607M1641) is registered with the Rhodes University Department of Psychology for the Honours Degree in Psychology.

Furthermore, Ms Myhill's Honours Research Project, which is being supervised by Mr Gary Steele, has been approved by the Department of Psychology's Research Projects and Ethical Review Committee (RPERC).

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact either Prof. Lindy Wilbraham, chair of the Department of Psychology's RPERC, or Mr. Werner Böhmke, Honours Research Coordinator.

Kind Regards,

Mr. W. R. Böhmke
Psychology Honours Research Coordinator
Department of Psychology, Rhodes University
Grahamstown, South Africa
6140

Tel: (046) 603 8501/8501 Fax: (046) 622 4032 e-mail: psychology@ru.ac.za

Appendix C: Original company permission letter

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RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT
RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH
PARTICIPANT**

</div>

I (participant's name) _____ agree on behalf of (organisation) _____ _____ to allow individuals affiliated with the organisation to participate in the research project of Claire Myhill on professional ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for an Honours degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 072 551 9813 (cell phone) or clairemyhill@gmail.com (email). The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Mr Gary Steele in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on 046 603 8504 (office) or g.steele@ru.ac.za (email).

2. The researcher is interested in gaining an in depth understanding of professional ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness and whether or not it plays a role in their lives and dancing careers.

3. The participation of all parties involved is voluntary and will involve one two hour interview with each participant at a location that they are comfortable with, as well as possible follow up correspondence via email to check that their experiences and sentiments have been understood accurately.

4. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about members of the above organisation's participation in the study, or consequences the organisation may experience as a result of this participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. In addition, if any problems arise during the study, a referral to a Psychologist will be facilitated.

5. The participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to allow their full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about the organisations participation which I did not originally anticipate.

6. The report on the project may contain information about individuals' personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for them to be identified by the general reader nor will any identifying information about the organisation be included.

7. Confidentiality will be a central concern throughout the study and the researcher will put measures in place to protect and secure all data gathered.

8. I may not attempt to interfere with the results and findings of the study, but I may gain access to the findings once the study is completed.

9. There is a possibility of the research findings being published.

Signed   on   (Date)_____

Participant:_____ Researcher:_____

Appendix D: Original letter of intent

March 2012

To whom it may concern,

As part of the requirements of my Psychology Honours degree at Rhodes University, I will be conducting a research project over the next several months. I have chosen to focus on how professional ballet dancers experience mental toughness and the impact this has on their careers. In order to do this, I am hoping to identify dancers who are willing to take part in the study. Each person who consents to participate voluntarily will be asked to take part in a two hour interview to discuss their thoughts on the subject.

The aim of the study overall is to better understand the role that mental toughness plays in the lives of professional dancers in order to achieve two things. Firstly, my hope is that the experience itself will be rewarding for participants and that they learn more about themselves, experiencing an increase in self-awareness on some level. Secondly, I intend to investigate environmental factors that assist in the development of mental toughness

Once the interviews are completed, they will be transcribed. The text will then be analysed to identify themes, for each individual and then across all participants. The themes will be interpreted after this, and contextualised in relation to the theory.

This study in no way aims to cause harm to any person, company or the industry overall; rather the intention is to better understand the inhibitors and facilitators of ballet dancers' development, and what specific skills are most likely to lead to a dancer having a successful career. The research will hopefully contribute to the existing literature around dance and mental toughness, and better understand the role it plays in this unique performance environment.

The research is being supervised by Mr Gary Steele, in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University and he can be contacted on 046 603 8504 (office) or G.Steele@ru.ac.za (email) should you have any questions or concerns, and the research has been approved by the relevant ethics committees.

Alternatively, please feel to contact me with any queries or issues that you may have or to indicate interest in taking part on 072 551 9813 (cell phone) or clairemyhill@gmail.com (email). Thank you for considering being involved in this project, which aims to provide a useful perspective on the lived experiences of ballet dancers, related to mental toughness.

With thanks,

Claire Myhill

Appendix E: Original Consent form

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RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT
RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH
PARTICIPANT**

</div>

I (participant's name) _____ agree to participate in the research project of Claire Myhill on professional ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness.

I understand that:

10. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for an Honours degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 072 551 9813 (cell phone) or clairemyhill@gmail.com (email). The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Mr Gary Steele in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on 046 603 8504 (office) or G.Steele@ru.ac.za (email).

11. The researcher is interested in gaining an in depth understanding of professional ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness and whether or not it plays a role in their lives and dancing careers.

12. My participation is voluntary and will involve one two hour interview at a location that I am comfortable with, as well as possible follow up correspondence via email to check that my experiences and sentiments have been understood accurately.

13. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.

14. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. In addition, if any problems arise during the study, a referral to a Psychologist will be facilitated.

15. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.

16. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for me to be identified by the general reader.

17. Confidentiality will be a central concern throughout the study and the researcher will put measures in place to protect and secure all data gathered. I am aware that stakeholders may be aware of my potential involvement in the research due to logistical reasons, but have been informed that the final decision of whether to participant is mine, and even if

certain individuals are aware that I am taking part, the final report will not include information that can be directly attributable to me.

18. There is a possibility of the research findings being published.


Signed   on   (Date)_____

Participant:_____ Researcher:_____

Appendix F: Interview Questions

Interview Questions – Professional ballet dancer's experiences of Mental Toughness

1   What is a "ballet dancer" to you? How would you describe this to someone who does not know?

2   What led you to decide to pursue a career as a ballet dancer?

3   What people or events had an impact on your development as a dancer?

4   Do you think that there are attributes that all (ballet) dancers should have? How can they be developed?

5   What was it like starting out as a professional ballet dancer?

6   Is there such a thing as a ballet culture? Can you tell me a bit about what it's like to be a professional dancer, the environment you work in, and how it impacts on other parts of your life?

7   What kinds of pressures have you experienced related to the work you do and your career? What are the benefits?

8   Do you have any suggestions about how your environment, during your development and currently, could be adjusted to enhance your development or well-being as a dancer? What do you think is important for ballet dancers' development?

9   What does the term Mental Toughness mean to you in general? And in a ballet environment?

Appendix G: Rhodes University permission to re-use data
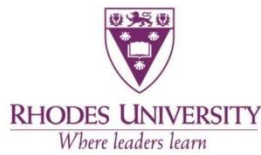
Psychology Department
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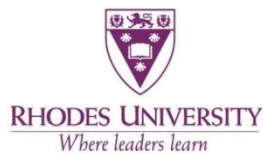www.ru.ac.za/psychology

26 May 2016

To whom it may concern:

RE: Ms Claire Myhill – ownership of data from her Honours research

In 2012, I acted as Supervisor for Miss Myhill's Psychology Honours research project titled "The Iron Butterfly: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of professional ballet dancers' experiences of mental toughness." As part of this process she secured and conducted several interviews with professional ballet dancers at a local company, and transcribed the information into over 100 pages of data.

During the course of her Masters in Counselling Psychology degree, Miss Myhill has approached me to explore whether she may re-use the data collected during that study for a new research project, titled "Foucauldian discourse analysis of professional South African ballet dancers' subjective performance experiences." She has explained that the paradigmatic approach and methodology will be different from her initial study, and has clarified that her current study is seeking to use the data again because of its richness in information which cannot be easily found in other sources.

I have noted that Miss Myhill's current research is being conducted at the University of Pretoria, under the supervision of Prof Terri Bakker, who is supportive of Miss Myhill's proposed approach. I have been made aware that the University of Pretoria's ethical committee ethically approved her research project, pending permission from Rhodes University to re-use the data that was previously collected.

This letter serves to confirm that I do not wish to retain any ownership of that data for future research purposes and that Miss Myhill may use the data for her current research project. Miss Myhill intends to publish an article related to her initial project, which we have agreed will include

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me as a co-author due to my role in it as her supervisor. She has also indicated that she will seek to publish an article based on her current research as well, in collaboration with her current supervisor.

After discussing and agreeing to this point with Miss Myhill, I would like to clarify that I shall retain ownership of results of the first data analysis for the purposes of publishing the article related to her Honours study. I shall also have access to the data for educational purposes; however, I do not intend to retain ownership of the data for purposes of the current (second) analysis and subsequent articles that may be forthcoming.

Sincerely,

GARY STEELE (MR)

Appendix H: Company letter

2016/06/21

Department of Psychology

University of Pretoria

To whom it may concern

RE: AGREEMENT BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND BALLET COMPANY

As part of the requirements of my MA Counselling Psychology degree at the University of Pretoria, I will be conducting a research project over the next several months. I have chosen to focus on how professional ballet dancers drawn on certain knowledge and stories that relate to performance enhancement in order to form their identities as ballet dancers and how this in turn impacts on their lives and careers.

I am contacting you specifically because dancers who were members of the company with which you are affiliated took part in a previous study of mine in 2012 that aimed to better understand the role that mental toughness plays in the lives of professional ballet dancers. Due to the fact that the information provided by the dancers I spoke to was very insightful and useful, I would like to re-analyse this information in order to develop further knowledge and understanding with regards to ballet dancers.

In order to do this, I am asking for permission to re-use the information that was provided to me by these dancers in our interview that took place in June of 2012. The dancers who were involved previously will be contacted to obtain their consent to include the information they provided. No names of participants or the relevant company will be used and all identities will only be known to myself, as the primary researcher. The findings may be made public in an academic journal or other article in order to make them accessible to those who can potentially benefit from the knowledge produced. It may also be used for further research purposes.

This study in no way aims to cause harm to any person, company or the industry overall; rather the intention is to identify different aspects of how ballet dancers engage in performance enhancement and the ways this impacts on their identities. In particular, I will aim to draw attention to the positive stories and aspects of ballet that are not always given a strong position in the research that currently exists.

However, should you have any concerns or experience any problems in relation to the research, those involved are more than welcome to discuss them with me at any stage of the project. If the situation necessitates it, a referral to a qualified psychologist will be provided.

The research is being supervised by Prof Terri Bakker, in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria and she can be contacted on 012 420 4924 (office number) or at terri.bakker@up.ac.za should you have any questions or concerns. The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committees at the university.

Alternatively, please feel to contact me with any queries or issues that you may have on clairemyhill@gmail.com or 072 551 9813.

Kind regards,

Claire Myhill
MA Counselling Psychology student

Appendix I: Company permission form

2016/06/21

Department of Psychology

University of Pretoria

Permission Form:

I (name) _____ agree on behalf of (organisation)

_____

give permission for individuals affiliated with the abovementioned organisation to participate in the research project of Claire Myhill on how professional ballet dancers' draw on discourses of performance enhancement in forming their identities, and the impact that this has on their lives.

I understand that:

19. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Masters degree at the University of Pretoria.

20. The research project is under the supervision of Prof Terri Bakker.

21. The researcher will focus on how professional ballet dancers draw on certain knowledge and stories that relate to performance enhancement in order to form their identities as ballet dancers and how this in turn impacts on their lives and careers.

22. Participation is voluntary and the relevant dancers are not required to take part in a further interview, but are consenting to allow previously supplied information to be re-used for analysis purposes.

23. I am invited to voice any concerns I have about members of the above organisation's participation in the study, or consequences that the organisation or dancer's may experience as a result of this participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. In addition, if any problems arise during the study, a referral to a Psychologist will be facilitated.

24. The participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to allow their full participation unless some

unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about the organisations participation which I did not originally anticipate.

25. The report on the project may contain information of a personal nature, but it will report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for any participants or the company to be identified by the general reader.

26. After completion of the project, the data will be stored in hard-copy format for 15 years in the Psychology archives, which is located in the Psychology Department, within the Humanities Building at the University of Pretoria, and that this is a requirement of the university.

27. Confidentiality will be a central concern throughout the study and the researcher will put measures in place to protect and secure all data and information concerned. I am aware that the final decision of whether to participate lies with each dancer concerned.

28. There is a possibility of the research findings being published to provide the information to people who may benefit from the knowledge produced, and the research data may also be used for further research purposes.

Representative of Company: _____

Researcher: _____

Signed on (Date): _____

Appendix J: Participant letter

<div align="right">2016/06/21</div>

Department of Psychology

University of Pretoria

To whom it may concern

RE: AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

As part of the requirements of my MA Counselling Psychology degree at the University of Pretoria, I will be conducting a research project over the next several months. I have chosen to focus on how professional ballet dancers draw on certain knowledge and stories that relate to performance enhancement in order to form their identities as ballet dancers and how this in turn impacts on their lives and careers.

I am contacting you specifically because you took part in a previous study of mine in 2012 that aimed to better understand the role that mental toughness plays in the lives of professional ballet dancers. Due to the fact that the information provided by you and the other dancers I spoke to was very useful and insightful, I would like to re-analyse this information from a different perspective in order to develop further knowledge and understanding with regards to ballet dancers.

In order to do this, I am would like to ask for your permission to re-use the information that you provided me with in our interview that took place in June of 2012. Each person who consents to volunteer the use of this information will not be required to take part in any further interviews, but will still be sent the findings via email and given an opportunity to comment on them before the project is finalised. However, though your additional comments may be of great value, I cannot guarantee that the findings will be adjusted in relation to them.

The transcripts of the interviews will be checked to ensure that they reflect the interview recordings accurately, and then they will then be analysed to

identify the discourses (stories) related to performance enhancement. After this is completed, the findings of the study will be checked by a second research assistant who is familiar with the type of analysis being conducted to ensure that they are reasonably related to the transcripts. However, in the transcripts and the final research project, no names of participants or the relevant company will be used and your identity will only be known to myself, as the primary researcher.

The report on the project may contain information of a personal nature, but it will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for you to be identified by the general reader. Confidentiality will be a central concern throughout the study and I will put measures in place to protect and secure all data and information concerned while the project is underway. Once it is completed, the data will be stored in hard-copy format for 15 years in the Psychology archives, which is located in the Psychology Department, within the Humanities Building at the University of Pretoria. This is a requirement of the university.

The findings may be made public in an academic journal or other article in order to make them accessible to those who can potentially benefit from the knowledge produced. It may also potentially be used for further research purposes.

This study in no way aims to cause harm to any person, company or the industry overall; rather the intention is to identify different aspects of how ballet dancers engage in performance enhancement and the ways this impacts on their identities. In particular, I will aim to draw attention to the positive stories and aspects of ballet that are not always given a strong position in the research that currently exists.

However, should you have any concerns or experience any problems in relation to the research, you are more than welcome to discuss them with me at any stage of the project. If the situation necessitates it, a referral to a qualified psychologist will be provided. By consenting to be in involved, you are committing yourself to be involved in the study as described above, but

may withdraw from it if unusual circumstances occur, or if you have concerns about participating which were not originally anticipated.

The research is being supervised by Prof Terri Bakker, in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria and she can be contacted on 012 420 4924 (office number) or at terri.bakker@up.ac.za should you have any questions or concerns. The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committees at the university.

Alternatively, please feel to contact me with any queries or issues that you may have on clairemyhill@gmail.com or 072 551 9813.

Kind regards,

Claire Myhill
MA Counselling Psychology student

Appendix K: Participant consent form

2016/07/12

Department of Psychology

University of Pretoria

Consent Form:

I (name) _____ agree to participate in the research project of Claire Myhill on how professional ballet dancers' draw on discourses of performance enhancement in forming their identities, and the impact that this has on their lives.

I understand that:

29. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Masters degree at the University of Pretoria.

30. The research project is under the supervision of Prof Terri Bakker.

31. The researcher will focus on how professional ballet dancers draw on certain knowledge and stories that relate to performance enhancement in order to form their identities as ballet dancers and how this in turn impacts on their lives and careers.

32. My participation is voluntary and I am not required to take part in a further interview, but am consenting to allow my previously supplied information to be re-used for analysis purposes.

33. I will be provided with the findings via email and given an opportunity to comment on them.

34. I am invited to voice any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation to the researcher and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. In addition, if any problems arise during the study, a referral to a Psychologist will be facilitated.

35. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation based on what has been described above, unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.

36. The report on the project may contain information of a personal nature, but it will report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for me to be identified by the general reader.

37. After completion of the project, the data will be stored in hard-copy format for 15 years in the Psychology archives, which is located in the Psychology Department, within the Humanities Building at the University of Pretoria, and that this is a requirement of the university.

38. Confidentiality will be a central concern throughout the study and the researcher will put measures in place to protect and secure all data and information concerned.

39. There is a possibility of the research findings being published to provide the information to people who may benefit from the knowledge produced, and the research data may also be used for further research purposes.

Participant: _____

Researcher: _____

Signed on (Date): _____

Appendix L: Ethical approval

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

30 May 2016

Dear Prof Maree

Project:	A foundation discourse analysis of professional South African ballet dancers' subjective performance experiences
Researcher:	C Myhill
Supervisor:	Prof T Bakker
Department:	Psychology
Reference numbers:	10597167 (GW20160321HS)

Thank you for your response to the Committee's letter of 12 April 2016.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 30 May 2016. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof. MME Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Kindly note that your original signed approval certificate will be sent to your supervisor via the Head of Department. Please liaise with your supervisor.

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Dr L Blokland; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder; Dr E Johnson; Dr C Paneblanco; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Prof GM Spies; Prof E Taljard; Ms B Tsebe; Dr E van der Klashorst; Mr V Sithole

Appendix M: Example of conceptual model