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**A South African perspective on**

**professional ballet dancers' career transitions (2018 - 2021).**

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**Plagiarism declaration**


I <u>Amy Denise Dean</u> declare that this Master's dissertation is my own work unless specifically stated otherwise in this text. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this dissertation from the work/s of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced. I have used the *Harvard UCT 2015* for all citations and references. This master's dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters in Dance - TDP5001W with the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Cape Town and has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university in South Africa or abroad.


Signed by candidate

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**ABSTRACT**

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The discourse of dancers' and career transitions has significantly increased since the 1980s, and much of the literature views the topic of dancers and career transitions from European, American and Australian perspectives. No literature from a South African perspective was found, and this research dissertation aims to fill this gap. This research explores the phenomenon of a dancer's career transition from a South African perspective through a microcosm - four interviews conducted with former professional ballet dancers from a single ballet company. The aim was to answer the main research question; What is the experience of South African ballet dancers transitioning from a full-time professional stage performing career to alternative careers or roles?

A Phenomenological case study was applied to explore and identify the former dancer's transition experiences. Qualitative data was gathered through in-depth interviews with four former dancers who had been employed full-time by a single company in the Western Cape, South Africa. The transcripts of the data collected were analysed using thematic analysis, and four themes emerged:

1. Loss, grief and coping processes.
2. Preparation for an exit.
3. Support systems.
4. South African experience versus outside South Africa experience.

Several established theories and models were used to underpin the interpretations and understandings of the experiences of these former dancers. These include Irina Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (Roncaglia, 2006), Colin Murray Parkes'

Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998), Margret Stroebe and Henk Schut's Dual-process Model of Coping and Bereavement (1995), Britton Brewer, Judy Van Raalte and Darwyn Linder's Athletic Identity (1993), and Carolyn Cutrona and Daniel Russell's ideas on types of Social Support (1990) along with an exploration on the profile of South African dancers.

The research demonstrates that even though South African ballet dancers find themselves in different training and performing environments compared to their European, American and Australian counterparts, the experiences of dancers' transitioning out of a professional stage performing career have similar themes yet are unique for each individual. The research also comments on suggestions to improve South African dancers' experiences while considering the socio-economic climate of Dance in South Africa. Recommendations for further study are made, borne from the limitations and findings of this research.

In closing, although zoomed into experiences from a single ballet company, the four themes provide an answer to the research question, which allows for a new perspective (South African) to be added to the already established dialogue of dancers and career transitions.

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**CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**


As I watched many of my Dance colleagues from Cape Town City Ballet[1] (CTCB) leave behind their stage performing careers as professional ballet dancers and embark on alternative career paths, I questioned how they had experienced and perceived this transition. This observation is the starting point for this dissertation which resulted in a research study that asked questions such as; what is the experience of South African ballet dancers transitioning from a full-time professional performing career to alternative careers or roles? How and for how long did they plan or prepare for this transition? If they chose to exit their career, how did they experience making that decision? How much support did they have before and after their career transition and where did the support come from? Are the experiences of Cape Town ballet dancers' career transitions similar to other ballet dancers (and dancers of other genres) in South Africa? Are the experiences of Cape Town ballet dancers' career transitions similar to the experiences of dancers of other countries in which some of the research on dancers' and career transitions has taken place? The research reviewed in this dissertation on Dancers' and career transitions focuses mainly on American, European, and Australian dancers and includes Bennet (2009), Cashmore (2010), Harrison and Ruddock-Hudson (2018), Jeffri (2005), Jeffri and Throsby (2006), Pohjola (2014), Roncaglia (2006; 2008; 2010), and Willard and Lavelle (2016).

One of the goals of this dissertation is to extend the dialogue of dancers' career transitions (Bennet, 2009; Cashmore, 2010; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2018; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Pohjola, 2014; Roncaglia, 2006; 2008; 2010; Willard & Lavelle, 2016) to include a South African perspective. I have attempted to achieve this through a research study in which the experiences of four former professional ballet dancers in Cape Town were

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[1]  Cape Town City Ballet (CTCB) is a professional ballet company based in Cape Town, in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The company was established in 1934 as the University of Cape Town Ballet Company, which then changed to the CAPAB Ballet Company in 1964 and was then funded by the Performing Arts Councils (see footnote 7, page 8). In 1997 CAPAB Ballet Company, after the removal of the Performing Arts Councils, became a Section 21 Company meaning not for gain, and changed its name to Cape Town City Ballet. The company currently employs on full-time contract 28 classically trained dancers. Cape Town City Ballet's repertoire includes traditional ballet classics such as *Swan Lake*, new classical ballets such as *Transfigured Night*, neo-classical ballets such as Balanchine's *Serenade*, and contemporary ballets such as *Enemy Behind the Gates*. Debbie Turner is the current CEO of Cape Town City Ballet. (Cape Town City, n.d.).

examined by conducting semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of the data collected. I also immersed myself in the current literature on dancers' and career transitions. Exploring this experience could have significance in understanding the South African ballet career pathing and developing career planning strategies, 'professional training[2],' and complementing support systems that South African dancers could receive throughout their professional stage performing careers to prepare for the inevitable exit.

This dissertation begins by contextualizing the research question before describing the development of ballet in South Africa and presents a profile of ballet in South Africa. It discusses various Dance education pathways of some South African ballet dancers and how the pathways impact their careers. This opening chapter will also critique some of the current dancer transition schemes available to American, European and Australian dancers and what resources are available to South African dancers. It concludes with a clarification of the position of the researcher.

Chapter 2 comments on the current literature's trends, contradictions, and themes on dancers' and career transitions. The chapter has a narrow to broad outline as it begins with a review of the current scholarly literature[3] on dancers' and career transitions. This review examines the scholarly literature in terms of how the literature defines dancers' career transitions, the themes and findings, research design, theories and models applied by the research, and references commonly used in the field (Mouton, 2001:87). The chapter then expands to discuss the increased coverage of dancers' career transitions in popular literature[4] and finally broadens to discuss the position of the discourse on dancers' and career transitions

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[2] Young ballet students who partake in ballet classes for many reasons; exercise, motor development, recreation/fun, or to prepare for a career in ballet (This includes professional dancers, dance teachers, and choreographers). Professional training in this research refers to young dancers who deliberately and consciously take ballet classes to become professional ballet dancers.

[3] "These kinds of sources are written by experts in a field. They use technical and academic language, and they are usually written for other experts. These sources are also known as academic sources, peer-reviewed sources, or refereed sources. These sources are usually research articles published in scholarly journals" (University of Saskatchewan, 2021).

[4] "This is a type of information source that is written for the everyday person and is informal in tone and scope. It is not written for an academic audience. Popular works include general news, entertainment, and business publications" (University of Saskatchewan, 2021).

in the sub-fields of Dance studies. This chapter concludes by introducing the gap identified in the literature - the South African perspective of dancers' and career transitions.

Chapter 3 describes a Phenomenological research methodology, as this is the lens through which this research study views the experiences of the former dancers. The chapter then outlines several theories and models that underpin the themes observed during the thematic analysis of the data collected. These theories and models are;

- Career Transitions Model for Ballet Dancers (2006);
- Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998);
- Dual-process Model of Coping and Bereavement (1995);
- Athletic Identity (1993);
- Six types of social support (Cutrona & Russell, 1990).

Chapter 4 discusses the details and reasons for the research design choices. The chapter begins with the reasons for applying a Phenomenological research methodology as the lens and the reasoning behind applying a case study research method. The details and reasoning behind the research design, including preparation, data collection, and thematic analysis to analyse the data collected, are discussed. This is followed by the research study's ethical considerations, evaluation, and limitations.

The data analysis /Chapter 5 explores the qualitative data collected through the interviews with the four former dancers who had been employed on indefinite contracts with the ballet company CTCB. This data is analysed using thematic analysis, which organises the experiences in four themes: Loss, grief, and coping processes; preparation for an exit, support systems; and South African experience versus outside South Africa experience. The data analysis is not looking to provide a final answer to the research question, as the experiences of the four former dancers cannot be generalised to represent all South African dancers' experiences but could indicate shared experiences. The data analysis and findings attempt to achieve the goal set out by this dissertation to continue the dialogue of dancers' and career transitions to include a South African perspective. Chapter 6, the last chapter of this dissertation, closes by summarising the findings and providing possible recommendations and further study.

**Contextualising the research question.**

Before delving into the background, terms need to be contextualised within the research question to ensure that the research design is best suited for answering the question.

The research question is: What is the experience of South African ballet dancers transitioning from a full-time professional stage performing career to alternative careers or roles? The terms **experience** and **transitioning** will need to be contextualised.

**Experience** is defined as "the direct observation of or participation in events as a basis of knowledge" (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2021a) and "the act or process of directly perceiving events or reality" (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2021a). Experience in this research was used to describe how ballet dancers viewed, perceived, and interpreted the events of the transition from a full-time professional performing career. The word experience is seen throughout this dissertation and is key to this research. Underpinned by the Phenomenological research methodology the experience analysed is the lived experience of the dancers. Edmund Husserl's Phenomenological research methodology describes how an internal world is created by each individual and this internal world is a person's reality (Ashworth, 2007) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This internal world is shaped by an individual's past experiences. How an individual perceives or interprets an event (how they experience an event) is dependent on their individual internal world or reality.

The definition of **transition** is a "passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another" (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2021d) and "a movement development, or evolution from one form, stage, or style to another" (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2021d). Much of the literature about dancers' and career transitions refers to the retirement of dancers. Retirement is defined as a "withdrawal from one's position or occupation or from active working life" (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2021c). Ending a professional performing career is retiring or withdrawing from the performing career, but for many dancers, it does not mean a withdrawal from active working life (Roncaglia, 2006:184). For this reason, this research has referred to the ending of a professional performing career as a transition rather than using the term retirement although, it would have been acceptable to use this term.

Roncaglia (2006, 2008) highlights how for many dancers their performing career is a continuous transition to and from stage performing and other careers and roles. This is because many professional dancers work on a project-to-project basis and are required to find other means to financially support themselves between projects. Their continuous state of transition is like a pendulum as dancers enter and exit the professional stage performing (Bennet, 2009). What is observed is how many dancers then have to take control of these transitions in order to financially support themselves.

Like experience, the world transition is seen throughout this dissertation. In this research transition is both the event and the experience. In the context of the event, transition is the change from one career or vocation. In the context of experience, the transition is the internal and external changes (Personal, emotional, and social transitions) associated with the career transition process that took place due to the transition event. The research does not view transition as a single event but includes events leading up to the change, the time during the change, and events that followed.

The research narrowed the question of the experience of career transitioning to include:

- **Professional** which can be defined as "participating for gain or livelihood in an activity or field or endeavour often engaged in by amateurs" (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2021b). This research study has interpreted professional dancers as dancers performing for remuneration.
- **Full-time** was interpreted as dancers whose professional dance performance career formed the bulk of their working life before their transition. There are several employment statuses of professional dancers. These include self-employed, fixed-term contracts, and long-term/ indefinite employment contracts (Polacek & Schneider, 2011). The study focused on dancers who were employed on indefinite employment contracts before they transitioned out of their full-time professional stage performing careers.
- **Ballet dancers,** ballet can be described as a dance form or a dance production as a whole (including choreography, music, scenery). For example, ballets as a dance production could be traditional classical ballets such as *Swan Lake* and neo-classical

ballets such as Balanchine's *Serenade*. Ballet as a dance form includes multiple styles or techniques, such as Cecchetti and Vaganova. Classical Ballet technique can be described as a set of movement rules or steps that dancers follow to execute the dance form. For the purposes of this research, ballet dancer refers to dancers who are trained in a classical ballet style/technique and whose bulk of their professional stage performing career had been performing dance using the classical ballet technique.

- **Stage Performing** for purposes of this research, the topic of ballet dancers is confined to dancers whose bulk of their performing career had been on mainstream performance stages, for example, Opera Houses. This confinement is necessary because the nature of dance performance today is that it can be performed anywhere, for example, theatre stage, dance studio, and parking lot.

Later in chapter 4 (page 76), the limitations of this narrowing have been highlighted.

**A brief history of ballet in South Africa**

South Africa's political and social constructs shape the South African theatre Dance scene. According to Grut, "Cape Town is the cradle of ballet in South Africa" (1981:1). Grut's account of the history of classical ballet in South Africa (although flawed as it fails to speak of the political and social policies which shaped the theatre and Dance scene) describes how classical ballet was supported and encouraged by the Dutch and British colonist population in South Africa with the first ballet pantomime produced in South Africa in 1802. Grut noted that "Through the years the Cape faithfully echoed the trends in Europe" (1981:3). From the early 1900s, classical ballet was promoted by the colonist population and ballet studios, which promoted a European classical ballet aesthetic through specific Dance teaching methods set out by organisations such as the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) became widely popular across the region reaching as far as Zimbabwe and Zambia (Grut, 1981). While Cape Town was the initial base of classical ballet, classical ballet extended to the other provinces and major cities of South Africa, such as Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein. Grut (1981) described a

sharing and booming of classical ballet throughout South Africa's provinces through tours by local and international stars and guests such as South African teachers; De Valois, Dolin, and Markova. The touring and guest professional classical ballet dancers and choreographers shared their knowledge and greatly influenced ballet in the different provinces throughout the 20th century (Samuel, 2021; Grut, 1981).

In 1934, Dulcie Howes founded the University of Cape Town (UCT) Ballet School and Company in Cape Town. The UCT Ballet School and company developed a high standard of classical ballet that followed a European aesthetic and style of classical ballet (Grut, 1981). In 1941, UCT created a ballet department, offering Howes's course to provide theoretical and practical skills in classical ballet based on the European classical ballet technique, aesthetics, and teaching methods (Grut, 1981). The UCT Ballet School and Company produced European ballets. Some of these ballets were re-choreographed by South African 'ballet choreographers[5]' such as David Poole, and South African themed ballets such as *Raka* and *Princess Vlei* were also choreographed and produced by South Africans (Grut, 1981). While these had South African themes, they were still choreographed in a European style and aesthetic.

Apartheid[6] in the 1950s discriminated, separated, and created barriers between the South African population based on race and sought to privilege the white population of South Africa. In the South African theatre scene, this privilege was access. Main theatre stages, Dance education, and funding were reserved for European theatre offerings, such as classical ballet, opera, and orchestras. It restricted the performance casting and audiences to the white population, and when performances offered multi-racial audiences or casting, special permits were required, and people were separated by race.

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[5] For this research, ballet choreographers are dance choreographers who do not necessarily produce traditional classical ballet productions, but the movement vocabulary of their choreographies is based on the classical ballet technique.

[6] "[A] former policy of segregation and political, social, and economic discrimination against the nonwhite majority in the Republic of South Africa" (Merriam Webster Incorporated, 2022). Apartheid (1948-1994) was governed by specific laws which dictated what people could or could not do and where they were allowed to go based on their race, and the white population of South Africa was privileged. For the arts, the privilege was the form of access. The Group Areas Act and Separate Amenities Act were two of the laws which had severe consequences for the arts as the acts dictated who could have access to specific arts education and facilities such as theatres based on race (Friedman, 2012; Samuel, 2018; 2019; 2021).

In 1962, the Apartheid government created the Performing Arts Councils[7], which resulted in the exclusive funding of a European aesthetic of theatre performed and enjoyed by the white population. The Western Cape and the previously named Transvaal and Natal Provinces each had a state-subsidised classical ballet company. In Cape Town, the UCT Ballet Company became CAPAB (Cape Performing Arts Board), the first professional classical ballet company in Cape Town. PACT (Performing Arts Council of Transvaal) Ballet and NAPAC (Natal Performing Arts Council) Dance company were also established by the Performing Arts Councils in the then Transvaal and Natal provinces. NAPAC Ballet closed relatively soon after its establishment in 1976. Perhaps the establishment of the full-time professional classical ballet companies resulted in Dance becoming a more viable career option for South African (white and classical ballet) artists.

The apartheid laws determined the employment opportunities within CAPAB Ballet and PACT Ballet (Friedman, 2012; Grut, 1981). As Friedman, Triegaardt (Friedman, 2012), and CTCB (Cape Town City Ballet, n.d.) state, both Dulcie Howes and David Poole, while directors of the UCT Ballet School and Company and CAPAB Ballet, were advocates for racial equality and attempted to push the boundaries of the Apartheid policies through employing dancers of colour and providing access to classical ballet training to students of colour through development programs (Friedman, 2012). This segregation with unequal access and opportunities resulted in many classical ballet dancers of colour, such as Johaar Mosaval and Vincent Hantam, looking to Europe and America for prosperous careers in classical ballet.

After abolishing the Apartheid policies (1992) and the election of the first democratic government of South Africa (1994), the theatre scene began to transform to become a more inclusive and racially equal space. The theatre began to represent the various cultures, stories, and race groups of South Africa and redress the inequalities brought upon by the Apartheid government through theatrical development and education programs (Friedman, 2012). The Performing Arts Councils were dismantled, and Cape Town City Ballet (CTCB) emerged in 1997

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[7] The Performing Arts Councils were established in 1962 by the Apartheid government. They provided almost exclusive state funding to European art forms such as opera and classical ballet. Each province (four) of South Africa had its own state-funded performing arts council; Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB), Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC), Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFS), and Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT). These councils had state-funded theatres, opera companies, orchestras, and classical ballet companies. CAPAB Ballet Company, NAPAC Ballet, and PACT Ballet are the three state-funded ballet companies this research refers to (Friedman, 2012; Samuel, 2018; 2019; 2021).

from CAPAB Ballet as a not-for-profit organisation (Friedman, 2012). CTCB increased its efforts to offer classical ballet development training and education programs (Friedman, 2012; Cape Town City Ballet, n.d.). Without the Performing Arts Councils, funding which was now from the National Arts Council had become considerably reduced and often unreliable. CTCB reduced their large artistic and administrative staff complement to survive (Friedman, 2012), and PACT Ballet closed in 2000. The current Joburg Ballet[8] began with the South African Ballet Theatre, established in 2001 by former PACT Ballet company members.

**The 'ballet world'**

Whiteside and Kelly (2016) discuss the presentation of self in the context of an amateur classical ballet class, but the 'ballet world' described encapsulates the practices of ballet training and ballet performance arguably around the world. They discuss how there are different techniques and training methods of ballet; however, their analysis of a ballet class is "demonstrating the institutional and universal elements to what appears on the surface to be personally former behaviours, but what are actually rooted in pre-existing and well-established definitions of situations" (Whiteside & Kelly, 2016:16). Much of what is observed in ballet training and performance today is based on traditions and conforming to a set of rules and systems. Whiteside and Kelly (2016) insist that ballet training is authoritarian, and they also describe how there is a certain consistency in the movement vocabulary. Another important quality that Whiteside and Kelly (2016) discuss is the label of elitism given to those who participate. This idea of elitism could stem from the intense physicality, discipline, dedication, devotion, and sacrifice needed to participate, which could make those who participate in ballet separate themselves from those who do not (Whiteside & Kelly, 2021:20). There are also etiquette, habits, behaviours, and attire associated with participating in ballet

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[8] Joburg Ballet is a professional ballet company based in Johannesburg, in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The company was established when the South African Ballet Theatre (2001-2012) and Mzansi Productions merged in 2012. Currently, the company has 29 classically trained dancers (8 ballet dancers with permanent contracts, 16 ballet dancers with varying length fixed-term contracts, and 5 aspirants). Joburg Ballet's repertoire includes traditional ballet classics such as *Swan Lake,* new classical ballets by South African and international choreographers, and the occasional contemporary ballet. Esther Nasser is the current CEO of Joburg Ballet, and Iain MacDonald is the current Artistic Director (Joburg Ballet, 2022; Joburg Ballet, personal communication 2022, February 8).

that, when practised or worn, make individuals feel included in this 'ballet world' and being a part of a familiar and safe place (Whiteside & Kelly, 2021:21). Lastly, Whiteside and Kelly (2016:21-22) describe how kinaesthetic empathy during ballet practice or performance, critical self and external evaluation, and experiencing the physical demands (pain and exhaustion) would add to this feeling of belonging, "confirming the legitimacy of the situation and their roles" (Whiteside & Kelly, 2021:21). These are examples of how participation in ballet training or performance may encourage a feeling of belonging to a group or 'ballet world' separate from others.


**Profile of South African ballet dancers**


Today, the theatre Dance scene consists of many Dance styles that encompass the diverse cultures that exist in South Africa. These styles include 'neo- traditional' (Friedman, 2012: 78) Indian Dance and African Dance, African Contemporary Dance, Classical Ballet, Neo-Classical Ballet, Contemporary Dance, Jazz, Modern Dance, urban Dance styles such as Hip Hop and African urban Dance styles such as Pantsula. One struggle for the South African theatre scene is funding and in South Africa, like many other countries around the world, there is limited funding for the arts (Friedman, 2012; 2008; Smith, 2009). That being said, the funding received for the arts in South Africa pales in comparison to the arts funding in America and Europe. Funding for South African arts comes from various national sources, such as the National Arts Council and National Lottery (Friedman, 2012). Friedman describes how the National Arts Council funds not only the arts (theatre, music, drama, and Dance) but "supports heritage, literature, visual arts and crafts as well" (2012:12). How Friedman and Triegaardt (Friedman, 2012) have described the lack of consistency in receiving funding from the National Arts Council is significant. This lack of consistency results in professional theatre Dance companies or projects rolling the dice to see if they can receive a 'small piece' of funding from an already small funding 'pie'. Friedman and Triegaardt (Friedman, 2012) state how this inconsistency and lack of funding make it almost impossible to maintain full-time professional Dance companies.

"The view of the dance and theatre communities is that there are currently no strategies in place that would guarantee the long-term survival and further development of individual dance artists and companies and ensure the production of "quality work"" (Friedman, 2012:13).

Because of these funding constraints, many Dance companies and artists in South Africa work on a project basis. Many professional dancers do not have full-time employment with a Dance company and are required to find alternative work that would allow them to take on Dance projects as they become available (Friedman, 2012). Through the researchers' observations, there are two ballet companies; Cape Town City Ballet and Joburg Ballet that offer indefinite or long-term employment contracts to dancers in South Africa (Cape Town City Ballet, n.d.) (Joburg Ballet, 2022). From these observations, there are currently about 58 ballet dancers in South Africa that are employed full-time on various types of contracts which means that most of the working professional dancers are self-employed or employed in short fixed-term contracts or on an ad-hoc basis as projects become available (Cape Town City Ballet, n.d.; Joburg Ballet, 2022; Joburg Ballet, personal communication, 2022, February 8). The project-based ballet companies include Mzansi Ballet[9]. As explained above, this leaves a majority of South African dancers without a stable employment status and requires dancers to find work elsewhere to sustain their professional performing careers. This speaks to the idea (discussed earlier in this chapter, page 4) in which dancers are required to continuously navigate and take control of transitions in and out of professional stage performing roles in order financially support themselves.

There is a range of jobs other than performing that dancers take on to maintain a living, these include being self-employed, teaching Dance, Dance choreography, and corporate dancing jobs, film and modelling, fitness instruction such as Yoga or Pilates, temporary jobs or jobs that they have the option to choose shifts or working hours. Many dancers and Dance choreographers also seek employment internationally, as their career prospects are far

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[9] Mzansi Ballet is a ballet company and school based in Johannesburg, in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Mzansi Ballet company was founded in 2017, Mzansi Ballet School in 2021, and Mzansi Ballet Junior Company in 2022. The company employs professional classically trained dancers on an ad-hoc basis, for example, to perform for the South African International Ballet Competition (SAIBC). Dirk Badenhorst is the founder and director of Mzansi Ballet. (South African International Ballet Competition, 2019; Mzansi Ballet, personal Communication 2022, February 8).

greater than if they were to stay in South Africa (Friedman, 2012). Although Triegaardt and Sichel (Friedman, 2012), and Grut (1981) mention that many return to South Africa to share their knowledge and experience, this is still a significant loss of South African talent for South Africa's theatre Dance scene.

Within CTCB and Joburg Ballet dancers are employed at various dancer ranks. In CTCB, the dancer ranks include artist, senior artist, soloist, senior soloist, principal, and senior principal, and in Joburg Ballet, the ranks include junior corps de ballet, corps de ballet, senior corps de ballet, soloist, senior soloists, and principal. Dancers of each rank often take on the performance roles of their rank. For example, the artist and corps de ballet ranks would most often perform the corps de ballet roles and group dances, while the soloists would often perform the solo roles, and the principal dancers would often take on the lead roles of the ballet. Both companies have dancers in training or 'student dancers', called apprentices in CTCB, and aspirants in Joburg Ballet. From the researcher's observations, Joburg Ballets' junior corps de ballet, corps de ballet, senior corps de ballet, soloist, senior soloists, and principal dancer ranks show a more racial and gender-inclusive dancer complement while CTCBs artist, senior artist, soloist, senior soloist, principal, and senior principal dancer complement is majority white female dancers with only a few male dancers and dancers of colour (Cape Town City Ballet, n.d.; Joburg Ballet, 2022).

Several groups are raising awareness and supporting Dance in South Africa, such as The South African National Dance Trust[10] (SANDT), Sustaining theatre and Dance[11] (STAND) Foundation, and the Theatre and Dance Alliance[12] (TADA). SANDT aims to promote and support classical ballet and contemporary dance, "SANDT is committed to creating opportunities within the

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[10] The South African National Dance Trust, or SANDT, was established in 2008. Through workshops, screenings, and performances, the trust raises awareness and support of classical ballet and contemporary dance in South Africa. The Trustees are Veronique Paeper, Robyn Taylor, and Mike Bosazza (South African National Dance Trust, 2020).

[11] The Sustaining theatre and Dance Foundation or STAND Foundation was established in 2020. The foundation aims to serve the dance and theatre sector and practitioners of South Africa through choreographic mentorships, opportunities in writing and acting, advocacy, upskilling, financial assistance, and mental wellness (STAND, 2022).

[12] The theatre Dance Alliance or TADA was launched in 2021. The Alliance gathers various organisations and individuals of the theatre and dance sector of South Africa for advocacy and activism for dance and theatre (Theatre Dance Alliance, 2021).

arts, collaborating with and assisting in the development of fresh young talent, inspiring communities, expanding new audiences and identifying occasions to expose as many members of our diverse population to this medium" (South African National Dance Trust, 2020). The STAND foundation supports and promotes both Dance and Theatre in South Africa (STAND, 2022), and TADA is a collection of various organisations that are advocates and activists for Dance and Theatre in South Africa (Theatre Dance Alliance, 2021).

Training for South African ballet dancers follows the European trends of training. Teaching Methods such as the RAD, a British method of classical ballet teaching and the Cecchetti method, an Italian method of classical ballet teaching are prevalent in the private ballet studios of Cape Town. Triegaardt states that there are about 50 000 participants in private ballet training in the Western Cape (Friedman, 2012). These private ballet studios offer classical ballet to people at various levels and ages. For young students still in school, these private ballet studios generally operate after school hours /in the afternoons during the school terms as an extra-mural activity for students. Students take part in their Dance studio's respective training methods, levels for examinations, competitions such as the Cape Town Eisteddfod, and studio productions and performances. In Europe and America, full-time classical ballet training programs are available within school hours such as those seen in organisations such as English National Ballet School, American Ballet Academy, and the Royal Ballet School. However, in South Africa, it has been challenging to find such programs for students who have not yet completed their matric certificate[13].

The South African Department of Basic Education has introduced subject syllabi including Dance Studies, which promotes all forms of Dance. Students could experience Dance through the curriculum throughout the education levels, exposing young students to Dance, developing an appreciation for the art form, and nurturing talented students who would not have otherwise experienced Dance. Each school that offers Dance in the various levels may decide what style of Dance they wish to offer; creative Dance in the younger grades, contemporary Dance, African Dance, or classical ballet. This introduction to Dance poses problems for many schools that wish to offer Dance as such classes will require suitable space,

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[13] Matric Certificate or National Senior Certificate is the certificate received after completing formal schooling in South Africa. The certificate is achieved through passing examinations in chosen and compulsory subjects in Grade 12 (Department of Basic Education, 2021).

equipment, and finances to employ specialist Dance teachers. There are art-focused schools in South Africa, such as the National School of the Arts in Johannesburg and Alexander Sinton, Chris Hani and Battswood in Cape Town. These focus schools specialise in art and the performing arts subjects and programs such as Music, Drama, Dance, and Visual Art. Students complete their matric syllabus with their chosen art form as a subject choice (National School of the Arts, 2015). As many non-arts-focused schools continue to struggle to fund the most fundamental basics of education, they have little or no budget for Dance, most of these schools that lack such funds are schools in which most of the students cannot afford private Dance tuition (Friedman, 2008).

Many non-profit organisations promote the development and education of ballet in Cape Town such as Dance For All, the Eoan Group School of Performing Arts, Jikeleza Dance Project, Silver Leaf Dance Academy, and Zama Dance School (Friedman, 2012). The ballet development and education organisations were founded on addressing the inequalities of access and opportunities. These organizations and other development programs aim to promote and expose students to ballet and nurture and train talented ballet students who would not have otherwise had the opportunity because of past social and political Apartheid policies or financial restrictions. The development programs identify talented students and assist them in creating a career in ballet (teachers, dancers, and choreographers) (Friedman, 2012).

Triegaardt makes an important yet sombre statement when considering promoting a career as a ballet dancer in South Africa with its few career prospects,

> "I remain skeptical, however, that there is any merit in all this "development"
> when there is no career path to follow and no inspiration forthcoming from a
> vibrant professional company, which is in constant danger of closure due to lack
> of funding" (Friedman, 2012:29).

Talented ballet students from private ballet studios and ballet development programs often take part in pre-professional ballet training. The programs offer additional training in classical ballet techniques, body strengthening, repertoire, and performance opportunities. Cape Town programs that offer pre-professional ballet training include the Cape Junior Ballet (CJB)

Company, Jacqui Pells School of Ballet's Vocational Classical Programme, and Cape Academy of Performing Arts Accelerated Training Program. These training programs are an addition to students' regular classical ballet classes and the programs often take place on weekends and school holidays. During the school holidays, intensive workshops involve a week of Dance and Dance strengthening from morning to afternoon, ending in a certificate of completion and demonstration of work learned.

Some South African ballet students who are training towards a career as professional ballet dancer have a somewhat 'conventional' educational experience as they continue with traditional schooling until completion of their final Matric year however, the dedication to the training of ballet after school hours means sacrificing social activities over weekends and school holidays and often non-participation in school extra-murals and social activities because of training commitments. Some ballet students choose to participate in home-schooling to dedicate even more time to training in classical ballet. Some ballet students choose to audition for full-time classical ballet schools in Europe and America, which means leaving to attend a full-time classical ballet school in a foreign country.

After completing their Matric education, most of the South African ballet students enrol in full-time post-matric Dance training programs. These training programs do not require students to have participated in pre-professional training beforehand, but they require students to audition for entry. Examples of these programs in the Western Cape include UCT Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies (CTDPS), the Waterfront Theatre School, and the Cape Academy of Performing Arts (CAPA) Full Time Pre-Professional Program. The CTDPS offers students an opportunity to complete a variety of undergraduate or postgraduate studies in theatre practises including Dance (contemporary Dance, African Dance, or classical ballet) focusing on performance skills, teaching, creating, or academic research. The Waterfront Theatre school offers a 4year program focusing on theatre (including Dance) performance skills or teaching and CAPA offers a 3 or 4-year program focusing on Dance performance skills. The classical ballet instruction in all 3 programs is based on various European classical ballet teaching methods and aesthetics. These programs aim to prepare students and provide them with the skills for careers in Dance (the University of Cape Town, n.d.) (Waterfront Theatre School, n.d.) (Cape Academy of Performing Arts, 2015).

CTCB and Joburg Ballet offer vocational training through their companies via apprentice (CTCB) or aspirant (Joburg Ballet) programs. They offer aspiring South African ballet dancers to work and perform with professional ballet companies while continuing their classical ballet training. Youth Dance companies, such as the Jozi Youth Ballet, offer pre-professional training and performing experience to young dancers to help start their dancing careers. After completing these vocational training programs, dancers, including ballet dancers, should have the skills and techniques to begin careers in professional Dance.

A problem now becomes clear because there are only about 58 full-time ballet jobs in South Africa. Therefore, many of the talented graduates have to work on a project basis or some look internationally. If dancers are fortunate enough to be offered a long-term or indefinite professional dancing contract in South Africa, from the researcher's experience, they do not have great earning potential. There is little to no information available which provides prospective professional dancers information on the earning potential of their career choice. The researcher had noticed from personal conversations with colleagues who were employed as ballet dancers that they have relied on continued assistance from their families or a second career such as a yoga or Pilate's instructor. This low earning potential for theatre dancers and other artists is valid for future research (Porges, 2009).

CTCB's average retirement age is 35 (Samuel, 2016). CTCB has stated it is focusing on developing South African choreographers. It is important to point out that jobs for choreographers are as unpredictable as jobs for dancers. This lack of opportunities and stability results in many choreographers looking internationally for a prosperous career. There is no information available about dancers' education and qualification levels outside of the dancing role, which makes it impossible to discuss the education profile of dancers in South Africa. The dancers of CTCB belong to the Ballet Benevolent Fund, which can assist dancers for further education. The Ballet Benevolent Fund will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter (page 23).

Triegaardt writes, "in CTCB individual company members are mentored and assisted in developing skills that long outlast their careers as performers" (Friedman, 2012:26). Because

of funding constraints, the two South African ballet companies have a relatively small administrative staff complement and at the time of observing CTCB only continued to employ two former dancers of CTCB in administrative roles with many former dancers of CTCB continuing their relationship as guest teachers, choreographers or character dancers. With employment for choreographers being unpredictable and prospects of continuing employment within a ballet company after leaving performing careers slim, having a second career option as a ballet dancer could be significant. An alternative career could benefit professional ballet dancers who need to sustain their income while working project to project, add financial relief while in full-time employment, or exit their performing career.

This profile of South African ballet dancers is essential as it sets the 'scene' and provides a context for this research. What is observed is how South African ballet maintains its European traditions and aesthetics and is attempting to survive in an increasingly difficult economic environment. What knowledge is gained through the above information is how many South African dancers may prepare for their professional Dance careers and their employment opportunities. What is emphasised is the lack of structures which assist dancers of all genres to prepare and plan for their final exit from professional stage performance. What is notable is the significance and influence CTCB and Joburg ballet has on the South African theatre dance scene, being the only two full-time ballet companies and the lack of opportunities for full-time employment and to continue employment with the ballet companies beyond performance.

**Dancer Transitions Schemes.**

When establishing a second career, organisations such as the Career Transitions for Dancers in New York and Dancers Career Development in the United Kingdom become important in the lives of many professional dancers, including ballet dancers. These non-profit organisations aim to provide skills, funding, and support for dancers' second careers. These organisations acknowledge that dancers prepare and train extensively for a career as a professional dancer, and they often neglect to prepare for an alternative career after performing (Dancers Career Development, n.d.; Actors Fund, 2021). Dancers' career

transitions have increased in awareness since the 1980s, which may be due to the establishment and growth of the dancer career transition organisations and schemes (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006).

**Table 1.1.** below are some of the Dance Transition Organisations and Schemes that offer assistance to dancers for their career transitions (observations from the literature reviewed). There are no such organisations in South Africa for South African dancers:

*Table 1.1. **Dancers Transition Organisations and Schemes***

(Actors Fund, 2021; Dancers Career Development, n.d.; Danse Transition, n.d.; IADMS, 2022; IOTDP, n.d.; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; NYFA, n.d.; Omscholing Dansers Nederland, 2022; SSUDK, 2015; Stiftung TANZ, n.d.; Upper, 2004:24)

| Organisation Name and reference | Location | Founded | Type of assistance | Organisation website |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| International Organisation for the Transition of Professional Dancers (IOTPD) | Switzerland | 1993 | Awareness, support, advice, and information, sharing experiences, networking, research, financial support, grants. | http://www.iotpd.org/ |
| International Association for Dance | United States of America | 1990 | Dance Resources for health, training, and performance. Research, and | https://iadms.org/ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Medicine & Science | | | mentorships. Publication of the Journal of Dance Medicine and Science. | |
| New York Foundation for the Arts | New York, United States of America | 1971 | Career advice, online learning, training. Awards and grants | https://www.nyfa.org/ |
| Swiss Foundation for the Retraining of Performing Artists | Switzerland | 1993 | Counselling, grants, workshops, networking, support, advice | https://ssudk.ch/en/home-en/ |
| Danse Transition | Switzerland | 1993 | Courses, workshops, counselling, skills assessment, coaching, mentorship, grants | https://www.danse-transition.ch/en |
| Ausdance | Australia | 1977 | Dance resources and support including career transitions | https://ausdance.org.au/ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dancer career development | United Kingdom | 1973 | Counselling, workshops, grants, networking, support, mentoring | https://thedcd.org.uk/ |
| The Actors Fund - Career Transition for Dancers | United States of America | 1985 | Career counselling and guidance. Scholarships and grants. | https://actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/career-transition-dancers |
| The Actors Fund - The Career Centre | United States of America | 1998 | Skills development, career counselling, workshops, discussions, and training | https://actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/career-center |
| Omscholing Dansers Nederland | Netherlands | 1986 | Advice, counselling, and financial support | https://www.omscholingdansers.nl/en/ |
| Stiftung TANZ - Transition Center Germany | Germany | 2010 | Tips and support, counselling, information about funding and grants. Scholarships | https://stiftung-tanz.com/?lang=en |

| School of Extended Education at St. Mary's College of California

LEAP program | California, United States of America | Not available | Services, support for training, and job search | https://stmarys.ac/curriculum/academic-excellence/extended-learning/

https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/liberal-education-for-arts-professionals-leap |
|---|---|---|---|---|

These dancers' transition organisation schemes offer a variety of support and services. These include:

- Financial assistance through loans and grants;
- Support groups and Counselling (individual and group);
- Career advice;
- Mentoring;
- Training and workshops;
- Information and resources;
- Skill assessment and development.

Along with the establishment and growth of the dancer career transition organisations and schemes, many professional Dance companies have assistance available to dancers for their career transition process. Many of these dancer transition organisations are sources of research on dancers' and career transitions, such as the IOTDP's aDvANCE project (Baumol, Jeffri & Throsby, 2004) and Dancers keep moving research report (Ijdens & Langenberg, 2008). Some professional Dance companies assist dancers with their career transitions or have a fund or program affiliated with their company. CTCB has a Ballet Benevolent Fund that assists dancers financially with further education: These are listed below in **Table 1.2.**

**Table 1.2.** Professional Dance Companies with career transition assistance

| Dance Company | Location | Type of assistance | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Houston Ballet | Houston, United States of America | Fund to assist dancers to train for new careers. | (Upper, 2004:83) |
| Birmingham Royal Ballet | United Kingdom | Services, support for training, and job search | (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:60) |
| Pacific Northwest Ballet | New York City, United States of America | Services, support for training, and job search | (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:60) |
| Nederlands Dans Theater | Netherlands | Services, support for training, and job search | (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:60) |
| Opéra National de Paris | France, Paris | Services, support for training, and job search | (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:60) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Escuela del Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández | Mexico | Services, support for training, and job search | (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:60) |
| Ballet Benevolent Fund | Cape Town, South Africa | Fund to financially assist dancers to train for new careers. | (personal Observations) |

The dancers of CTCB belong to the Ballet Benevolent Fund (The Ballet Benevolent Fund, personal communication 2020, June 10), established in 1984 as an independent trust to provide financial assistance through loans or grants for re-education and learning new skills for a new career after Dance. Contracted dancers of CTCB contribute monthly towards the fund, and after two years, they are eligible to apply to the fund for financial assistance for their re-education. Dancers who have left CTCB are still eligible to apply for assistance.

Some ballet schools in Europe and America have also recognised their role in the future career planning of dancers and have partnered with the dancer transition schemes. The Royal Ballet School, English National Ballet, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Elmhurst Ballet School, and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland have formed partnerships with the organisation Dancers' Career Development to help young dancers prepare for a career outside of Dance while still in training (Dancers Career Development, n.d.).

What the researcher has observed is how American and European ballet companies and dancer career transition organisations are shifting to a holistic approach to dancers (employees) wellbeing and career longevity for dancers who are employed in all styles and through different employment contracts. South Africa whilst beginning by echoing Europe's classical ballet scene has diverged and not fully embraced this holistic approach to dancers (employees) wellbeing and career longevity. Whether due to financial instability or by design is a valid topic for future research.

Here, the researcher questions how South African dancers experience a career transition with minimal systems to assist with preparation, planning, and coping with the life-changing event.

**Positionality of the researcher.**

Where do I, the author, fit in this research? I began classes in classical ballet at three years old as an extra-mural activity in the RAD method, and in my adolescent years, I began Modern Dance classes. I competed in some local Dance competitions and undertook RAD examinations. I had my first experience of professional theatre when I was 12 years old, and from this point, I knew I wanted to be a ballerina. During high school, I took part as a student in CTCB productions and joined the CJB school and company as I prepared for a career as a professional ballet dancer. As my Dance training schedule increased, I had to give up many extra-mural activities, weekends, and much of my school holidays to make time for dancing. After Matriculating, I began my Bachelor of Music (BMus) in Dance with UCT. During my years with UCT, I performed with the CTCB corps de ballet. During my UCT years, my focus was always Dance training and performing, and with advice from my family, I decided I would pursue three majors: Classical Ballet, Contemporary Dance, and Dance Teaching Method under the Performance stream and completed the RAD Certificate in Ballet Teaching (CBTS). Admittedly, while studying, I did not understand or acknowledge the total value of the degree program from UCT or the CBTS. I just understood these to be necessary steps that needed to be taken now for my future after performing, but I had no outline of what that plan would be.

After graduating from UCT with my BMus (Dance), I performed in 3 seasons as an Ad hoc dancer, after which I received a contract as an Artist with CTCB in 2015. Since then, I have performed in 32 seasons with CTCB and had incredible opportunities, experiences, and memories both on stage and in the studio. After watching many of my colleagues leave CTCB and exit from a performing career to begin new careers, I questioned how they experienced this career transition. I began this Master's dissertation in 2020 while being employed as a full-time professional ballet dancer with CTCB. I was retrenched during the second half of 2020, and I felt unprepared for the transition out of performing. I had prepared for a future

career from the start of my professional stage performing career, but I did not know what I wanted that new career to look like or how I would achieve this. Although it had not been my plan to undergo a career transition while writing this dissertation, my experience has confirmed my thoughts that a South African perspective needs to be added to the current dialogue on dancers and career transitions.

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, the current literature on dancers' and career transitions is reviewed to allow the researcher to comment on the trends, contradictions, and themes observed in the current literature. The chapter focuses on the scholarly literature on dancers' and career transitions. The review is systematic and based on the elements Mouton (2001:87) suggests need to be observed to gain understanding and insight into the "[...] existing scholarship or available body of knowledge to see how other scholars have investigated the research problem that you are interested in" (Mouton, 2001:87). The scholarly literature is reviewed under the following headings;

- The current literature's definitions of dancers' career transitions;
- Themes or findings of the literature;
- The research design includes data collection and analysis tools;
- Theories, models, and common references used in the literature.

The chapter then expands to include popular literature on dancers' and career transitions. Popular literature on this topic has increased since the 1980s (Cashmore, 2010; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006) and is situated mainly in an American and European context. Finally, the chapter broadens to explore the position the discussion of dancers' and career transitions has within the sub-fields of the current discourses in Dance: History, Pedagogy, Criticism, and Politics. In conclusion, the gap in the literature is identified, and the perspective of this study is introduced - the South African perspective of dancers in career transitions.

**Scholarly Literature on Dancers and Career Transitions.**

**Definitions of dancers' career transitions.**

Roncaglia (2006) discusses the various possible meanings of retirement and how the context from which retirement is viewed would change its meaning.

"For an economist, retirement will mean that an individual is no longer in formal employment and does not contribute to the national income. Psychologists and sociologists consider it as a special process which can potentially herald a period of crisis with a beginning, middle and an end" (Roncaglia, 2006:182).

Willard and Lavallee describe dancers' career transition through Athletic retirement, "Athletic retirement, often referred to as career transition from sport, is defined as the transitional process from participation in competitive sport to a post athletic career" (2016:266). Jeffri (2005:343) chose to use the term transition instead of retirement to describe moving from a performing career to a new career, and Roncaglia, in a later article (2008:1), identified retirement with transition. Roncaglia (2006:184; 2008:50) describes how a new career may not always be the path after ending a performing career but could be a new role of some kind (For example, Parenthood). Jeffri and Throsby (2006:61) make an interesting comment when discussing how it has become common practice for workers to have multiple careers in their lifetime. This multiple-career idea is in line with Bennet's description of the "focus in the general workforce shifts from ongoing employment toward ongoing employability" (2009:29). Cashmore's research, however, focused on moving from one career (performing) to another. Pohjola's description of career transition is that it "has been portrayed as a multi-layered and comprehensive life change [...]" (Pohjola, 2014:22). Jeffri and Throsby point out how when working constantly on a project basis, "[...] one is in a constant state of transition" (2006:31). This is reiterated by Bennet "Dance artists tended to refer to transition as representing continual moves between projects both within and outside of dance" (2009:29).

From the above, it is noted how dancers' career transitions have multiple definitions such as retirement, athletic retirement, transitions, continual transitions and new roles. These are researched within specific perspectives such as career transitions to a new career, and dancers in specific genres, employment types and countries. What the researcher observed is that having such broad scope meant that the researchers needed to be selective in their research design. Even though the definitions of career transition and perspectives are different, together they begin to form the landscape of what the term 'dancer's career transition' could mean and its context.

**Themes and findings of the literature**

There are multiple themes that Upper (2004) has commented on in the book *Ballet Dancers in Career Transitions: Sixteen Success Stories*. Beginning with Upper's (2004) emphasising two main themes, the first being transitions of both career and identity, and Upper explains "transitions link the stages of development in all our lives" (Upper, 2004:7). The second theme Upper identified as the theme of Ballet's transitioning movements. The following section explores the themes observed. Table 2.1 below shows the multiple themes about career transitions observed and the page numbers these themes can be found on.

**Table 2.1.** Themes from *Ballet Dancers in Career transitions: Sixteen Success Stories.*

(Upper, 2004)

| Themes | | Page number |
|---|---|---|
| Reasons for Transition | Voluntary or involuntary exit. | 171 |
| | Not being able to perform – Going through the four temperaments. | 47 |
| | Sudden stop of career – injury. | 70 |
| | Knowing when it is time to quit. | 12, 193 |
| Emotional preparation | Mentally letting go/ acceptance of ending career/ metal preparation. | 56, 175, 200, 240 |

| Psychological challenges post-transition | Unwillingness to let go and continued return. | 14, 70, 93, 146 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Finding a new balance in life. | 25 |
| | The need for approval and acclaim. | 14, 193 |
| | Reinventing yourself/ changing your identity/ rebirth/ finding new meaning. | 14, 57, 93, 96, 108, 180, 222, 232 |
| | Depression/ emotional and physically unbalanced. | 92, 92, 146 |
| | The need to take time for yourself/ taking time to adjust. | 92, 171, 240 |
| | Avoiding Dance after a career transition. | 93 |
| Physical challenges post-transition | Loss of physicality of a dancer – weight gain and both negative and positive changes. | 26, 93, 147 |
| Education and retraining and new career preparation | Acknowledging transferable skills. | 121, 147, 165, 240, 243 |
| | Only having time for dance or keeping options open by involving different aspects | 17, 47, 141, 155, 156, 240 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | of yourself and not just Dance, exploring life. | |
| | Lack of formal education outside of Dance. | 82,96, 239 |
| | Starting a new career while still performing. | 70 |
| Loss and grief | Loss of structure. | 171 |
| | Loss of reality/ what you have known your whole life/ loss of identity. | 92, 147 |
| | Feeling of failure/ losing value in self/ fall from 'greatness'/losing the 'specialness/ loss of purpose'. | 92,93, 96, 142, 146, 200 |
| Support | Support from other former dancers. | 93, 241 |
| | Support from family, friends, Dance teachers. Mentoring. | 135, 157, 186, 190, 235 |
| | Financial support/ Financial preparation. | 136, 175, 240, 240 |

Upper's (2004) breakdown of interviews into three parts is noteworthy. Part I follows stories of dancers whose new career was still within Ballet; part II follows dancers whose new career was outside of Ballet, and part III follows non-Ballet careers related to Dance. Uppers emphasised what career or role the dancer transitioned to and identified this a contributing factor in how the career transition was experienced. Grouping the experiences based on the

dancer's new career or role highlights the similarities and differences in the experiences between the dancers in each part and as a whole. The significance of a dancer's new career or role in the experience is also highlighted in other studies. Some studies suggest a second career path within the same professional sport helps with a career transition (Shachar et al., 2004). Shachar et al. (2004) also suggest that this could be an indicator that individuals did not explore options outside of their professional sport and, by doing so, narrowed their career options after sport.

Upper (2004) had included a chapter, Part III–Christopher Nelson: Reverse Transitions, that highlighted the theme of the older dancer as Christopher Nelson, the subject of the chapter founded the organisation, Dancers Over 40. Scholarly study and discourse around the idea of the older dancer are growing and have been discussed by Samuel (2016). The topics of the older dancer and dancers' career transitions have similarities and differences. They differ in that the older dancer questions the position of the older dancer in the performing Dance space, and dancers' career transitions question a move away from the performing Dance space. They are similar in questioning the later phase of a dancer's career. There is an extensive volume of literature on Dance Education and Dance performance which, if viewing a dancer's career path linearly, only encompasses the beginning and middle phases of a dancer's career.

Jeffri (2005), in *After the ball is over: Career transition for dancers around the world,* discusses challenges observed by dancers when career transitioning. These challenges create themes that include:

- Physical and emotional problems;
- Loss of status, income, and support;
- Deciding what to do next;
- Sense of emptiness.

Other topics are discussed such as

- New careers;

- Income;

- Retraining;

- Awareness;

- Support.

Already there is a trend in the themes observed. Jeffri (2005) notes how these different themes were identified in differing order of priority between the different countries. This observation suggests that although themes may be common, the intensity of each theme differs depending on the circumstance of the individual dancers and the Dance profile the dancer finds themselves (Jeffri, 2005).

Jeffri and Throsby's *Life after dance: career transition of professional dancers* (2006) continues Jeffri's (2005) observations and identifies three areas in which they believe dancers experience difficulties when career transitioning: economic, physiological, and emotional challenges. Jeffri and Throsby (2006) also identify multiple themes, these are

- Awareness: This awareness refers to current dancers' awareness of the challenges of career transitions. The study suggested that current dancers are aware of these challenges. Interestingly, former dancers felt they were not prepared for the challenges.

- Preparedness: Jeffri and Throsby state that the study found "a markedly higher level of post- transition career satisfaction among those fully prepared to meet transition than among those not fully prepared" (2006:56). Jeffri and Throsby (2006) also notes the prevalence of dancers avoiding preparing for a career transition.

- "[T]he end of a Dance Career" (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:56): This theme explores how dancers believe they will continue performing much no longer than they do in reality. Jeffri and Throsby (2006) discuss the idea of loss and grief within this theme by stating that "dancers having to mourn the loss before embarking on a new career" (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:57).

- Post–transition careers: This theme explores moving into a career path still within Dance or a non-related career path (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:57). Jeffri and Throsby

(2006) comment that although it could reassure dancers to continue in a Dance-related career, there are few opportunities to do so in the countries where the surveys took place (Australia, Switzerland, and the United States).

- Retraining: Jeffri and Throsby (2006) note the challenges dancers face when retraining for new careers, including time and financial challenges.

- Support systems: Support comes from "dance companies, unions, service organisations, and family and friends, as well as the four transition centres" (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006:60). Jeffri and Throsby include a participant's comment about dancers not asking for help when they should.

Other challenges which are tabled in Jeffri and Throsby (2006:58) reflect Jeffri's (2005) themes and include:

- Physical and emotional problems;
- Loss of status, income, and social network;
- Difficulty with what to do next;
- A sense of emptiness.

Roncaglia (2008) begins the article *The Ballet dancing profession: A career Transition Model* by relating the career transition process to a "sequence of steps that an individual–a dancer–ought to perform" (2008:50). This description of career transition and steps/movement is similar to Upper's (2004) connection between the transition of ballet steps and the transition of career and identity. Themes which Roncaglia (2008) points out include:

- Weight gain and self-perception;
- Identity crisis;
- Coping processes.

Roncaglia (2008) also discusses five themes that make up Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Dancers (2006). These themes are suggested to affect the experience of retirement. The themes are:

- Reasons for retirement;

- Emotional response;

- Support sources and types;

- Coping within and without;

- Floating resolutions.

To add to this, Roncaglia (2008) identifies six responses spread through the six themes above.

> "These psychological responses can be identified by the following concepts: feeling of loss of control; anxiety/ worry/ disquiet; hopelessness/ feeling stuck; disorientation/ sense of loss; openness; self-doubts; nostalgia/ feeling of belonging to the past" (Roncaglia, 2008:54).

Roncaglia (2008) comments on the individuality of the participants' responses and how this demonstrates how a career transition or, in this study's case, retirement is a personal and individual experience. In Roncaglia's continued discussion in *Dancers and career transition, coping with and coping without* (2010). Roncaglia (2010) divides this theme of coping into eight sections:


- Denial;
- Alienation;
- Isolation;
- Severance;
- Acceptance;
- letting go;
- Renegotiation;
- Reconstruction.

As in Roncaglia (2008), Roncaglia (2010) again comments on the individuality of the participant's responses.

Although Bennet's (2009) article *Careers in Dance: Beyond Performance to the real world of work* explores dancers' working and employment profiles in Australia, findings comment on

career transitions. The themes observed from findings related to career transitions include the significant number of hours dancers spend on non-dance-related work, employment opportunities, and additional skills. Bennet (2009) also mentions themes of education, training and the challenges it brings, and support from career transition centres. Bennet comments that "Dance artists tended to refer to transition as representing continual moves between projects both within and outside dance" (Bennet, 2009:29). This points to the idea that career transitions could be a continuous occurrence, not a finality. Themes observed from Pohjola's (2014) *Identity Attachment Influences Contemporary Dancers' Career Transition* narrative stories include:

- Reasons for retirement;
- Identity and identity crisis;
- Insecurity about the future;
- Loss of social networks;
- Denial;
- Emptiness, bitterness, and disappointment;
- Overlapping careers;
- Preparation.

Willard and Lavallee's (2016) *Retirement experiences of elite ballet dancers: Impact of self-identity and social support* observed several themes from their data analysis:

- Pre and Post journey and identity formation;
- Imbalance of power;
- Regaining control;
- Dancer Network.

*Beyond the Stage: Career transition and retirement of professional dancers* by Harrison and Ruddock-Hudson (2018) describe how their study participants adapt after their career transitions and explain various emotional and physical challenges they face. Harrison and Ruddock-Hudson (2018) also discuss the resources and support the participants felt they had, what the participants made use of, and improvements of resources and support.

Pickman's (1987) *Career Transitions for Dancers: A counselor's perspective* observes dancers and career transitions and discusses the themes of:

- Separation and loss;
- Interest identification;
- Attributes facilitating career change.

Through *Access and Innovation: A degree program for Professional Dancers in Transition,* the LEAP program is discussed by Lamoreaux and Taylor (2008), and they comment on retraining and education of dancers. Keefe (2010), in *The short-career Syndrome: A case for professional development,* argues that dancers face financial difficulties transitioning from Dance as they lack the resources to fund such a transition. Keefe (2010) also comments about the Dance-related job market offering little income and job security. At the same time, Griffith et al.'s (2019) in *Career Transitions for the young dancer: Considering psychological implications, challenges with athletic identity* explores a literary review on the availability of resources and support to dancers during their career transition.

### The research design of the literature

While reviewing scholarly literature on dancers and career transitions in terms of research design, some literature analyses data collected while others provide professional opinions and reviews of the literature on dancers and career transitions. The data collection methods include more informal discussions with participants to, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and surveys. Each literature item had its criteria for participation, capturing data, and data analysis. Overall, the literature in this group seems to be a qualitative investigation into the experience of dancer's career transitioning or a related topic that leads into a discussion about dancer's career transitions.

Upper (2004), describes the career transition stories of sixteen former professional dancers. The researcher agrees with Cashmore's (2010:3) comment that the book does not provide an in-depth emotional view of the transition experience. From observations, the book is similar to a biographical account. Each dancer was interviewed about their career transition out of

Dance, which is reflected in each dancer's chapter. Half of the chapter talks of their Dance life and Dance career, and then there is a description of how their career transitioned and what career path they are on now. This observation does not diminish the significance this book has on the scholarly conversation of dancers and career transitions, as it provides narratives on the dancers' experiences and highlights numerous themes on the topic. Upper (2004:6-7) explains that the timing of writing such a book was while undergoing a career transition. Upper's method was to interview sixteen former dancers at different stages of career transition. These stages of career transition were the early, middle, and reflective stages. The interviewees were classical ballet dancers, but Upper included dancers from other disciplines. Upper describes these interviews as "long conversations" (2004:3). This idea of the interviews being less formal and more conversational is carried through in each dancer's chapter's story-like or narrative feel. Upper chose interviewees whose career transitions ended successfully (2003:7) and divided the interviewees into three groups, which make up the book's three parts. Upper's perspectives on career transition were therefore: Former professional ballet dancers, American, having a successful transition and new careers within ballet, outside of ballet and non-ballet careers.

Jeffri's (2005) article published in the International Journal of Cultural Policy and Jeffri and Throsby's (2006) article for the International Journal of Arts Management has interesting observations of *The aDvANCE Project* done in 2000 by the IOTPD. The research team of the study comprised of Jeffri, Throsby, and Baumol. The study took place as surveys with current and former dancers of various styles in Australia, Switzerland, and the United States. The surveys gathered qualitative data by asking open-ended questions. Jeffri and Throsby describe these selected countries as having "well-established dance sectors covering a range of genres" (2006:55). *The aDvANCE Project* also profiled Dance in 11 countries (Australia, Switzerland, United States, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, and the Netherlands). The study selected current and former dancers to highlight expectations of a career transition to the realities experienced by former dancers after career transitioning. The perspective of these articles was considered global for the 11 country profiles. The perspective for the surveys and data analysis could be described as current and former professional dancers, across numerous Dance genres, and dancers in Australia, Switzerland, and the United States,

Roncaglia's (2008) article in the Australian Journal of Career Development discusses dancers' retirement and the psychological and social implications. Roncaglia applies both Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis and Grounded Theory research methodologies to analyse two of fourteen case studies. Roncaglia applied a series of criteria to select participants. These criteria included time since retirement, and participants were employed as ballet dancers in a company for a minimum of two years. Roncaglia notes that one of the fourteen case studies was Asian and thirteen were Caucasian, and of the two case studies that were analysed, one participant was male and the other female. After the interviews, there was no follow-up, as Roncaglia states that this was to "capture the experiential nature of their transition […]" (2008:53). Roncaglia (2008) comments on how the retirement research has moved from emphasising the financial challenges to describing the experience. Roncaglia continued this conversation in 2010 with an article for the Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung in which all fourteen interviews were analysed, and themes of coping within and coping without were discussed. The perspective of the study could be considered international and former professional ballet dancers for at least two years.

Viewing dancers and career transitions from the angle of career pathing. The Journal of Dance Education published Bennett's (2009) article, *Careers in Dance Beyond Performance to the Real World of Work* which discussed the findings of an Australian case study. The purpose of the case study was "to determine how dance artists allocate their working time and what skills they use to sustain their careers" (Bennett, 2009:27). The case study took place over two phases: surveys and interviews. The surveys collected data with open questions on dancers' demographics, working patterns, and career aspirations and reflections (Bennett, 2009:28). The interview phase consisted of two in-depth interviews, which delved into themes from the surveys (Bennett, 2009:28). The study applied interpretive and normative methodologies throughout the process. The sampling for participation included Australian independent and company dancers and Australian dancers who had worked or were working abroad (Bennett, 2009:29). In Bennet's view, "this study sought to build a retrospectively longitudinal snapshot of dance careers in Australia" (Bennett, 2009:27). Whilst the study did not directly look at career transitions of dancers, findings provide essential insight and themes for the topic, which will be discussed under themes. As there were two phases to this research, the perspective of the first phase could have been Australian, while the second phases focus on

Western Australian classical and contemporary dancers who had been employed with a Dance company and independently.

Cashmore's (2010) Masters in Fine Arts Thesis titled *Career transitions of professional dancers* includes interviews with former dancers that explore and discuss participants' attitudes, opinions, and approaches to career transitions. Pohjola (2014) also uses interviews to collect data in the article published in the Nordic Journal of Dance titled *Identity Attachment Influences Contemporary Dancers' Career Transition*. Pohjola (2014) explains how the narrative approach is like "a biographical account that is emphasised on a certain life event" (Pohjola, 2014:24). The participants were three former Finnish contemporary dancers. Cashmore (2010) research perspective was former professional dancers whose career transition was to another career, while Pohjola's perspective was former Finnish contemporary dancers whose career transition was due to injury.

Once again, a qualitative research method was used for Willard and Lavallee's (2016) article published in the Journal Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology titled *Retirement Experiences of Elite Ballet Dancers Impact of Self-Identity and Social Support*. The research study involved semi-structured interviews with six former ballet dancers who danced for a single ballet company in the United Kingdom. The research was from a United Kingdom perspective and pinpointed to a single ballet company and elite ballet dancers' perspective.

In 2018, Harrison and Ruddock-Hudson's article was published in the Journal of Science and Medicine, as the above scholarly literature used a qualitative research method through semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data on the dancers' experiences. The research included twenty Australian participants, and the article compares the Dance profile of Australian dancers to dancers in America, the Netherlands, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The research is from a British and Canadian professional dancer perspective.

The next group of literature is peer-reviewed, and the authors write from the point of knowledge from education or experience in the field. Pickman (1987), Lamoreaux and Taylor (2008), and Keefe (2010) wrote from the author's perspectives and observations. These articles are published in the Journal of Counseling and Development, Adult Learning, and Dance/USA Journal. They offer the author's observations and opinions referencing other

scholarly literature, reports, studies, or organisations on Dancers and Career transitions in the United States.

Griffith et al., (2019) in their article use a literature review approach to discussing dancers and career transitions. The review included literature from 1987 to 2017, and they required literature to meet several criteria to be included. PubMed and EBSCOhost were the two databases used to search for the literature. A Quality assessment was done on the literature found; however, they found no literature that met all the criteria. The article discusses career opportunities for young dancers and the psychological implications of career transitions based on the literature on dancers and career transitions (Griffith et al., 2019).

Even if two studies were researching the same main question they were zooming in or focusing on unique perspectives. It was these perspectives which influenced the research designs. This also suggests that no two research designs are the same but could contain similar elements. The similar and differing research design elements provide a draft outline of where to begin a research study so that it can continue an already established dialogue but provide new insights or perspectives.

### Theories, models, and common references are used

Upper (2004) includes a map of innovation and transition in the appendix of the book: *Ballet Dancers in Career Transition: Sixteen Success Stories*, which shows the career transition process following a pathway of innovation. The graph describes the highs (optimism) and lows (pessimism) through time (weeks, months, and or years). This inclusion is because Upper links transitioning into a new career to innovative ideas. This innovative idea is a new career.

Jeffri (2005) and Jeffri and Throsby (2006) spoke of the idea of career cycling and how little was known about the concept at the time of writing and described entering and exiting a career and not a complete stop. When referring to *The aDvANCE Project*, Jeffri states that "it is hoped it will provide the underpinning for continued research" (2005:342). Whilst Jeffri (2005) and Jeffri and Throsby (2006) do not specify specific theories which underpin the literature, the range of references used for the article is noted and many of the references

are other Dance and career transition books or articles and Jeffri (2005) includes references to resources on employment profiles and statistics of not only dancers but artists and performing artists.

Roncaglia (2008) draws from sports psychology literature and research and references much literature on retirement and career pathing. Roncaglia (2008) discusses several concepts and models that help understand the data collected. These concepts and models include Hopson's model (transition cycle), defining vocation, identity foreclosure, and Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers. Roncaglia (2010) notes two theories that contextualise the study. The first is Schlossberg's Framework, which Roncaglia explains "offers a framework where four main factors affect how individuals cope during transitions" (2010:3). The second, Taylor and Oglivie's model, which Roncaglia explains, "identifies four different causes which initiate the retirement process" (2010:4). It is interesting that Roncaglia (2008) only references Roncaglia's Dance and career transition literature, and the focus is rather literature in sport psychology, retirement, and career pathing.

Bennet refers to "Protean careers" (2009:28) in describing the career paths of dancers and many artists. Bennet explains that the "fundamental element of protean careers is the measurement of success based not in the eyes of others, but on an intrinsic or psychological measure of success, self-identity, and meeting personal and professional goals" (2009:28). This choice is intriguing as it lends itself to the idea of a Dance career being more of a vocation or calling, described by Roncaglia (2010). Once again, references include previous Dance and career transition literature and literature focusing on career pathing and employment statistics. Pohjola's (2014) research explores identity attachment and identity formation of dancers and how this affects career transitions. This is similar to the extensive sports psychology literature on Athletic Identity and the effect on an athlete's retirement (Lavallee & Robinson, 2007; Shachar et al., 2004). Willard and Lavallee's (2016) article refers to the current research and dialogues on professional sports retirement. It uses theories on retirement from elite sports such as Athletic Identity, athletic retirement, and theories of Self-Identity and the Model of Human Adaptation to Transition. Willard and Lavallee's (2016) references only include one dancer career transition item, Roncaglia (2010); the rest is literature on sports psychology, retirement, and identity.

From the observations, three authors, Jeffri, Throsby, and Roncaglia, are referenced often in the current literature on dancers and career transitions. Sport Psychology, identity, career and employment literature, models, and theories are also often used to develop research designs, analyse data, and underpin theories. What this knowledge suggests is the place that the topic of dancer's career transition is taking within scholarly literature and the subfields of dance literature.

**Popular literature on dancers' and career transitions**

The first observation made while reviewing the literature on dancers' and career transitions is the prevalence of popular literature discussions on this topic. Cashmore (2010:3) observed this trend that Dance magazines such as *Dance Magazine, Backstage, Dance Teacher, Dance Forum, Pointe Magazine, Attitude- the dancer's magazine*, and *Dance Spirt* and Entertainment industry magazines such as *The Stage* have plenty of articles referring to career transitions and dancers (Jennings, 2000; Palmer-Fornarola, 2002; Arnett, 2004; Libby, 2005; Loizou,2005; Dancers Transitions, 2005; Hildebrand,2007; Sagolla, 2008; 2011; Career Advice Every Step of the Way, 2013; Shah, 2014; Hamilton, 2016; Wroth, 2017). As previously mentioned, since the 1980s, these discussions have increased in frequency due to the growth of Dance and career transition organizations (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006). These popular literature discussions are excellent ways to engage some members of the Dance community and public on the ideas of dancers and career transitions, but they are mainly in an American or European context. The articles often describe anecdotal experiences of last performances and future careers of professional dancers. Some magazine articles promote various dancer career transition organizations or tips on what to expect and prepare for a career transition. Popular literature newspapers and magazines such as *The Atlantic, TD Magazine, The New York Times, HuffPost, HuckMag, Washington Post*, and *The ASHA Leader* have published the occasional article of a similar context to the above Dance magazine articles (Mackrell, 2001; Behrens, 2006; Aguirre, 2007; Sugerman, 2011; Ritzel, 2012; Muzaffar, 2014; Angyal, 2017; Healy, 2019). The film *Restless Creature* was produced for the 54th New York Film Festival and made available for streaming on Netflix, a subscription television streaming service (Saffie & Schlesinger, 2016). The film documented Wendy Whelan's (a former principal dancer for the New York

City Ballet's) retirement process and is an anecdotal account of a dancer's retirement process from Whelan's perspective. This demonstrates how the conversation of dancers and career transitions is increasing in the mainstream so-called global media and becoming more accessible to the public. The problem remains that it cannot be assumed that American and European experiences are experienced elsewhere.

**Positionality of literature on dancers' and career transitions**

Samuel (2016:50) writes of three subfields of literature in the discourse Dance Studies: History, Criticism, and Pedagogy. Brinson (1993) discusses Dance Politics which the researcher views as a fourth subfield of literature in the discourse of Dance Studies. As described by Brinson (1993), Dance politics involves Dance policies, processes, and practices. Other literature that may contribute to this fourth subfield includes Bennet (2009), Porges (2009), Polacek and Schneider (2011), Friedman (2012), Samuel (2016), Schupp (2016), and Hadisi and Snowball (2017). The above literature discusses Dance policies, processes, employment profiles, and how Dance is practised in the current social, political, and socio-economic climates. This is where the author positions the discussion on dancers and career transitions as it involves Dance policies, processes, and practices.

Through reviewing the current literature through the theories, models and common references used, the researcher observes how much the current literature makes use of theories, models an literature in the fields of Sports Psychology, identity, career pathing and employment. This highlights the position within Dance politics the discussion of Dancer's and career transitions takes.

Acocella, Adair, Anderson, Bland, Cass, Crisp, Craske, Fewster, Fonteyn, Karsavina, Lawson, and Wilson are prominent American and European authors of classical ballet. When searching through the literature on classical ballet, it had been noticed the lack of South African classical ballet literature compared to European and American classical ballet Literature. Examples of South African authors on ballet include Botha (1988), Fourie (2011), Greyling (2011), Triegaardt (2011), Friedman (2012), Glasstone (1996), Samuel (2016; 2021), and Grut (1981). The researcher also observed the increase in South African Dance literature questioning the

relationship of South African Dance to South African politics (Friedman, 2012; Samuel, 2016; 2021). This literature the researcher could categorise in the subfield of Dance politics. The researcher has yet to find South African literature which discusses specifically dancers' and career transitions. South African Dance literature briefly comments on dancers' future careers, such as Triegaardt, who makes the brief comment that "In CTCB, individual company members are mentored and assisted in developing skills that long outlast their career as performers" (Friedman, 2012:26). There is also the increasing conversation on the older dancer amongst South African Dance scholars (Samuel, 2016), which has similarities and differences to dancers and career transitions which have already been discussed (page 31).

In terms of statistical data, *The Dancers' Career Transition A EuroFIA Handbook* (Polacek & Schneider, 2011) provides statistical data on European dancers. In describing the employment profile of dancers, the career transition process and future career planning can be better understood. Statistical data on South African dancers is challenging to find. There is statistical data from the South African Cultural Observatory describing the employment status in the creative and cultural industries of South Africa (Hadisi & Snowball, 2017). However, this is not a collated resource for statistical data specifically on South African dancers. The statistical data being referred to describes dancers' socio-economic profile, professional training and education, and professional transition schemes as outlined by Polacek and Schneider (2011). This data is essential for dancers and future dancers for proper career planning. The data is also important for policymakers, Dance schools, and Dance companies to consider (Polacek & Schneider, 2011). This has meant drawing information from various sources such as Friedman's (2012) *Many Bodies Many Voices Many Stories* and webpages from organizations such as ballet companies and pre-professional training schools (Cape Academy of Performing Arts, 2015; Cape Town City Ballet, n.d.; Dance for all, 2018; Joburg Ballet, 2022; Joburg Ballet, personal correspondence 2022, February 8; Lultingh Alexander Musical Theatre Academy, 2018; Mzansi Ballet, personal Communication 2022, February 8; South African International Ballet Competition, 2019; South African National Dance Trust, 2020; STAND, 2022; Theatre Dance Alliance, 2021; University of Cape Town, n.d.; Waterfront Theatre School, n.d.). The researcher has also drawn information from her experience and knowledge of Dance in Cape Town. Although there is this glaring gap in the South African Dance literature and research which describes the statistical data on South African dancers, chapter 1 (page 10) attempts

to piece together a profile of South African ballet dancers. This gap will be brought forth under suggestions for future study in chapter 6 (page 118).

**The gap in the literature and the perspective of this research**

From the several literature items above, it is observed that although experiences are unique to each individual, there is a trend in how dancers experience their career transition, and several themes recur. Themes emerge in different ways, but overall, they show the dancer's experience before, experience after, preparation, challenges, outside influences, support, resources, and improvements. Many of the themes have aspects that are psychological and or physical. There is a noticeable trend in the experiences, but many of the authors note the individuality of the experience (Jeffri, 2005; Roncaglia, 2008; 2010).

In conclusion, the literature on dancers and career transitions is increasing in both popular and scholarly literature. There is a definite pattern to themes observed in the literature. The themes often involve loss of various aspects, emotional and physical challenges, and support. Frequently authors have stated that answers to questions are individual, and although there are trends in themes, the priority of the themes is an individual experience and based on the dancer's circumstance and Dance profile in which the dancer finds themselves (Jeffri, 2005; Roncaglia, 2008; 2010). There are also trends in research design and method that focuses on a qualitative approach by using interviews or surveys to collect data. The criteria for participation are varied and based on the research questions. There are some contradictions to choices in the research design, such as not providing an opportunity to review a transcript after an interview to maintain the experiential aspect (Roncaglia, 2010) and allowing participants to change their transcripts (Cashmore, 2010). The trend observed in theories used explores career development theories and models, identity theories, employment statistics, and sport psychology theories on Athletic Identity and athletic retirement. Jeffri, Throsby, and Roncaglia are frequently referenced in the current dancer and career transition literature.

No literature that describes the South African experience of dancers and career transitions has been found by the researcher (this does not mean that none exists), and here is where this research finds its gap to explore the experiences from a South African perspective.

**CHAPTER THREE: UNDERPINNING THEORIES**

This chapter identifies and describes Phenomenology as a lens. The chapter also discusses related theories and models used to underpin and support the themes identified in the thematic analysis (Chapter 5). This chapter has five sections: Phenomenological lens, retirement, loss and grief, Athletic Identity, and social support.

Husserl's theory of Phenomenology will be accessed to unpack the research question. Husserl maintained that lived experiences should guide and interpret concepts. This allows for a deeper investigation led by the former dancers' experiences (Ashworth, 2007:11). As suggested by Roncaglia (2006), the notion of retirement will be explored through the Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (Roncaglia, 2006), which will provide a greater understanding of what dancers experienced in this phase and how they could be supported. When examining loss and grief as part of the process of retirement, Parke's Psychosocial Transition Theory (Parkes, 1998; Gross, 2016b) will be explored to frame how grief is part of a physiological adaptation process. Furthermore, Stroebe and Schut's Dual-process Model of Coping and Bereavement (Gross, 2016a; 2016b) provides an outline of how this grieving process involved not only grief but restoration. Retirement appears to propel a change in identity, and in this section, Athletic Identity, as suggested by Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993), is examined. How dancers perceive their old and new identities and the implications this could have had on their career transitions is unpacked. Lastly, Pearson, Cutrona, and Russell's ideas on social support (Cutrona & Russell, 1990; Pearson, 1986) will be discussed to explain how such action helps individuals cope with stressful life events such as transitions and loss.

**Phenomenological lens.**

Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) ideas of qualitative psychology led to Phenomenology as a research methodology in studies of human behaviour. The key characteristics and considerations as described by Ashworth (2007), and Denzin and Lincoln (2008) are what the researcher followed when utilizing a Phenomenological lens. These include that:

- Phenomenology is qualitative;

- Phenomenology is concerned with the experience of the phenomenon;

- Phenomenology suggests individuals create their own internal world or assumption of reality 'life-world';

- The experience is described in the first person;

- Concepts are derived from experiences;

- The underlying reasons for the experience can be explored after the experiences are observed;

- There are no variables but interrelated meanings;

- The experiences are unique to an individual;

- Small sample groups;

- In-depth data collection from participants;

- Themes and patterns are created from the data collected;

- Bracketing the researcher experiences.

These characteristics and considerations have guided the research method and data analysis of this research which is rooted in the experiences of a sample of South African ballet dancers and transitions in their lives.

**Retirement**

Roncaglia (2006) developed the Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers after analysing qualitative data gathered from fourteen interviews with former ballet dancers. The five themes observed in the interviews make up the categories of this model alongside contextual factors and personal resources. **Below is diagram 3.1** that Roncaglia (2006:188) used to demonstrate the career transition model. Roncaglia (2006) identifies the five themes of the model as reasons for retirement, sources of support, emotional states, coping within and without, and floating resolutions.

Diagram 3.1: **Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers**

**(Roncaglia, 2006:188)**

**Floating Resolutions: The Sequels**
Managing Life Changes

Balanced Self
Renewed Sense of Self
Inner<--> Outer Self

Sense of Achievement

**Contextual Factors**
Circumstances around Transition

**Emotional States**

Challenge

Courage/Openness

Foreclosure

Uncertainty/Confusion
Disquiet

Loss/Emptiness

Lack of Understanding

**Personal Resources**
Life Experiences
Personal Values

**Coping Within & Without**
Planned/Unplanned Retirement
Dancer Identity
Denial
Alienation
Indecision
Severance
Acceptance
Letting Go
Renegotiation
Reconstruction

**Sources of Support**
Family members
Friends /Peers
Formal Acquaintances
Professional help

**Types of Support**
Informative
Emotional
Practical
Social Companionship

**Reasons for Retirement**

| **Involuntary** | **Voluntary** |
| --- | --- |
| Deselection | Deselection |
| Interests | Interests |
| Age | Age |
| Physical A. | Physical A. |
| Injury | Family P. |
| Redundancy | |

Roncaglia suggests that the external situation surrounding a transition and personal resources, such as values and experience, would change how a career transition is experienced. Roncaglia (2006) refers to the model as representing retirement and the rehiring of dancers as although dancers are retiring from their Dance career, it is unlikely they would retire from active working life (2006:184). The multiple factors and multiple combinations of these factors show the individuality of the experience of a career transition. This Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers has assisted with outlining the types of questions used in the interview questions posed to the dancers in Cape Town.

**Loss and Grief**

Theories of loss and grief underpin the themes observed by this research study and could provide some understanding of the interviewee's individual experiences. This is similar to

Roncaglia's (2006; 2008; 2010) category: Emotional states. This research focuses on Parkes's Psychosocial Transition Theory (1988) and Stroebe and Schut's Dual-process Model of coping and bereavement (1990). Gross noted that "'Loss' is also used more broadly than just denoting death. Everyday life is full of losses, both trivial and substantial, tangible and intangible, literal and metaphorical" (Gross, 2016a:1). Gross (2016a) identifies two types of losses: physical loss and relational loss. The word loss in this research is not used colloquiality but to describe a significant loss that could cause psychosocial transitions and grief. Parkes observed that "grief is essentially an emotion that draws us toward something or someone that is missing" (Parkes, 1998:54).

An important aspect of psychosocial transitions is that it is about adapting an internal worldview to an external change. Although Parkes's (1998) reference is a loss through death or amputation, Parkes in Gross (2016b) indicates multiple types of changes, both positive and negative, which could require Psychosocial Transitions. Also shown in **Diagram 3.2** is how a primary change (loss) results in multiple secondary changes (losses), and both primary and secondary losses can contribute to individuals' feelings of grief (Gross, 2016a). The personal resources factor of Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (2006:188) would shape the assumptive world of the dancers.

Diagram 3.2. **Parkes' Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998)**

**(Gross, 2016b:51)**
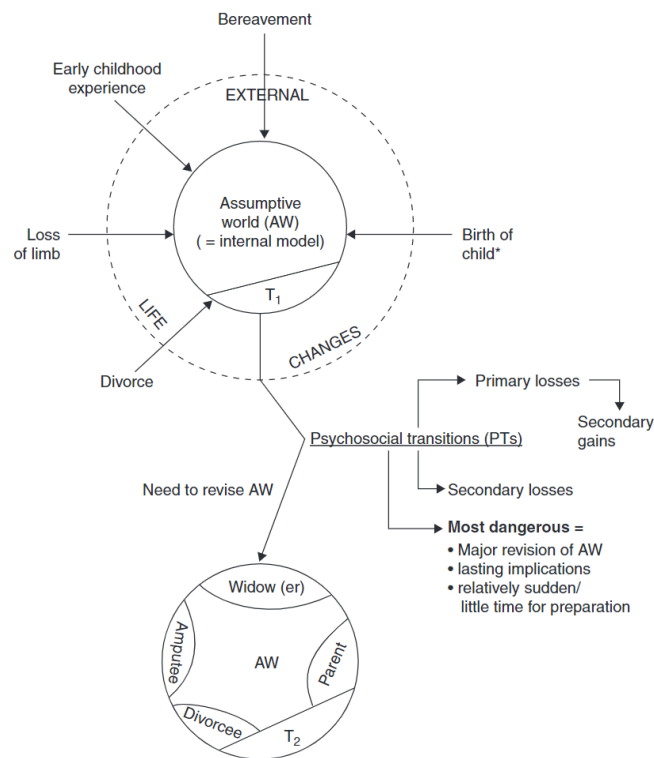


Gross explains that what something or someone means to a person can be determined by an individual's perceived secondary losses (Gross, 2016a). What would be the value of Psychosocial Transition Theory in relation to this research on dancers changing careers? As previous research has shown dancers could create an individual internal world around Dance and Dance could influence many or all aspects of a dancer's reality of the world. When this is disturbed by an event like a career transition (or a loss of their dancer career), this individual internal world needs to change as a reaction to this external change. This career change causes multiple secondary changes. This is not likening the experience of a career transition with a loss through death or amputation however I argue that because Dance can become an integral part of a dancer's internal world and could also be an important point of reference to a dancer's reality, Psychosocial Transition Theory provides a foundation on which to understand dancers' experiences when losing this focal point of their internal world or reality.

Parkes describes the assumptive world referred to in his Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998) as containing "everything that we assume to be true on the basis of our experiences" (1988:56). Parkes (1998:56) adds to this by explaining that a person would respond to their external environment based on their internal assumption of the world around them. A rudimentary and straightforward example relating to a professional dancer would be the physicality gained from being active at work. When there is no longer a career in Dance (the primary loss), this physicality which was gained from daily training and performance would change (a secondary loss), and the dancer would need to adjust to their perception of their physicality or accommodate habits which would maintain this (Adaptation and transition). Parkes (1988:54) explains how grief is an individual experience because how one perceives and views their world based on their experiences is unique, and therefore how they relate the external changes to their internal world would be unique as well.

In general, dancers' career transitions follow the three criteria Parkes (1988:55) identified for psychosocial transitions. 1) There is a significant change to the dancer's internal view of the world, 2) which is long-lasting, and 3) even if dancers are prepared for the career transition, the actual change takes place over a short time. Although this criterion does not include gradual change, Parkes (1988:56) does note that if a specific event highlights a gradual change, that could bring about a psychosocial transition. There could be exceptions to this, for example, when dancers begin new careers whilst dancing and slowly remove themselves from their role as a dancer. Gross added to how psychosocial transition can be experienced when they state that,

> "In many ways, every PT is a 'job of work' that must be done if we adapt to the requirements of the real world. However, the mind that is carrying out the revision is also the object that is being revised" (Gross, 2016b:50).

This 'work' to adapt an individual's internal world view to an external change could be explained through Strobe and Schut's Dual-Process Model of Copying with Bereavement (Gross, 2016:52-60). The model describes two sides (categories): a loss-orientated and a restoration-orientated side; these sides represent ways of coping. Through moving between these two sides, an individual could cope with their loss and adapt their internal worldview to the external. The model suggests people oscillate between the sides when faced with grief,

and Gross (2016b) sometimes notes that no grieving occurs. This is also observed in Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (2006:188) under Coping with and coping without and Floating Resolutions: The Sequels.

Diagram 3.3. **Stroebe and Schut's Dual-Process Model of coping with bereavement**

**(Gross, 2016b:56)**

Everyday life experience

Loss-oriented

grief work

intrusion of grief

breaking bonds/ ties/relocation

denial/avoidance of restoration changes

Restoration-oriented

attending to life changes

doing new things

distraction from grief

denial/avoidance of grief

new roles/ identities/ relationships
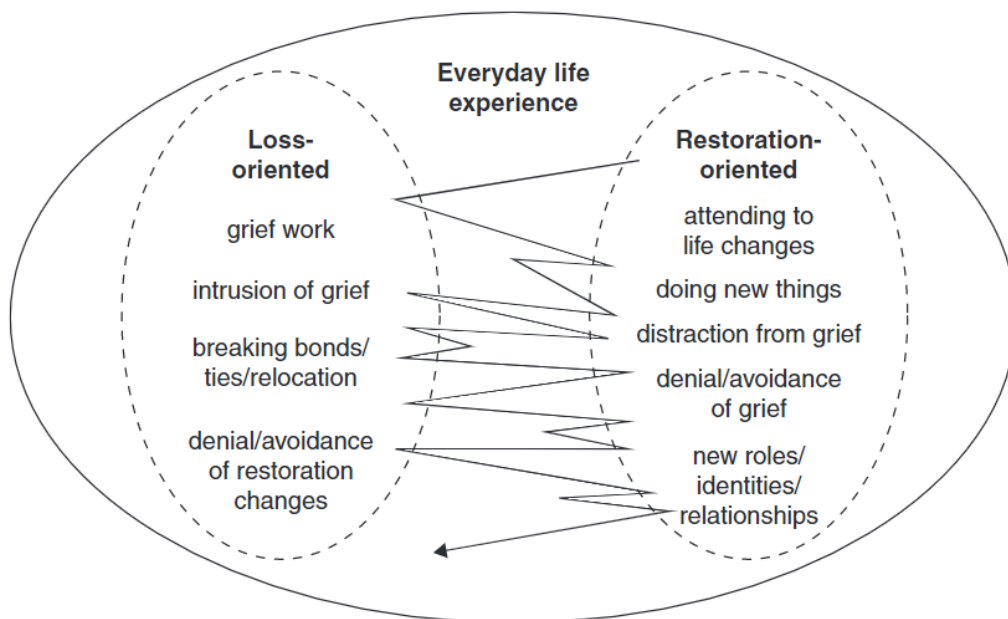
**Athletic Identity**

A secondary loss observed in previous research is a loss of an identity as a dancer. The term Athletic Identity has occurred often in the literature reviewed on dancers and career transition, see chapter 2 (page 26): (Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Roncaglia, 2006; 2008; 2010; Willard & Lavallee, 2016; Griffith et al., 2019). Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder discuss their concept of Athletic Identity in their article *Athletic Identity: Hercules' muscle or Achilles heel?* (1993). They maintain that *Athletic identity* is defined as "the degree to which an individual identifies with the athletic role" (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993:237). Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder explain how people's self-perceptions could assign importance to their

role in a sport or exercise (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993:237). Griffith et al. expands on this definition of Athletic identity by including "[…] and other's interpretation of the athletic role" (2019:50) when defining Athletic Identity. This draws from Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder's idea that Athletic identity is a social concept in "that the extent to which one labels oneself as an athlete may be strongly influenced by family members, friends, coaches, teachers and the media" (1993:238).

Washington explained how an Athletic Identity is "developed through acquisition of skills, confidence and social interaction" (2016:4). Brewer Van Raalte and Linder (1993) discussed the hypothesized benefits and limitations of an emphasized or strong athletic identity noting that a strong Athletic Identity could result in improved performance due to increased drive, commitment, and engagement with the sport, but could also result in a narrowing people's explorations outside of the sport because of an exclusive focus on the sport. This could have a negative effect on training behaviours and psychological reactions to injury and sports career termination.

Why is an understanding of Athletic identity important when viewing dancers' experiences and career transitions? Shachar et al. suggest, "Identity is considered a central contributor to the career development process in athletes and is sought to influence adjustment to sport career termination" (2004:71). They discussed how because of the demands of participating in a sport, and some athletes do not explore or prepare for future careers (Shachar et al., 2004:72) From the researchers' observations, this may be the case for some dancers as there are similarities in the physical, mental and emotional demands of participating in professional sports and taking part in professional dancing (Griffith et al., 2019:50). Identity forms a part of the Assumptive inner world according to Parkes Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998) and plays a role in the psychosocial transition process once a change occurs.  Roncaglia also points to this in the Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (2006:188).

Erik Erikson's term Identity Foreclosure describes this exclusive focus on the sport. Marcia (1966:52) identifies Erik Erikson's Identity Foreclosure when observing dancers' during the adolescent years, when serious training towards a career as a professional dancer begins, which sometimes restricts their occupational exploration. Griffith et al. reference this Identity Foreclosure as well and writes that "those who focus solely on dance from a young age may

be more likely to revolve their entire identity around the activity" (2019:50). This intense focus from a young age and not partaking in exploration may cause Identity Foreclosure. This Identity Foreclosure from a young age and the physical, emotional, and mental demands of the Dance profession may increase a dancer's Athletic Identity to a point where a dancer may over-identify with the dancer role (Griffith et al., 2019:50). When dancers have a strong Athletic Identity, this may cause negative implications when transitioning from a professional performing career. Griffith et al. describe a dancer's strong Athletic Identity as when a "dancer comes to understand his or her world as it pertains to Dance; athletic identity results in a framework from which information is interpreted and relationships develop" (2019:50). Griffith et al. further added to this by stating, "the difficulty lies when dancers' identities are so strongly tied with their form of art that life without dance appears unimaginable" (2019:50). Identity foreclosure is identified in Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (2006:188)

Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) developed an Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), which is used to determine how much sport plays a role in the identity of an athlete.

Diagram 3.4. **Athletic Identity Measurement Scale**

**(Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993:243)**

*Athletic Identity Measurement Scale*

| Item |
| --- |
| 1. I consider myself an athlete. |
| 2. I have many goals related to sport. |
| 3. Most of my friends are athletes. |
| 4. Sport is the most important part of my life. |
| 5. I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else. |
| 6. I need to participate in sport to feel good about myself. |
| 7. Other people see me mainly as an athlete. |
| 8. I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport. |
| 9. Sport is the only important thing in my life. |
| 10. I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport. |

While this study will not use the AIMS questionnaire, the research interview questions ask interviewees modified versions of these questions regarding a dancer and dancing and not athlete and sport. The aim was to observe the interviewee's experience with their relationship to their dancer role before, during and after their career transition to provide a qualitative view of how this is experienced.

**Social Support**

Roncaglia (2006:188) identified sources of support and type of support which is expanded on. Social support can be described as:

> "A broad range of interpersonal behaviors by members of a person's social network may help him or her successfully cope with adverse life events and circumstances" (Cutrona & Russell, 1990:319).

Pearson notes that "Social Support facilitates coping" (1986:64). Cutrona and Russell (1990:322) identify six types of social support:

- Emotional support - Support that makes someone feel cared for and comforted (Cutrona & Russell, 1990:322). It could also include venting emotions (Pearson, 1986:391).

- Network support - "person's feeling part of a group whose members have common interests and concerns" (Cutrona & Russell, 1990:322). Cutrona and Russell add this by explaining that these are not emotional relationships but relationships based on social and recreational activities (1990:322).

- Esteem support - External positive reinforcement from others assists with a person's "belief that the person is capable of coping with a stressful event" (Cutrona & Russell, 1990:322).

- Tangible aid - This support involves resources and physical assistance, for example, financial support

- Informational support - This support is advice, counselling, guidance, and or mentoring.

- Giving support to others - Cutrona and Russell state that "individuals need to feel that they are needed by others" (1990:322), and therefore, a person assisting others could feel support themselves.

It is not enough to view social support on its own but to view the stress and coping mechanisms of social support.

> "Stress is defined as a relationship between the person and the environment in which the individual perceives that something of a personal value is at stake and judges that his or her resources are taxed or overwhelmed by the situation" (Cutrona & Russell,1990:324).

Cutrona and Russell outline how stress could be classified. By asking the following questions, stress can be classified, which can link to the type of social support needed the most.

1. Does the individual perceive the event as a challenge, threat, harm, or loss?

2. Is the event controllable, uncontrollable, desirable, and or undesirable?

3. What life domain is the event experienced in?

The first question looks at the 'primary appraisal' of the event (Cutrona & Russell, 1990:324). This primary appraisal determines if the person perceives the stress as a challenge, threat, or loss/harmful. Although Roncaglia (2006) does not identify this as a theme on its own challenges and loss are identified under the theme of Emotional states. This is an individual perception, and contextual variables could influence this, meaning individuals perceive the same event differently. A simple example relating to a dancer's career transition would be a career-ending injury. A young dancer who has started their career may view this as a loss of a Dance career, but an older dancer who had started their second career and was ready to make a career transition may view this career change as a challenge. Both dancers may experience psychosocial transitions and losses, but the perception of the stressful event may change the experience of the event, and the social support needed to cope with the transition

and loss. The next question would look at whether the event was controllable, uncontrollable, desirable, or undesirable. Controllable is viewed as an event that allows a person to achieve a goal or is a preventative event that allows a person to prevent harm or loss. Desirable events are events that an individual wants to occur or generally have a favourable outcome. This affects how the stressful event is perceived and what support is needed to help cope with the event.

The last question looks at what 'domain' this stress is located in (Cutrona & Russell, 1990:324). The domains include life-space, personal lifestyle, assets, relationships, self-esteem, and discipline. The stressful event could encompass any combination of domains. An individual's appraisal of their stressful event will determine the best method of support. Cutrona and Russell suggest the perception of stress and the social support they believe would be best suited, as seen in **Table 3.1**. below. This demonstrates how an individual's perception of an event can change the type of support that they feel they need to help them cope.

*Table 3.1.* **Cutrona and Russell's Table of the Dimensions of Stress and Predicting Components of Support. (Cutrona & Russell, 1990:108)**

| | Assets | Relationships | Achievement | Social Role |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Uncontrollable** | | | | |
| **Emotional Support (especially caring)** | | | | |
| Negative | Tangible support | Attachment or social integration | Reassurance of worth | Social integration |
| Positive | " | " | " | " |
| **Controllable** | | | | |
| **Instrumental Support (especially information) and Esteem Support** | | | | |
| Negative | Tangible support | Attachment or social integration | Reassurance of worth | Social integration |
| Positive | " | " | " | " |

A dancer's career transition may not be limited to one domain as Parke's Psychosocial Transition Theory suggests multiple secondary losses, each with its own accompanying stress.

In conclusion, the above set of theories and models will be applied individually and collectively to the four themes observed in the data analysis.

**CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHOD**

This chapter provides details on the research design and reasoning for the design choices. Denzin and Lincoln write that "Using an extant framework also allows researchers to lodge their plans in ideas well-grounded in the literature and recognized by audiences" (2008:3). This has helped determine this research framework and methods used throughout this research. Using methods that are well-established in Dance research ensures that the research is relevant and can continue the current conversations on the topic. The chapter begins by restating the research question and the research framework in which a Phenomenological case study is used. The Phenomenological case study approach combines a Phenomenological research methodology as the lens and case study research as a research tool. In the next section, the research method, details and justifies the preparations and procedures of the research. The procedures include collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews and data analysis using thematic analysis. The last sections of the chapter will discuss the ethical considerations of the research and an evaluation of the study and the limitations foreseen.

**Restating the Research Question**

The primary question is: **What is the experience of South African ballet dancers transitioning from a full-time professional stage performing career to alternative careers or roles?** The research aims to add a South African perspective to the current dialogue of dancers and career transitions which has increased since the 1980s.

**Research Framework**

Phenomenology is the best-suited lens or theoretical framework for this research as it permits multiple viewing points on the lived experience of a phenomenon. Postpositive, Advocacy/Participatory, Pragmatic, and Constructivist frameworks were also considered;

however, they did not suit the research question and goal of the research. A Postpositive framework was not a good choice as the research question looks at the former dancers' individual experiences and is not "a deterministic philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:7). An Advocacy or Participatory framework "should contain action or agenda reforms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:9). It did not suit this research study as recommendations may arise from the research, but these are consequences of exploring the experience and not the purpose of the research itself. A Pragmatic framework was not suitable as it should focus on "solutions to problems" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:11). The research question explores the experiences which may not be defined as problematic; instead, they reflect the varied and nuanced experiences of individuals. Any problems regarding South African ballet dancers' career transitioning would not be identified until a broader set of experiences and contexts can be explored.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008:15), Phenomenology is a philosophy and a research method. In this research, a Phenomenological research methodology was a lens that guided the methods of data collection and data analysis. By using a Phenomenological lens, "the research identifies the 'essence' of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study." Much of the current literature on dancers and career transitions is collecting qualitative data about a career transition to understand dancers' experiences, and this is what this research question aims to do as well. A Phenomenological lens best suited to the research question and current literature on the topic. This is because the research has collected data on the individual personal experiences of an event or phenomenon (the career transition) and attempts to interpret meaning in the individual experiences. If referring to the characteristics of the Phenomenological research methodology discussed in Chapter 3 (page 47), how research question relates to the Phenomenological characteristics is tabulated below (see **table 4.1**. below).

**Table 4.1.** Similarities between Phenomenology characteristics and the research question

| Phenomenology characteristics | The research question |
|---|---|
| Phenomenology is concerned with the experience of the phenomenon. | The research is concerned with the experience of the dancers' career transition. |
| Phenomenology suggests individuals create their own internal world or assumption of reality 'life-world'. | Past research suggests dancers create their own internal world or assumption based on their relationship to their role as a dancer |
| The experiences are unique to an individual. | Past research suggests that the experiences of dancers' career transitioning are unique |

Bearing the above lens characteristics in mind, the researcher assumes that experiences being explored are not a singular general experience, that there are individual perceptions of the career transition event, and that individuals create the assumption of their reality. The research question also assumes that the individual's responses to the experience would guide how the data could be analysed. The research has also deliberately chosen to bracket her voice and experiences from the research project. This follows key characters and considerations of Husserl's phenomenology (see chapter 3 page 47). The reasons for this bracketing are so that the researcher avoids her own bias when analysing the data collected.

When choosing research methods, the researcher wanted to explore the experiences and the meanings from the experiences themselves and not theory generation, which is why the grounded theory was not suitable and because the "reasoning behind people's actions" (Maree, 2007:76) was not the aim of the research, ethnographic research was also not

suitable. The researcher felt that narrative research would not provide enough in-depth exploration into the experience and the meanings to answer the research question. Because the research aims to add a perspective to the current dialogue of dancers' and career transitions, aspects of case study research have been used as a research tool combined with the Phenomenological lens. Maree had pointed out that.

> "Case studies offer a multi-perspective analysis in which the researcher considers not just the views and perspectives of one or two participants in a situation, but also the views of other relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them" (Maree, 2007:75).

This multi-perspective analysis is achieved through reviewing the experiences observed in the current literature before undergoing data collection from participants. According to Mouton (2001:150), it is acceptable for general ideas to guide case study research, and the experiences observed in the current literature will guide the exploration of the research participants' experiences. This will add a South African perspective and ensure the research applies to the current literature. The case study research is exploratory and descriptive, as research will be exploring, identifying and describing the individual experiences before attempting to interpret the experiences to understand or give meaning. The sample group will be small but contain multiple cases from a single point.

To continue with the Phenomenological lens, themes will be participant-driven and derived from the data collected from the sample, and the possible understanding and meaning of the experiences were explored after the themes had been identified.

**A Rationale for the Research Method**

This section discusses the research method with a description and justification of the methods and procedures used by this research. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to collect qualitative data from four former dancers from a single ballet company. The four dancers were all known to the researcher and came from the same ballet company - CTCB, with which the researcher had worked for several years. The last section for the research

method describes the data analysis, which used thematic analysis to explore, identify, cluster, and attempt to understand the unique experiences of each of these former professional ballet dancers.

**Preparation**

The initial spark of this research began with the researcher questioning how several of her colleagues experienced leaving their professional stage performing Dance careers. A search on websites, articles, books, and newspapers resulted in multiple popular literature articles on dancers' career transition centres and final performances or future careers of former dancers. A broad question was created: How do South African dancers experience a career transition? A search for academic literature that discussed dancers and career transitions led to finding several sources on dancers and career transitions and many more items of literature discussing athletes and their career transitions. This determined the aim of the research, to provide a South African perspective on the experience of dancers' career transitioning. This narrowed the final research question to include South African ballet dancers' transitions from a full-time professional stage performing career to any new career or role.

The next step was to conduct a database search. To avoid a zero-result search through very focused criteria, as in Griffith et al. (2019), the researcher broadened the literature search to include as much literature on dancers' and career transitions as possible and one that would encompass the research question. A literature search was performed on 02 May 2020. Keywords such as 'dance', 'career' and 'transition' were used from the keywords used by Griffith et al. (2019), and additional Boolean operators and keywords were used to expand the search and not limit the search to specific psychological implications of career transitions but seek for any discussions of dancer's career transitions. Additional searches using multiple combinations of keywords and Boolean operators that included 'dance', 'career', 'transition', 'retire', 'professional', 'model', 'dual career', 'athletic identity', 'second career', and 'career change'. The resources were then reviewed to determine whether they applied to this dissertation in that they discuss, review, or research dancers' careers transitioning from professional performing careers. The current literature was then divided into popular

literature and scholarly literature. To expand on the literature search, reference lists of the scholarly literature were used to source several additional items on dancers' and career transitions that did not appear in the database search results. The researcher's opinion was that the search provided a detailed view of the current literature on dancers' and career transitions. From here, the current literature was reviewed to get a holistic understanding of the current dancer's career transition field before focusing on the experiences that have been observed.

**Data Collection**

The first step would be to determine if the research approach would be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed. The researcher chose a qualitative approach with the reasoning to follow. "The goal of qualitative research is to explore and understand a central phenomenon, which is the concept or process explored in a qualitative research study (Maree, 2007:257)." There are also several characteristics of qualitative research which guided the choice.

- "Data analysis is based on the values and meanings that participants perceive for their world" (Maree, 2007:258).
- Qualitative data "produces an understanding of the problem based on multiple contextual factors" (Maree, 2007:258) or for the Phenomenology lens, it would produce an understanding of the experience.
- "Interpretation involves stating the larger meaning of the findings […]" (Maree, 2007:258).

Bearing the above characteristics in mind, the research question, the purpose of the study, and the current research design, a qualitative research approach was appropriate.

There are several methods of collecting qualitative data (Maree, 2007:257):

- Individual interviews
- Focus group interviews
- Surveys
- Observations

- Documents
- Audio-visual material
- Artefacts

Individual interviews were used as they aligned with the research question and Phenomenological lens, which views experiences as individual and in the first person. Upper (2004); Jeffri (2005); Jeffri and Throsby (2006); Roncaglia (2006; 2008; 2010); Bennet (2009); Cashmore (2010); Willard and Lavallee (2016); Harrison and Ruddock–Hudson (2018) all used interviews or analysed data that had been collected from interviews for their qualitative data. Jeffri (2005), Jeffri and Throsby (2006), and Bennet (2009) combined the data from interviews with qualitative data that had been collected through surveys.

Semi-structured interviews would allow for adjusting questions based on the interviewee's responses. The interviewees' responses could then guide the interview within the framework of the interview questions, ensuring that the experiences would guide the data collected. The interview questions were also open-ended and allowed the interviewees to decide how they would interpret the question, and therefore the responses were driven by the participants. The current research and literature guiding the questions were in line with the case study research method and ensured that this research would fit into the gap in the literature and continue the dialogue from a new perspective. This aligned with the Phenomenological lens and this case study method's exploratory and descriptive nature.

Five broad areas were determined, which explored the participant's career transition experiences based on themes from the current literature.

- How the participants experience their Dance life and identity.
- How the participants experienced their preparation and planning.
- Experience leading up to the career transition and the event itself.
- Experience of their social network, lifestyle, identity, and connection to Dance.
- Experience of support and support systems for their career transition.

These five areas were then unpacked to create the interview questions, seen in **Appendix 2**.

"Case studies allow researchers to observe and analyse data on a much smaller, intimate level (Crawford, 2016:63)." The case study research method has therefore determined the sampling process. Sampling was from a single organisation but included multiple cases from a single point. This allowed the researcher to explore the experience with a deeper understanding from a focused perspective. This is an advantage to this specific research question as it does not wish to generalise experiences but places a unique viewpoint in the current literature. Willard and Lavallee's (2016) research participants were also from a single ballet company.

The case studies are also retrospective, as the research question questions how the former dancers experienced the career transition, they would have had to have undergone a career change. The maximum five-and-a-half-year gap between the career transition and the interview was not too long to have too great an effect on how the participants remembered the experiences of the event (Willard & Lavallee, 2016). Since the career transition and the interview, the minimum six-month gap would be enough time for the former dancers to have a retrospective view of the event (Willard & Lavallee, 2016). Participants were spread out within this time frame.

The criteria included:

- Being a former professional ballet dancer indefinitely employed with a ballet company in the Western Cape -CTCB, South Africa, for a minimum of one year.
- Their transition from a full-time professional stage performing career was between December 2015 and December 2020.
- They are over 18 years of age.

From the researcher's observations, approximately fifteen former dancers fit the criteria. Initially, the research was only going to include three former dancers. However, it was expanded to include four former dancers to cover a range of dancer ranks (see chapter 1 page 10). Ethical clearance was received for the interviews from the University of Cape Town (see Ethical Considerations page). Six potential participants were contacted and provided information, and four former dancers agreed to participate in the research. The four interviewees were former colleagues of the researcher. There are limitations to this, which

are discussed later in this chapter. However, having the interviewees known to the researcher would allow them to feel free to share their experiences and not feel intimidated in any way. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were restricted to an online meeting platform of the participants' choosing. The interviews took about 45minutes to an hour and were audio-recorded for transcription purposes.

After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher requested all participants to select a pseudonym and pronouns for their interview transcript, and identifiers, such as specific places and people, were removed. The interviewees were allowed to edit, remove, clarify, and add anything to their transcript. Providing the interviewees with an opportunity to review and edit their transcripts allowed them to feel comfortable with their portrayal of their interview and open up about their experiences because of this comfort. Two interviewees requested that the interview transcript be edited to correct grammar; therefore, two of the interview transcripts were not verbatim; however, the contents and context were not edited as well as subtle cues such as pauses, distractions, and repetitions were maintained. The participants then accepted their transcripts by returning the deed of gift and the audio recordings were deleted.

**Data Analysis**

The Phenomenological lens determined the data analysis method. The aim was to use a top-down approach in which the experiences observed in the data collected determined themes, which only then determined the theories to help gain understanding or meaning to the themes. A thematic analysis was used as it "allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:2). Through using thematic analysis, the researcher could link shared or contrasting experiences that are related to the research question and possibly provide understanding and meaning to these linked experiences as thematic analysis can search for and organise the experiences observed in the data, which is why it is a suitable method for the Phenomenological lens. Thematic analysis is also suitable for case study research as it can explore data over multiple sets of data, with this research the four interview transcripts.

As the experiences will guide the data analysis, an inductive approach was used instead of a deductive approach.

> "Inductive TA often is also experiential in its orientation and essentialist its theoretical framework, assuming a knowable world and 'giving voice' to experiences and meaning of that world, as reported in the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2021:3).

Therefore, the thematic data analysis approach based on the above statement, research question, Phenomenological lens and case study research method is inductive, experiential and exploratory.

Below are the six phases that Braun and Clarke (2012:5-11) created to describe their approach to thematic analysis.

1. "Familiarising yourself with the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:5);
2. "Generating initial codes" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:6);
3. "Searching for themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:7);
4. "Reviewing potential themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:8);
5. "Defining and naming themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:9);
6. "Producing the report" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:10).

The researcher followed these steps when analysing the data following these phases, and the researcher aimed for the analysis to be "thorough, plausible and sophisticated" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:12).

*Phase:*

1. *"Familiarising yourself with the data"* (Braun & Clarke, 2012:5).

This initial phase of the data analysis involved reading the interview transcripts several times. As Braun and Clarke (2012) describe, do not read for reading's sake but read beyond the surface of the text, asking questions about the meaning of what was said. These observations and questions were causally noted.

An example of this:

Emma, "I don't know what else there is that could top how I felt in my career" (personal interview, 2021 July 22).

Examples of casual notes:

- Emma's performing career had been a high point in her career life;
- Emma is searching for a career that meets the highs that her Dance career made her feel;
- Emma feels that nothing could reach that high point;
- Emma placed her performing career on a 'pedestal';
- By placing on a pedestal, it could be seen as extraordinary and irreplaceable;
- Was Emma's career on the pedestal, or was it 'Emma the dancer' on the pedestal?
- How could that have affected her experience of the career transition process?

*Phase:*

*2. "Generating initial codes"* (Braun & Clarke, 2012:6).

This phase began the coding process. This phase highlights and provides labels to sections of data. Some sections had multiple codes.

For example, Emma's quote above was highlighted and described as 'placing a Dance career/being a dancer on a pedestal.' An additional example would be Leigh stating, "I miss performing. Meaning like acting and being great (laugh) if I can say" (personal interview, 2021 July 11). This section was highlighted and given two descriptions 'what was lost/missed: performing, acting, greatness' and 'Performing/ being a performer was a form of greatness'.

Continuously referring back to the interview text ensured sections of text that were coded were understood in the context of the discussion. This refers back to the interviews aimed to ensure that the interviewees' experiences guided the coding and avoid the researcher from interpreting a section of data out of context. After the initial coding took place, the researcher modified some codes as Braun and Clarke suggest, "as your codes will have likely developed

during coding" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:7). Looking at the above examples, pedestal and greatness were combined to a description that encompassed both, i.e., 'greatness of a Dance career/being a dancer'.

Braun and Clarke note that not all the codes would become themes or part of the final findings. However, these are the sections of the text that the researcher felt applied to the experiences of the former dancers' career transition.

*Phase*

*3.        "Searching for themes"* (Braun & Clarke, 2012:7)

According to Braun and Clarke, "Searching for themes is an active process, meaning we generate or construct themes rather than discovering them" (2012:7). This involved grouping and linking the codes which related to each other. This process involved physically cutting out sections with their descriptive codes and placing them in groups of similar codes. For example, all codes about lost or missed were grouped.

The researcher observed that some groups of codes, such as codes related to the above example' Performing/ being a performer was a form of greatness, were better placed as a subgroup of 'what was lost/missed'. The themes took shape around the research question of experiences of the career transition. Coded sections that did not relate to the grouped themes but could have still related to the research question were grouped like Braun and Clarke's miscellaneous theme. For example, the code of 'resentment'. This ensures that codes that could answer the research were not lost or discarded at this point, as they could be included in the next phases when reviewing the themes.

This phase ended with a chart of possible themes, sections of data, and what interview the data was extracted from.

*Phase*

*4.* *"Reviewing potential themes"* (Braun & Clarke, 2012:8).

This theme is "Essentially about quality-checking" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:8). The researcher discussed the themes she observed with her supervisor. This discussion resulted in shifting some of the themes to either create new themes or combine existing themes that would better answer the research question.

The researcher then began reading the extracted data that creates the theme to ensure that the coded data aligns with the theme. The data was read within the interviews to ensure that the extract was not misinterpreted. The researcher also applied a deductive approach at this point and ensured no data that added value to the themes and interpretations was missed. The themes were then compared to the research question to determine if the themes were suitable to answer the question. Lastly, the interviews were re-read.

> "What you are aiming for is a set of themes that capture the most important and relevant elements of the data, and the overall tone of the data, in relation to your research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:9).

*Phase*

5.      *"Defining and naming themes"* (Braun & Clarke, 2012:9).

This phase involved defining each theme observed in phase 4 and ensuring that the theme answered the research question. Extracts from the data were selected which highlight the theme. These extracts were taken from all four interviews. This ensured the themes were observed across the experiences of the case study and individual experiences. Once the experiences and patterns of experiences were defined, it was now for the researcher to interpret the themed experiences for understanding and meaning as the Phenomenological lens dictates. This interpretation included relating themes to the current literature and theories. By doing so, the researcher demonstrates how her observations and interpretations fit into the discourse of dancers' and career transitions and, as case study suggests, provides

a new perspective on the field of study. The researcher then viewed the themes individually and collectively to ensure they answered the research question. The final task was to name the themes.

*Phase*

*6.* *"Producing the report"* (Braun & Clarke, 2012:10).

This final phase involved presenting the themes. Braun and Clarke (2012:10) suggest several considerations: interesting, complex, related to the field, answer the question, logical order of themes, and meaningful. This phase resulted in the following Chapters 5 and 6.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics clearance was received from the University of Cape Town as the research involved interviewing participants. To ensure participants understood the research method and aim, a document that explained the researcher's background, the intention of the research, and details about the interview process were provided, and they were encouraged to ask questions. There was no foreseen known serious risk to the participants. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews took place online for the safety of the participants and the researcher. The participants were notified that the researcher was restricted to the privacy and security terms and conditions of the online meeting platform, which is why they selected the platform they would be most comfortable using.

The participants were reminded that they could withdraw with no explanation from the study at any point before they accepted and returned the 'deed of gift'. The researcher could not receive a signed copy of all the participants 'agreement to participate' before the interviews took place. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to provide hard copies and some participants did not have access to printing facilities. All participants, however, notified the researcher that they agreed to take part in the interviews. The 'agreement to participate' was signed and returned by all participants when they signed and returned the 'deed of gift'.

It was intended for the participants to decide if their interview transcript would reference them by name or by a pseudonym. Because only one participant deciding to be anonymous and the indecisiveness of participants on the matter, a decision made by the researcher for continuity and to protect anonymity to request that all participants select a pseudonym for their transcript. All participants agreed, a pseudonym for each transcript was used, and identifiers within the transcripts were edited.

Another ethical consideration implemented was to allow the participants to review and edit the transcripts of their interviews so that all participants could feel comfortable and confident in how their interviews were portrayed. Each audio recording was transcribed verbatim, and two participants requested to edit the grammar. The audio recordings were deleted after the transcript had been accepted and the deed of gift signed and returned. The participants were reminded that after they returned the deed of gift, they were still welcome to amend their interview transcript until it would be available to researchers from the UCT CTDPS archive.

Great emphasis was placed on the participant's comfort and to provide them with ample opportunity to either withdraw from the study or ensure they were happy with how the interview was portrayed. Allowing the participants to open themselves up to the questions because they felt in control of how they would be portrayed, a deliberate intention was for participants to be honest about their experience and not hold back their opinions.

**Evaluation and Limitations**

This section contains a discussion on the evaluation of the research design and the limitations foreseen. The research began with a review of several items of literature on dancers' and career transitions that ensured a large resource of current dialogues in the field influenced the design choices and ensured that the research was in line with the current literature— aligning with the aim of the research to add a perspective to the existing dialogue on dancers' and career transitions. A new perspective is suitable as the literature states the experience of a dancer's career transition is an individual one and dependent on dancers' resources and the

profile in which the dancers find themselves (Jeffri, 2005; Roncaglia, 2008; 2010). The research has not attempted to generalise the South African perspective but comment on the common and contradicting themes observed from four former ballet dancers from CTCB. By describing the profile of dancers in South Africa, the researcher has contextualised and provided a background for the experiences. This has also been an essential step in the current literature of dancers' and career transitions.

As described previously in this chapter, a Phenomenological case study approach was a suitable approach to answer the research question. The qualitative data collection method of interviews allowed the researcher to gather in-depth and revealing descriptions of the experiences. The case study method was helpful as it allowed the researcher to pinpoint a specific context, allowing for a new perspective into an already established dialogue (Crawford, 2016). Following the process of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2012) ensured that the data collected was interpreted thoroughly and systematically. By following such steps that are established valid research methods, the researcher aimed to ensure the credibility and validity of the research. There are limitations to the study which have been foreseen and will be discussed next.

The first limitation is that the researcher was not expecting to undergo her career transition during this research. This is not necessarily a limitation, as Upper (2004) had noted the same circumstances, but it is a factor that could cause bias. The researcher acknowledged the potential bias, and at the same time, as she acknowledged her experiences, she attempted to set them aside. When analysing the data, an established process was used. The researcher continuously referred back to the transcripts to ensure that the interviewee's coded comments were not interpreted out of context. After coding and the initial set up of themes, these themes were discussed with her supervisor, Dr Gerard M. Samuel, this provided an outside perspective, and themes were adjusted slightly after this discussion. Once the researcher had established the themes, theories were explored to help understand the experiences. After this, the researcher referred back to the transcript to confirm that no crucial comments were missed. This ensured that the interpretations of the data were participant-led but also founded on established theories or ideas.

The following limitation is the narrowness of the study. All the interviewees were from a single company. This is a valid practice of the case study method, and as there are only two companies in South Africa that offer full-time employment to ballet dancers, it could be argued that this study represents the experiences of half of South Africa's full-time professional ballet dancers. The researcher also cautiously suggests that the experiences of other South African dancers may be similar as many themes are shared with dancers from previous studies (America, Europe and Australia); however, further study is suggested in chapter 6 (page 118) as the importance and priority of these shared themes could differ.

The researcher's relationship with the interviewees is another limitation. All interviewees were former colleagues of the researcher. However, only one interviewee had a social relationship with the researcher outside of the work environment. The researcher notes that for the three of the interviewees, the colleague relationship did not involve in-depth emotional exchanges and was more a professional working relationship, in which their experiences about their career transition had not been discussed previously. The researcher had not spoken to the three interviewees since they had left the ballet company until approaching them to participate in this research study. The researcher also notes that the tone and openness of the three interviewees during their interviews was no different to the interviewee whom the researcher knew outside of the working environment. This colleague relationship could have also been advantageous for this research as interviewees felt comfortable talking freely and openly in their interviews about their experiences.

In order to ensure that the interviewees' experiences led the interview, the researcher kept to the designed interview questions and only stepped out of those questions when the interviewees had said something of interest which the researcher wanted more detail on. For the most part, the researcher let the interviewees interpret the questions. This avoided the researcher from steering the interviewee's answers. Another way the researcher avoided steering the answers to the interview questions was by not asking or re-asking questions if the interviewee's interpretations of questions were different. By providing an opportunity to check and change their transcript, ensured that the interviewees' voice leads to the interview transcript and not the researchers.

Other limitations that arise from narrowing the study are only viewing ballet dancers whilst a myriad of other forms of theatre Dance is being performed in South Africa. The study is narrowed down to include only dancers employed on indefinite contracts, which would exclude many professional dancers in South Africa who are self-employed or employed on ad-hoc contracts or on a project basis. While completing the data analysis, further limitations were uncovered that the researcher had not actively questioned before. The study does not consider if and how differences in gender, religion, language, race, sexual orientation, disability and family structure could affect the experiences of the career transition event. These limitations are expanded upon in discussing recommendations for future study in Chapter 6 (page 118).

**CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter outlines how the qualitative data collected via semi-formal interviews were analysed and interpreted for any markers of the subject 'career transition'. It clarifies how patterns of convergence and divergence emerged and have been set out as four themes:

1. Loss, grief, and coping processes.
2. Preparation for an exit.
3. Support systems.
4. South African experience versus outside South Africa experience.

The study applied a Phenomenological case study method discussed in chapter 4 (page 59). The four interviewees selected pseudonyms during the process of transcription, and these are noted as Chad, Emma, Leigh and Sophie. Exerts from each transcript can be viewed in **Appendix 3,** which illustrates the nature of the interview process and how subtle cues such as pauses, distractions, and repetitions were addressed.

**Unpacking the Interview Process**

The four interviews took place between June and July 2021 and involved posing the same set of interview questions to each one of the participants. Each interviewee was a former professional ballet dancer and had an indefinite full-time contract as a ballet dancer with a ballet company in the Western Cape -CTCB. All participants had undergone a career transition between December 2015 and December 2020. The time identified since their career transition and the interview (June/July 2021) is as follows.

Leigh - 3 years;

Emma - 2 years;

Sophie - 2 years;

Chad - 18 months.

They, therefore, were answering interview questions retrospectively. Even though all participants are no longer full-time professional ballet dancers, they each have varying current connections with Dance, some not at all, while others are choreographers, Dance teachers, audience members or casual participants in Dance activities. All the participants were former colleagues of the researcher. The advantages and disadvantages of this relationship have been discussed in chapter 4 (page 73).

Three participants identified as female, and one participant identified as male. At the time of their career transitions, the interviewees were between the ages of 27 years and 35 years (the average retirement age for South African ballet dancers). They ended their performing career at varying dancer ranks within the ballet company, for example, Artist, Senior Artist, Senior soloist and Senior principal. The researcher's opinion is that the range of the interviewees in terms of gender and dancer rank represents what is observed in the CTCB company. However, the study could have expanded its demographics to include a review of gender, religion, language, race, sexual orientation, disability and family structure, but this was not the primary investigation (career transitions). Such categorisation was not discussed with the interviewees during the research, and it would be unethical to review such data at this stage. This limitation has been discussed in chapter 4 (page 73).

The interview questions provided a wealth of insight and information into the interviewees' career transition process and their earlier Dance training and identity formation as a dancer. This highly personal exchange may or may not have influenced their career transition process itself. The thematic analysis identified four themes that could stand alone but should also be read and understood in relationship to each other. It was interesting to explore how their views expressed in the themes affect each other. Individual statements cannot be seen as being a representation of a whole, i.e., the experiences of the four former classical ballet dancers, are and are simultaneously not, given the size of the sample, an overall reflection of the experiences of all ballet dancers and their career transitions in South Africa. This research study can only begin to add South African perspectives and voices to the current dialogue of dancers' and career transitions around the world. Suggestions for further study are tabled in the concluding chapter.

**Theme 1: Loss, grief and coping processes**

Loss permeates throughout the interviews, with each interviewee presenting or describing different losses. All interviewees lost their careers as professional dancers on the stage. In relation to Parkes's Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998), the interviewee's assumptive worlds included Dance and needed to change once this stage performing career was lost (removed). The interviewees experienced a transition of their assumptive world to adjust to this change, whether it was desirable or undesirable, controllable or uncontrollable. This transition of their internal worlds caused interviewees to grieve at different points in their career transition. To deal with this loss and accompanying grief, the interviewees describe coping strategies they used. As Parkes's Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998) notes the loss is not always negative. There are also positive experiences about the loss some interviewees felt in the form of more freedom and time.

> "I was looking forward to the break because I felt so burnt out [...]" (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22).

> "My boyfriend wanted to go traveling, so I was pretty excited and I liked the idea of the freedom I would have to pursue those things" (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22).

> "My days are a lot, a lot freer, I can make appointments and get on with my life admin, where that used to be really difficult at the ballet company when you are booked from ten until six every day without knowing really what your day was going to look like and I find it a lot easier to just live" (Sophie, personal interview, 2021 June 30).

According to Parkes's Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998), this loss of a Dance career is the interviewee's primary loss. However, this is not what the interviewees experienced losing or missing. The secondary losses that came about because of the primary loss are what the interviewees highlighted. This shows what a career in Dance meant to each interviewee. Each interviewee experienced different and or shared losses indicating the uniqueness of the experience.

Two of the four interviewees described their loss of a career in Dance as akin to relationship losses. This almost personified a Dance career and helped the interviewees explain their emotional attachment to their Dance career and how they felt losing this. Sophie used the idea of a relationship break-up to describe how she dealt with her sadness leading up to her final day as a professional ballet dancer. She said,

> "So, I felt quite calm, obviously a little bit of sadness but I think the bulk of the sadness, I suppose like with any sort of a break-up, a lot had already happened in the two years before when I had been agonising" (Sophie, personal interview, 2021 June 30).

Emma used a similar idea when describing the days after her final performance when she described her experience as bizarre and feeling as if someone had died.

> "The few days after my last show was very weird, I felt like someone had died, it was the most bizarre experience I had ever felt." (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22).

Although Leigh did not personify a Dance career as a relationship, she used the words heartbroken when describing how she felt when she stopped dancing. Through explaining their experiences as a loss of a human relationship the researcher observes how a Dance career is viewed as both types of loss described in Parkes's Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998), a physical loss and a relational loss. This shows the significance dance played in the former dancer's assumptive worlds.

The first and most prominent secondary loss experienced by all the interviewees was their identity's relationship to the role of the dancer (This is referred to as dancer identity). Before delving into the experience of the loss itself, the experience of the interviewee's dancer identity before their career transition is explored. After these experiences were identified in the analysis of the interviews, they were compared to Parkes Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998). These dancers' identities would have shaped the interviewee's assumptive (internal) world. Each interviewee described at some point during their interviews how Dance was their identity:

Chad (personal interview, 2021 July 22): "I think it was my identity […]."

Emma (personal interview, 2021 July 22): "[…] it becomes your whole identity […]."

Leigh (personal interview, 2021 July 11): "[…] you do associate yourself as the dancer […]."

Sophie (personal interview, 2021 June 30): "I suppose while I was performing, there was a sense of identity as a dancer like in the essence of it."

When viewing the qualitative data collected alongside the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993), it is observed that the interviewees experienced strong connections with their dancer role on varying aspects. Chad describes how he thinks Dance was his identity and feels Dance consumes you. He also described how he knew that he wanted to Dance from a young age. He identified himself as an artist more than an all-rounded dancer. Emma frequently stated how Dance had become her identity, and it is "who we are" (personal interview, 2021 July 22) and both Sophie and Leigh also associated being a dancer with their identities.

All interviewees felt other people saw them as dancers. Sophie added to this by explaining how she did not like this external perception as she felt everyone has a different stereotype of what a dancer is, and she did not like to be put into other people's dancer stereotype, and there was more to her than that. Leigh spoke of how she was seen as the dancer in the family. In response to this, the interviewees described mixed social networks, including family, dancer friends, and non-dancer friends. This social network was described as friends, family, social interaction, and how they spent their free time. Chad described while performing, his work colleagues became his family and how he had a small circle of non-dancer friends who came from different backgrounds to Dance but ended up taking great interest in Dance. Emma described how her performing career was "full-on", so she felt she could pursue nothing else. Chad stated that he did not want to have anything to do with dancing outside of the work environment and provided a list of tasks outside of dancing, which he did. All interviewees commented on their enjoyment of physical exercise in and outside Dance, indicating a general enjoyment of being physically active.

All interviewees pointed out there were sacrifices of not doing certain things for their dancing career, but they were happy to sacrifice for their career. Chad described the sacrifices that Dance has required of him. He felt that he had sacrificed friendships, relationships, and opportunities. All the interviewees saw Dance as an essential part of their lives while in their stage performing careers. Three interviewees explained how they spent much of their time thinking about Dance at the start of their careers, but this shifted as they neared the end. Chad answered no to spending much of his time thinking about Dance outside of work hours. However, he also explained how Dance consumed him and that was always dancing and choreographing. Whilst this research does not subscribe to the quantitative AIMs test, the interviewees' answers indicate that they placed emphasis and importance on their roles as dancers, and their social networks seem to interpret them as dancers. All interviewees described a need to be more well-rounded and explore different things outside of Dance, which could demonstrate there was not a foreclosure of identity, although there were comments of tunnel vision, blinkers to Dance, or being consumed by their Dance career at various points in their careers. Further study would need to be done to determine whether the dancers experienced identity foreclosure. This analysis provides the researcher with an observation of how dancers experienced their dancer identity and how it could have shaped their assumptive (internal) world.

Once the dancers lost their dancer identity, this identity needed to shift. Leigh explained how she grappled with the loss of her dancer identity and that she felt lost while trying to decide on what to do next after her former career and how to transition to something new. Both Leigh and Emma coped with their loss by taking a step away/ changing their everyday context. Emma coped by undertaking a trip outside of South Africa, and Leigh escaped by taking a job as an *au pair* outside of South Africa.

> "But I also just felt that I was still a bit lost. I couldn't identify myself as a dancer anymore because I wasn't and I was office admin, but it wasn't… me. So, I decided to then take a gap year off life (laugh)" (Leigh, personal interview, 2021 July 11).

To add to the above, Leigh explained further how she saw herself as the dancer of the family, but now she was no longer and stated that the first 18 months were difficult because of this loss of her dancer identity, which she felt she had for her whole life.

"[...] it was really difficult because you do associate yourself as the dancer, you are the dancer in the family and now you are not dancing, oh, but then what are you? Who are you? What are you doing? So… the first, again the first 18 months was hard, it was difficult, I wasn't a very happy person. Which makes sense because you are this person your whole life and now you've changed but then again, I know that I had to do something else to get me out of this rut so I took a year" (Leigh, personal interview, 2021 July 11).

Emma explained how she tried to cope and move on by not being stuck with who she was (a dancer) but by taking Dance with her because it is, as she describes, "who we are" (personal interview, 2021 July 22), and she reminds herself that she can reinvent herself at any stage. While Leigh, in contrast, does not view the process of career transition as a reinvention of herself but adding to herself. Sophie noted there are different aspects of this idea of a dancer identity and that two years after her career transition, she can still relate to some aspects but to others such as performing and daily training she no longer relates to. What is observed from this is that the interviewees acknowledge and grieve this secondary loss and, at the same time, they are coping with this loss by renegotiating or restoring this dancer's identity to their new environment like in Strobe and Shut's Dual-Process Model of Coping with bereavement. This was not completely removing the dancer's identity but reshaping it as the former dancers move between loss and restoration.

Social network changes are another secondary loss experienced by the interviewee. Sophie felt her social network remained the same after her career transition, but the time she spent with friends and colleagues from the ballet company had changed significantly. Emma contrastingly feels that her friend group had changed completely and that her social life had become smaller. Chad described while performing that some of his work colleagues had become his family. After the career transition, Chad felt that his friend group from work shifted and that people he assumed were friends were no longer there. Chad pointed out that for him, a change of career has meant a change of environment, including new colleagues and new friends. Emma explained a different view of social networks as she experienced missing the social atmosphere that the theatre creates.

"I miss more the people, the comradery, the backstage banter, the theatre world

is so special like the behind the scenes, backstage crew, tours[…]" (Emma, personal

interview, 2021 July 22).

Chad misses this as well as when he describes how he wants to be back on stage. He excitedly talks about finding his old dancer friends asking questions about the choreography and costumes.

For some interviewees, the social network changes decreased the amount of time and frequency spent with groups of people. For others, a loss of the social network meant losing certain social groups completely or losing social interactions in specific settings. This loss of social networks can also translate to a loss of support from those social networks. Chad had a negative view of his loss of friendships and, at the same time, acknowledged that colleagues and friends will change with a change of environment.

The idea of a loss of social network could be extended to a loss of 'place' or belonging. Chad described how it has been challenging to find his "footing in this world" (personal interview, 2021 July 22) as even though he has studied and had done other things, he feels some people ask him when will he go back to dancing. This can suggest that he has only one possible identity for some people. Chad went further when he commented on how the Dance facilities always provided a safe space for him, and he refers to his memories of Dance as his "happy place" (Chad, personal interview, 2021 July 22) this is linked to how he identifies himself and social networks but moves more into how he has needed to find a new 'place' because he had lost his physical Dance place (the Dance studio) and psychological space (his dancer identity). Sophie spoke of a fear of not knowing how to move on or how the transition would look and fear of changing something she had known for most of her life. She also described how the thought of the loss of structure was overwhelming. Emma described Dance as her world and that it was the only thing she had known for so long and that it was "nerve-wracking" (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22) to say goodbye. Emma explained how she misses the structure of this dance world. Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998) talks of automatic habits and how they are hard to change (Gross, 2016b:50). This fear of losing structure or a place in the world and missing the structure of the Dance world moves beyond automatic habits but the fear of losing familiarity and control of daily life. The above

statements demonstrate how interviewees would have lost their safe space or structure when in a career transition. We can see that they are reacting to the loss or pending loss of safe space and structure, and the interviewees experienced what Parkes's Psychosocial Transition suggests, grief, as they described difficult, overwhelming, and fearful emotions.

There is also the experience of a loss of greatness or significance. Emma stated, "I do not know what else there is that could top how I felt in my career" (personal interview, 2021 July 22), and Leigh commented that she at least got to call herself a professional ballet dancer and that few people can and that she misses being great. Both Emma and Leigh's comments could show that they place the idea of a career as a professional dancer on a pedestal. In doing so, after a career transition, it could be challenging to let go of this perception of greatness and the feeling that nothing else may compare or live up to that status. According to Parkes's Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998) these are all assumptions of the interviewee's inner world and form secondary losses they have needed to cope with to reshape their assumptive world.

Chad and Leigh speak of a loss of physicality that Dance brought. There was a loss of an expressive outlet experienced by Emma "I miss the acting the most, it was a great outlet" (personal interview, 2021 July 22). Chad reflects on this loss.

> "Like when I demonstrate, I am like, I hate myself, that they only see this part of me, they didn't see the part of me that was actually able to demonstrate and sustain something" (Chad, personal interview, 2021 July 22).

Leigh speaks of how Dance, because it was active, was a stress reliever for her and how she now has to make time to do classes to be active. Chad grieved this loss of physicality while Leigh described a restoring process by finding balance and ways to continue being active.

The interviewees each experienced grief at different times. Sophie experienced much of her grief leading up to the career transition event as she explained how she spent years agonizing over whether to make a career transition. Even though an injury helped her decide, the career transition was not out of Sophie's control. Much of Leigh's grief was experienced after her career transition. She had taken control and ended her stage performing career on her terms. Emma's grief was experienced, leading up to Emma deciding and after her career transition,

she was in control of her decision to exit her stage performing career. Chad's career transition was not in his control as the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in him having to prematurely exit his stage performing career as he could no longer continue performing. He experienced grief after his career transition. This observation shows how the interviewees experienced grief at different stages, even if they were similarly prepared or in control.

The interviewees have different current connections to Dance. Leigh and Emma have continued their step away from Dance. Although they do not avoid it, they view Dance externally or from a distance. Sophie sometimes works with dancers and continues to watch performances, whilst Chad sometimes teaches Dance and dances privately whenever he has a chance. This shows how all interviewees still connect to Dance, although Dance is no longer the focus of their assumptive world. This idea of maintaining some connection (even if small) and not wholly shutting out or avoiding Dance can also be understood as a way of coping by including their Dance experiences and knowledge in their new assumptive (internal) world.

What is observed in the theme of loss, grief and coping processes is how a Dance career was the primary loss, which resulted in the interviewees experiencing differing and shared secondary losses:

- Identity
- Social network
- Place/belonging
- Structure (comfort and familiarity)
- Greatness/ Significance
- Expressive outlets
- Physicality.

These are closely related to the factors seen in Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers. Secondary losses indicate what Dance meant to the interviewees and is part of their assumptive world. The process for coping with these losses was through grief and restoration.

**Theme 2 – Preparation for an exit**

The theme of 'preparation for an exit' explored the interviewee's planning and preparing for their career transition, reflecting on why they prepared in such a way. Two types of preparation were identified: 1) the planning and education for a new career and 2) the emotional, and mental preparation needed to decide to exit. A distinction is drawn for interviewees whose career transition was voluntary and those where a decision was thrust upon them.

All interviewees completed their National Senior Certificate before pursuing full-time Dance training to become professional ballet dancers. Sophie commented how, for her parents, it was important that she received "the same sort of academic tuition" (personal interview, 2021 June 30). Emma described how she felt some dancers seem to know what they want to do after school because they need to prepare for a professional dancing career from an early age and how some dancers do not go through what many other people go through when deciding what to do after school. The researcher observes that dancers possibly go through this career crisis at a later stage and with less support system than if they were younger and still at school. Leigh was the only interviewee who tried to pursue a career other than Dance after school, as she believed it would not be financially viable to pursue a Dance career. However, after one semester, she chose to pursue a career in Dance. Leigh, Emma and Chad choose to enrol in a university Dance program with only Leigh completing their chosen course. Emma left the course because she was offered a place in the CTCB company, and Chad faced financial difficulties, which resulted in him leaving his studies and then taking up a place offered by the CTCB company. The three interviewees spoke of how they viewed the university Dance program as a point of entry to the professional ballet company, and this was part of their reasoning for pursuing enrolment and their choice of stream. Leigh said, "I knew I would never go into teaching, and that's the teaching stream; my ultimate goal was to graduate under the performance stream" (personal interview, 2021 July 11). Chad noted how he "[…] dropped out of university. I was looking after myself, so I needed the money" (personal interview, 2021 July 22). Emma commented that she saw "[...] the program as a bridge to get into the ballet company" (personal interview, 2021 July 22). This is significant as the researcher questions why this was viewed as only a stepping stone to CTCB and there was

not a consideration for other careers within Dance and the Performing Arts that such studies could have provided. Is this because of a lack of career planning strategies and mentors to guide young dancers through their options or is it that the dancers are closed off to the idea and solely focus on dance?

Sophie's education for her post-dance career began quite early on in her career. She discussed how her Dance teachers at the time "nudged" her to pursue qualifications outside of Dance. Sophie noted that there was no specific plan for the qualifications, but the people to whom she looked for advice (including her parents and Dance coaches) "were quite insistent that I get this [qualifications] done and have it even if I don't use it" (personal interview, 2021 June 30). Sophie explained how the Cecchetti teachers' qualification was a natural progression of the courses and examinations that she had already done as a student and completed this many years before her career transition. Opportunities to complete a Modern Dance teacher qualification and a Pilates instructor's qualification at a financially reduced rate were also presented to Sophie, which is why she completed those specific qualifications. Sophie stated that "I had no intention of teaching Modern [Dance], but in case I ever need it, at least it's there (laugh), and the Pilates was a similar thing, it was something that was available" (personal interview, 2021 June 30). Sophie noted that her parents and Dance coaches wanted her to complete an academic qualification with a part-time university. She chose not to as she felt she would want to give a qualification her full attention, which she maintained could not be achieved while performing. She stated that she regretted not attempting to do academic study part time with a university.

Leigh and Chad also began studying part-time while performing with the ballet company. Leigh felt much pressure at the end of high school to decide on her future career, and she was concerned that Dance was not a financially viable career. She took a year after high school and started studying optometry. After a semester of optometry studies, Leigh decided she wanted to pursue a professional performing career and enrolled in the university Dance program in which she graduated under the performers' stream before being employed as a professional ballet dancer. In her second year as a professional ballet dancer, Leigh enrolled in part-time accounting studies, which fitted into her Dance timetable and was affordable.

Chad explored a variety of tasks and skills outside of the Dance world while working for the ballet company. He explained how he immersed himself with people outside of Dance to be all-rounded. He pointed out, "In order to be all well-rounded personality and not just being one of those dancers that could end up marrying rich, you know, the whole cliché"[14] (Chad, personal interview, 2021 July 22). Although Chad immersed himself in a life outside of ballet, he mentioned how "once you stop dancing you realise, oh my God, 12 years has passed what have I done. You sit there, and you go, oh my God normal people actually do things" (personal interview, 2021 July 22). Here Chad distinguished himself (the dancer) as abnormal and different to people outside of Dance (Normal people). It could be interpreted that his assumptive world could have separated and distinguished him as being different to those outside of Dance, and this separation could provide a sense of belonging to the unique group of people that are different to people who do not Dance professionally as described by Whiteside and Kelly (2016).

Chad did many tasks outside of dancing for the ballet company as he would archive newspaper clippings of reviews and photographs, label DVD recordings of productions and other events, cleaned the offices of the ballet company during the holidays, assisted the wardrobe staff, clean up after social events, locked up and opened the ballet studios, prepared the DVDs used for classes and rehearsals, and assisted in the canteen. He also set up the studio for daily use, started the ballet company social media (including Facebook) pages, and co-created video advertisements for the theatres. Chad's work outside the ballet company included working as an architectural researcher. Chad's father was passionate about health and safety studies, which led Chad to pursue part-time academic study in Occupational Health and Safety and Environmental Management. Chad admitted that he did not understand the place his new area of study had in relation to the Dance world, but after completing some of his studies, he realised how important this field of work is to the professional Dance industry. He decided that Health and Safety in the Arts is what he is going

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14  This cliché referred to by Chad is the idea that for dancers to survive during and after their stage performing career financially, they need to marry into wealth. I have heard this cliché several times during my stage performing career, and I noticed it was primarily used amongst dancer colleagues in a joking manner. Several suggestions of ballet dancers' stereotypes could have brought about such a saying. The first is that for female classical ballet dancers in Europe in the 19th century; it was common practice to be courted or financially supported by wealthy male ballet patrons (Bland, 1976:62). The second is that ballet dancers may be stereotyped as being 'not intelligent' and dancing is the only activity that they are capable of doing, and therefore they need to find other ways to financially survive after they are done performing (Roncaglia, 2010; Fourie, 2011). A third could be the low earning potential of (ballet) dancers and the need to find ways to survive financially. Another could be that being a professional dancer could be viewed as 'eliteness' and therefore, by marrying rich, a ballet dancer would fit into the stereotype of being a 'trophy' partner.

to do after he stops stage performing and it would allow him to stay in Dance and give back to the performing arts. He described how he was always trying to find what stimulated him outside of Dance and what "outside work that could still bring [him] towards the Arts or Dance" (2021:5).

By way of contrast, Emma did not study or prepare outside of her Dance career as she felt it was "quite a full-on career" (personal interview, 2021 July 22), and towards the end of her professional stage performing career, she explored other ways of working with the body, specifically other kinds of fitness, such as cross-training. Emma commented that "I think when you in dancing it's all about dancing, there's no bigger picture too […]" (personal interview, 2021 July 22).

Nearing the end of her professional performing career, Emma explained how she began looking for other things to do. She had started a product, interested in personal training and travelling. Emma explained how she is still figuring out what she wants to do one and a half years after her career transition. Sophie explained how her focal point shifted throughout her career. She was intensely focused on her performing career, but sometimes she opened up to new experiences outside of her performing career. Sophie explained how in those focused times, "other people were saying; this is not healthy, you can't progress in life like this (laugh), you need to be a little bit more open-minded" (personal interview, 2021 June 30). Sophie further spoke of the need to be a well-rounded individual by having things outside of Dance. Sophie remembered that she felt that her "horizons grew a bit bigger" (personal interview, 2021 June 30), and she explored more outside of the ballet world. Sophie began building her next career while in the ballet company. She began teaching ballet and Pilates as a locum instructor whilst still performing, and three years before Sophie's career transition occurred, she took over a Pilates studio. Once Sophie had ended her career as a professional ballet dancer, she continued with the Pilates studio, which she now owned.

By the time Leigh's career transitioned, she was a qualified Junior bookkeeper. Leigh explained how she was unsure what to do and jumped at the first job opportunity as office administrator that crossed her path. Leigh was an office administrator for 18 months before taking a gap year to *au pair* in Europe and to figure out who she was and what she wanted to

do. On her return, she resumed work as an office administrator but for another company. She explained,

> "So, my transition between stopping dancing and where I am now is a bit like going into the industry then falling out of the industry then taking a gap year and now being back in the sort of finance industry" (2021:7).

Chad described his experience of studying as one in which he had to isolate away from the ballet company. When asked how he fit his studies in, he responded, "in the dead quiet, in the stillness of myself. After hours. Making sure no one knows that I am actually prepping for life after dance" (Chad, personal interview, 2021 July 22). He explained how he did not want to cross his studies and Dance work as he felt he was in a grey space with people in the company, and it was the safest way he could do his studies. He also explained how some of the company management knew he was studying, but some did not and that he had to go to extremes to write his exams as he felt he would not get leave.

Sophie, Leigh and Emma's career transition was voluntary, in that they chose to exit their performing career and career transition. Sophie explained how she sat with the decision for years, although an injury ultimately helped her decide.

> "I remember feeling very overwhelmed. I knew that I was unhappy, and I think I was at a point that I was ready to move on, but I did not know how to do it and what it would look like" (Sophie, personal interview, 2021 June 30).

Emma also states how she had to emotionally prepare to make the decision and sit with it for a few months before writing her resignation.

> "I defiantly I needed to sit with the realisation that I was going to maybe be leaving for a few months because it's my world […]" (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22).

Leigh describes a different view of a voluntary exit. She explains how she did not want to leave but felt that the company would have let her go in two or three years, and she felt like she was no longer progressing. Leigh chose to be in control of her career transition. Chad's career transition was different; he ended his full-time professional ballet dancer career in December

2019, intending to pursue a professional dancing career on cruise ships. He intended to do this for a few years before making another career transition into Health and Safety in the Arts. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, he could no longer perform on cruise ships and began work as an occupational health and safety officer. At the interview, Chad had been undergoing a career transition for about 18 months and was not expecting to return to a professional Dance performing career. However, in conversation with the researcher a few months after the interview, Chad had returned to a professional stage performing career on a cruise ship. Although Chad has returned to a professional dancing career, at the time of the interview for this research he was not expecting to ever return to a professional ballet stage performing career.

What does this theme show about the experiences of career transitions? Each individual experienced different preparation paths. When a career transition was voluntary, there was an emotional response, including grieving the loss of the old career and uncertainty of the new career. This process had a psychological impact in terms of confidence to explore new areas beyond the world of ballet and Dance. However, these psychological preparations did not consistently minimise or remove grief after the career transition. Educational preparation and the pursuit of new qualifications drew similar observations. Having achieved new qualifications and undertaken additional education did not consistently minimise or remove grief. Overall, this theme's observations show that the amount of preparation did not consistently result in experiencing loss and grief any less after a career transition. Here the researcher question what circumstance can reduce the amount and time period of grief felt from the loss.

Looking at these preparation experiences and relating them to theories about stress, specifically the primary appraisal when classifying a stressful event. For those interviewees who voluntarily underwent a career transition, the time leading up to the exit could have viewed this as a threat to their Dance career, which is why they experienced grief and overwhelming and fearful emotions. After the career transition is where they differ, one interviewee (Sophie) overcame her career loss and reshaped her internal world quickly, while two interviewees (Emma and Leigh) took time to grieve and reshape their internal world. When observing Sophie's preparation experiences, she initially collected qualifications with no clear plan on how she would make use of them. However, three years before her career

transition, she took over the Pilates studio and began building a new career plan. Cutrona and Russell's (1930:324) thoughts on Primary appraisal of stress suggest that Sophie experienced the grief of potentially losing her performing career, she did not become lost in the grief of the loss after deciding to exit her stage performing career. She appears to have experienced this career change as a challenge. While Sophie still experienced grief, she had a 'place' to reshape her world. This could be because she had created a clear plan by having already established a studio.

Leigh had planned a new career involving accounting studies, but she did not have a clear plan for using these studies. Leigh potentially viewed the event as a loss and used the year overseas to consider and formulate a clear plan and find a place in her new career in which she then reshaped her internal world. Emma, near the end of her career, began exploring her interests and, although she had an established product, she remains undecided on her new career path. This possibly meant that her career transition was not perceived as a challenge but as a loss as she tries to navigate and find a new place.

Chad's career transition was involuntary. Although he planned for a career in Health and Safety in the Arts at the time of his career transition, he, like Leigh, did not have a clear plan for his new career. He stated that he struggled to find his place, and, like Leigh and Emma, he may have viewed this event as a loss and not a challenge.

Overall, the significance of this theme is that there are multiple ways to prepare for an exit and based on the interviewee's experiences it may not necessarily be about the emotional, psychological or educational preparation that affects how much grief is experienced but preparing a clear new career path or new 'place'. By establishing a clear path and new place, individuals may see this as a challenge to reshape their internal world and cope quicker and more effectively with loss and grief instead of feeling lost in those emotions.

**Theme 3 – Support systems**

The theme of support systems explored the kinds of support interviewees experienced concerning their career transition and the support they felt they needed. From observations, each interviewee's experience of support is different, indicating the individuality of the experience. Most of the support experienced by interviewees was given from their personal resources, such as their social networks and relationships.

Emma felt that "there's a lack in South Africa for the help that dancer's need when they transition because it's quite a big decision to make" (personal interview, 2021 July 22). She compares this need for support to when students are in high school, as a guidance counsellor is available to help students. Emma feels that the ballet company needs to appoint a figure that can help guide young dancers from a young age to study something else. Chad was assertive when describing his support. He maintained, "I was my own support. Point blank. Dot. That is, it" (2021:10). Chad explained that he had been self-supported since after high school and needed to drop out of the university Dance program to support himself financially. He took on the non-dancing or extra tasks inside and outside of the company throughout his professional performing career because he needed the extra finance. His finances and the Ballet Benevolent Fund (see chapter 1, page 23) funded his occupational health and safety and environmental management studies. Emma pointed out that there is the Benevolent Fund,

> "They always said that they can help with furthering your studies and all of that,
> but that's not a conversation as to how you are going to feel or how it's going to
> be or kind of serious [career] advice for when you leave" (Emma, personal
> interview, 2021 July 22).

Leigh's second career studies were also self-funded. She explained how she undertook many jobs (Au pairing, babysitting, house sitting, and pet sitting) outside of Dance to help financially support herself whilst performing. Sophie's new qualifications were also self-funded.

Emma noted she had "no discussions with [anyone] regarding [that] one day you're going to have to stop and it's such a short career" (personal interview, 2021 July 22) and Leigh had

said the same. Sophie added to this by saying that although she does not remember having explicit conversations about career transitioning, she was private about her personal life, especially with the management of the ballet companies (including CTCB) she had worked for and did not allow the ballet company an opportunity to give her any advice or help. It is noteworthy that a new career was something that Sophie felt she had to explore without the ballet company's help. This could suggest independence and a tolerance to endure, which seems to be valued by such institutions. Chad explained how his decision to study Health and Safety was because of his father's passion for the field. As Chad progressed in his studies, he realised that with Occupational Health and Safety he could give back to the performing arts after retiring from a professional stage career.

Although Emma described how her friend group from the ballet company had shifted after her career transition, she felt that her sustained support came from her friends and family. She felt they have helped her become emotionally positive and strong. Emma explained how once she decided to leave, half of the ballet company management was upset and the other half was indifferent, and this, to Emma was neither positive nor negative. She noted, "it is what it is" (personal interview, 2021 July 22), even though, as a dancer, it was a tough decision to make. Sophie explained how her friends and family were essential support systems to help her exit her performing career. "I felt very supported by my friends and family, they were very open to having the conversation multiple times" (personal interview, 2021 June 30), and her Dance coaches and parents had pushed her to gain various other qualifications throughout her performing career. "I was very lucky that I had teachers, coaches, and people who cared for me and insisted that I did these things" (personal interview, 2021 June 30).

Emma also mentioned how important it was to have support after a career transition because it "hits you afterward" (personal interview, 2021 July 22). On many occasions, during her interview, Emma raised concerns that many dancers do not know what they are going to do when they leave and that she felt there was no one to guide her. In contrast, Sophie felt that a second career was presented to her, but she chose not to see it and furthered this by saying that there may be better ways of making it more understandable to current dancers. Chad described how he felt like he had to keep his studies a secret from the ballet company. After his career transition, Chad explained his struggles to find his footing in his new working environment. He felt his whole friendship circle and the social network had changed. He spoke

of contact with his former work colleagues from the ballet company, some of whom ask him 'how he is doing?' and 'what is he up to?' but he questions why they are making contact with him now when there was no support while he was a dancer.

For Chad, the interview itself could have been viewed as support. In the interview, Chad spoke of his struggles about talking about Dance which he refers to as his "happy place" (Chad, personal interview, 2021 July 22). At that point, the researcher chose to ask whether Chad was still comfortable to continue and reminded him that he does not need to answer anything if he does not want to, as the comfort and well-being of the interviewees was a priority. In response to this, Chad stated he was comfortable to continue and that "[...] I am kinda listening to myself talking, it heals, it does heal process hey" (personal interview, 2021 July 22).

Cutrona and Russell (1990) explain how support is essential to enable people to cope with life-changing events. It would be that various kinds of support are needed as an individual's perspective of the transition event can determine what kinds of support they might need. Reflecting on the interviewees' experiences, the following section discusses these in relation to the six types of support described by Cutrona and Russell (1990): emotional; network; esteem; tangible and informational support and giving support to others.

Experiences of network support were barely spoken of. This could be because some interviewees felt they lost their work friend group and a place/belonging. Chad's experiences demonstrated this as he had isolated his studies from the rest of the ballet company and, after his career transition, felt like his whole social network had changed. Therefore, his experience was that he was his own support. As mentioned in the first theme, loss, grief, and coping processes for those who experienced a loss of their social network could have meant a loss of the larger social network support. This social network support is not emotional relationships but the feeling of being part of a group or belonging and links with the loss of 'place'.

Tangible aid, for example, the Ballet Benevolent Fund, provided this kind of support to Chad through its financial assistance. Sophie and Emma acknowledged the Ballet Benevolent fund but did not make use of it. Sophie's family assisted her at the start of her performance career

as Sophie could live with her family. This allowed her to have the resources to cover the costs of one of her qualifications financially. Three interviewees described how finances were a debilitating factor when considering their future education options and, to a point, govern how and what they chose to study.

Esteem support is also barely spoken about; however, confidence and self-esteem were. Emma described how she felt dancers become people-pleasers. Sophie described how a performance or rehearsal's success (or lack thereof) affected her self-esteem.

> "I'd say my self-esteem or my self-worth was definitely directly proportional to how well I perceived I had done in that rehearsal or performance" (Sophie, personal interview, 2021 June 30).

Chad had put routines in place depending on how well a rehearsal or performance went. Therefore, if the interviewees relied so heavily on others while dancing for esteem support, they would need to find this from somewhere else after their career transition. This kind of support could have helped those interviewees who felt lost after their career transition build up their confidence to reshape their internal world. This, in turn, could develop the confidence to forge a clear new career path.

Informational support experienced by the interviewees came from their personal resources (friends and family). Sophie had much support from her friends and family regarding the decision to career transition: "I felt very supported by my friends and family, they were very open to having the conversation multiple times" (personal interview, 2021 June 30). Sophie's Dance coaches and teachers provided much informational support to gather new and other qualifications for her second career. Sophie acknowledges that there were times when she dismissed much of this as she did not want to contemplate life without Dance. Chad's father's passion for Occupational Health and Safety encouraged Chad to pursue the same. Emma received support and advice from a former dancer, which helped her through her final performance. None of the interviewees described any counselling, mentoring, or professional guidance about their career transition. None of the interviewees received adequate and timely support advice from any of the ballet companies (including CTCB) they worked for throughout their Dance career. Chad went as far as isolating his career transition from the

ballet company, which seems a drastic measure. Sophie acknowledges she was a private person and may not have allowed the ballet company the opportunity to provide this advice. Emma spoke of how she felt career transition was not spoken about, and when she handed in her resignation, she experienced a neutral "it is what it is" (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22) response. Informational support is readily available from the Career Transition Organisation tabled in chapter 1 (page 18).

Some of the informational support received goes hand in hand with emotional support. For example, Sophie feels supported by her friends and family. This kind of support would make individuals feel comforted. Emma described how her friends and family were necessary for her support.

> "I definitely could not have done it without the support of friends and family. I don't think I would be in such a positive or strong position as I am in now if it wasn't for all of them" (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22).

Chad noted a lack of support, as he felt he was his own support. The interview for Chad may have also provided some emotional support based on his comment that hearing himself talk is a healing process, this kind of support may have provided a space for him to vent his emotions about his experiences.

The last type of support discussed by Cutrona and Russell (1990) is giving support to others. Whilst none of the interviewees spoke of assisting others with their career transition, there were comments about supporting other dancers' careers. Emma felt that many former dancers are bitter about their career transition, and they cannot cheer on the next generation of dancers as they compare them to when they were performing. Chad supports his former colleagues from afar and gets excited when he sees some of his former colleagues doing roles that he thought they would be good at. However, he compares the current dancers with how roles were performed when he was performing. Emma said that when she is asked questions or advice, she is happy to do those things, but she still maintains a step away from Dance.

From the above experiences, it is observed that much of the dancers' support came from their personal resources. Friends and family provided emotional and informational support. For Sophie, her Dance coaches and teachers played a huge role in her informational support and

encouraged her to further her education. This suggests the significance and impact Dance coaches and teachers can have on not only the performing career of future dancers but their students full career path. The question that remains is, what if dancers wanting to change careers lack the personal resources for this support?

**Theme 4 – South African experience versus outside South Africa experience**

The last theme is the researcher's observations of the South African dancer career transition experience compared to the experiences observed outside of South Africa. These external experiences are based on previous research and literature, which has generally focused on dancers in Europe, America, and Australia in the 2000s. This comparison of the experience of a dancer's career transition also compares the training and education of dancers and the economic climate of professional Dance in South Africa and similar conditions outside of South Africa.

From the onset, there is a significant similarity in the experience of sacrifice, dedication and focus described by the interviewees in the Dance (ballet) training and professional stage performance careers. This echoes various scholarly authors' sentiments and findings of the current research on dancers and career transitions (Bennet, 2009; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby 2006; Roncaglia, 2010). This could be a consequence of the nature of ballet practice and performance as it is required to conform to systems and rules which give rise to a 'ballet world' (Whiteside & Kelly, 2016). Jeffri and Throsby clearly state,

> "caution must be exercised in drawing more general conclusions since it is known
> that conditions do differ between countries in many respects" (2006:55).

The question is, what differing conditions are Jeffri and Throsby referring to? Drawn from the experiences of the interviewees and those described in the current literature, ballet training and professional practice follow similar conforms and uniformity. However, even though the specifics of the technique may differ, the authoritarian style training and basic movement rules and principles could be argued to remain relatively similar around the world. This is similar to how Whiteside and Kelly (2016) explain how if a ballet dancer (amateur or

professional) partakes in a ballet class outside of their usual location (a different country), there would be familiarity, comfort, and similar structure "properties, regulations, and behaviours" (2016:25). Therefore, these differing conditions Jeffri and Throsby (2006) are referring to may not be the actual practice of ballet and professional stage performing of ballet but the profile of dancers within the country, including available resources and the individual dancers' experiences and their personal resources as explained by Jeffri (2005) and Roncaglia (2008; 2010).

What has been observed from the research is that three interviewees completed their matric certificate at academic high schools, and one interviewee completed their matric certificate at an arts-focused school in which Dance was a subject choice. From the researcher's general observations (see Chapter 1 page 10), finding a full-time Dance and or classical ballet training high school focusing on Dance training has been challenging, such as the Royal Ballet School or English National Ballet School. All interviewees participated in after-school extra-curricular Dance training, although this may have been focused and intense. Upper (2004:82,96 & 239) writes of the lack of formal education outside of Dance. However, the interviewees' experiences are that they completed the basic academic education certificate before moving on to full-time Dance training post-Matric. Three interviewees enrolled in a university Dance program, with only one interviewee completing their studies. One interviewee needed to leave his studies because of finances. One interviewee chose to move onto a ballet dancer contract with the CTCB. The researcher observed that the focus was to study Dance to enter a full-time professional Dance company. Three of the four interviewees acquired further education through various levels of qualifications whilst performing full-time.

The interviewees experienced phases where they were very dance-oriented and focused, and it was only near the end of their careers that their "horizons grew a bit bigger" (Sophie, personal interview, 2021 June 30). Some experiences contrastingly describe a 'tunnel vision' towards ballet and a need to be more open and well-rounded. Therefore, further investigation would need to determine if South African ballet dancers experience identity foreclosure as Roncaglia (2008) and Willard and Lavallee (2016) describe.

As described in chapter 1 (page 10), the full-time employment opportunities available for ballet dancers in South Africa are minimal, and the prospects for continued employment

within a ballet company after leaving stage performing is minimal as well. Along with this, the little funding for Dance in South Africa (which includes ballet) makes it challenging to sustain full-time Dance companies. The same lack of job opportunities, few opportunities to continue employment in Dance companies after stage performing, and the lack of funding are said of many countries (Polacek & Schneider, 2011).

> "Dance creates a "pyramid" effect in reverse. As one ages, far fewer jobs exist in the field; proportionally only a few director, teacher or choreographer positions are available compared with dancer jobs" (Keefe, 2010:9).

Keefe (2010) describes American dancer opportunities, but the same could be said for South African dancer opportunities. However, there are even fewer full-time jobs and career progression opportunities in a South African context as there are only about 56 full time ballet dancers' position in South Africa according to the researchers' observations. There is also a similarity in the average retirement age of ballet dancers, as South African ballet dancers' average retirement age is 35 years of age (see chapter 1, Page 10) as Bennet (2009) describes a ballet dancer's career as short-lived. However, again there could be more opportunities in countries such as America and Europe to continue professional stage performing or continue with Dance in some form.

There is a vast difference in the career transition support systems available to dancers in some countries outside of South Africa. The Ballet Benevolent Fund was available to the interviewees, although only one made use of the fund. Besides this fund, friends, family, and one interviewee's Dance coaches and teachers, there are no other support systems that the interviewees experienced. Chad's experiences of feeling like he had to hide his future planning from many in the ballet company could be related to how a former Australian dancer in Jeffri and Throsby describes a "[...] fear that it will jeopardise their career" (2006:56). Another reason for this isolating experience could be what Chad describes as dancers being expected to be an emotional seal. This idea of an emotional seal follows Whiteside and Kelly's description of "the studio is a space designed and reserved for the activity of dance" (2016:3). There also could be a feeling of independence as Chad also describes spending hours alone in a back studio practising ballet and Sophie describes being a private person and not giving the ballet company an opportunity to discuss career transition.

Sophie's description of how she did not want to contemplate life without Dance is also an echo of Jeffri and Throsby's comment of "The unwillingness of some dancers to confront the prospect of a major life event" (2006:56). Sophie's comment about being private follows a former New York City Ballet dancers' comment in Jeffri and Throsby, "Regarding the dancer's inability to ASK for help […]" (2006: 61). This can be observed again in that only Chad used the Ballet Benevolent fund for financial assistance, while Sophie and Leigh spoke of how the lack of finances as a concern and a significant consideration in their choice of studies. The experiences of the four interviewees show how they relied on their own personal resources for support.

Based on the experiences described by the interviewees, financial support is needed. However, Emma notes that there also needs to be guidance. Many of the dancer career transition schemes in America and Europe offer emotional, informational, social network and esteem support along with tangible support. This is a notable difference in the interviewees' available support resources which could be why some of the interviewees went through relatively long stages (over a year) of grief or feeling lost.

There is a notable similarity in the interviewees' experiences with Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet dancers (2006). The model was developed from the study analysis of dancers' career transitions which included 14 international ballet dancers. It can be observed how the interviewee's experiences of loss, grief, and coping processes through restoration and reshaping of their assumptive world are similar to Roncaglia's (2006) description of emotional states, coping within and without, and floating resolutions. The interviewee's experience of planning for an exit links to aspects of Roncaglia's reasons for retirement, such as interests, Involuntary and voluntary and aspects of Coping within and without (planned/unplanned retirement). The interviewee's experience of social support systems and how the stressful events could be appraised and would determine the support needs are similar to Roncaglia's Emotional States, Personal Resources, and Sources of Support.

Roncaglia (2010) notes that support for the dancer's career transition was from friends and relationships and much support also came from the dancer's work environment. The interviewees' experience notes the lack of support received from their work environment,

and to further this, Willard and Lavelle describe how this lack of support may negatively affect how former dancers reflect on the process and the ballet company. This is followed through in how Emma felt that her career transitions were seen as "it is what it is" (personal interview, 2021 July 22) and that she felt that some former dancers negatively compare current dancers to how they perceived Dance to be while they were performing. Roncaglia (2010) also discussed that dancers have a strong identity and how this could cause an identity crisis after retirement. The theme loss, grief, and coping process interpreted from the interviewees' experiences described how this dancer identity is a secondary loss that needed to be reshaped and restored into the interviewees' new environments.

Overall, what is observed is how there are similarities in the experiences. The researcher's interpretation of the interviewees' experiences is grouped differently to Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (2006). Which is another indicator of how career transition experiences for dancers in different locations may be similar but different in how the experiences are prioritised based on the individual's experience, resources, and Dance profile they find themselves in Jeffri and Throsby (2006). The experiences observed by the interviewees are similar to those in America, Europe, and Australia (Bennet, 2009; Cashmore, 2010; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2018; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Pohjola, 2014; Roncaglia, 2006; 2008; 2010; Willard & Lavelle, 2016).

The next and final chapter of this dissertation will summarise the findings, make possible recommendations, and finally close off with possible suggestions for future study.

**CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This final chapter provides a summary of the findings. Recommendations based on these findings are discussed in relation to the profile of Dance in South Africa. To close off, suggestions for further study are discussed. These suggestions are borne from the limitations of this research, findings, and additional comments from the data collected.

**Summary of Findings**

The findings suggest what Roncaglia states:

> "Individual circumstance, expectations, aspirations, fears, hopes, coping styles and support systems will have an impact on the way former dancers experience retirement and individual responses can differ at each point of transition" (2008:57).

Moreover, Jeffri (2005), and Jeffri and Throsby (2006) explain how the experience of a dancer's career transition is both an individual experience and shared. Each interviewee had placed varying importance on their different experiences. Four themes were drawn from the experiences of the four former ballet dancers, which have close relations to themes and findings observed in the current literature such as Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Pohjola, 2014; Roncaglia, 2006; 2008; 2010 and Willard & Lavelle, 2016. After experiences were observed, theories that best related and described the experiences were explored to help provide understanding and meaning to the individual experiences. Each theme can be read separately or combined to answer the research question. A summary of each theme is provided below.

*Theme 1: Loss, grief, and coping processes*

According to Parkes Psychosocial Transition Theory (1998) losing their professional ballet stage performing career was the former dancer's primary loss and the secondary losses experienced are what the interviewees highlighted in their interviews. These secondary losses

show what a Dance career meant to each interviewee (Gross, 2016a). Whilst there are shared experiences of loss, there was an individual perception of the loss and its importance in their career transition process. The secondary losses experienced described by the interviewees are;

- Identity;
- Social network;
- Place or belonging;
- Structure (comfort and familiarity);
- Greatness or Significance;
- Expressive outlet;
- The nature of physicality.

There were positive experiences of the primary loss such as having more freedom and time. The primary loss of a Dance career played a significant role in the interviewee's assumptive world. The secondary losses formed part of this assumptive world. The description by some interviewees of their loss of their Dance career as akin to a relationship loss demonstrates how the loss of a dance career covers both types of losses identified by Gross (2016a); physical and relational loss. It is important as it shows the significant role dance played in the assumptive world of dancers and could have been how the interviewees viewed their attachment to Dance. Explaining their experiences in such a way helped them understand and articulate their feelings of grief and deep sadness.

The former dancers had strong connections to their role as dancers. Some interviewees describe how this connection shifted throughout their professional performing career, but overall, all interviewees describe how Dance had become part of their identity. This is drawn from the basis of the theory of Athletic Identity and the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993). This is referred to as dancer identity. The researcher noted that although some interviewees at points in their professional performing careers described a tunnel vision or being consumed by Dance, many of the interviewees at times attempted to explore things outside of Dance, trying to be more well-rounded.

Further research would need to be done to determine whether the interviewees experienced identity foreclosure. Once again, according to Parkes Psychosocial Transition Theory (Parkes, 1998), this strong dancer's identity would have played a significant role in the interviewee's assumptive world. Once a change took place (loss of a Dance career), this dancer's identity would need to shift to renegotiate or restore this dancer's identity within the interviewee's new environment. Some interviewees describe their coping methods by taking a step away from Dance or time away from their environment, acknowledging their dancer's identity, reinventing, or adding to themselves. After their career transition, all interviewees still experienced various connections to their role of a dancer, and this demonstrates how the interviewees did not remove their dancer identity but reshaped it.

The secondary loss of social networks is experienced differently by interviewees. Some interviewees experienced a change in time spent with friends from their Dance career. Others felt their friends from their Dance career were lost entirely, and some interviewees experienced losing the social atmosphere of the theatre. The interviewees acknowledge this shift in their social networks, with some interviewees experiencing this as a negative emotion. This loss of social networks would have also changed the social support received. This leads to the secondary loss of place or belonging.

Dance provided a physical safe place and the former dancers felt that Dance was what they had known for most of their lives. This was both a physical space (the Dance studio/theatre and the social network it provided) and a psychological space (their identity). An attachment to this place and space could have provided the interviewees with a feeling of belonging. By the interviewees' assumptive world being determined by these spaces, once Dance was no longer their career. This place or belonging needed to be redefined. Some interviewees have described difficult experiences when trying to find a new place or space in the world.

Another secondary loss is the loss of structure. This draws from the interviewees' experiences of fearing losing something they had known for most of their lives and missing the Dance world's structure. This structure could have created a feeling of familiarity and control over the interviewee's daily life. This could be akin to a habit or series of habits that could have become familiar and comforting to the interviewees, which is why some interviewees experienced being fearful or overwhelmed at the thought of the change. Psychosocial

Transition Theory (Parkes, 1998) talks about automatic habits and how changing these is difficult, which could mean the assumptive world becomes unfamiliar.

There is a loss of greatness or significance as some may have placed their Dance careers or the idea of themselves as professional dancers on a pedestal. This means that letting go of this perception would be difficult as nothing could compare to that status, and the task of finding something that would compare may have seemed impossible or daunting. This loss of greatness or significance could have affected how they perceived themselves and their confidence in themselves, affecting how they navigated within their new environment. There is a loss of an expressive outlet and physicality. The loss of physicality was also described as the loss of a stress reliever and feel-good activity. At the same time to cope with this loss, some found ways to replace the physicality gained from a career in Dance and find balance, while others experienced this negatively through grief. This negative experience was directed towards the body and physical capabilities, which may have affected their self-esteem and confidence.

Grief was experienced at different points in their career transition process, before, during and after. This loss of a Dance career resulted in the interviewees having to change many of their internal assumptions of the world, and with this change comes a grieving process and a restoration process as they acknowledge what the primary loss meant to them and reshape their assumptive world. All the interviewees still maintain some connection to Dance (some interviewees have an external view, and some are more active through teaching). The idea of maintaining some connection is a way of coping by including their experiences of Dance and the knowledge they gained in their new assumptive world.

*Theme 2: Preparation for an exit.*

The experiences of the interviewees identified two types of preparation;

- Planning and further education for a new career;
- Emotional and mental preparation for the interviewees who voluntarily ended their stage performing careers.

There are different preparation paths for their career transition. Further education preparation did not differ between those interviewees who voluntarily or involuntarily exited their stage performing career. There is also a difference in when each of the former dancers began with further education, some near the beginning of their stage performing career, while some felt that Dance was too full-on and began thinking of their new career near the end of their stage performing career. What is significant is that at the point of pursuing further education there was no specific plan for how they were going to use the specific qualification. For some, this plan progressed during their studies or after their studies. Family, friends, Dance teachers, and Dance coaches were whom some interviewees looked to for advice on their second career. Financial restrictions and available time determined what further education some interviewees pursued. One of the interviewees had an isolating experience as they felt they had to go to extremes to keep their preparations a secret. Interviewees whose career transition was a voluntary experience felt overwhelming and fearful emotions leading up to deciding to exit and some after their career transition. Although external factors may have guided some interviewees to exit their stage performing careers, they were still in control and voluntarily chose to exit.

Overall, this theme observed how the amount of educational and emotional preparation does not consistently result in minimising or removing grief after a career transition. What could minimise experiences of grief would be Cutrona and Russell's (1990:324) primary appraisal of the stressful event (the career transition). Interviewees who voluntarily exited could have perceived the idea of losing their Dance career as a threat which is why they felt overwhelmed or fearful leading up to the exit. After the career transition has taken place, the primary appraisal could be seen as a challenge or a loss. Those who had a specific plan for their career transition and, therefore, a new 'place' to begin reshaping their assumptive world could have viewed the career transition as a challenge (even though there would still be losses). The interviewees (whether they had or had not prepared) who did not have a specific plan for their career transition could have viewed the career transition as a loss which is why they need to take time to acknowledge their loss and find ways to cope, which could allow them to begin reshaping their assumptive world and turn the event into a challenge. By establishing a clear path and new place, individuals may see a career transition as a challenge to reshape

their internal world and cope quicker and more effectively with the emotions of loss and grief instead of feeling lost in these emotions.

*Theme 3: Support systems.*

Support for the interviewees was derived mainly from their personal resources such as their family and friends. There are different experiences of receiving no support from the ballet company. These include no discussions or conversations being had, interviewees maintaining their privacy and not providing an opportunity to receive support, and the feeling that they needed to cover up and hide the career transition preparations from the ballet company. There could be various reasons for these experiences. Maintaining privacy and not seeking help or being open to support could indicate personality qualities such as independence and endurance, which are valuable qualities in a professional dancing career and not wanting to consider the possibility of no longer being a stage performing ballet dancer. Covering up or hiding a career transition could indicate a fear that it would negatively affect their career projection or how the ballet company perceives their focus. This is added to by the experiences of some interviewees of differing expectations of different dancers when injured and that as a dancer, it was felt that they had to be emotionally sealed off (the idea of leaving problems outside the Dance studio). The ballet company not initiating discussions or conversions with dancers could be because much of the company's focus is set on the production tasks and performing or Dance education and Dance training. This links to the comment in chapter 3 regarding viewing a dancer's career linearly, focusing on the beginning and middle phases. Other reasons could be that a career transition is seen by the ballet company as an inevitable "it is what it is" (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22) attitude.

The six types of support (Cutrona & Russell, 1990) are observed, and from the experiences, the researcher questions if the support is needed, if support was received and where it came from.

- Network Support: This support refers to support from being a part of a social group. This could have been associated with "place" and belonging that some interviewees felt they lost.

- Tangible Support: The Ballet Benevolent Fund was there to request assistance but only one dancer made use of the Fund even though many interviewees explained restricting finances and that it was an important factor when deciding on what and how to further their education.

- Esteem support: This support is also rarely spoken of. Could this have assisted with the confidence to reshape their internal world and forge new career paths? Some interviewees described relying on the confirmation of others for self-esteem and confidence, and some explained how their Dance performance (successful or unsuccessful) would directly affect their self-esteem. There is now the question of if they relied so heavily on others and Dance, would there be a need to find this elsewhere after their career transition?

- Informational Support: This came from family and friends and could have coincided with receiving emotional support. An interviewee had significant informational support from former Dance coaches and teachers. Counselling, mentoring, and professional guidance were lacking, and none of the interviewees received this from CTCB.

- Emotional Support - Friends and family again provided this support, and some interviewees believe this is how they coped with the loss and are now in a positive space. Some interviewees, however, felt like they were their own support. It was also identified that the interview for this research was a part of the healing process, and this could be because it allowed the interviewees to express their emotions about their experiences in a safe space knowing that they could remain anonymous and they were in control of how their voice would be portrayed.

- Giving support to others: None of the interviewees spoke of assisting others with their career transitions. There are some positive experiences of continuing support to former dancer colleagues. However, in contrast, there are also some feelings of negative competition or comparison. There is also a feeling of some interviewees wanting to keep a distance from Dance but at the same time are willing to assist current dancers.

The observations above raise another question, what do dancers do if they do not have the personal resources for the support needed to help them successfully cope with their career transition?

*Theme 4: South African experiences versus outside South Africa experience*

The last theme compared the experiences of the interviewees with experiences observed in some of the current literature of the field which the researcher reviewed. This literature mostly referred to dancers in Europe, America, and Australia in the 2000s. There is significant similarity in the experience of sacrifice, dedication and focus described by the interviewees and described by some of the current research on dancers and career transitions (Bennet 2009; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby 2006; Roncaglia, 2010). Therefore, what is different may not be the actual practice of ballet and professional stage performing of ballet but the profile of dancers within the country including available resources and the individual dancers' experiences and their personal resources as explained by Jeffri (2005) and Roncaglia (2008; 2010).

A lack of formal education outside of Dance explained by Upper (2004: 82,96 & 239) is not experienced as all interviewees completed the basic academic education certificate before moving onto full-time Dance training post- Matric. One interviewee entered their professional stage performing career with a degree qualification and some completed certificates and qualifications during their performing careers. The dancer job opportunities and opportunities to continue employment in Dance companies after stage performing could be described as slim in both America and Europe however from a South African perspective it is far less. Retirement ages is another similarity between South African ballet dancers and American and European dancers.

The support systems available to dancers are a drastic difference between what is available to South African dancers and what is available to American and European dancers. There are similarities in how dancers don't ask for help, are fearful of help, not acknowledging that an exit is a reality and or dancers are expected to focus on only Dance when in the studio. There was a need for financial support experienced by some of the interviewees which was

available. Based on the interviewee's experiences the researcher interpreted there was a need for other kinds of support that the interviewees could not receive from their personal resources.

The similarities between the experiences of the interviewees and Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (2006) are significant as they suggest that what Jeffri and Throsby (2006) state experiences of career transition are similar but individual as they are influenced by an individual's experience, resources, and Dance profile they find themselves in.

Other similarities in experiences include the effect that a lack of support from a dancer's working environment affects how former dancers reflect upon their Dance career, how dancers associate their identities with being a dancer and this needs to change once they are no longer stage performing. Overall, the experiences of South African ballet dancers' career transitioning are similar to the experiences discussed in some of the current literature focusing on career transitions in America, Europe and Australia.

**Recommendations**

It would be ideal to recommend establishing a large organisation such as Dance Career Transitions in South Africa that could tailor support given to individuals based on their needs and not only for ballet dancers but all dancers in South Africa. This is not realistic in South Africa's economic position, where Dance companies struggle to receive funding and maintaining full-time Dance companies is almost impossible. This does not mean that nothing could be done either. The following are recommendations of shifts in communication between dancers, Dance companies, and Dance teachers and small-scale initiatives or projects that could assist dancers in their career transitions.

Beginning with Emma's suggestion of having a counselling figure within a ballet company. It may not be financially realistic to have a dedicated person specifically for career transitions. However, a trained counsellor or sport psychologist could support dancers in various

situations, including career transitions. Looking at the data collected from this research, several additional comments could indicate the need for such a support system:

- Demotivating atmosphere. "[...] crying after a particular teachers Classes, I had another teacher telling me I wasn't trying hard enough, or it was the head of the ballet company telling me I was not strong enough, or another teacher saying that I was just useless, [...]" (Chad, personal interview, 2021 July 22).

- Unaccepting atmosphere. "They make one size to fit all and not everybody is the same body size and ja, that's a big issue that I've had. [...] Often there was a lack of understanding, if your body is not the same as every other body else, [...]" (Leigh, personal interview, 2021 July 11).

- Anxiety about injuries. "It would cause me anxiety about what is this going to mean or am I now going to stagnate in the hierarchy because now I am going to fall out of favour? Do I look lazy? Do I look weak? [...]" (Sophie, personal interview, 2021 June 30).

- Performance anxiety. "I got stage fright quite badly at the end and there was no one to help me come out of that" (Emma, personal interview, 2021 July 22).

Therefore, having a trained counsellor or sport psychologist could benefit dancers and Dance companies in many ways. Benefits could include protecting dancers' mental health, positive company culture, increasing performance, increasing productivity, increasing job satisfaction, prolonging Dance careers and, concerning this research, helping dancers move on after their stage performing career. This recommendation is not limited to full-time Dance companies as project-based companies could see and benefit in similar ways.

The following recommendation is to improve communication between dancers and the Dance companies. Based on the experiences observed in this research and previous research about not being able to open up to ballet companies about their plans for fear of prejudice and not asking for help. A recommendation would be for Dance companies and dancers to provide positive spaces and opportunities to discuss career transitions. Discussion should also highlight that dancers should create actual plans or visualise what a second career will look

like and not stop planning once they have selected a new field of study. Another recommendation is for Dance companies to provide a space for dancers willing to put their further education to practice. This could be a way of demonstrating/training for other dancers and administration, discussions, or assisting in their chosen new field examples from the interviewee's skills; bookkeeping assistance, health and safety practises, Pilates, fitness and ballet classes. This could be done as trainee programs or instead of outsourcing; however, most importantly, it should not be exploited. Such programs would allow dancers to put their education to practice, gain experience, gain confidence in their new field, and feel valued outside of their role as a dancer. It could also provide companies with limited resources with valuable knowledge and skills. Furthermore, a recommendation to Dance educators, coaches and institutions to discuss career transitions and career pathing with students who wish to pursue a career as a professional stage performer, continue relationships with former students, and provide a safe space for former students to return for advice and emotional support.

A further recommendation would be to invite former dancers to be part of the process. Concerning CTCB dancers, this could be done by both the Ballet Benevolent fund and the ballet company. Inviting former dancers acknowledges that they can still add value to their art form outside of stage performing. This could help create a community that has had similar experiences and create a social network for emotional, informational and esteem support. According to Cutrona and Russell (1990), giving support is a way to feel supported and therefore invited former dancers could benefit as well. This can be via informal conversations, workshops, sharing stories, and mentoring programs. This former dancer community could be opened up to all professional dancers and not just dancers of a single organisation or style.

The next recommendation would be to acknowledge that dancers who work on a project basis (many of the dancers in South Africa) may be continuously going through similar career transition experiences. The next question is whether this career transition process is confined to dancers or other performing artists who experience the same. If so, there could be a need for projects on a larger scale to help support performing artists through varying career transitions. This leads to recommendations for further study.

**Recommendations for further study**


The first recommendation for further study is the gap in the employment data on South African dancers, which could be addressed as it is difficult for prospective professional dancers (and performing artists) to plan their careers without this. It would help dancers see what their education options are, where job opportunities are, what kind of jobs there are, and their earning potential. This would guide their career planning, and they could better understand what to expect and how to prepare. This may also assist performing artists being able to recognise being exploited as they would have a reference to compare to.

Further research is recommended to fill the gaps created by the study's limitations. This further exploration includes an interviewee's suggestion to include questions to dancers of colour on what it is like to be a dancer, what it is like to be a dancer in communities and gender stigmas. The researcher agrees that further research on how gender, religion, language, race, sexual orientation, disability and family structure affect career transitions would add valuable perspectives to the topic. In filling the gaps created by the study's limitations, further studies could include other genres of Dance, dancers from other companies and provinces, and dancers who work on a project basis, this may result in differing experiences. These are all important and valid expansions of this study and should also include expanding from researching the experiences to possibly answering problems that have been observed.

Further recommendations for future study are unrelated to this research question on the experience of career transition that arose from the interviewee's experiences and commented on in their interviews. These include comments about dancers and injuries (a martyrdom or needing to feed the pain), performance anxiety, a culture of breaking people down, unacceptance of body types, dancers becoming people pleasers (your effort does not equate to what you get out and the person in the front of studio determines your future) and the feeling that some people are treated differently. These comments are all noteworthy, and some have extensive research and literature already, but they could spark interesting further studies from a South African perspective.

**Concluding thoughts**

The goal of this research and dissertation had been to question and explore the experiences of four former CTCB ballet dancers who transitioned from full-time professional stage performing careers to new careers or roles between December 2015 and December 2020. By doing so, the researcher has attempted to continue the current dialogue of dancers' and career transitions to include a South African perspective.

The research had begun with an examination into what it could mean to be a ballet dancer in South Africa with a brief discussion into how South African ballet came to be. The idea of a 'ballet world' was also examined using the findings of Whiteside and Kelly's (2016) research study on the interactions and behaviours of individuals in an amateur ballet class. Further examination of being a ballet dancer in South Africa was made by piecing together a profile of South African ballet dancers. This included an overview of the Theatre Dance scene, professional Dance funding, employment opportunities for ballet dancers, and ballet education. The researcher then gathered information on some of the dancer transitions organisations and schemes around the world to illustrate what resources and support for dancers' career transitions are available in various countries across the globe. Lastly, the researcher positioned herself within the South African ballet scene. This examination into what it could mean to be a ballet dancer in South Africa illustrated the setting and conditions in which the research took place, therefore providing the researcher with a context and circumstance for the case study research method and immersing any future readers into the setting of ballet in South Africa.

The next step was to review and critique some of the current literature in the field on dancers' and career transitions. What was evident from this review was the expansive list of themes and experiences of dancers when career transitioning and how these themes and experiences overlapped and were shared by dancers in different countries in which the research took place (America, Europe, and Australia). What was also evident was the individuality of the experience through these shared themes. The critique of the research designs of some of the current research studies in the field demonstrated how much the research focused on qualitative approaches and the specific narrowing of each study. For example, Pohjola, H.

(2014) focused on Finnish Contemporary dancers whose career transition resulted from an injury. The researcher has also positioned within the subfields of Dance literature the discourse on dancers and career transitions into the subfield of Dance politics.

A Phenomenological Research Methodology was then identified and characterised as it is the overall lens that has guided the research design, data analysis and interpretations. It is befitting the research question to use such a lens that focuses on the lived experiences of a phenomenon. Chapter 3 has then outlined the theories and models which have assisted the researcher to interpret and draw meaning from the themes identified from the data collected. An inductive approach to thematic analysis grouped into themes the interviewees' experiences. After identifying these themes, the researcher examined and selected the theories and models to guide the researchers' interpretation of the data within the themes. This has achieved two goals, the first being that the interviewees' experiences guided thematic analysis and that the researcher used established theories and models to explain possible reasons why the interviewees experienced the career transition process in such a way. To expand the thematic analysis further, the researcher returned to the interview transcripts to apply a deductive approach that ensured no data that added value to the themes and interpretations was missed.

The Phenomenological lens was combined with a case study research method to follow a Phenomenological case study research methodology. Details and justifications for applying a Phenomenological case study are critiqued in Chapter 3. The research design is then put forth, and the reasons behind the design choices are examined. It was determined that qualitative data would be collected through semi-structured interviews with four former ballet dancers. These four former ballet dancers had been employed on indefinite contracts with CTCB and had transitioned from their full-time professional stage performing careers to alternative careers or roles between December 2015 and December 2020. The interviews had taken place online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the same set of interview questions was posed to each interviewee. To encourage interviewees to talk freely about their experiences, they were provided with an opportunity to review their interview transcripts. The data collected was then analysed using thematic analysis in six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The six phases ensured that the data analysis and subsequent interpretation was systematic and credible. Ethical considerations, evaluation, and study limitations were then exposed to ensure the

research's credibility and accountability. All choices for the research design were best suited to serve their purpose of answering the research question.

The themes which were identified through the thematic analysis and which answered the research question of, what is the experience of South African ballet dancers transitioning from a full-time professional stage performing career to alternative careers or roles were:

- Loss, grief, and coping processes.
- Preparation for an exit.
- Support systems.
- South African experience versus outside South Africa experience.

The theme of loss, grief and coping processes was underpinned by two theories of loss and grief work; Psychosocial Transition Theory (Parkes, 1998) and Stroebe and Schut's Dual-process Model of coping and bereavement (Gross 2016a; 2016b). What was identified is the loss of a career in Dance (primary loss) resulted in multiple secondary losses. These secondary losses were highlighted in the experiences, and although there was commonality between them, each interviewee described a different experience. The secondary losses experienced included:

- Identity;
- Social network;
- Place or belonging;
- Structure (comfort and familiarity);
- Greatness or Significance;
- Expressive outlet;
- The nature of physicality.

Psychosocial Transition Theory (Parkes, 1998), describes how these secondary losses could indicate what a career in Dance meant to the interviewees. There were positive experiences of loss as some former dancers felt they gained freedom and time. The primary loss and what that loss means to the interviewees could have been a significant feature of an individual's assumptive world. This (internal) assumptive world changed to accommodate a new external environment. With this change came grieving and restoration processes at differing points in

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the career transition process as the interviewees acknowledge what the primary loss had meant to them and restoring their assumptive world while including their experiences of Dance and the knowledge they gained into their new assumptive world.

Preparation for an exit, explored the two types of preparation identified. The first being the planning and education of a new career, and the second is the emotional and mental preparation for those that chose to exit their career. This theme considers the how stressful event can be classified as described by Cutrona and Russell (1990), and the researcher draws the assumptions that it possibly not the amount of preparation that one does that reduced the negative consequences of the career transition but the preparation of an apparent new career path or 'place' so that the stressful event is then classified more as a challenge than a loss. Although there will still be losses viewing the process as a challenge this may prevent overwhelming experiences of emotions associated with loss and grief.

Support systems identify how the interviewees experienced support mainly from their personal resources (family, friends, Dance coaches and teachers). Pearson (1986) and Cutrona and Russell's (1990) six types of support (Tangible, informational, emotional, esteem, social and giving support to others) suggest that interviewees may have been lacking in some types of support such as social, informational, esteem and supporting others. These could have helped them navigate their losses, cope with the grief and prepare more efficiently. A problem arises when individuals do not have the personal resources to support themselves during their career transition as the only support experienced outside of the interviewee's personal support system was tangible support from the Benevolent Fund. However, it was also noted that there was a lack of asking for help or a deliberate separation of Dance and a new career which could stem from the 'ballet worlds' or the personality qualities sought after by professional ballet dancers.

The last theme of South African experience versus outside South Africa experiences identifies the similarities in interviewees' experiences concerning the themes and findings of some of the current literature in the field. This theme hones into the perspective of the research study. Overall, what is observed is that the structure and practices of ballet training and professional stage performance are relatively consistent around the world. What differs is the profile (economic and available job opportunities) that the dancers find themselves in and the

resources that they have available. The experiences of the former CTCB dancers career transitioning echoes many of the experiences of dancers of previous studies. The themes identified by this research are akin to Roncaglia's Career Transition Model for Ballet Dancers (2006); however, they are grouped differently. This demonstrates the shared experiences but the individuality of how those experiences is perceived.

The four former CTCB dancer's experiences cannot be generalised to represent all South African ballet dancers' experiences. The researcher cautiously suggests that the experiences may be similar. The cautious suggestion is derived from the observation that the research findings continue the trend of the shared themes and experiences of the current literature.

Although zoomed in to experiences from a single ballet company, the four themes provide an answer to the researcher question of what is the experience of South African ballet dancers transitioning from a full-time professional stage performing career to alternative careers or roles. There is specific use of the word 'an' answer as there is no final distinct answer to such a question because of the uniqueness and individuality of experiencing a phenomenon. Therefore, multiple case studies and perspectives need to be explored to search for trends and contradictions so that any extrapolations of findings are based on large volumes of different data sets, making any assumptions more reliable and credible.

The research should not end here. There are several recommendations made which could assist in further understanding South African dancers' experiences on career transitions. Through better understanding of what is experienced, processes, programs, and policies can maximise the efficiency of support provided and ensure that the support is catering to the needs of the dancers (of all genres and employment statuses). However, this is not a task only for Dance researchers and scholars. The recommendations involve participation from Dance companies, Dance policymakers, Dance organisations, Dance advocacy foundations, Dance educators and coaches, Dance institutions and the dancers themselves. By doing so, the needs of dancers in career transition can be met and are realistic considering the economic climate in which they are in.

On a final note, the researcher leaves future readers with this quote:

"If we are to sustain a cultural activity that rests on human accomplishment, we must understand the career transition difficulties faced by those who are some of its best exemplars" (Jeffri, 2006:341).

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**Appendix 1: Example of Deed of Gift**

# UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
## IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

## Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies

University of Cape Town - www.ctdps.uct.ac.za - (+27 21) 650 7121 - ctdps@uct.ac.za

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I, Amy Denise Dean, as a Masters student at the Centre of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies (CTDPS) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) have conducted interviews to gather data on 'The experience of South African Classical Ballet Dancers transitioning from a full-time professional performing career.' I have documented the interviews in transcript format.

I would like to thank you for your willingness to participate and your contribution to the research by providing your experiences and memories of your transition from a full-time professional performing career through an interview which has been transcribed.

The UCT CTDPS archive will hold your interview transcript to be used in future research. For this to take place you will need to read the agreement below and ask any questions you may have. If you understand and you agree with the terms and conditions you may then sign the agreement.

---

I, _____was interviewed by Amy Denise Dean on the _____ relating to my experiences and memories of transitioning from my full time professional performing career and the interview has been transcribed. I would like to permanently donate and convey my interview transcript to the UCT CTDPS archive. I understand that through this gift I am conveying rights, title, and interest in any copyright to the UCT CTDPS archive and I will have a non-exclusive licence to use my interview during my lifetime.

I understand the UCT CTDPS archive will make the transcript of my interview available to researchers and future uses may include quotation, publication, or broadcast in any medium.

I may/may not be identified by name in my interview transcript or any reference to my interview transcript.

I have read and amended my interview transcript and I understand I may further edit and review my interview transcript before it is made available to researchers.

Participant:                                          Researcher:

Date:                                                Date:

**APPENDIX 2 - EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. A brief outline of your Dance training?

2. A brief outline of your dancing career?

3. How would you describe your social network and lifestyle while you were performing?

4. Questions about how much you identified as a Dancer while you were performing.

   - Did you consider yourself a dancer?

   - Did other people see you as a dancer?

   - Did many of your goals related to Dance/ Dance fitness?

   - Where most of your friends' dancers

   - Was Dance the most important part of your life?

   - Did you spend more time thinking about Dance more than anything else?

   - Did you feel good about yourself when you danced?

   - Did you feel good about yourself when you rehearsed/ performed well?

   - Would the way coaches/ choreographer/ directors perceive your performance affect you?

   - Did you feel bad about yourself when you rehearsed/ performed poorly?

   - If you were injured, would you try to push through an injury to perform?

   - If you were not able to perform because of an injury, would you feel depressed?

5. A brief outline of your career transition?

6. Did you plan for a career transition?

7. What was your experience and thoughts leading up to your career transition?

8. Can you describe your final day or performance?

9. Did you feel you had any support during this career transition?

10. Do you feel your social network and lifestyle changed after your career transition?

11. Do you feel the 'how much you identified as a Dancer' has changed or remained the same since your career transition?

   - Do you consider yourself a dancer?

   - Do other people see you as a dancer?

   - Are most of your friends' dancers?

   - Is being a former dancer the most important part of your life?

- Do you spend more time thinking about Dance more than anything else?
- When you think about being a former dancer do you feel good about yourself?
- Do you feel good about yourself when you think of performances that went well?
- Do the way former coaches/ choreographers/ directors perceive you now affect you?

12. What are your thoughts when you reflect back on your performing career?

13. How would you describe your connection to Dance now?

14. What was your overall experience and thoughts of your career transition and did this change over time? Including: Positives, negatives and suggestions

**APPENDIX 3 - EXCERPTS FROM FOUR INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

**List of interviewees:**

| Order. | Name. | Date. | Interview type and place | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sophie | 30 June 2021 | Zoom meeting session – Private room in Sophies home. | 56min 54sec |
| 2 | Leigh | 11 July 2021 | Zoom meeting session – Private room in Leigh's home. | 46min 08sec |
| 3 | Emma | 22 July 2021 | Zoom meeting session – Private room in Emma's home. | 43min 14sec |
| 4 | Chad | 22 July 2021 | Zoom meeting session – Private room in Chad's home. | 65min 22 sec |

**Expert: Sophie's 2021 interview transcript** (page 6)

Sophie: Very much so and that was when I would dip into my (emphasis) feelings of o, but I am not just a dancer.

Amy: Okay

Sophie: I think it was very clear from other people's perceptions that that's the little box that they had put you in and you would then be their stereotype of what a dancer was.

Amy: Yes.

Sophie: That's why exactly what I asked earlier, what do you think a dancer is because I've found people would do that, they say you a dancer and this is where you sit in my box and I used to find I had a lot of resentment towards that. I would think, no, I am not just that, even though at times I feel just like that (laugh).

**Excerpt from Leigh's 2021 interview transcript** (pages 8-9)


Amy: Okay, and how did you decide what you wanted to do? What made you decide bookkeeping?

Leigh: Well. So, I'm definitely a numbers person and I did accounting during school and it was also one of my career options. Oh, I should become an accountant. Cool. Oh, I wanted to be a hairdresser. Oh, I want to be a dancer. Oh, I want to be an optometrist, you know, as a child, you have all of these dreams (laugh). And for me it was just, ja, that was my choice. I mean, I knew that would be good for me.

Amy: Okay. And was there any kind of support that you had during this planning stage of your career transition? And if so, who supported? What kind of support was it?

Leigh: So, I had my family's support. And didn't really have support from like, obviously my friends knew about it and supported but from a… Ja.


**Excerpt from Emma's 2021 interview transcript** (Page 8)


Amy: And do you feel like your social network and your lifestyle has changed at all from performing to now?

Emma: I am such a hermit. I think my social life was better in the company (laugh). I now don't really do anything… I did a lot more when I was in the company, I think I've become a bit lazy in my old age, so yes and no.

Amy: And then do you still consider yourself a dancer?

Emma: It's weird. I think… yes and no. No because I don't Dance anymore but yes because I can't deny that a whole career has happened and I was a dancer for most of my life. So, I think it's like the way you still carry yourself, the way like, I think it, it carries on with you even though you don't Dance. Like I say I was a dancer. People still say oh, you the dancer but I go ja, but I don't know, its yes and no.

Amy: And did you spend a lot of your time thinking about Dance while you were performing? As opposed to thinking about other things?

Chad: No and once you stop dancing you realise, oh my God, 12 years has past what have I done. You sit there and you go, oh my God normal people actually do things, (slowly) wow.

Amy: And did you feel good about yourself when you danced?

Chad: O, Amy there are dark days in that career. There are (louder and slower) dark days. There are pit holes as deep as the will of water. (Sigh) Child. As deep as the deepest but yes, I did. Think about those darkened spaces.