Personality, Self-Esteem, and Confidence in Dancers

Dancers have a very unique way of being able to captivate their audience. The best dancers seem to have an outgoing expressive personality, high self-esteem, and remarkably good confidence. This expressive personality, high self-esteem, and confidence, however, are not traits of every dancer. These traits may not even be accurate interpretations of the dancers that seem to possess these qualities. These dancers may only come across as expressive and self-confident in front of an audience. There are many possible factors that come into play when you are talking about a person’s self-esteem or confidence and dancers seem to have audiences fooled.

The following research looks at factors that might contribute to a dancer’s personality, self-esteem, and confidence, and if they are truly outgoing individuals. Many psychologists have looked at factors such as personality, self-esteem, and confidence in dancers of all ages and all experience levels. Most of the sources have looked into the different causes of these factors and some found outside factors that have an impact on the way a dancer may view their self-esteem or confidence.

Review of Literature

Personality Aspects of a Dancer

According to past researchers, the way people tend to view dancers, self-confident and outgoing, is not in fact the reality (Bakker; Bakker; Fink; Hamilton, Hamilton, Meltzer, Marshall
Researchers have found that dancers are actually more likely to be introverted individuals rather than extroverted (Bakker; Bakker; Fink). These researchers have found that ballerinas were the most introverted type of dancer; but, all dancers tend to be more introverted than non-dancers. (Bakker; Bakker; Fink). Some researchers feel that the reason for ballerinas being more introverted is a result of how ballerinas are expected to dress, leotard and tights. Others feel that it is not so much of how they are expected to dress but the expectations they have as ballerinas. It was also found that male dancers demonstrated more negative personality traits (Hamilton, Hamilton, Meltzer, Marshall and Molnar). Researchers feel that the reason for this could be that dance is stereotyped as a girl’s activity.

*Self-esteem and Environment Correlation*

Researchers have disputed whether dancers actually have good self-esteem or whether it just changes depending on their environment and other factors. (Bettle, Bettle, Neumaerker and Neumaerker; Kalliopuska; Price; Van Zelst, Clabaugh and Morling; Vicario and Chambliss). Some researchers feel that dancers do not have good self-esteem especially when wearing tight fitted clothing such as a leotard and tights (Bettle, Bettle, Neumaerker and Neumaerker; Price). This tight fitted clothing being worn in a dance studio with a ton of mirrors enables the dancer to see every angle of their bodies, making this inevitably hard to have high self-esteem. On the other hand, some researchers feel that dancers have good self-esteem some of the time depending on their environment that they are in and the experience that they have (Van Zelst, Clabaugh and Morling; Vicario, Chambliss). They have found that dancers in a non-studio setting or dancers with five years or more of dance experience are in fact self-confident and possess high self-esteem (Van Zelst, Clabaugh and Morling; Price). Again, dancing in a studio with mirrors to show the dancers every angle and also others in the class can lower a dancer’s self-confidence.
Dancing outside of the studio can allow dancers to be more self-expressive and confident in their dancing. The same thing goes with the number of years of experience a dancer has. The longer the dancer has danced, the more likely they are to be self-confident.

*Outside Factors*

Researchers have found that there are many other factors that affect how a dancer may view themselves (Misirhiralall and Price). Media and setting can have a major impact on a dancer (Misirhiralall and Price). People might think that a dancer benefits highly from rehearsing in a studio full of mirrors, but according to researchers, having this view of their own body hurts their self-esteem as a dancer. The media also posts articles with dancers that have the “ideal dancer’s body” which also can have a huge impact on the dancer because they feel they need to emulate this image (Misirhiralall and Price). Articles and movies also portray this “perfect ballerina image” and can have a big influence on how a dancer feels they need to look (Misirhiralall and Price). Having this image in the media also makes non-dancers view dancers in this way making it harder for the dancer to resist the need to fit this image. Some also say that this may have a correlation with dancers being introverted (Misirhiralall and Price).

*Acquiring Knowledge*

Many researchers have all found different components that effect a dancer’s personality, self-esteem, and confidence. They have looked into possible factors that could affect a dancer’s view of themselves and have found numerous amounts of different results. It can be concluded that there is no one set factor that determines a dancer’s self-esteem. There are also some biases from these researchers because most of them specialize in the field of psychology. My research focuses on what factors, if any, affect a dancer’s personality, self-esteem, and confidence. I am planning on conducting several interviews with different types of dancers. I am going to be
interviewing Jenna Stein (Jen) who is currently a dancer on the UCF Starlet Knights, Christina Newman who dances for Central Florida Dance Academy (CFDA), Jess Smith who dances at Dance Explosions, and Kirsten Wall who took a year of dance lessons as a kid. All of these dancers vary in age and skill level and they all also have trained in different studios and are now currently dancing with different dance companies. I am also planning to observe a dance class at Center Stage Dance Studio to see how dancers act in a studio setting and if the dance teacher could possibly affect the dancer’s self-esteem. Lastly, I am planning on conducting textual analysis by looking at not only a magazine to see what kinds of dancers are in the photos, but I am also going to be looking at the T.V. show, “Dance Moms” to see how the girls act and if the media does affect how dancers feel they should look. I am aiming to be able to identify personality, self-esteem, and confidence in these dancers through this field work.

Methods

Interview

I set up four interviews with four very different types of dancers. All of the interviews consisted of questions relating to the given dancers personality, self-esteem, and confidence. The first interview was conducted with Jess Smith. I met Jess in the Library at the University of Central Florida on March 17, 2014 at around 10:30 a.m. We went to a quiet area on the right side of the first floor of the library where we were able to discuss the interview questions. Jess has been dancing for approximately ten years, making her a perfect candidate to interview. Jess started dancing at the age of twelve. Because of this, interviewing her gave me statistics on a dancer who started dancing older. The next interview I conducted was with Kirsten Wall. I interviewed Kirsten on Wednesday March 19, 2014 at around 11p.m in our dorm room at UCF. I chose to interview Kirsten because she has only had about one year of studio lessons.
Interviewing her gave me data on a less experienced dancer. The third interview I conducted was with Christina Newman who dances at her local dance studio, CFDA. I emailed Christina the questions on Thursday March 20, 2014 at around 9:15 p.m. She responded to me almost immediately. I chose to interview Christina because she is still in high school, giving her less experience, and she has also only been dancing for about five years which is more than Kirsten but less than Jess and Jen. The last interview I conducted was with Jenna Stein (Jen). Jen is a sophomore who dances on the UCF Starlet Knights dance team. I emailed Jen the interview questions on Thursday March 20, 2014 at around 9:15 p.m. Later, we discussed some of her responses in person. I chose to interview Jen because she has been dancing her whole life and she has a very outgoing and bubbly personality which is different from my other interviews.

Textual Analysis

The magazine, Dance Spirit, is a well-known magazine that features dancers and the latest dance wear. I chose to conduct textual analysis on this particular magazine because of the amount of pictures that are in these magazines. I am going to be looking through the magazine to see what types of dancers are featured and what they are wearing. Looking at these pictures will help me get an idea of possible influences on dancers. The specific issue I have chosen is the one from November 2012 featuring Kathryn McCormick, who started as a contestant on “So you think you can dance”, and progressed into a movie star, featured in the movie “Step Up: Revolution”. I also chose to watch an episode from “Dance Moms”. This show airs on Tuesday nights at 9p.m on Lifetime. I am focusing intently on how a teacher can affect a student’s confidence in this show. The teacher, Abby Lee Miller, is very hard on her dancers and is extremely strict. Looking at this show will hopefully help me collect data on how being extremely strict can either hurt a dancer’s confidence or help them, depending on the dancer.
Observation

I chose to observe a dance class at Center Stage Dance studio. I watched a portion of a ballet class that was held on a Tuesday night at 7pm. I watched the stretching segment of the class first which consisted of barre exercises and then I watched the dancers as they warmed up on center floor. They closed their class with short combinations and “across the floors”. During the period of time I was observing, I took notes on how the dancers acted in their class in a studio setting, what they were wearing, and how their teacher taught the class. I also looked at the dancer’s personality, self-esteem, and confidence. Having the ability to watch and observe allowed me to collect valuable research pertaining to a ballerina’s confidence in a studio setting.

Strengths and Limitations

The strength of the interviews I conducted was that each dancer I interviewed had variation in experience. They ranged from about one year of dance to sixteen years. Another strength in this field work was being able to interview four dancers as opposed to just one or two. This gave my research more support. The age range of the dancers interviewed was relatively close (17 – 21) resulting in a limitation in my research. Interviewing only dancers ages 17 – 21 could present some bias.

The strengths for the observation would be viewing firsthand how the dancers acted without them knowing that I was watching. The emphasis on drama for the entertainment of the show, especially in Dance Moms yields a limitation. Some of the intense drama that occurs may not normally happen when there are no cameras.

The strengths for the observation were being able to firsthand see how dancers acted without telling them I was watching. It allowed me to see what actually went on during the class.
A limitation to the observation could have been that I looked at only one dance studio. This particular class or studio might be run differently than others.

Results

Interview

Jess

My first interview was conducted with Jess who used to dance for her local dance studio, Dance Explosions. She started officially dancing at the age of 12 years old, besides the one year dance class she took when she was six. This gives her ten years of experience. She informed me that she was involved in all styles of dance including broadway jazz. Dance Explosions was a unique dance studio in the fact that the owner didn’t believe in competing. This could have possibly made the dancers feel more comfortable in their own studio which was the case for Jess. Jess claims that regardless of what she wore or who was teaching her, she always liked dancing in the studio rather than an alternate location. Jess said she felt that the clothing she wore had no effect on her dancing. She felt that even though she fit the image of a broadway dancer better than say a ballerina, who she described to me as a bony tall blonde, she was not uncomfortable in a studio setting. “Dancing in a studio with mirrors actually gives me more confidence. I can watch myself to perfect moves and if I forget a step, I can watch another classmate to help me quickly trigger my memory”. Jess said that she did view her dance teacher as a role model, wanting to look and dance as she did. Jess said she has always been an outgoing dancer. She feels that starting as a performer young contributed to this. Even with this outgoing personality, however, Jess said that her confidence was never extremely high and in fact is decreasing as she gets older with the realization that professional dancers have to be the best of the best.

Kirsten
My second interview was conducted with Kirsten Wall. Kirsten has only had a year or so of official studio training. Kirsten described her personality as always being outgoing. However, she did say that she was a bit more shy when she was younger because she was afraid of how people would react to her dancing. Although she feels her confidence has stayed the same throughout the years, she said her confidence is drastically stronger when she knows what she is doing regardless of if she thinks she is doing it well or not. Kirsten said that she tended to dislike acro (acrobatics) more because her teacher was hard on her. When I asked Kirsten to describe a typical ballerina, she said she pictured a ballerina as being “tall, thin, and having long legs”. She said she felt a jazz or hip hop dancer would almost be the opposite of that.

Christina

My third interview was conducted with Christina Newman. Christina is a senior in high school and has been dancing for five years, starting at the age of 13. She said that she had danced at two different studios, one in which she currently dances at. She told me that the two of these studios differed greatly in how they were run. Her first studio, The Dance Center, was a very strict dance studio. She said that there was one teacher who taught each style of dance and the dress code was very strict, black leotard and pink tights. Christina’s current studio, CFDA, has a more relaxed feel where sports bras and shorts are worn in class and tights are not a “must”. Christina informed me that when dancing in the studio she liked to switch up where she stood to “avoid complacency”. She said that she preferred to stand in the back if she was new to a studio/class or if she didn’t know the combination but she had no problem standing in the front at some point. Christina was very particular when describing a typical ballerina, “pink back seamed tights, leotard, and various warm-up clothing”. She also said that ballerinas “take pride in their hair, slicking back all of the ‘baby hairs’ to form a perfect bun”. Christina did say that she did
indeed feel that she fit this image because she feels that it is the technique that is what qualifies a dancer. And although she said her confidence has never been great (4.5/10), she said that she doesn’t feel the need to be like every other dancer although she said she feels most dancers do, trying to perfectly emulate their instructors or other famous dancers. Just knowing Christina as a friend, I know that she is more on the quiet side. She claims she was spunky as a child which has died down as she has gotten older. She said that she has always been a shy performer. “There is never a performance I am not nervous about”.

Jen

Jen has been dancing almost her entire life, starting at the age of four, giving her 16 years of dance experience. Jen informed me that she had danced at two different studios, Dance Conservatory of Orlando and then Dance Force Extreme. She claims that both were very competitive and there was one teacher who taught each style of dance. Jen said that she has always been an outgoing person even before dance and even though she feels that she does not fit the professional dancer look, “a twig”, she feels that dancers come in “all shapes and sizes”. When I asked Jen where she likes to stand in a studio setting, she replied with, “I like to stand in the front but on the corner.” She explained that this spot allows her to see and hear everything. She also said, “but in the back there is more room so I guess it all depends on the situation. I like when instructors rotate the room giving everyone a chance to be in the front.” The dress code was always very strict, ballerinas wore a black leotard and pink tights, and all other styles wore a sports bra and booty shorts. Jen has danced all different styles. She talked about how she had a dance teacher that almost made her quit because she was so hard on her. This had an affect on how she viewed that style of dance, she began to dislike it. When I asked her about how she felt dancers were viewed in the media, she said that dance was viewed as “an art, a great way of
expression” she felt. She said what she loves about dance so much is how it exists in every county. Regardless of how the media portrays dance, Jen does not feel she needs to fit that image. She is okay with just being herself. “I am more confident now than I was before because I have found the passion in dance and I believe that confidence comes from loving what you do.” This is what Jen said to me when I asked her if she considered herself confident or not. She did however say that she has become more confident with the more training she has had.

*Textual Analysis*

**Dance Spirit**

I chose to conduct textual analysis on the magazine, Dance Spirit. When looking at this magazine I found that there were over 100 dancers pictured in this 90 paged magazine. I found that around 30 of the dancers were ballerinas, around 30 contemporary/lyrical, about 20 jazz, about 10 ballroom, and about 10 hip hop dancers. Typically, ballerinas and contemporary/lyrical dancers are in the best shape because of what they physically have to do. I noticed that not only was over half the magazine centered on either ballerinas or contemporary/lyrical dancers, but the ballerinas were significantly skinnier than all of the other dancers pictured. There were only a handful of average size dancers and most of them were the hip hop dancers. In fact, almost every dancer in the entire magazine was extremely thin excluding these several “average” size hip hop dancers which were still very thin. This was the same for the men pictured in the magazine; the male ballerinas were thinner than the male hip hop dancers. I also noticed that most of the ballerinas were tall and muscular. They also all appeared to have very long legs and almost all of them were wearing point shoes. Most of the ballerinas also carried a very serious look; whereas, the other types of dancers looked mostly happy with a smile on their face. Every dancer in the
magazine seemed to have some variation of the same look, they were all very thin, long legged, flexible girls and guys.

**Dance Moms**

I chose to conduct more textual analysis on the television show, Dance Moms. This show is somewhat of a reality show about girls ages 8-13 who compete in dance competitions weekly. Viewers get to basically watch all of the rehearsals that the girls go through each week and then the competition they attend on that given weekend. As I was watching an episode of this show, I noticed right off the bat how a dance teacher can affect a dancer’s confidence. Each episode begins with what Abby, the dance instructor, calls a “pyramid”. The pyramid ranks the girls on how well they performed the prior week. The dancers at the top were said to have performed the best. The same dancers are almost always on the bottom and the same dancers are almost always on the top making the pyramid no surprise for the girls. As the pyramid is revealed, feedback is given as to why the dancer was placed in that spot. Most of the dancers at the bottom receive negative feedback and most of the dancers towards the top receive positive feedback. Since the pyramid does not change very much each week, the same dancers are getting praised and the same dancers are getting put down. You can tell that most of the dancers are use to this because they just nod their head with respect and take the beating. The dancer who is almost always on the top, Maddie, stands up straight with a big smile on as she gets praised. Throughout dance rehearsals and practices, Abby blatantly admits that her favorite dancer is Maddie. She claims that the reason for this is because of her hard work and dedication which relays over to her fantastic dancing. For this reason, Abby rewards Maddie with all of the featured parts in the group dances and spends the most time with her on solos. You can tell by body language once again that the other dancers feel defeated not given the chance at a lead part. She feels that
Maddie has great potential and she wants her to succeed. Abby often times tells the girls to “watch Maddie” or “perform like Maddie” not even allowing the other dancers to use their own individuality. This is no surprise to me why the other dancers in the room stand in the back with their hands crossed and their heads partially down. Abby has made it so that all of the other dancers, except for Maddie, have significantly less confidence.

Observation

As I observed the dance class, I noticed how the teacher plays a big role in a dancer’s confidence. From the start of the class, I could tell which dancers were more confident and outgoing. These dancers entered the room very chatty and stood front and center. The others quietly filled in and went to the sides or corners of the barre. As the teacher prepared to start the class, the girls who were at the center of the barre stood up straight and prepared for pliés. Once again, the others in the corners or on the sides looked intimidated and not nearly as confident. Here is where I also noticed how a teacher can affect a dancer’s confidence. The instructor payed more attention to the girls who stood front and center, giving both positive and negative feedback, and adjusting their dance positions to make them flawless. After the barre exercises, the dancers moved to center floor. The arrangement of the ballerinas was no different here; the same dancers were in front and the same dancers were in the back. This segment of the class was very much the same as the barre exercises except it allowed them to practice a ballerina’s balance without the barre, so many of the same observations were made here. As the dancers all proceeded to the side of the room to work on their “across the floors”, the same ballerinas were always first in each routine.

Discussion
As I started to research personality, self-esteem, and confidence in dancers, I defiantly had some biases myself being a dancer my entire life. I thought that many dancers who had been dancing for most of their lives would have an increasingly noticeable outgoing personality. I found however that this was not the case in the terms of the research methods I conducted. I actually found that there was no correlation between the dancer’s performance and their personality. I was expecting the dancers to become more outgoing with every performance, and acquire more confidence because this was the case for me. I was also expecting this to have an effect on their personality outside of dance, but I found no results proving this hypothesis.

When it comes to self-esteem, I predicted that the dancers who seemed to fit the “stereotypical image” would have the highest self-esteem. I imagined that certain dancers whom I talked to would naturally have a higher self-esteem if they fit the image and had many years of experience. I found that although a dancer might have the “stereotypical body image”, they still may not be very confident. This seems to have come from the realization that there is always a better dancer, a thinner dancer, a more graceful dancer, etc. The same goes for dancers with many years of experience. It seems they always see that someone is much better than themselves.

I found that the media might play a large role in how dancers feel they need to view themselves. I thought it was interesting to find that most dancers regardless of experience or self-esteem described a “typical ballerina” very much the same. Some of the more experienced dancers gave me a more detailed description, but the general image given was still similar. This also may have correlated with their personalities. Cassie, who is more the ballerina type dancer gave me a very detailed and unique description regarding other aspects of a dancer than just their body image (which was described the same as others). She even went as far as describing a ballerina’s hair, “Each dancer takes great pride in their hair. ‘Baby hairs’ are slicked back and the
buns are impeccable and perfectly symmetrical.” I noticed the same description with Jen, a very detailed image that matches her personality. I was surprised to find that dancers and non-dancers also described a ballerina to me almost exactly the same way. Almost everyone said “tall, extremely thin, long legs, blonde” regardless of whether they were a dancer or non-dancer, experienced or unexperienced, boy or girl. When I had asked the non-dancers where they came up with this idea, they all said they had either seen a movie about dance or saw pictures in magazines, etc. This very “stereotypical image” was also on almost every page of the magazine I analyzed, Dance Spirit. This could possibly be a result of the effect the media has on viewers.

I thought additionally that confidence came with experience or parasol from instructors. Although this was partially my findings, I was also partially wrong according to my research methods. I found that an instructor’s attitude towards a dancer most defiantly affects their confidence. This was discovered in all three of my research methods. Almost every one of the dancers I interviewed said that an instructor was so tough on them; as a result, it made them dislike that particular dance style. This was not a surprise to me because as a dancer of sixteen years, I know that this has happened to me as well. On the other hand, I found that most dancers claim they are not confident. All of the dancers that I researched said they were not extremely confident at all, even the dancers who were very experienced. I expected to find a difference in the confidence levels of less experienced dancers versus more experienced dancers. There was a slight difference when putting numbers on it but, for the most part there was not a difference in confidence.

It was interesting how my primary research findings and my secondary research finding were different in some aspects. My primary research found that no matter the dancer’s experience, their confidence and self-esteem is often not high. Some of my secondary experience
found this as well but some claimed the more experience are the most confident and have the highest self-esteem. Some of the sources argued that dancers had more self-esteem when dancing in a non-studio setting. This was not the case for my primary findings. I found that many of the dancers I looked at liked a studio setting better because the mirrors help the dancer fix themselves to what the position should look like, this which I agree with. I was surprised at the fact that some dancers felt that the attire required for a dancer to wear does not affect their self-esteem or confidence. I expected this to have a major impact on a dancer especially when surrounded by a studio full of mirrors allowing each dancer to see every angle of their body. My secondary research conflicted with this finding in the essence that these sources found that ballerinas had the lowest self-esteem. In a sense I agreed with that statement. I thought that a dancer in a tight and leotard would feel more self-conscious than a dancer in a shirt and shorts.

Looking more in-depth to how the media portrays dancers, particularly ballerinas, could possibly be some further research that could be done. Also looking at professional dancers would give the results a different spin possibly. These are the girls that dancers want to emulate so it would be interesting to see if they were self-confident and outgoing or if they too saw that there is always a better dancer out there.

Works Cited

Web. 23 February 2014.

Web. 18 February 2014.


Stein, Jenna. Personal Interview. 20 March 2014.


Appendix A: Interview with Jess

1. How long have you been dancing? 10 years
2. What age did you start? 6-7, 12-21
3. Where did you dance? studio, drama club
4. Describe how you studio was run? (ex. one teacher per style) didn’t believe in competing.
   One teacher per style. workshops.
5. Describe to me what a typical dancer would look like and do you feel like you fit that image? ballerina-tall, bones, skinny, delicate. Hip hop- 5’6, muscular, tan. I fit the broadway Jazz image.
6. Describe your personality as a young child and now. Has it changed? When I was young, I always wanted to be with my mom. Friends and experience helped me become more outgoing.
7. How do your parents describe your personality now vs as a child? the same
8. Were you ever shy as a performer? no
9. How do you view your dance teacher? Does he/she give feedback? Positive or Negative? yes, I do aspire to be like my teachers and so do most dancers.
10. Do you prefer to stand in the front row, second, third? Is there a particular reason for this? front, end. That is the spot I have always been given. I also like to stretch in that spot. I like the studio also because I can use the mirrors to my advantage - if I forget a step I can easily look over to the next dancer, and I can perfect my dance positions as well.
12. How do you feel dance is viewed in the media? All girls wished they danced. mostly positive except for a show such as dance moms. 5’6, thin, pretty.

13. Do you feel you need to fit that image? yes

14. Do you consider yourself a confident dancer? I used to be more of a confident dancer (9/10) but now I am more of a 6/10 because of the realization that there are so many good dancers out there.

Appendix B: Interview with Kirsten

1. How long have you been dancing? studio less than a year.

2. What age did you start? N/A

3. Where did you dance? N/A

4. Describe how you studio was run? (ex. one teacher per style) small studio

5. Describe to me what a typical dancer would look like and do you feel like you fit that image? Ballerina- tall, thin, long legs, short torso, small chest and butt, strong legs, light skin, long hair, gross feet. Jazz- “rejected ballerinas” Opposite of ballerinas. Hip hop- tomboys, muscular

6. Describe your personality as a young child and now. Has it changed? always outgoing

7. How do your parents describe your personality now vs as a child? agree

8. Were you ever shy as a performer? yes, I was scared of what people would think.

9. How do you view your dance teacher? Does he/she give feedback? Positive or Negative? Acro- teacher was hard on me and made me dislike the style because of it. Same thing with my jazz class.

10. Do you prefer to stand in the front row, second, third? Is there a particular reason for this? middle. not confident enough to be in the front, can’t see in the back.
11. Is there a dress code at your studio/ for your dance team? dark clothes.

12. How do you feel dance is viewed in the media? women’s sport/activity. confident, outgoing, thin, tall

13. Do you feel you need to fit that image? no - more affect on a “serious dancer”

14. Do you consider yourself a confident dancer? I have gotten more confidence when I know what I am doing but I am pretty much the same.

Appendix C: Interview with Christina

1. How long have you been dancing? I have been dancing for five years.

2. What age did you start? I started dancing at age 13 (although I took a few classes when I was a toddler).

3. Where did you dance? I danced at the Brandon Ballet/ Dance Center and now I dance at CFDA.

4. Describe how you studio was run? (ex. one teacher per style) At my main studio (the dance center), classes were run by one teacher (per style). Once in awhile guest teachers were brought in and during the summers we were taught by instructors outside the staff completely.

5. Describe to me what a typical dancer would look like and do you feel like you fit that image? A typical dancer would be in pink back seamed tights, leotard, and various warmup clothing. Each dancer took great pride in their hair. "Baby hairs" were slicked back and the buns were impeccable and perfectly symmetrical. Also the dancers took great care in attaching ribbon and flowers to the sides or undersides of their buns.
6. Describe your personality as a young child and now. Has it changed? I fit the ballerina image as well because our classes were centered on technique. As a young child I was carefree and spunky. I have retained (a more muted) spunk but I am less confident.

7. How do your parents describe your personality now vs as a child? My parents also described me in that manner; "intelligent, funny and wild".

8. Were you ever shy as a performer? I am still shy as a performer. There is never a performance I am not nervous for!

9. How do you view your dance teacher? Does he/she give feedback? Positive or Negative? My dance teachers over the years have been very strict and demanding. I appreciate the feedback (both negative and positive) because it helped me grow as a dancer. I was always taught that corrections are good and you should strive to be "criticized' so that you can improve.

10. Do you prefer to stand in the front row, second, third? Is there a particular reason for this? If I am new to a studio or unsure of a combination I will stand in the back. I stand in every row as to avoid complacency.

11. Is there a dress code at your studio/ for your dance team? At TDC there was a very strict dress code (that I described earlier) but at CFDA we are able to wear sports shorts/bras to dance class with varied hair styles.

12. How do you feel dance is viewed in the media? I feel dance is respectfully viewed in society because the media emphasizes the athletic and enchanting aspects of dance.

13. Do you feel you need to fit that image? I do feel I fit that image because I work hard and put a lot of myself into dance. I don't feel that I need to "fit in", but I find most dancers
naturally fit the media stereotype (because they tend to work hard and have that type A personality).

14. Do you consider yourself a confident dancer? I do not think I am a confident dancer, but I do feel I am realistic about my dance ability. I feel I am 4.5 on a scale of 1 to ten on confidence. This is because I realize how many great dancers there are and I know that I do not compare to a great number of them! My confidence has always been in this range.

Appendix D: Interview with Jen

1. How long have you been dancing? About 16 years.

2. What age did you start? I started when I was 4.

3. Where did you dance? I began at a studio called the Dance Conservatory of Orlando and then moved to Dance Force Extreme.

4. Describe how you studio was run? (ex. one teacher per style) Both studios were competitive studios taught by several specialized teachers. However there was one teacher who headed the competition group, I guess you could consider her the head director. Then a separate ballet instructor, tap, and so on. The head director did most of the technique classes.

5. Describe to me what a typical dancer would look like and do you feel like you fit that image? To me a dancer comes in all shapes and forms. It is an athletic activity so muscled and fit could be a standard but does not have to be. Typically most professional ballerinas are twigs. I believe I am an average sized girl but certainly not professional dancer size.

6. Describe your personality as a young child and now. Has it changed? I have pretty much always been out-going. Dance made me into a hard worker. I have grown up a lot since when I first started dancing and I have a better understanding of what it takes to succeed.
I wish when I was younger that I listened more. I feel like I am a much better listener now.

7. How do your parents describe your personality now vs as a child? Every parent thinks their child is the best and my parents were/are my biggest supporters. They would say the same thing. Adding that I was a bit of a handful. Dance was a great outlet to get all my extra energy out!

8. Were you ever shy as a performer? No, but i was often put in the back of dances due to my tall height. I also fell a lot, When I did competition dance I had not grown into my legs yet and I would trip over them during dances. It was a great way to help me learn how to quickly recover and get back on my feet.

9. How do you view your dance teacher? Does he/she give feedback? Positive or Negative? My first competition teacher was very young and had favorites and I felt picked on. It was a great learning experience but at the time there were many nights I came home crying, I almost quit because of her. but, My second competition teacher was incredible! She was very responsive and made me the dancer I am today. Not just in technique but also in terms of being a leader and teaching essential life lessons to succeed.

10. Do you prefer to stand in the front row, second, third? Is there a particular reason for this? . I like to stand in the front but on the corner! I know my self limitations and it takes me a while to grasp what is going on but by being in the front I can hear and see everything clearly. my teacher once told me that by standing in the back you are missing vital information. but in the back there is more room so I guess it all depends on the situation. I like when instructors rotate the room giving everyone a chance to be in the front.
11. Is there a dress code at your studio/ for your dance team? The dress code was always pink tights and a black leo for ballet, booty shorts and a sports bra for everything else. It is very important that the teacher can see all the body lines. if the body is covered by heavy amounts of clothing the coach can not see any mistakes.

12. How do you feel dance is viewed in the media? i believe dance is viewed as an art, a great way of expression. i also see it as a way to bring many different people together. You can dance in any country! I love that video of the guy doing his personal dance all over the world. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlfKdbWwrU possibly my favorite video ever!

13. Do you feel you need to fit that image? NO. Sure most of the dancers in MTV videos are crazy skinny and voluminous but if you think you are sexy than you should go out and sexy dance... whether or not people will accept you is a whole other story. lol But i like who I am and sometimes when I am having a bad day I will just stop and find an open space and dance. Dance is an amazing, living art form that can release such positive energy into the world.

14. Do you consider yourself a confident dancer? My confidence has grown as my training has grown. Because i grew up in the same place every year I got better. however its like being a big fish in a big pond. you can only be as good as the others around you let you. I am more confident now that I was before because I have found the passion in dance and I believe that confidence comes from loving what you do.

Appendix E: Textual Analysis

Dance Spirit

• dancers all look the same
• mostly ballerina/contemporary dancers
• ballerinas looked “serious”, others looked happy/smiling.
• all extremely thin, ballerinas noticeably thinner than others
• 100 dancers pictured in this 90 paged magazine
• 30 ballerinas, 30 contemporary/lyrical, 20 jazz, 10 ballroom, 10 hip hop dancers pictured in magazine

_Dance Moms_

Pyramid

• Already sets dancers up to feel a certain way
• Maddie almost always on top
• Abby gives feedback- mostly negative to the bottom of the pyramid and mostly positive for the top of the pyramid.

Class

• admits to favorites
• gives special attention to Maddie/ gives highlighted parts in group dances to Maddie
• Same dancers in the front
• Maddie always featured
• Solos and duets pretty much always given to the same dancers with a change up from time to time

Appendix F: Observation

Stretching/barre (About 30 mins)

• Dancers entered in a certain fashion- could tell off the bat who was confident in the studio
· Placement at barre – could tell who was more confident because they stood in the center or at the front to lead the exercises
· Instructor- attention to certain dancers more than others. All were looked at however

Center Floor
· Similar exercises as barre, similar results

Across the Floors/ Combinations
· Same dancers went first, same dancers went last
· Some acted more confident than others (ones in front)
· More confident dancers seemed to be more outgoing (relationship between personality and confidence?)