GETTING TO “THE POINTE”: ASSESSING THE LIGHT AND DARK DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES IN BALLET CULTURE

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Abstract

The focus of this ethnographic study is to examine the industry-wide culture of the American ballet. Two additional research questions guided the investigation: what attributes, and their light and dark dimensions, are valued among individuals selected for leadership roles within the culture, and how does the ballet industry nurture these attributes? An understanding of the culture was garnered through observations and interviews conducted in three classically-based professional ballet companies in the United States: one located in the Rocky Mountain region, one in the Midwestern region, and one in the Pacific Northwest region. Data analysis brought forth cultural and leadership themes revealing an industry consumed by “the ideal” to the point that members are willing to make sacrifices, both at the individual and organizational levels, for the pursuit of beauty. The ballet culture was found to expect its leaders to manifest the light dimensions of attributes valued by the culture, because these individuals are elevated to the extent that they “become the culture,” but they also allow these individuals to simultaneously exemplify the dark dimensions of these attributes. Tables providing examples of how both the light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes manifest in the ballet industry are presented.
Dedication

To the Chaucer who inspired my pilgrimage; to the Wife of Bath who kept me motivated with, “It is about the process, not the product”; and to the Knight who repeated, “Trust the process”: this has been my favourite tale-telling contest yet.
# GETTING TO “THE POINTE”

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CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Study

Research Topic and Background

Colorful tutus and satin pointe shoes beckon young girls into the ballet. They dream of one day becoming a prima ballerina, resplendent on stage in elaborate beads and tulle, mesmerizing audiences with their \textit{pirouettes} (full turn on the front of one foot) and \textit{sissonnes} (jumping from two feet and splitting their legs in the air like scissors). A girl can transform herself into a dazzling firebird, a sugarplum fairy, or a graceful swan. She can truly get her prince, being literally carried away in the arms of her love by playing the roles of Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, or Juliet.

Ballet is the magical world where these dreams can come true. Young girls and women can be [...] characters that symbolize femininity in a society that teaches young girls to be and want everything pretty in pink. (Kelso, 2003, p. 1) “The ballerina comes across as a feminine ideal, unblemished and ethereal, inspiration incarnate” (Kelly, 2012, p. 1). However, the lights and splendor of ballet are blinding to those striving to be a leader in this industry; we often forget that in order to rise in the ranks of any ballet company, the person must exemplify the values and behavioral norms of the culture (Aalten, 1997; Benn & Walters, 2001).

While the ballet industry’s culture fosters perfect harmony and movements that appear effortless so too does it foster more negative characteristics or outcomes. Public perception of the ballet industry has been further shaped by recent portrayals in the movie \textit{The Black Swan}, allowing glimpses of the negative underbelly: eating disorders, verbal harassment, fierce competition, and the war on the body, both mental and physical
(Kelso, 2003). “In an entertainment culture that is essentially geared to creating a technically and aesthetically pleasing outcome,” having a culture that values devotion and training helps produce an apparently flawless product. However, as a member of the corps de ballet, “dancers learn to put in maximum effort, analyze mistakes, and try again after they ‘fail’ in the name of the discipline” (Hamilton, 1998, p. 38). That same dedication and perseverance causes dancers to over-perform, take unwise risks, and reject limitations. The “world of tutus, pointe shoes, make-up, lighting, and whimsical dance” (McEwen and Young, 2011, p. 153) prizes certain attributes required for dancers to survive in such a physically demanding and grueling art form.

Ballet culture has been said to be a controlling institution where “hard work, repetition, discipline and structure are imposed often through authoritarian power structures and convention […]”, creating a dancer who merely accepts the culture around him or her (McEwen and Young, 2011, p. 167). As highlighted in the The Black Swan, fiction shaped by notable persons in the ballet world, the elite world or culture of the ballet industry has yet to be able to cast off the certain characteristics that are associated with this form of dance. In the film, Nina, the principal dancer, can play both the white and black swan because the characteristics needed for both portrayals—the juxtaposition of grace and power—are within her: they have been nurtured by the ballet culture.

Statement of the Problem

When a dancer takes the stage, all eyes are on him or her, and while the corps de ballet may interact in perfect unity, the principal dancer is where most eyes are drawn. Yet, when any dancer, corps or principal, joins a company, he/she is subject to the culture
and beholden to its leadership; thus, the ballet becomes not something that one does, but who one is (Bentley, 1982; Gordon, 1984). A dancer’s role and participation within the ballet industry’s culture are dictated by the values and behavioral norms of the culture. However, the problem is that an accurate or unbiased image of ballet culture is rare.

“Behind the intricate and beautiful choreography, we [the audience] see on stage is an even more forceful yet subtle choreography of power” (Gordon, 1983, p. 15). The question remains though whether that “choreography of power” (Gordon, 1983, p. 15) is the duet of light and dark leadership attributes and the nuances of how they are manifested in a specific culture. In leadership a dance exists between light and dark leadership dimensions, with the light being attributes that have positive implications for a leader and the dark, while perhaps harder to see and slower to reveal themselves, are those that have negative implications; however, the crucial part of the interplay is how light and dark are valued by a culture (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016).

The idea of the individual has also been the primary focus when researching or exploring light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes/characteristics (Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Judge & LePine, 2007; Conger, 1990; Judge, Piccolo, & Kolsaka, 2009). Yet, any organization or industry nurtures or values certain leadership attributes, with ballet being no different. Even if dancers are a mere reflection of the ballet industry’s culture, we still do not know to what extent the cultural values of the industry manifest as light and dark and set a dancer on his or her way to standing ovations and bouquets of roses—to becoming a leader. There is certainly a grooming or recruitment process with leadership selection in any organization that is
dependent on the culture. Whether a leadership dimension is viewed as light or dark is similarly dependent upon culture: it is about what is valued or sanctioned in a culture and how the leadership attribute is manifested (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016). Therefore, the question to be studied is: what does the ballet culture value in its leaders in terms of light and dark dimensions of leadership?

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to profile the culture of the American ballet. Most research on ballet culture examines the individual or topics associated with the physical body instead of assessing the culture of the industry and its values. Dancers’ personal insights abound in books, but little exists that is research-based and that looks across the culture as a whole. If dancers truly experience a “loss of self” for the “ballet establishment” (Gordon, 1984, p. xviii), understanding the relationship between a ballet dancer and her social situation—the ballet culture—is necessary.

The sharing of culture in any organization is developed by the interactions of the group or organization and is unique to a particular context (Schein, 2010). Ballet culture is thought to be understood, but the “myth machine continues to produce its romantic rhapsodies” (Gordon, 1984, p. 311) so this study seeks to better understand the contemporary culture of the ballet industry. American ballet dancer and choreographer Agnes de Mille asserted, “Theatre always reflects the culture that produces it” (1963, p. 74). This study provides a first step toward establishing the extent to which the same hold trues for a ballerina. In order to fully comprehend the light and dark leadership characteristics of a dancer, the culture that helps shape such needs to be spotlighted.
The second purpose of this study is to identify the light and dark sides of leadership attributes that are nurtured and honed by ballet culture across the industry. “It [ballet] is such a gorgeous profession. It looks so easy. And yet, there is a dark side to being a dancer that people don’t see, and it’s nurtured and perpetuated [. . .]” (Kelly, 2012, p. 143): this study aims to assess both the light and the dark dimensions of this culture simultaneously. What is not well understood is to what extent those selected for leadership roles are expected to embody both light and dark dimensions of the ballet culture, or whether these individuals represent those uniquely skilled at navigating between the light and dark extremes of the culture (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016). Thus, when looking through a formative perspective, it is valuable to know which light and dark dimensions are embodied in ballet culture and how these cultural norms impact leader emergence in the ballet industry. Investigating these questions requires looking across individual companies, at the cultural dynamics of the ballet industry as a whole. As Nietzsche (1997) once noted, “One must have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star” (p. 19-20) and that chaos—the battle of light and dark attributes—is embodied by the ballet industry culture.

The third purpose of the study is to explore how the culture selects leaders who reflect the light and dark characteristics that the organization values. While much is known about the ballet culture in general, what is less clear is what light and dark dimensions of leadership are valued by the culture, and specifically, to what extent light and dark dimensions of leadership are fostered among those groomed and selected for leadership roles. The beauty of ballet often distracts from the duality of light and dark aspects of its culture, but it is important to know how the culture, and its values, impact
the individual in terms of leadership advancement—getting “on pointe.” If the ballet world is “a fairly perverse social order whose perversities are often defended as beauty” (Alderson, 1987, p. 292), we would expect to find many of these same light and dark characteristics represented among those selected for leadership roles. Understanding the dynamics that govern the selection of leaders in this social order is crucial so that it does not dizzy one’s mind like a line of fast-paced pirouettes.

If as Kellerman (2004) asserts, “Leaders are like the rest of us: trustworthy and deceitful, cowardly and brave, greedy and generous” (p. 54), then we might expect the culture of the ballet industry to groom and select leaders who embody both the light and dark dimensions of leadership characteristics valued by the industry. On the other hand, if the industry as a whole recognizes the inherent threats posed by some of the dark dimensions of its culture, then it is possible that those selected for leadership roles are those who manage to successfully manifest the light dimensions while keeping the dark in check (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016). Understanding this interplay of light and dark dimensions of leadership in the ballet culture could help illuminate the beauty and complexity of the ballet.

Although leaders in general have been found to embody both light and dark attributes (Kellerman 2004), that is easy to forget in the real world, much less in the fantastical and magical world of ballet. But leadership has begun to study not only what should be celebrated in leaders, but also the dark underbelly. Examining the industry is important because evidence suggests that leaders may embody the culture (Kets de Vries, 2006), but the question remains to what extent those who emerge as leaders in the ballet industry reflect light and dark leadership dimensions. By assessing the light and dark
leadership dimensions that are valued by the ballet industry’s culture, these characteristics can then be held up as exemplars of who are selected as leaders. Describing what the culture of the ballet industry values represents a first step toward understanding and eventually predicting who will become leaders in that culture. In general, leaders rely on what they have been taught and what they have learned from observation and doing: they depend on context or culture (Kets de Vries, 2006). Ballet culture in general is thought to be no different: “more than an aesthetic symbol, the ballerina is also a social construct, a complex product of her time and place” (Kelly, 2012, p. 2). Dancers have to successfully navigate the thin line between light and dark manifestations of leadership attributes in the ballet culture; yet the extent to which dancers selected for leadership reflect various aspects of that culture has yet to be established (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016).

**Theoretical Framework**

Two areas of leadership theory shaped the theoretical framework for this study: trait theory of leadership (Judge, Piccolo, Kosalka, 2009) and social identity theory (Hogg, 2001 & 2006). A theoretical framework, developed by the co-investigator (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016), that embodies the ideas of both light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes and culture was essential for this study. In Judge et al.’s (2009) Leader Trait Emergence Effectiveness (LTEE) Model, the mechanisms underlying the expression of traits are explicated to explain both leader emergence and leader effectiveness, distinguishing between subjective and objective effectiveness. In this model, organizational culture is an important factor moderating the relationship between leader emergence and objective leader effectiveness, defined as
“aggregated individual performance” and “collective unit performance [and] survival” (Judge et al. 2009, p. 862). This study focuses on the ballet industry’s culture as a lens for examining the attributes that govern the emergence of leaders perceived as possessing the potential to be effective within the ballet industry. The light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes valued by the culture are examined, with particular focus on leader emergence, not an objective assessment of leader effectiveness.

Judge et al.’s (2009) model of leader emergence identifies a number of leadership traits purported to have an underlying genetic component. While not an exhaustive list, Judge et al.’s (2009) explores how each may manifest with both light and dark dimensions. Hogan, Curphy, and Hogan (1994) offer a similar exploration of some of the bright traits included in Judge et al.’s (2009) model, further illuminating their dark counterparts. Hogan, et al. (1994) focused on the Big Five Personality Traits (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism [Emotional Instability], Extraversion, and Openness). Theoretical analysis suggests that those traits generally considered to be positive (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness) can be detrimental if manifested at extreme levels, while Neuroticism, generally considered a negative trait, may nevertheless have positive effects at some levels (McCord, Joseph, & Grijalva, 2014, p. 131). Whether a trait is considered bright or dark in these analyses depends in general upon its social desirability. Light and dark dimensions are usually associated with social desirability and undesirability, respectively (Judge et al.; 2009; Hogan, 2016). In the context of this study, what is socially desirable is dictated by the cultural norms of the ballet industry, which are presumed to vary from the norms of society at large. Therefore, after identifying an attribute within the ballet culture, to delineate such as light or dark,
the outcome—how the attribute manifests itself, either positively (light) or negatively (dark), on the collective—is examined.

Light and dark characteristics have effects and paradoxes. Light attributes are those deemed socially desirable and are likely to allow for leader emergence or effectiveness (Hogan, 2016; Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, 2015). Yet, these bright attributes can at the same time be counterproductive if the culture or context does not regard such as positive (Kaiser, 2016). The same can be said of dark characteristics, those usually deemed socially undesirable, but that can be positive in a certain culture. Thus, in their framework for discussing the implications of traits and leader effectiveness, Judge et al. (2009) draw on the person-situation interaction, and how the context of the culture ultimately helps determine what is dark and what is light. Similarly, in this study, the labels of “light” and “dark” are dependent upon the culture of the ballet industry. The notion of social desirability is not about what is desirable or undesirable in a universal sense but rather what is sanctioned by the “society” of the ballet industry; thus the crux of the issue is whether a leadership dimension is light or dark—having positive or negative implications for the individual or organization—in terms of the specific culture (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016.)

Leadership attributes are essentially normative in that they are socially selected for in terms of the culture (Hogg, 2001). The formation of a culture is cognitively generated by the social categorization of self and others, and people form cultures as a prototype, attributes that identify similarities among individuals in the same culture and differences between people from other cultures (Hogg, 2001 & 2006). Likewise, when a dancer enters a ballet company they are beholden to its culture: “To be a dancer is to join
a family” (Gordon, 1984, p. 206). Of utmost importance in the formation of culture, “the
family”, is that people identify with such, so this study will assess the groups’ values and
how those impact individuals in terms of leadership.

A culture is developed from interaction of the group or organization, but is unique
to a particular context—in this instance the ballet industry. Since people norm to social
desirability and the culture transmits that in certain environments, the ballet industry, the
focus of this study is on a ballet dancer and his/her social situation. Understanding how
leadership characteristics are nurtured by the culture is necessary because, a culture’s
norms, can “increase people’s motivation to exert effort on behalf of the group and its
goals” (Hogg, 2006, p.124), resulting in social mobilization or a rise through the ranks of
leadership. Every organization affirms and transmits cultural norms through their
organization (Kets de Vries, 2006) and employees to try to assimilate to the
organizational ideal in hopes of advancement. Ballet culture is no different:

Everyone in ballet is connected, a relation close or distant, but ever-present,
members of a family who may not be merely sitting close-by at a party, but one
day—perhaps the next—may become partners or dance beside you, or be the
choreographer who direct you, or the régisseur who rehearses you, or the
company director who hires or rejects you, or the older dancer who shows you,
finally, why you are having trouble with a particular turn or series of beat.

(Gordon, 1984, p. 207)

Although all are part of the same culture, the notion that the culture promotes from
within, selects and grooms leaders, is more than likely always present in a dancer’s
thoughts. Therefore, both the intrinsic characteristics and the behaviors of the person are
nurtured or strengthened by the ballet industry because a culture selects leaders with certain attributes based on what it values. When identification with a certain culture occurs, the more influential the prototype, and unsurprisingly, those within the group look for those who are most prototypical, those who are more socially attractive, viewing those people as a leader (Hogg, 2001 & 2006).

Leaders can be prototypical, but that does not mean they perfectly reflect the culture, which can have positive or negative manifestations. Instead they can simply be socially attractive by being unique: they have a special combination that allows them to be successful, a leader, instead of just a general member of the culture. In this particular study, that social allure, that unique combination, may be successfully navigating the thin line between light and dark manifestations of leadership attributes in the ballet culture (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016). Because of this social allure, “[. . .] the most prototypical leader is able to exercise leadership by having his or her ideas accepted more readily and more widely than suggested by others” (Hogg, 2001, p. 189). Due to this, prototypical leaders do not have to exercise power, rather they are intrinsically motivating because they embody and embrace the culture. Thus, the cultural values are socially designated to those within the group or organization so the classification of light and dark is within a specific context: clarifying the ballet culture and what it values could help clarify the connection between culture and leader selection.

In past research studies, light and dark dimensions of leadership qualities have been examined at the individual level, but since people cannot be separated from their environment, their situation, their culture (Judge et al., 2009), this study adopts a cultural perspective to see how these various characteristics play out within the ballet culture.
(Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016). Taking into consideration the ballet industry’s culture and the notion that leadership dimensions can have both positive and negative dimensionality, this study delineates between the light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes, by documenting the positive and negative implications of each within the culture of the ballet industry.

**Research Questions**

The primary overarching research question guiding this ethnographic study is: What is the industry-wide culture of the American ballet? The following secondary research questions guides the interpretation of cultural data collected:

1. What are the attributes valued among individuals selected for leadership roles within the ballet culture?
   a. What are the light dimensions of those attributes in the culture of the ballet industry?
   b. What are the dark dimensions of those attributes in the culture of the ballet industry?

2. How does the culture of the ballet industry nurture these attributes among individuals groomed and selected for leadership positions?
   a. To what extent are leaders expected/allowed to manifest the light dimensions of these attributes?
   b. To what extent are leaders expected/allowed to manifest the dark dimensions of these attributes?
Methodology

Since the research questions revolve around the extent to which ballet culture values certain leadership dimensions and how they are manifested as light or dark, decisions relating to methodology are rooted in an understanding of organizational culture and explain why this study adopts an ethnographic approach. Culture is something an organization is, a subconscious that is taken for granted and shared (Driskill & Brenton, 2011). Organizational culture tends to be characterized as “tacit knowledge,” meaning that it is understood or implied without being stated. The culture of an organization is its roots; thus, explaining why culture is somewhat subconscious since it starts beneath the proverbial surface (Driskill & Brenton, 2011). Culture is a deeper and less consciously held set of meaning than climate. Because it is the “foundation” of an organization that is why culture is often characterized as stable; the transmission and reception of culture often occurs at the unconscious level. Although cultural knowledge is tacit, it is still shared and in a sense visible. The sharing of culture happens since it is developed from interactions of the group or organization: being developed by the group, culture tends to be historically based and unique to the particular context—“a homemade blueprint” (Whiteley, 1995, p. 19). Beliefs, norms, values, rituals, myths, rites, symbols, stories, and climate are visible manifestations of the culture. The ways in which people perceive and feel in relation to an organization’s problems are part of the culture, but again these perceptions are shared by the group. The substance of a culture is its ideologies and the cultural forms or visible representations of such are the observable entities of the group, their comments and actions (Trice & Beyer, 1993). The themes identified in this study are specific to the ballet organization or industry and are identified
because they are pervasive, relevant to the various units in the organization, and salient, the importance of the theme or its “weightiness” (Driskill and Brenton, 2011, p. 116).

While there are multiple approaches to studying organizational culture, an ethnographic approach is selected for this study. Data is collected using both observation and interviews, and interpretation during data analysis employs both functional and symbolic approaches to allow the “story” to be told more comprehensively (Sackmann, 1991). The functional approach focuses on the selection of the leaders within the ballet industry culture and the symbolic probes into the meaning behind the selection process. Values and behavioral norms characteristic of the ballet culture are identified using content analysis, and the bright and dark dimensions of each are delineated based on the positive and negative impact of each on members of the industry. A definitive list of attributes going into the study would not be advantageous because the focus is on what is valued and honed by the ballet culture. Instead, assessing what emerges in the context of the culture and identifying the dimensionality of these attributes is the focus of analysis. In essence, the focus is on identifying, using an ethnographic approach, leadership characteristics promoted in the culture of the ballet industry and then differentiating between the light and dark dimensions of each. Although social desirability comes into play with Judge et al.’s (2009) theory, in this study, the leadership attributes that emerge are anchored in the ballet culture, meaning what is valued by the ballet industry, and whether these have positive or negative implications for the members of that culture determines the light and dark dimensionality of each: i.e. the constructs of light and dark are dependent on the ballet culture (Latta, G. F., personal communication, February 8, 2016). The “social” desirability is in terms of the specific context— the culture of the
ballet industry—not society as a whole. In the end, a list of light and dark leadership dimensions, specific to ballet culture, should surface.

Dance tells a story, and this is true because in the culture of ballet every item and action has a meaning. The focus of this study is on the symbols in the organizational culture, and the meaning the stories, metaphors, and examples create for the leadership in the ballet culture: “symbols are objects, acts, relationships or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meaning [. . .]” (Schultz, 1995, p. 76). The ballerina and her dance is an expression of the culture, and these expressions take the form of verbal and physical behaviors or practices or artifacts (Sackmann, 1991). Symbols are “visible,” meaning they can be seen (physical), heard (verbal), felt, and perceived (behavioral) (Schultz, 1995, p. 82).

In this study, in order to study the ballet industry, qualitative data is gathered from the population of three classically-based professional ballet companies in the United States: one located in the Rocky Mountain region, one in the Midwestern region, and one in the Pacific Northwest region. Instead of taking a normative approach, an ethnographic approach is taken, meaning being immersed in a foreign culture, with the focus being on two primary methods of data gathering and analysis: systematic observations and conversational interviews (Driskill & Brenton, 2011). The process for recruitment into the study included examining the following criteria of participants in the organization: their role, their participation within, their leadership role(s), and their time at the company.

Acting as an observer-participant, the principal investigator collected ethnographic data in each of the three companies over a two-month time period,
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including observations and interviews of members (all over the age of 18 years of age) in each setting. Being an observer-participant means that the researcher does not take part in activities, but merely observes, and the status as researcher is known to participants (Dane, 1990). The specific settings where observations took place are: practices, rehearsals, meetings (in all levels of the organization), trainings, and performances. The focus of these observations and interviews was on all members of the culture, not just those with a leadership role in the ballet companies. To delve into the organization, the principal investigator observed and interviewed trainees and members of the corps de ballet as well as solo dancers, principal dancers, and those of higher ranks in the organization (e.g. director, choreographer, support staff, etc.); both those on the stage and behind the scenes were interviewed in that understanding the interplay of subgroups in the ballet companies was needed to get a complete picture of ballet culture.

In order to select participants, consent (see Appendix A) was obtained from the head of each organization through a letter of support on organizational letterhead (see Appendix B), allowing access to a list of members. Individuals willing to participate in one-on-one interviews and possibly follow-ups were solicited via email (see Appendix C) and completed consent forms indicating whether their interviews could be audio recorded (see Appendix D). In order to understand who and how leaders embody the culture, data reflecting all aspects, regardless of their amount of time in the organization and the instruction they receive or give within the organization, was collected. Stratified sampling was utilized with participants solicited from among the corps de ballet; the soloists and principal dancers; administration, which has been divided into two categories, artistic (e.g. choreographers, artistic directors, ballet mistresses and masters,
etc.) and executive (executive directors, finance, marketing, development, etc.); and production (e.g. costume shop, stage manager, music, electrician, etc.). Although the observations encompassed all levels at a given time in order to see their interactions, the interviewer, if not already done so by the organization, divided the ballet companies’ rosters into the named categories and then created a deliberative sample so as to ensure the exhaustion or saturation of data.

The principal investigator was not confined to interviewing or interacting with the same titles within each separate ballet company in that this was not a comparative study, but rather looked across the entities to perform a collective study of culture and the dark and/or light dimensions of leadership attributes. Moreover, key informants, those who are an expert source of information, were sought out in the process, whether that be from emergence or recruitment. The individual consent form asked if participants were willing to be key informants and participate in multiple interviews. Participants were deemed “experts” and recruited as key informants if they exhibited personal skills and/or position in the industry. Because of follow-up interviews, these individuals provided more information and deeper insight into the behaviors around them and made observations about the development of their culture and often speculated or made inferences about both. The principle advantage of the key informant(s) is the quality of information they can provide over a relatively short period of time (Fetterman, 1998).

Field notes were taken during the observations to reflect a broad array of organizational contexts (artifacts, interaction, language, and symbols). Acting as an observer-participant increased access to the views and insights of the organization while remaining on ethical ground. The interviews helped interpret the observed events and
allowed for probing with follow-up questions so as to obtain the richest cultural data. Participants in the semi-structured interviews were selected to reflect percentages similar to those of the demographics of the organization. The basic assumption underlying these methods was that using multiple methods ensures triangulation to enrich the data set (Driskill & Brenton, 2011).

Because cultures are often considered unique, studying industrial/organizational culture is appealing, but two perspectives or approaches—“emic” and “etic”—exist. In an etic study, more scientist-orientated, the meaning is imposed by an outsider of the culture, and the “view” is imposed on one or more organizations at a time; thus, allowing for a framework. Emic studies, more anthropologist-orientated, are done by an insider of the culture, letting meaning emerge from the group and focusing on one group at a time. These studies are done through more qualitative measures like unstructured interviews and observations. This analysis of ballet culture (through three different ballet companies) adopts an emic (insider’s) perspective, striving to capture the story of those being studied. As an ethnographic study, results are “representing in words what you have lived through as a person when your stated purpose was to study a culture” (Driskill & Brenton, 2011, p. 66).

**Definition of Terminology**

- **Ballet company**: group of professional dancers who perform classical, neoclassical, and/or contemporary ballet in the European tradition, plus managerial and support (Grant, 1967).
• **Corps de ballet**: a term from French meaning “body of the ballet.” This is the group of dancers who are not soloists. They are a permanent part of the ballet company and often work as a backdrop for the principal dancers (Grant, 1967).

• **Culture**: the totality of a person’s learned accumulated experience in a group of people—behaviors, skills, beliefs, values, motives and symbols—which is socially transmitted, meaning generally accepted without thinking and that are passed on through communication and imitation (Driskill & Brenton, 2011).

• **Dark attribute**: socially valued leadership characteristic that has negative implications or outcomes within a social unit or collective, such as the ballet industry (Latta, personal communication, February 8, 2016; c.f. Judge, et al., 2009).

• **Leadership**: the ability of an individual in a position of authority within the ballet organization to influence others within the culture.

• **Leadership attribute**: a trait, behavior, or characteristic of a leader

• **Light/bright attribute**: socially valued leadership characteristic that has positive implications or outcomes within a social unit or collective, such as the ballet industry (Latta, personal communication, February 8, 2016; c.f. Judge, et al., 2009).

• **Principal dancer (often shortened to principal)**: the dancer at the highest rank within a professional ballet company. A principal may be either a male or female. The position is similar to a soloist; however, principals are hired by (or promoted
from within a company) to regularly perform not only solos, but *pas de deux* (dance duets in which a male and female perform steps together). It is a coveted position in the company and the most prominent position a dancer can attain (Grant, 1967).

**Assumptions**

The theoretical framework underlying this study included a variety of conceptual assumptions, reflecting the limited amount of empirical research on organizational culture and the light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes. These assumptions will not be enumerated, however, the following assumptions relating to research design must be considered when interpreting results of this study: (a) within each ballet company interviewees were selected in an effort to achieve a sample typical of the population within the organization; (b) for purposes of identifying attributes valued among leaders in the ballet industry, it is assumed that those individuals promoted to principal dancer or higher most nearly reflect cultural ideals of the ballet industry; (c) the data collected through observations and interviews during the designated period of the study are sufficient to assess the culture of each ballet company and the views of their members; and (d) the cultures of the ballet companies selected for inclusion in this study are more similar than divergent, permitting a cross-industry culture to be profiled.

**Limitations**

The study has the following limitations: (a) the principal investigator in this study not only participated in the ballet culture as a child and adolescent, but also has a daughter that has just stepped foot into the ballet culture, which therefore means the principal investigator has a prior impression of ballet culture; (b) the sample of ballet
companies was drawn from three states; therefore, results may not be generalizable to all states; (c) due to the focus on the culture of a particular type of dance/art, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other dance organizations or to organizations outside of dance; (d) many variables beyond the culture of the ballet could impact the light and dark leadership characteristics of those in the ballet industry. These variables may include: the quality and diversity of instructional ballet programs one has experienced, parental involvement, educational attainment, time in a particular ballet company, ancillary services provided by ballet companies, the quality of the ballet facilities, and economic background and status of the leader, none of which were included in the scope of this study.

**Delimitations**

A delimitation of this study is that for purposes of analysis, the ballet industry’s culture is represented by only three classically-based professional ballet companies in the United States selected for participation: one located in the Rocky Mountain region, one in the Midwestern region, and one in the Pacific Northwest region. This boundary embodies an assumption that the microcosm of these three companies represents the macrocosm of the industry as a whole: getting to “the pointe” of how these ballet companies value light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes is interpreted as having validity for the industry as a whole. Regardless of the number of ballet companies included, the list would certainly be incomplete. As an exploratory study, the number of ballet companies included is a reasonable first step in addressing the stated research questions. One aspect that was unknown prior to conducting the study was how much variation would be represented in such a small sample of companies. Great variability could negatively
impact the attempt to characterize a coherent industry culture, but selecting companies from different geographic regions mitigated against this threat to internal validity (Latta, G. F., personal communication, March 11, 2017).

Another delimitation is the somewhat arbitrary designation that showing leadership in the ballet is limited to being more than just a member of the corps de ballet, i.e. a solo dancer, principal dancer, or another person who has made it into the higher ranks of the ballet organization/industry (e.g. director, choreographer, etc.). Yet, this does not mean that individuals within the corps will not also embody leadership attributes. The reason for this distinction is that the corps de ballet is merely a permanent part of the ballet company, and often serve as the backdrop for the lead dancers. Thus, although these dancers may one day rise in rank to a leadership role, they have not yet done so.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is to provide a preliminary exploration of the light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes that may be nurtured in the culture of the ballet industry. Although the terms “light” and “dark” have been used previously to distinguish leadership characteristics, these analyses have been primarily at the individual or person level, not within a cultural perspective, like that of the ballet industry. In fact, most often the terms “light” and “dark” are used in conjunction with traits, meaning inheritable qualities that are not seen to be developed, but rather innate. This study represents an effort to extend the paradigm of light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes to encompass both traits and behaviors, the unlearned and learned, and to link these to culture dynamics (Latta, G.F., personal communication, February 8, 2016).
Further study will be required to fully understand how “light” and “dark” characteristics may be cultivated in the ballet industry, but this exploratory ethnography lays the groundwork for such further research. A solo or principal dancer in pointe shoes, gliding effortlessly across the floor, always mesmerizes people, but more than just technique helped one obtain such roles. More knowledge of the culture of the ballet industry, and the light and dark dimensions of attributes valued among its leadership, may lead to better understanding of the factors that contribute to these performances that continue to dazzle and delight audiences.

The art of ballet has always been the symbol of femininity, but even from its earliest origins, the culture has been able to distract people with its satin, frills, and meticulous movements: “dancing in hard-tipped shoes that appear to lift her above the earth, she [ballerina] occupies a realm above the everyday” (Kelly, 2012, p. 1). Yet, literature, history, popular culture and research have revealed that behind the proverbial curtain is another world:

The history of ballet is tarnished by institutionalized suffering, starvation, poverty, and sexual exploitation. She [a ballerina] has to suffer enormous deprivation to maintain the ideal of the classical dancer as symbol of perfection, enduring pain, frequent humiliation, and even starvation to create the illusion of weightless on stage. (Kelly, 2012, p. 2)

Unlike prior studies which focus on injuries, eating disorders, and sexual exploits, this study focuses on dimensions of leadership —both light and dark—that are strengthened and promoted by the culture, allowing individuals to rise through the ranks, to step out of
the *corps de ballet* and shine. Rather than focusing on the physical health of ballerinas, this study focuses on attributes valued by the culture that help one “get on pointe”.

**Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, research hypotheses, methodology, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, which includes ballet culture and history and “bright/light” versus “dark” traits. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for this research study: it includes the selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 presents the study’s findings, including demographic information and results of the data analysis. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the entire study, interprets findings in terms of the research questions, discusses contributions and implications of the findings, and proposes recommendations of further research.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Although some would consider the modern ballet world elitist, during the 19th century this was certainly true, at least for the patrons, the brunt of which were men who came to ogle the ballerinas. Do not take offense to the word “ogle” because this was certainly the case in that the ballet was associated with prostitution: men often swapped dancers as sexual partners. Young girls knew what they were positioning themselves into since the art of seduction was just another move learned in their training (Kelly, 2012); in fact, Augustis Vestris, once brilliant dancer turned instructor, told her pupils, “Indicate through movement the greatest transports of passion. It is imperative that during and after your variations you inspire love and the box and the orchestra and seat holders should want to carry you off to bed” (as cited in Huckenpahler, 1984, p. 22). And the men did just that. In fact, the Palais Garnier, a theatre, had the foyer de la danse, which to the naked eye seemed to be just a rehearsal room. But to the outside world, this room was for “social displays, business deals, and private liaisons” (Kelly, 2012, p. 53) in that le abonnés, wealthy male subscribers, could mingle with dancers and ultimately choose their ballerina, their mistress. A ballerina wearing a tutu might seem far from the image of what is normally conjured as a prostitute, but dancers knew securing a male subscriber was the difference between a life of privilege or destitution: the abonné could single-handedly determine a dancer’s destiny (Kelly, 2012).
Yet, despite the side-business of ballet, some dancers knew this was the only way—“dance” one’s way out of poverty. But for some, no real way for advancement existed:

[. . .] scores of these bedraggled, malnourished, sexually exploited girls in the corps de ballet had almost no real chance of dancing their way out of the misery into which they were born. These were popularly known as les petits rats, for how they seemed to gnaw at everything in sight, desperately hungry for life and its material goods. (Kelly, 2012, p. 55)

One has probably seen one of these little rats, without realizing it—Marie van Goethem, the ballerina immortalized in Edgar Degas’ renowned ballet sculpture (the only one of his career), The Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen. At the unveiling of the statue in 1881, she was one of the dancers employed by the Paris Opéra who was a member of the corps. (In Degas’ paintings, suited men are hovering in the background: these are the abonnés making their selections.)

Degas worked on the sculpture, which was out of wax (although modern day renditions are in bronze; the original does not remain), for two years:

[. . .] he took pains to capture the young dancer’s physiological makeup, presenting her idiosyncratically in ballet’s relaxed fourth position. Her bony legs widely turned out, and her thin arms are pulled back with hands tightly-clasped. Her pointy chin is thrust high, and her eyes are semi-closed, as if lost in a dream, if not interminable boredom. She wears a real tarlatan tutu as she might have worn to the studio for practice, and there is a ribbon in her plaited hair. She looks defiant if not impudent: she is not at all one of the fantastical creatures of the
ballet stage but a girl who looks half-starved and brutalized by life and her profession. (Kelly, 2012, p. 63-64)

While this little dancer is famous today, the reviews during its time, were quite mixed. Although it did have some supporters, the critics were quite harsh at its unveiling. Elie de Mont in *La Civilization* said, “I don’t ask that art should always be elegant, but I don’t believe that its role is to champion ugliness. This opera rat has something about her of the monkey, the shrimp, and the runt” (1881). Beyond her grotesqueness, some critics even felt the sculpture was immoral, embodying the sins of her profession. The critic Paul Mantz wrote in *Le Temps* that Degas had “picked a flower of precocious depravity from the espaliers of the theatre” (1881), and Charles Ephrussi, art historian, claimed the sculpture represented “the Opéra rat in her modern form, learning her craft with all the disposition and stock of bad instincts and licentious inclinations” (Kendall, 1998, p. 21). However, the realism of Marie was also what garnered people’s adoration.

Clearly from his artwork, Degas frequented the ballet and even the *foyer de la danse*, albeit for different purposes: he was not interested in bedding a ballerina (although his brother had a ballerina mistress), but instead stripping off the façade of the dancer. He was not interested in depicting a body of desire, but the body of a workhorse. *The Little Dancer* was never again exhibited in public and remains perhaps Degas’ most controversial piece. Marie van Goethem’s likeness received such mixed reviews because it was such a juxtaposition to what normally saturated the market with regard to ballet—the idea of the beautiful body that could seduce onlookers, in more ways than one.

The Degas sculpture is a prime example of “light” and “dark” in that it reveals the seedy underbelly of the profession and the dire situations from which girls came, rats
looking for ballet to be their salvation. During the nineteenth century, to rise through the ranks, the ballet culture fostered certain attributes, albeit not pretty ones. Similarly, modern day ballet companies possibly cultivate both light and dark leadership characteristics, and just like Degas’ little dancer, a storm of reviews about ballet and dark and light attributes exists in the literature, albeit not on the two topics together.

**Trait Leadership Theory Synopsis**

The perspective on light and dark leadership attributes adopted in this study will be grounded in trait theory of leadership. Early trait theorists were primarily concerned with identifying a group of heritable attributes (personality traits, physical attributes, intelligence, or personal values) that differentiated leaders from non-leaders. According to Zaccarro (2007), Galton argued that leadership is unique to only a select few, “the great”, and these individuals possess certain immutable traits that cannot be developed: “effective leadership was naturally endowed, passed from generation to generation” (Zacarro, 2007, p. 6). These early trait theorists were preoccupied with the notion of portraying leaders as heroes, projecting strength, competence, and integrity (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Stogdill, 1948, 1974, 1975). They were intrigued with the idea of leverage those “Great Man traits” to improve leader selection or identification based on these ideal attributes. While studies linking traits and leadership were promising, these studies were not conclusive (Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948). Traits cannot seemingly be separated from the situation or context in that those who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in another situation, which is one reason why identifying a definitive list of leadership traits was problematic (Zacarro, 2007; Den Hartog & Koopman, 2002; Mischel, 1998).
Leadership research then expanded beyond attributes to include behavior. Although traits/characteristics still continue to be important, it is also important to consider what leaders do in a particular setting/context/culture. Stogdill (1948) caused a behavioral paradigm shift by proposing that leaders’ behaviors are as important as their attributes. Subsequent research demonstrated that these behaviors are governed by social situations, such that those who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in another situation; rather than being a universal quality than individuals possess, leadership was redefined as an interaction between leaders in a social situation (Den Hartog & Koopman, 2002; House & Aditya, 1997; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). In turn, leaders’ behaviors or dimensions are dependent or contingent on the situation or culture, and in order to be successful in a certain culture, one has to be the right leader for that situation.

**Bright and Dark Leadership Characteristics**

**Separate entities.** Within the context of trait theories of leadership, the notion of light and dark attributes is that they are not the flip side to the same coin: they are separate entities. This work has its roots in a distinction made by Hogan et al. (1994) when he studied the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality. Also known as the Big Five Model, this theory focuses on five traits: Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism (Emotional Stability), Extraversion, and Openness (to Experience). Hogan et al.’s work focused on identifying the bright and dark dimensions of these personality constructs, with four being primarily bright, and one (Neuroticism) being principally dark. In general, they deemed bright characteristics as those everyday traits that are likely to allow for leader emergence or effectiveness/top performance (Hogan et al., 1994). Furthermore,
the bright side of personality describes when a person is paying attention to the normal rules of self-presentation. However, just as early trait theorists’ notion of the great men or heroic traits fell short, ignoring the reality that leaders engage in destructive behaviors is impossible. In fact, simply look to stories of modern day leaders to see what would be deemed “dark” or flawed leaders. Dark attributes are considered those characteristics that cause leader derailment or ineffectiveness and that usually surface during times of crisis or high tension (Hogan & Hogan, 2001); since the stress or crisis is the focus, dark personality attributes are often thought to manifest when people are not paying attention or are not concerned about impression management. However, of note is the fact that dark attributes are different from clinical pathologies in that they do not reflect an inability to function in daily life (Krupp, Sewall, Lalumire, Sheriff, & Harris, 2013; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Paulhus, 2014). The first notion of dark and light traits held that dark characteristics were not simply variations of normal or bright characteristics, but rather distinct from the FFM traits:

Although [. . .] there are similarities between dark characteristic and the dimensions of the Big Five Models (see Guenole, 2014), dark personality traits are, more often than not, composites of more elemental aspects of personality and correlations may be driven by construct overreach in Big Five Measures. (Harms & Spain, 2015, p. 17)

Thus, dark and light characteristics did not fully overlap, but rather, lay on a continuum: “the dysfunctional ranges of dark-side dimensions pick up at the ends of bright-side dimensions and extend the continuum beyond its scope of the bright side” (Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, p. 2015, p. 59).
Later, Judge and LePine (2007) formally defined bright and dark traits in terms of context and their social desirability: bright traits were those deemed socially desirable and that cause positive implications for the workplace, while dark traits were socially undesirable and negative. Again, this assumption was based on the idea that the traits were conceptually independent from one another; these labels were used to determine leader effectiveness, implying that those most successful embodied bright traits and lacked dark. Yet, this notion is problematic in terms of evolutionary theory (Nettle, 2006) and also resulted in misleading research claims (Castille, Kuyumcu, & Bennett, 2014; Tett, 1998). Evolutionary theory claims that if an advantage spans across contexts, then this quality will eventually become a universal for the species (Judge et al., 2009). In turn, this would mean that natural selection would have occurred and that instead of individual differences, bright traits would be universals. However, one knows this not to be the cause simply because of the individual differences seen within leaders, and that these “advantages” are only granted under certain circumstances and that tradeoff exists with certain trait levels (Nettle, 2006). Thus, instead of looking at light and dark attributes in terms of the universal, to delineate between such requires a consideration of context or situation. However, as noted, the original distinction between bright and dark leadership dimensions was about the qualities in kind, not degree.

**Flip side of the coin: extreme levels.** Judge and LePine (2007) suggested that further studies examine contrasting implications, meaning bright traits could lead to dark outcomes and visa versa: “we conclude that personality traits have both bright and dark effects in both individual and team contexts [. . .]” (Judge & LePine, 2007, p. 350). Instead of being focused on the difference in traits (with bright and dark traits being
considered separate entities), now the crux of the matter was on the degree of the characteristic or dimension: “Bright-side and dark-side tendencies do overlap to some degree, and so dark-traits may have similar positive effects as their bright-side cousins, especially for the overlapping range of individual differences covered by both domains” (Kaiser, et al., 2015, p. 59). With the aforementioned, consider the old adage, “all good things in moderation” in that a leadership dimension, both light and dark, can be attractive until it is overdone, at the extreme level. For every bright dimension a dark dimension exists: they are the flip side of the same coin—for every bright there is a dark and visa versa. However, the bright or dark is all dependent on the level of degree, the extremeness to which the characteristic is exhibited.

**Bright and dark leadership dimensions of the Big Five.** Studies have recognized that bright attributes can be detrimental if manifested at extreme levels, and thus, have often viewed traditionally desirable dimensions as having a dark side (McCord, et al., 2014): “Recent researchers suggest these traits [the Big Five] can also be detrimental if manifested at the extreme levels (i.e., there is evidence for curvilinear relationships between these traits and organizational outcomes, where both the extreme low pole and the extreme high pole are maladaptive” (McCord et al., 2014, p. 131). Essentially, the cliché “too much of a good thing” does seem possible in that when a bright trait reaches an extreme level, it can be counterproductive: “When a leader’s behaviors become exaggerated [. . .] they may harm the leader and the organization (Conger, 1990, p. 44). Extreme behaviors in leadership can be counterproductive (Ames & Flynn, 2007; Kaiser & Kaplan, 2009; Kaplan & Kaiser 2009). Important to remember
in the upcoming description of the Big Five Traits is these descriptions are societally accepted or societally normed, not what is specifically valued in a certain culture.

Consider the idea of Conscientiousness, which lends itself towards competence, orderliness, responsibility, achievement striving, self-discipline, and deliberation and is often associated with top job performance (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Barrick & Mount, 1991). In fact, this dimension is often connected with task performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000) and organizational citizenship (Chiabrua, Oh, Berry, Li, & Garnder, 2011), again causing people to often consider it a “bright” characteristic. However, this same trait, in extreme levels, has also been associated with increased rigidity in the workplace, struggle in new skill acquisition, and such perfectionism that is takes too long to complete tasks, which can be harmful for the organization (Carter, Dalal, Boyce, O’Connell, Kung, & Delgado 2013; Grant & Schwartz, 2011; Le, Oh, Robbins, Ilies, Holland, Westrick, 2011; McCord, et al, 2014; Pierce & Aquinis, 2013). Moreover, Tett (1998) claimed that prior research (e.g. Barrick & Mount, 1991) shows that this characteristic can be a disadvantage in some settings. Also, Le et al. (2011) suggest that jobs that are low in complexity may not require high levels of Conscientiousness, which would then mean the characteristic is detrimental. Also, those highly Conscientious, because of their focus on minutiae rather than the big picture, can hinder creativity (Judge & LePine, 2007; McCord et al., 2014). In fact, Lahuis, Martin, & Avis (2005) found that job performance was high for moderate levels of Conscientiousness when compared to it at extreme levels.

Another of the Five Factor Model traits, Agreeableness can be viewed in a similar manner. In its bright light, the focus would be on trust, straightforwardness,
altruism, trust, and modesty (Costa & McCrae, 1992). A meta-analysis study has proposed this is associated with high levels of citizenship behaviors (Chiaburu, et al., 2011) and leadership (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002) within an organization and a lower inclination toward organization defiance (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007). While on the flip side—the dark side—the same trait is also linked with poorer extrinsic career success, lower pay, and fewer promotions (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Nyhus & Pons, 2005). People usually like to be around those who display Agreeableness, but at extreme levels, this trait can cause a person to be seen as gullible or the consummate pushover in that one wants to avoid conflicts (Samuel & Gore, 2012; Bernardin, Cooke, & Villanova, 2000). In fact, in modern day society, where shared or distributed leadership often plays out, the characteristic of Agreeableness can again be problematic to the concept of team in that one could be hesitant to voice differing opinions (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001).

Yet another of the FFM traits—Extraversion—again is only bright at moderate levels, not the extremes. Like Agreeableness, it seems bright at first blush in that one is considered social and gregarious, but at extreme levels, this same trait is viewed as self-centered, pompous, and long-winded (Coker, Samuel, & Widiger, 2002). This is a particularly interesting trait when viewed through the lens of leadership in that a person can appear to dominate, almost to the point of being aggressive or bullying (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Ames & Flynn, 2007). In fact, in the Ames & Flynn (2007) study, they discovered that at the extreme low end of Extraversion, a leader would be considered a pushover or a people pleaser while on the extreme high end one was dictator-like. Again, in levels that are not moderate, Extraversion takes on a maladaptive or dark aspect.
Of the traits in the series of the Big Five, Neuroticism is the only “negative” one, and in turn personality researchers often reverse it to Emotional Stability so as to better conform to the list. Those who are Emotionally Stable often pride themselves on being calm and level headed, the leader who would be perfect in the time of crises. However, again, when displayed at extreme levels, this same trait can be considered dark in that one seems cold and detached (Coker et al., 2002). Le et al. (2011) found that those who concentrated at extreme levels on keeping their emotions in check often failed to be able to relate to others and the energy spent on reining in their emotions often detracts from other cognitive areas.

Finally, the last of the Five Factor Model, Openness to Experience tends to be associated with creativity, a bright concept (Goldberg, 1993). Yet, at extremes that same openness can appear to be rebellion or bizarre behavior (Piedmont, Sherman, & Sherman, 2012; Harms & Spain, 2015). In leadership, especially in an organization that has company rules, this can be problematic or unconventional and lead to problems within the organization. In a conventional organization, where policies and procedures are prized, “thinking outside” the proverbial box can cause issues to arise.

Thus, examples suggest that in terms of bright and dark traits the kind of characteristic is not important, but rather the degree of such. Thus, socially undesirable traits may not reflect different traits, but rather extreme levels of bright traits (McCord, Joseph, & Grijalva, 2014; Kaiser, LeBreton, Hogan, 2015). In fact, the American Psychological Association (APA) (2013) published a revised DSM-5, which is an alternative model for personality traits that is based on the FFM model and views dark traits as partially a manifestation of extreme or normal/bright personality traits. However,
even this model ignores certain extremes (e.g. extreme extraversion, extreme agreeableness, and extreme emotional stability). But again, the importance here is that extreme levels of the FFM traits—the bright traits—might manifest in maladaptive or beneficial ways, depending on the context.

**Bright and dark leadership dimensions beyond the Big Five.** The extreme concept is not simply limited to the Big Five/FFM traits, but rather has been extended to personality characteristics not captured by the Five Factor Model. Judge et al. (2009) recommend taking a broader view of the idea of personality. They argue that in looking for traits “beyond” the Big Five consideration must be given to not only traits, but also behaviors, goals, interests, and motives, (James & LeBronton, 2012; Roberts, Harm, Smith, Wood, & Webb, 2006). For example, the characteristic of emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to use emotion to enhance thought processes, is considered “bright” in terms of task performance and leadership (Joseph & Newman, 2010; O’Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver, & Story, 2011; Harms & Crede, 2010). However, finding middle ground with this personality trait is important in that if emotions are regulated to the extreme, a person will appear detached and depersonalized, often being deemed “emotionless,” meaning it takes on a dark side. Yet, another personality attribute not considered one of the Big Five is self-efficacy. At extreme levels, this can potentially take on the look of having an ego or overestimating one’s abilities. It is argued that individuals with this mindset often do not see the need to consider possibilities on how to overcome in that they believe they are adequately equipped to do such on their own accord (Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002; Vancouver, Thompson, & Williams, 2001).
Bright and dark dimensions of dark traits. However, bright traits are not the only characteristics that can take on a different view. Dark characteristics can overlap to a degree in that they “coexist with well-developed social skills that can conceal their counterproductive nature and make them appear more desirable” (Kaiser et al., 2015, p. 59; Hogan & Hogan, 2001). Thus, “we should expect dark traits to exhibit positive relationships with outcomes at particular trait levels and to be associated with lower functioning or dysfunction at particularly high or low levels” (Harms & Spain, 2012, p. 20). In fact, Furnham, Trickey, & Hyde (2012) found that certain dark traits are positively associated with work success, leader effectiveness (Judge et al. 2009), and work promotion (Furnham, Crump, & Ritchie, 2013).

Take for instance Machiavellianism, often considered a dark trait, a socially undesirable characteristic, and how it can produce socially desirable outcomes. This quality is often linked to immoral behavior, a lust for control and power, and a distrust of others (Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009). Furthermore, Gustafon (2000) claims Machiavellian leaders are more concerned about themselves as individuals than the organization’s goals, but at the same time, this makes them skillful in winning negotiations. According to Kuyumcu & Dahling (2014), in organizations with constraints on performance efforts, Machiavellians receive favorable job performance evaluations from supervisors, evidence of a socially undesirable trait having socially desirable outcomes.

Another characteristic often labeled dark is Narcissism, but individuals who display such in moderation are generally perceived as being charming, charismatic, and having bold visions, and therefore are often nominated by their peers to be leaders.
(Brunell, Gentry, Campbell, Hoffman, Kuhnert, & DeMarre, 2008; Paulhus, 1998): “they tend to be extroverted and often times look like the prototypic leader. They have all the qualities that we value in a leader” (O’Reily, 2016, p. 8). That may be difficult to comprehend because of a Narcissist’s ego, but an individual has to have confidence in his/her ability, to see his/her potential, to even want to become a leader in an organization. Additionally, they are considered more leader-like during employment interviews (Schnure, 2010; Paulhus, Westlake, Calvez, & Harms, 2013); interestingly, individuals who are more narcissistic made a more more positive impression than those who were less narcissist. Narcissism has even been called an innovative characteristic in terms of “moving against” people (Zibarras, Port, and Woods (2008). However, the idea of extremeness still comes into play since at high levels Narcissists can be rejected because of their arrogance and ego, and because of such can be resistant to feedback and can be aggressive when challenged. Thus, not going to extremes with this characteristic is paramount:

I will describe the tight wire act that they [Narcissists] and their organizations must walk to ensure their balance. [...] To aspire to leadership at the top, a young manager needs a surplus of narcissism to even imagine themselves in the race. But if that trait goes unchecked, it can become a serious liability. (Conger, 2016, p. 23)

Although this review will not go through every dark dimension known and show its brighter aspect, Hogan and Hogan (2001) developed an inventory of 11 key dimensions of the dark side, trying to show that the dark side is hard to detect “because it is tied to the bright side in a twisted knot of strengths and weakness” (Kaiser, 2016, p.
39). The adapted taxonomy (Table 1) shows both the strengths (light) and weaknesses (dark)—the dimensionality or manifestations—of various leadership attributes valued by a culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dark Attribute</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Strength Dimensionality</th>
<th>Weakness Dimensionality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excitable</td>
<td>Moody, easily annoyed, hard to please, emotionally unpredictable</td>
<td>Passion and enthusiasm</td>
<td>Outbursts and volatility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeptical</td>
<td>Distrustful, cynical, sensitive to criticism, focused on the negative</td>
<td>Politically astute and hard to fool</td>
<td>Mistrustful and quarrelsome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Unassertive, resistant to change, slow to make decisions</td>
<td>Careful and precise</td>
<td>Indecisive and risk-averse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserved</td>
<td>Aloof, indifferent to the feelings of others, keeping to oneself</td>
<td>Stoic and calm under pressure</td>
<td>Uncommunicative and insensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisurely</td>
<td>Overly cooperative but privately irritable, stubborn, uncooperative</td>
<td>Relaxed and easy going</td>
<td>Passive aggressive and m-direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold</td>
<td>Overly self-confident, entitlement, inflated feelings of self-worth</td>
<td>Confident and conviction</td>
<td>Arrogant and grandiose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mischievous</td>
<td>Charming, risk-taking, limit-testing, and excitement-seeking</td>
<td>Risk tolerant and persuasive</td>
<td>Impulsive and manipulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorful</td>
<td>Dramatic, attention-seeking, interruptive, poor-listening skills</td>
<td>Entertaining and exciting</td>
<td>Melodramatic and grand-standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Original, unique perspective, thinking and acting in unusual or eccentric ways</td>
<td>Creative and visionary</td>
<td>Wacky ideas and constant change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diligent</td>
<td>Meticulous, precise, detail oriented, with a strong work ethic and high expectations</td>
<td>Hard working and high standards</td>
<td>Perfectionistic and micromanaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutiful</td>
<td>Eager to please and reluctant to act independently or express disagreement</td>
<td>Compliant and deferential</td>
<td>Submissive and conflict avoidant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Strong and Weak Dimensions of the Kaiser’s Eleven Dark Attributes.

(Adapted from “Dealing with the Dark Side,” by Kaiser, 2016, Talent Quarterly, 8, p. 40.)

This chart truly shows the “twisted knot” (Kaiser, 2016, p. 39) of an attribute, and the only way to unravel such is to look at whether the attribute is a strength, is valued, or a weakness, devalued in a particular culture and how such is manifested in the collective.
Just as with the Big Five traits, the attributes each have strengths or weaknesses associated with them, but how those are viewed, just like the FFM traits, is dependent on the culture and their level of degree.

As shown, dark dimensions can have bright sides, which Harms, Spain, and Hannah (2011) demonstrated in their longitudinal study of dark side traits over a three-year period and how personality, even the dark, can positively impact leader development. The dark side is:

[. . .] tied to the bright side in a twisted knot of strength and weaknesses. For instance, passion can be bound up with emotional volatility; confidence can be tangled with arrogance; eagerness to please can be looped around an inability to think for one’s self. (Kaiser, 2016, p. 39)

However, again the degree—the extremeness—of the leadership dimension is more important than the kind because:

At the extreme, one loses the flexibility to keep passion from verging into volatility or self-confidence from morphing into arrogance. To be effective, a person must maintain control—must have these tendencies rather than be had by them. The key is being selective about when to use them and to what degree. And since today’s operating environment is so fluid and rapidly changing, this versatility is crucial: What may be helpful in one culture can be a hindrance in another. In this view, the dark-side traits can be seen as strengths in overdrive, with the potential to become weaknesses through overuse” (Kaiser, 2016, p. 38)

**Cultural context.** Although bright and dark characteristics or dimensions are usually focused on the individual level, to fully understand them, consideration must be
given to the workplace, the cultural setting (Latta, G. F., personal communication, September 8, 2016). People cannot be separated from their environment, their situation, their culture (Judge et al. 2009; Zacarro, 2007). Therefore, this study will focus on how various characteristics play out and how they are strengthened by certain settings because the “specific levels at which optimal outcomes are found may vary by situation or cultures” (Harms & Spain, 2015, p. 20). Since Judge and LePine (2007) hinged the notion of dark and bright characteristics on whether they are socially desirable or undesirable, ultimately the focus will be on the socially determined aspect, meaning the culture, which is also socially constructed, in that this will ultimately determine whether a personality trait or behavior is bright or dark. Judge et al (2009) noted that the positive effect of a trait in one context can be a disadvantage in another, so again, understanding the culture in which he/she resides is critical. They analyzed social desirability in terms of light and dark dimensions: 1) socially desirable traits that normally are associated with positive implications (light), 2) socially undesirable traits that normally are associated with negative implications (dark), 3) socially desirable traits, that at extreme levels, have negative implications (dark), and 4) socially undesirable traits, that in particular situations, have positive implications. However, they also note that actual effects of a trait are dependent on a specific culture or content (Judge et al., 2009). Thus, whether a dimension is light or dark—valued or devalued—is in terms of the specific culture.

Leadership attributes are considered normative in that they are socially selected for in terms of the culture (Hogg, 2001). The formation of a culture is cognitively generated by the social categorization of self and others, and people form cultures as a prototype, attributes that identify similarities among individuals in the same culture and
differences between people from other cultures (Hogg, 2001 & 2006). Of utmost importance in the formation of culture is that people identify with that attributes of that group or culture. People norm to attributes that are deemed social desirable and the culture transmits these in certain environments, in this instance the ballet industry. A culture, or group norms, can “increase people’s motivation to exert effort on behalf of the group and its goals” (Hogg, 2006, p.124), resulting in social mobilization or a rise through the ranks of leadership. When identification with a certain culture occurs, the more influential the prototype, and unsurprisingly, those within the group look for those who are most prototypical, those are more socially attractive, viewing those people as a leader (Hogg, 2001 & 2006).

Leaders can be prototypical, but that does not mean they perfectly reflect the culture, which can have positive or negative manifestations. Instead they may simply be socially attractive by being unique: they have a special combination that allows them to be successful, a leader, instead of just a general member of the culture. In this particular study, that social allure, that unique combination, would be successfully navigating the thin line between light and dark manifestations of leadership attributes in the ballet culture. Because of this social allure, “[. . .] the most prototypical leader is able to exercise leadership by having his or her ideas accepted more readily and more widely than suggested by others” (Hogg, 2001, p. 189). Due to this, prototypical leaders do not have to exercise power, rather they are intrinsically motivating because they embody and embrace the group. Thus, the cultural values are socially designated to those within the group or organization so the classification of light and dark is within a specific context: clarifying the ballet culture and what it values will help clarify what is the connection.
between culture and leader selection. People norm to social desirability and the culture transmits that in certain environments, in this instance the ballet industry. The cultural values are socially designated to those within the group or organization so the classification of light and dark is within a specific context and its effect or manifestation on the collective.

People are often “blinded by the light” meaning they only notice the positive traits, those that most would consider socially desirable without question. However, those dark traits, those deemed socially undesirable, may be favorable in terms of moving up the social ladder, in becoming a leader in the organization. In fact, numerous studies show potential benefits of dark characteristics in work situations (Furnham & Trickey, 2011; Furnham, Hyde, & Trickey, 2012; Race, Hyde, & Furnham, 2012): “dark personality characteristics can be functional at specific levels or in particular situations” (Harms & Spain, 2015, p. 17). In fact, “some leaders achieve great things by capitalizing on the dark side of their souls” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 8). In the framework for discussion of implications of personality and leader effectiveness, Judge et al. (2009) draws on the person-situation interaction, and the idea of situation can be implied or transferred to the construct of culture, which is just a large scale situation. In turn, the context of the culture ultimately helps determine what is dark and what is light; therefore, the labels of “light” and “dark” are ultimately dependent on the culture (Latta, G. F., personal communication, September 8, 2016).

In order to be successful with an organization, an assumption would be that the person must understand the culture and become part of the culture, both the dark and light aspects, in that “both ‘bright’ and ‘dark’ side personality traits play a part in vocational
selection and success” (Furnham, Hyde, & Trickey, 2014, p. 592; Furnham, 2010; Higgs, 2009; Hogan, 2007). Yet, of necessity is understanding which of those traits, regardless of the label, are vital to the culture and valued by the culture in order to rise in the ranks. Naturally a bright dimension, albeit if important to the culture, helps one rise in the ranks of leadership, but “Organizational culture, procedures and governance can [. . .] play a role in fostering or discouraging dark side traits” (Watters, 2014, p. 9), and this is because this fostering or deterring is a product of what is important to the particular culture. If a person’s dark traits do not fit well with a culture, then naturally this would be expected to manifest itself in low effectiveness and satisfaction:

Thus, it is suggested that where correlations are positive between a dark trait and an occupational preference or value the trait is unlikely to cause the individual problems and may even facilitate performance. However, if the correlation is negative, the dark side traits would lead to stress, which would deleteriously affect performance over time. (Furnham, Hyde, & Trickey, 2014, p. 107)

In essence, leadership dimensions, even dark ones, are related to cultural values: the culture determines whether there is a dark side to being bright and a bright side to being dark through what is valued (Latta, G. F., personal communication, September 8, 2016).

The conceptual model that best encapsulates all the aforementioned—the leadership theories, the extremeness, and the context—is that of Judge et al.’s (2009), the Leader Trait Emergence Effectiveness heuristic model (LTEE). Although the model distinguishes genetics and selection process, something this study will not explore, the initiating construct is traits—both dark and light (although not an exhaustive list)—captured in one heading, demonstrating both can be impactful in terms of leader
emergence and leader effectiveness. (Naturally, emergence as a leader is necessary in order to be an effective one.) Yet, looking closely at the moderators of this model will reveal the ideas of threats, resources, and culture. Each of these three terms can be embodied under the idea of culture, meaning culture ultimately decides how those traits continue. With the influence of values of the culture, one would not advance or move through the mediators of getting along and getting ahead. The mediators also include skills and abilities, but again that is after being “valued” or moderated by the culture. Additionally, when looking closer at the model, of importance is that culture also moderates objective effectiveness, meaning the impact on unit survival, whether one remains an effective leader within the culture. This model proposes that culture moderates personality traits, and ultimately both the kind, and particularly the degree of those traits (both bright and dark), are what will determine whether a leader not only emerges within a culture, but is effective within a culture (Judge et al., 2009)

The Ballerina’s “Body” of Literature

Although countless people have probably attended a ballet, they are probably entranced by the performance, and that makes perfect sense because “there is nothing quite like the spell ballet casts” (Gordon, 1983, p. 7). However, reading the available literature will quickly cause the spell to be broken. A perfect summary of the literature is captured by an account taken after Gordan’s (1983) ethnographic study:

I learned that dancers must sacrifice any semblance of social or emotional life if they are to advance in a fiercely competitive and overcrowded field; that dancers are often injured because of undue pressures to perform when they are ill or exhausted or already suffering from a minor injury; that anorexia nervosa, a
psychological disorder in which young girls starve themselves, sometimes to death, is a prevalent problem among female dancers. And I found that dancers have terrible difficulty facing the real world once they leave the world of dance. I discovered that there was as much anguish as art in ballet, and that anguish was created by the ballet establishment; it was not inherent in the art. (p. 7)

Although this account was taken after an ethnographic study, most of the literature on the culture embodies the above issues, more the physical or bodily issues associated with ballet. However, a vital line in the quote its that the “anguish was created by the ballet establishment” (Gordon, 1983, p. 7), suggesting it is part of the culture. Just as the establishment may create the anguish—the dark—in these realms—so too it “creates” the leadership dimensions, both light and dark, by what it values. For the most part, ballet imposes homogenization, meaning one, especially a leader, must become the culture (Gordon, 1983). Whatever critical perceptions that an individual had before joining a group erode and their dependence on the group and its leaders “for guidance, interpretation, explanation, and normative control over activity and choices” (Baron, Crawley, & Paulina, 2003, p. 173). The only place that a dancer finds true individuality is in their daily livery, their practice attire in that dancers can change the color of their leotard and add adornments such as legwarmers, skirts, and sweaters. “To be a dancer is to join a family” (Gordon, 1983, p. 7) and that not only means in the tangible people, but also the family traditions, symbols, rituals, etc.—the culture—are inherited. Another metaphor that connects culture and ballet is that “dance is a liqueur which is distilled of the stuff of culture (Polhemus, 1993, p. 9). Wulff (1998) even believes that dancers gradually absorb and mirror their culture:
Dance is a stylized, highly redundant schema of a people’s overall physical culture which is itself the embodiment of that particular people’s unique way of life—their culture in the broadest sense of the term. Dance is the metaphysics of culture. (Polhemus, 1993, p. 8)

**Body and anorexia.** When considering the bodily frame of a dancer, the image that probably comes to mind is the “Balanchine princess.” George Balanchine co-founded the New York City Ballet and is styled as the father of the American ballet, in that he redesigned or invented the image (from his own ideals) that is synonymous today with that of a ballerina: tall, long limbed, arched and flexible feet, narrow hips, shapeless, breastless, long neck, and a small head (Kelly, 2012; Gordon, 1983; Benn & Walters, 2001; Kirkland, 1986; Kelso, 2003; Stinson, 1998). However, behind their perfect bodies is a not-so perfect culture. Nobody expects the ballet body to be “normal,” but that figure takes training and maintenance and part of that is weight, or lack thereof. Some might attribute the desire to weigh less to the fact that female dancers are lifted in the air by partners, but the preference for a waif-like body-image has more to do with the fashion and taste of the culture. In fact, in the 19th century portraits show thicker dancers, but over the decades, especially in American ballet since the 1970s, thinness became paramount.

Early on, a dancer’s weight is scrutinized and because of such meals are skipped, caloric intake is minimal, and at the extreme, anorexia becomes involved (Aalten, 1997; Kelly, 2013; Bentley, 1982). (In fact, it is estimated that 15 percent of the girls at American ballet schools suffer from anorexia nervosa and many more have eating disorders [Gordon, 1983, p. 40]). Maintaining a small percent of body fat is desirable in
that in doing so one can delay the onset of menstruation and keep dancers in a “puberty holding pattern” (Vincent, 1979, p. 99). Because of the lack of hormones and estrogen, the breasts and hips are kept from forming (Kelly, 2013). Most ballet dancers are between 10 to 15 percent below the ideal weight for their height (Hamilton, 1998). This is maintained because studies have shown that dancers only consume 700 to 900 calories a day (Benn & Walters, 2001). Although this body-image issue may start at a young age, it is even more pronounced in professional dancers, those in ballet companies. In fact, most professional companies have “appearance clauses” in their contracts which stipulate that if a dancer’s weight increases, she/he is eligible to lose her position (Gordon, 1982; Saint Louis Ballet, 1993). Although Balanchine may have created the preference for thin, that “ideal” has certainly survived since him. His successor at the American Ballet Theatre, and a famous dancer himself, Mikhail Baryshnikov was said to have fired a dancer in the middle of a rehearsal because he could not stand to look at her because she was fat (Gordon, 1983). Jennifer Ringer (2014), a principal for the New York City Ballet, actually recounts how her body image became an obsession and morphed into anorexia. Although she was ultimately able to battle this disease and weight, she was fired for doing so. She eventually returned to the company, only to have a critic comment on how she was fat, creating a firestorm of publicity and ultimately drawing further attention to the shadows lurking in ballet. Additionally, it is not uncommon for professional dancers to be greeted by a scale when they enter a studio for practice, and not only are the weights recorded, but they are often shared aloud to the entire class.
Thus, “Female dancers’ bodies are moulded to conform to the cultural form of dance” (Aalten, 1997, p. 212), and from an early age, the culture reinforces that weight comes with punishment and reward:

Ballet is truly an entire world all to its own. It functions within society, but it is a distinct group that should be recognized as such. The world of ballet has its own idea of what the body should look like that is more extreme than the rest of the world. [. . .] Dancers are raised in this subculture of ballet, many from as young as the age of three. They spend every night in this world among directors, teachers, and other students who help to normalize ballet’s ideas and values, and they internalize these messages. Dancers rely on their teachers for support and guidance, but also for approval and selection of parts in ballet. (Kelso, 2003, p. 8)

(Although to the outside world, this body image may seem extreme, to a dancer it does not because it is valued by the culture and they form “their ideas of healthy and normal [. . .] according to the norms and values of the ballet world (Benn & Walters, 2001, p. 14): expectations of body images are learned from the culture and dancers’ fixation on their weight is related to anxiety to conform to the vocation’s values and culture. Actually a plethora of evidence shows that punishing dissenters, or non-conformists, is an organizational norm while conformist behaviors are rewarded (Tourish, 2013, p. 49). The ballet ideal should not be necessarily chastised in that “many executives experience the need to create idealistic, powerful images of the organization in which they work. In other words, they create an idealized organization in the mind” (Kets de Vries, 2006, p. 316). For a person who wants to excel, to be the leader in the ballet culture, this becomes
even truer in that body image is visually evident in leader selection and casting in ballet roles. Ballet ideals are thought to be part of the cultural heritage and can be traced historically, as well as have been transmitted through film and photographers and by dancers who have morphed into more administrative roles in the ballet (Benn & Walters, 2001).

Although training certainly contributes to the perfect body image, so too does the ballet environment, the physical culture. Most ballet studios are lined with mirrors, causing one to naturally become entranced, but also critical, of a dancer’s image. In fact, a dancer claimed she felt like Narcissus because she stared at her own image so much (Benn & Walters, 2001). Furthermore, costumes contribute to the fixation on body image in that just like all other attire, they can highlight certain aspects of the body. Think of a leotard or costume, it is essentially like a bathing suit (sometimes even less material) with embellishments, which does not leave much to the imagination. Balanchine ballets are often choreographed in simple leotards, no frills, so that viewers can truly take in the lines of the body. However, that also means that every ounce of fat on a dancer is exposed, making it serve as a double-edged sword (Farrell, 1990; Benn & Walters, 2001).

**Injury.** Clearly from the focus on body-image within the culture, health is not always the top priority, but instead, the dance, the art, is the most important. With this mind-set, the fact that injury runs rampant in ballet should not be a surprise. In a survey of ballet dancers, 47% of those interviewed had experienced chronic pain and 42% had suffered from an injury in the past six months that had prevented them from performing (Tajet-Foxell & Rose, 1995, p. 31). In fact, when a doctor asked about where a dancer felt pain and how long it had endured, she looked at him befuddled and said, “But I feel
“pain all the time!” (Aalten, 2007, p. 115). However, those injuries are often the product of the culture itself—the training, the choreography, career structures, and increased athleticism of the profession. The amount of injuries should not be shocking since:

Dancers defy the principles of human design. [ . . .] Human toes were not designed to stand on. Unfortunately, dancers know this very well, but they stand on them anyway. [ . . .] When dancers learn to turn out 180 degrees from the hip, to dance on pointe, to hold their torsos high off their waists, to arch and point their feet unnaturally, the muscles involved in these operations are strengthened in one way, but weakened in another. (Mazo, 1974, p. 230-231)

While some of this can certainly be attributed to technique, another factor is the occupational culture of the ballet (in that culture promotes that the body is malleable) (Aalten, 2007). Injuries are actually just accepted as inevitable in ballet life and that culture seems to be committed to the idea that “the show must go on” (Wainwright and Turner, 2004; Turner & Wainwright, 2003); pain is more or less part of the calling.

Naturally injuries are painful, but there is also always the ever present fear that an injury can end one’s career (Farrell, 1990; Kelly, 2012) and, therefore, a dancer may be hesitant to even mention or attend to an injury. Since an injury can stop a dancer from dancing, either for a short term or permanently, and that being a dancer is more than just an occupation, injury also affect self-identity in that ones loses their ability to perform (Wainwright & Turner, 2004; Wainwright, Williams, & Turner, 2005; Turner & Wainwright, 2003). In other terms, the “dancer’s body is both the medium and the outcome of their innate physical capital” (Wainwright, Williams, & Turner, 2005, p. 58), and so when there are physical problems, this can also cause psychological issues in that
without dance, which injury prevents, one can feel empty: “the organizational ideal has other important psychological functions” (Kets de Vries, 2006, p. 316). Plus, in terms of the ballet companies themselves, although an art form, they are still a business, and an injured dancer can have financial consequences. Thus, dancers just accept that in order to be good and to advance, he/she just has to endure the pain, to suffer. In fact, some dancers take it as a sign that they are working hard and improving one’s self physically, that idea of “no pain, no gain,” and therefore the pain is actually welcomed (Wulff, 1998).

Although pointe shoes and tutus might not seem “dark,” the ballet culture is a competitive environment, where perfection is prized, meaning that it is a culture of risks:

Dancer’s attitudes to pain are embodied, and they epitomize the connections between the individual (the dancer) and the (ballet) institution. Being a dancer requires a stoical attitude to pain—indeed, injury, pain, and suffering were seen as playing a central role in the development of the artistic sensitivity. (Wainwright, Williams, & Turner, 2005, p. 62)

These risks and this acceptance of pain can be tied to a litany of injuries (that is not even complete): a torn meniscus, broken toes, pulled hamstrings, metatarsal fractures, sever cartilage degeneration, torn ligaments MCL tears, patellofemoral syndrome (“chondromalacia”—knee pain), fractured fibulas, torn muscles, and various combinations of muscle strains, sprains, chronic hip, knee, and back pain, and bruised toe nails (McEwen & Young, 2011). Clearly, “dance is hell on the body” (Gordon, 1983, p. 136); however, dancers willingly conform to the “pain principle,” meaning a belief system in which pain is considered inevitable and that one’s worth is enhanced through
endurance (Sabo, 2004, p. 64). The most common way that dancers endure such is through the silencing of the body: push it down and suck it up—endure. Again, when a dancer verbalizes injury and pain, that means that he/she cannot dance and must take time to heal. Interestingly, while most dancers will claim they listen to their body in terms of choreography and movement, injury is the one exception. Dancers hide their injuries for fear of what others, particularly teachers, choreographers, and artistic directors will think, and not only how that will affect their current performance, but also future performances. They also worry about their peers, their seeming equals, in that if one cannot dance, that means someone else can, and that person gets the opportunity, the spotlight. Furthermore, in a profession that prides itself on training and perfection, if the body cannot endure—it gives out—what does that say about one’s self: again, the body should be malleable. The culture is about the dance, and with or without pain, the curtain will rise, and one wants to be the dancer in the role, even if it means enduring pain and further injury.

**Aging and retirement.** Perhaps the biggest “injury” that a dancer can sustain is aging, but unlike broken toes or torn ligaments, aging cannot be fixed: it cannot heal. However, when the lifespan of a dancer tends to be around thirty years of age and youth is prized (Gordon, 1983; Farrell 1990; Wainwright & Turner, 2006; Edward & Newall, 2012), the fear of aging and the fact that it is inevitable is one that twirls within a dancer’s mind constantly (Gordon, 1983, Farrell, 1990; Bentley, 1982; Bull, 2011):

The everyday nature of what we [ballet dancers] do is another of the oddities of a dancer’s life. Every night the curtain comes down and the next morning we’re back at the barre again; another day, another set of plies. It can fool you into thinking that life is like this, that there will always been another chance to try
again to get it right. And then, at some point, the curtain comes down for the last
time and the final smattering of applause fades away. (Bull, 2012, p. 203)

In fact, ballet dancers are sometimes equated to bag ladies in that they “suddenly appear
out of nowhere, and then, just as suddenly, they disappear, and no one knows where
they’ve gone” (Gordon, 1983, p. 169). Some dancers wake up one day simply to be told
they are “too old” and yet others see and know their demise, watching their performances
slowly dwindle.

Coupled with the idea of not dancing is also the realization that one is not
equipped to step into a different profession. By entering ballet at such an early, a dancer’s
educational training and experience has been behind a ballet barre, not in the outside
world. Although some think that retirement will not pose problems in that they can
always teach ballet classes, this requires a different mindset and skills than performance;
dancers are performers and are accustomed to being in the spotlight, particularly the true
leaders, but teachers’ have more of a secondary role. Another facet of retirement that can
pose a problem is the financial issue in that most dancers do not have large salaries and
the majority of their money has been spent on their craft (Gordon, 1983). One dancer
sums it up perfectly:

The ballet world doesn’t help you make real-life decisions, not because it is
glamorous but because it is hard work. You put those decisions off, you think
about the next class, the next year. You think, ‘I have to learn to jump this year; I
have to learn to move more fast this year.’ But now [retirement age], I have done
it all. It is over. But the difference is, now I don’t know where I’m going, and I
used to know exactly where I was going. (Gordon, 1983, p. 183)
Leadership Emergence in Ballet Culture

When a dancer enters the ballet industry, he/she is beholden to the culture and all that entails. If one has to accept the ideals of body image, the persistence of injury, and the career repercussions of aging, then the acceptance of what the culture values in terms of leadership attributes, both light and dark dimensions seems plausible. Research needs to be conducted to clarify what the ballet culture values in its leaders in terms of light and dark dimensions of leadership characteristics, to better understand leadership emergence and effectiveness across the collective. Most of the current research on ballet culture looks at the individuals (e.g. autobiographies and biographies) or topics associated with the physical body. But this study will assess the group—its values—and how this impacts the individual in terms of leadership advancement—“getting on pointe.”

There is little to no literature about what the ballet culture values in terms of leadership dimensions. A few postings from former dancers exist on what the discipline helped instill in them, but again, these are not research-based, but rather personal insight. Although there is an article about how dance (the electric slide) teaches leadership (Peterson & Williams, 2004), the focus is not ballet nor what the culture values. This study will focus on assessing the particular bright and dark attributes that are promoted and valued by the culture and therefore more likely to be internalized by those that emerge as the “appropriate” leader (Tourish, 2013). The assumption is that if leaders embrace an organizational identity set for them by their leaders, display commitment to organizational goals and adopt the organization’s values in terms of light and dark leadership dimensions, and avoid deviant behavior, then he or she is more likely to emerge a leader. Another way of viewing it is that leaders are “bound up with their ability
to demonstrate that they embody what are deemed to be the prototypical properties of the group” (Tourish, 2013, p. 73). But these assumptions have not been evaluated against empirical evidence.

In the 1980s a revitalization of trait-based approaches to leadership emerged, emphasizing complex interaction between characteristics or traits and situation. This has been taken even further by Hogan et al. (1994) with the inclusion or labeling of attributes as “bright”, in turn producing its counterpart of “dark. However, environment influences attributes and behaviors, which is why in this research study, the focus will be on the relationship between a ballet dancer and his/her social situation; one is not chasseing (gliding that involves a step-to-step pattern) past the trait concept, but instead will examine how leadership characteristics are nurtured by the culture or the situation: culture can only select for attributes and influence their expression, not create them. Trait theory is more than just predicting a few essential traits; rather, it becomes more applicable with the caveat that individuals can and do emerge as leaders across a variety of situations. This research will choose to focus on both the intrinsic characteristics and the behaviors of the person that are nurtured or strengthened by the ballet because a culture selects leaders with certain attributes based on what it values.

Just as with early trait theory, which leaned toward the positive attributes of great men, ballet culture, from an outsider’s perspective, may seem positive with its beauty and art, but as made evident, there are shadows, a darker side, and this is also true in terms of leadership. Thus, this study will go beyond the bright traits—the FFM model—in that it will not only include a wide array of personality attributes not captured by the model, but it will also encompass dark attributes (Hogan et al, 1994). Just like light or bright
characteristics, the dark side characteristics exist and persist because they are functional, at least at some level in a particular culture. For example, “the ability to think outside the box is necessary for creativity, but highly odd behaviors can be disruptive” (Harms & Spain, 2015, p. 19). In the context of ballet, creativity is certainly prized in that dance is an art, but that can be disruptive to the technique and culture of ballet. Also, studying the dark side may lead to a better understanding of leadership by complementing the traditional positive emphasis since “it’s clear that many of the qualities of a strong leader have both a positive and negative face” (Conger, 1990, p. 55). While bright and dark certainly have connotations, both can have positive or negative impacts, as evidenced by the degree or extremeness of the trait. However, the kind of trait and the degree that is beneficial or productive in terms of leadership is dependent on the culture: the culture established those “rules.” Therefore, in the ballet culture bright and dark characteristics may be developed and necessary in order to become a leader, but again that is based on what the culture finds important, and so one needs to determine what ballet culture values in terms of leadership dimensions (Latta, G. F., personal communication, September 8, 2016).

Again, the sharing of culture is developed from interactions of the group or organization: being developed by the group, culture tends to be historically based and unique to the particular context—the ballet industry: “in every organization, there are cultural values, beliefs, and norms, and behaviors that are affirmed and transmitted throughout the organization [. . .]” (Kets de Vries, 2006, p. 308) and leadership dimensions are not immune. Organizational leadership “encourages (often unconsciously) the dissemination and acceptance of powerful idealized images. At every
occasion, public or otherwise, employees are given opportunities to assimilate imagined
attributes, values, and attitudes into this organizational ideal” (Kets de Vries, 2006, p.
317). But again, the industry, in this case ballet, will determine what leadership
dimensions are valued by the culture and in turn those values will more than likely have
been internalized in order for advancement: dancers have to accept the ideologies of the
culture in order to be promoted, and the crux of this study will be what are the ideologies
or values of bright and dark leadership prized by ballet culture.
CHAPTER 3
Methodology

Introduction

Ethnography, the methodology chosen for this study, is when the researcher takes an in-depth look at culture. Having been born out of the field of cultural anthropology (Creswell, 2007), ethnography is distinct from other research methodologies because of its emphasis on culture and what occurs or is shared within the culture, in this instance the culture of the ballet industry. The anthropological idea of cultural communities eventually became linked with organizations in that they provide a type of fieldwork, a better understanding of regularities, patterns, and generalization governing human behavior and social behavior (Fetterman, 1998). “Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 473), and an organization, just like a tribe, a family, or a village, is a group, a community. With ethnography, a researcher studies a cultural group or a particular phenomenon in a naturalistic setting, using primarily observation and interviews to gather data over an extended period of time (Madison, 2005; Patillo-McCoy, 1999) so as to construct a nuanced report of what is happening within the culture.

Ethnography is fairly flexible, capturing the lived realities of participants in their natural context (Creswell, 2003) so as to present a composite view of normative behavior. Although some would claim ethnography is anything but accurate, presenting a biased perspective on a culture, the objective is to emphasize and build upon the perspective of the people studied by gaining an insider’s view (emic perspective) in addition to an outsider’s view (etic perspective). Ethnography allows a researcher to witness and make sense of a culture, giving priority to and accepting as “truth” the explanations provided
by the participants and the evidence of such by the context or environment (Fetterman, 1998). Since this study examines what ballet culture values, and uses this lens to examine attributes of leadership in the industry in terms of light and dark dimensions, being immersed in the daily life and practices of the ballet industry was necessary so as to understand the culture of the dancers. Creswell (1998) explains ethnography as:

A description and interpretation of a cultural group. The researcher examines the group’s observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life [ . . . ]. As a process, ethnography involves prolonged observation of a group, typically through participant observation in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people or through one-on-one interviews with members of the group. The researcher studies the meaning of behavior, language, and interactions of the culture sharing group. (p. 58)

Ethnography involves an inductive and bottom up process of data analysis and interpretation by description. “The ethnographer enters the field with an open mind, not an empty head,” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 437) meaning that before collecting the first ounce of data, he/she has considered the entire undertaking, and even wades through his/her own preconceived notions about people’s behavior and thoughts. Clarifying what the researcher brings as bias allows assumptions to be recognized and questioned. The researcher comes to the study prepared but “still open-minded enough to explore rich, untapped sources of data not mapped out in the research design” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 437). The researcher is seen as the primary tool of data collection during the fieldwork, gathering evidence from observations and interviews that is situated in the specific time and space of the study. From such data, an interpretative story of the culture—a
description of the culture—is generated as the final product. This description is at both the technical and functional levels, so as to be interpretative.

Through this study, the paradigm or framework used for interpretation is both functional and symbolic during analysis so as to allow the “story” to be told more completely (Sackmann, 1991). The functional paradigm is focused on how the culture exists to help the organization meet its challenges—what the culture does for an organization and how it functions. The functional paradigm focuses on the selection of the leaders within the ballet industry culture. A symbolic paradigm during analysis does not emphasize the function of the culture, but rather the abstract and its meaning making, thereby probing into the significance behind the selection process. The emphasis strives for an insider’s (emic) view in order to create a complete picture of those studied: “the ethnographer is both storyteller and scientist; the closer the reader of an ethnography comes to understanding the native’s point of view, the better the story and the better the science” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 438).

Ethnographies are particularly useful at depicting cultural portraits because those under study are presented holistically and in context (Airasian, Gay, & Mills, 2009). Describing the culture in detail is possible since ethnography is grounded in an epistemology that posits that the social world is socially constructed (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). The light and dark leadership dimensions that are the focus of this study are those that are socially constructed norms. To truly understand norms, it is critical is see how light and dark traits are socially constructed in a particular context or microcosm of society, and what value that specific culture places on leadership dimensions and how they are manifested in order to properly understand those attributes as light and/or dark.
Research Questions

The primary overarching research question guiding this ethnographic study are:

What is the industry-wide culture of the American ballet as reflected in three classically-based professional ballet companies in the United States: one located in the Rocky Mountain region, one in the Midwestern region, and one in the Pacific Northwest region?

The following secondary research questions serve to guide the interpretation of cultural data collected:

1. What are the attributes valued among individuals selected for leadership roles within the ballet culture?
   a. What are the light dimensions of those attributes in the culture of the ballet industry?
   b. What are the dark dimensions of those attributes in the culture of the ballet industry?

2. How does the culture of the ballet industry nurture these attributes among individuals groomed and selected for leadership positions?
   a. To what extent are leaders expected/allowed to manifest the light dimensions of these attributes?
   b. To what extent are leaders expected/allowed to manifest the dark dimensions of these attributes?

Research Design

Study participants and setting. An understanding of the setting within which the events and experiences occur is integral to the data collection and data analysis of ethnographic research. To recruit ballet companies to participate in the study, the
principal investigator contacted the Artistic Director and/or the Executive Director of each ballet companies via email and then had follow-up conversations via phone or email mainly with Administrative Assistants to the directors to solidify the details and logistics. Of the 130 ballet companies in the United States, all were initially contacted except one because of location. In order to study the culture of the ballet industry, this qualitative research study takes place in three ballet companies in the United States: one located in the Rocky Mountain region, one in the Midwestern region, and one in the Pacific Northwest region. All are classically-based professional dance companies located in urban areas and they represent different segments of the industry because of their size (large, medium, and small). The focus of this study is on industry norms: individual ballet companies are not separately profiled in the analysis.

Ethnographic observations and interviews are carried out within each participating ballet company, focusing on how the membership of each socially constructs the culture of that specific organization, as an exemplar of the industry at large. All levels within the organization are observed in order to understand distinctions and interactions among groups. Individuals from each of the following groups are selected for one-on-one interviews: the corps de ballet, the soloists and principal dancers, administration, and production. Entry into each ballet company is obtained from each organization via email (see Appendix A) granting consent through a letter of support on organizational letterhead from the head of the participating organization granting permission to observe members during regular organizational activities, and to solicit willing individuals for confidential interviews to take place in a non-public, private location either on site or at a remote location, based on the interview’s preference (see
Appendix B). To facilitate solicitation of individual interviews, the head of each participating company is asked to provide access to a list of members’ email. The list provided is used to solicit individual participants to consent to one or more interviews (see Appendices C and D). Participation is completely voluntary and responses are kept confidential. Each organization is also provided a script detailing what members of the organization will be told, if anything, via the head of the organization about the principal investigator’s presence (see Appendix E). In the event the principal investigator is approached during observations and asked about what she was doing, the information shared is similar to that shared by the organization (see Appendix E). In order to guarantee that participants’ names remain confidential throughout the duration of the research, all identifying names of participants are assigned pseudonyms, and the key is kept separate from field notes and stored in a locked file cabinet in the principal investigator’s office. The reason for the key is to ensure that all data and quotes were attributed to the correct participant. The key is destroyed after all data analysis is complete. The key is secured in a separate locked filing cabinet from the informed consents, data, and study artifacts so as to ensure participants’ confidentiality. Only the principal investigator and co-investigator (dissertation advisor) have direct access to all confidential information pertaining to the participants and the confidential information is to be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. These and all protocols for protecting the rights of participants in this study are approved by the applicable institutional review board.

The process of recruiting study participants includes examining the following criteria of participants in the organization: their role, their participation within, their
leadership role(s), and their time at the company. Stratified recruitment strategies are used to solicit participants in proportion to population distributions of gender and role, continuing throughout the period of residency in each company to achieve saturation.

**Key Informants.** Key informants, knowledgeable sources of insights into the dynamics of each culture who are willing to engage in ongoing dialogue with the principal investigator, are sought out in the process, whether that be from emergence or recruitment. One key informant is identified in each of the divisions of the organizations: *corps de ballet*, performing leaders, and administration, and production. The primary advantage of the key informant(s) is the quality or depth of information obtained over a relatively short period of time in that they are willing to participate in follow-up interviews. Key informants are invited to participate in additional two to three half hour interviews. Willingness to participate in each subsequent interview constitutes participants consent to serve as key informants. Willingness to participate in one follow-up interviews does not obligate them for future interviews (see Appendix D). The key informants’ perspectives are leveraged to gain greater understanding of the underlying beliefs that inform the social and structural components of the culture of the ballet industry.

**Role of researcher and subjectivity.** Using ethnographic methods to capture the culture of the ballet industry requires the principal investigator to be clear about factors that could bias her perspective. Several recommended precautions are taken to guard against researcher bias. First, the principal investigator is an observer-participant, documenting the behaviors and traits of the dancers as they occur in the natural context from a visible position, but not engaging in the activities of the organization. Having the
participants feel comfortable being observed and interviewed is essential in order for them to fully share their experience and culture. Thus, the goal is to expose the participants to minimal discomfort and anxiety, while accomplishing the goal of the study, so as to not interrupt or change the natural environment. As an observer-participant, the principal investigator establishes rapport through observations of daily routines and interviewing, all the while observing boundaries for participation and involvement within the culture.

In reporting the results of any qualitative study, it is important to disclose the researcher’s personal background so that any potential impact on the interpretation of the data can be judged by others. The principal investigator in this study took ballet for more than a decade in a rural studio not located in any of the three geographic regions included in this study. In addition, the co-investigator took ballet lessons for one year as a child, and for two years prior to data collection, the principal investigator’s daughter had participated in a ballet pre-professional training academy, affording exposure to several of the leaders in that particular organization. Thus, coming to the ballet culture without some expectation or preconceived notions about the general ideas and workings of the dance form was not possible.

Given that all of these experiences could potentially serve as sources of bias with respect to the culture of the ballet industry as a whole, several precautions were taken to promote objectivity in data analysis and interpretation. First, neither investigator was ever involved in a professional ballet organization, much less in an urban area, so the ballet culture being studied on a large scale as part of this study is beyond the immediate experience of either investigator. Additionally, since this study adopts an industry-wide
perspective on examining light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes among members of the ballet community, researcher bias is further minimized because of the principal investigator’s limited understanding of how the culture is developed and maintained across the industry. Finally, to further guard against researcher bias in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data, the study’s co-investigator, who does not share the principle investigator’s long exposure to the ballet culture, was instrumental in creating the theoretical framework, methodologies and instrumentation (including interview protocols) employed in data collection, and provides oversight and input throughout all phases of data analysis and interpretation, pointing out and correcting bias and highlighting conclusions that might otherwise have been overlooked due to preconceptions about the ballet culture.

**Media bias.** The image most conjure of the American ballerina is the symbol created in the mind of Balanchine, founder of the New York City Ballet. While that lanky physique has certainly become iconic, the question is, “Was it society, or was it Balanchine?” (Kelly, 2012, p. 193), meaning that in part, society, influenced by media, has created its own picture of ballet culture. With films like *Black Swan* and *First Position: A Ballet Documentary* (citation check APA for appropriate format and add to References), “There is an enduring perception that ballerinas live on air, unfettered by earthly concerns, and so they are not in need of special protections. As artists specializing in wordless dance, ballerinas appear voiceless and are expected to be silent—an image exploited by their employers, who generally overwork and underpay them . . .” (Kelly, 2012, 147). In fact, even before said film, in 1979 America learned first hand about the meager salaries and paltry benefits of dancers in the American Ballet Theatre, when the
media covered them “taking to the streets, carrying placards, drawing public attention to the plight” (Kelly, 2012, 148). Historically, ballerinas of color have been rare, but the media has been sure to feature how Misty Copeland certainly pushes the boundaries of ballet, not only by being the first African-American principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre, but also through her buxom physique. Ballet has always been a part of American culture, but:

Over the past several years, we have watched ballet slowly float down from the stage, into the audience, and eventually, beyond the theatres into the ‘normal world’ infiltrating both artistic mediums and social media. You can now follow your favorite ballerina on Twitter. You can watch ballet on the big screen, with movements such as Ballet in Cinema, broadcasting performances from top European countries into movie theatres around the world. You can read about the high and lows of professional careers via blogs and books such as Sophie Flack’s much-acclaimed *Bunheads*. (Alexandra, 2013)

Yet, that exposure comes at a cost in that it creates media bias or stereotypes within the American culture. Through ethnography, the researcher conducts an empirical analysis of culture in the ballet industry by suspending opinion about both their own experience and the experiences portrayed in the media. Without regard for these prior exposures, this analysis seeks neither to prove or disprove any particular perspective or bias, but rather allows an insider’s view (etic)—rather than ordinary view—of what is often considered an extraordinary world.
Instrumentation and data sources

Instead of taking a normative approach, an ethnographic approach is taken, meaning being immersed in a foreign culture, with the focus being on two primary methods of data gathering and analysis: systematic observations and conversational interviews. The basic assumption is that using multiple methods enriches the data set and allows for the triangulation of evidence to ensure confidence in interpretation of findings (Driskill & Brenton, 2011).

Observations. Observations, where the principal investigator is an observer-participant are performed in each of the three participating ballet companies over a two-month time period. The specific settings where access is provided for purposes of observation are: practices, rehearsals, meetings (in all levels of the organization), trainings, and performances. The scope of the observations focuses on everyone present (e.g. dancers, choreographers, support staff, board members, etc.), not just those who have leadership rank in the company. This provides a more holistic assessment of what the culture values in terms of leadership and the light and dark leadership dimensions of those leadership attributes. Angrosino and DePerez (2000) claim observations are “the fundamental basis of all research methods” (p. 673). Being an observer-participant permits the immersion required to understand a culture while maintaining the boundaries and objectivity required to see from an insider’s perspective. Merriam and Simpson (2000) likens participant observation to a “schizophrenic condition” because during the participation portion “one must be an observer, remaining as objective as possible while collecting information” (p. 105). Observation gained the principal investigator exposure
to the day-to-day activities of the ballet companies, while building rapport with participants.

Ethnographic observation requires prolonged engagement with the culture of the ballet industry, which “accentuates the presence by actively seeking out sources of data identified by the researcher’s own emergent design” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 136). The amount of time spent in the field is secondary; instead, being curious enough to seek out information and relentless pursuit of understanding the culture is primary (Driskill & Brenton, 2011). Prolonged observation provides “scope” for this study, while persistent observation provides “depth” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 304). Observation is what is noted through the eyes of the researcher, so paying attention to details is vital, as well as documentation through field notes. With observation, one is not merely paying attention to the participants, but also the setting and events (Driskill & Brenton, 2011). However, observation techniques range from passive participation to more active participation (Spradley, 1980) in that at times the researcher is merely present while in others engaged, respectively. Throughout data collection, these techniques or principles inform the conduct of principal investigator during data collection.

Since cultural context ultimately helps determine what is dark and what is light in terms of leadership dimensions in this study, accurate use of the labels “light” and “dark” is dependent on a comprehensive understanding the ballet culture. Observations are not performed with a list of established criterion for what constitutes light and dark, rather observations focus on what attributes are valued in the culture and what dimensions of these attributes are exhibited by leaders. Before assessing a dimension as light or dark,
the emphasis of observation is on the leaders and how they are prototypical within each company, how their attributes are manifested in the culture. That means observing those that might reflect the cultural perfectly, but also those leaders who are unique, allowing them to stand out from the corps de ballet.

**Interviews.** Coupled with the observations are follow-up, face-to-face interviews of members (all over the age of 18 years of age) in the ballet companies participating in this study. To delve into the organization, interviews are conducted with members of the *corps de ballet* as well as solo dancers, principal dancers, or those of higher rank in the organization (e.g. director, choreographer, support staff, etc.); both those on the stage and behind the scenes are interviewed in that understanding the interplay of all subgroups is needed to get a complete picture of ballet culture. In order to understand who and how leaders embody the culture, data reflecting all aspects, regardless of their amount of time in the organization and the instruction they receive or give within the organization, is collected.

Stratified sampling is utilized to solicit participants from among the *corps de ballet*; the soloists and principal dancers; administration, which is divided into two categories, artistic (e.g. choreographers, artistic directors, ballet mistresses and masters, etc.), and executive (executive directors, finance, marketing, development, etc.); and production (e.g. costume shop, stage manager, music, electrician, etc.). The ballet companies’ rosters form the basis for creating a deliberative sample from within each of the specified categories. The reason for the spilt of the administration category is that while both are heavily involved in the organization, they really focus on two different
aspects, with the artistic being the creative bent and the executive being the business aspect.

To the extent possible within the time provided, participants in each ballet company are solicited and interviewed until saturation is achieved (Fetterman, 1998). The principal investigator is not confined to interviewing or interacting with individuals holding the same titles in each ballet company since the objective is not to construct a comparative study, but rather to gain an industry-wide perspective. The interviews aid the interpretation of observed events and allow for probing with follow-up questions so as to obtain the richest cultural data. Interviews are conducted with participants as to reflect percentages similar to those of the demographics of the organization.

Each participant interview is an in-depth, semi-structured inquiry, lasting approximately one hour in length, and consisting of open-ended questions (see Appendix F) regarding participants’ experience in the culture of the ballet industry. The “semi-structured” format is used because although questions will be written in advance, follow-up questions may be necessary so as to generate “conversation” around a particular response. Semi-structured, versus structured interviews, permits more flexibility within the interview so as to better explore the perceptions of the respondent and to follow-up on new ideas (Esterberg, 2001). The interview questions probe to understand how those in the ballet industry organize their world, especially in terms of leadership, and the meaning attached to being a leader, specifically around light and dark attributes. The goal is to generate honest, truthful, deep, reflective responses from participants.

Respondents are asked interview questions that explore their experiences and behaviors, their culture, their opinions and values, their feelings, their knowledge, their
senses, as well as demographic/background information (Patton, 2002) (See Appendix F). Culture questions elicit descriptions of behavioral norms and the experiences, behaviors, actions and activities that would have been observable if the researcher had been present. Opinion questions attempt to elicit understanding the cognitive and interpretative processes: what a respondent thinks about an event or topic. The feeling questions help understand the emotional responses, which is critical since emotions are the label humans give their physical response to what happens around them. Knowledge questions help ascertain factual knowledge whereas the sensory questions will help with the description of events, activities, and people. Background or demographic questions are necessary to ascertain identity characteristics of the respondent (Patton, 2002). All of these questions help construct a more complete picture of the culture of the ballet industry in that, “At the heart of what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolize their experience through language” (Seidman, 2006).

Prior to the interview sessions, each interviewee is asked to review and sign a consent form (see Appendix D), permitting the interview to be audio taped and including an explanation of confidentiality and their rights as participants in a study. Participants objecting to being recorded are permitted to opt out of the audio component of the interview as part of the consent process. Participants are also informed of their right to refuse to answer any questions they wish not to answer, and to stop the interview at any point without explanation. Although the interviews are audio recorded so as to allow further reference, the principal investigator also takes notes during the interviews. This method of capturing the interviews ensures what is captured by the field notes can be verified or clarified later during data analysis. Although the technique provides little
disruption to the interview process, participants are permitted to opt out of being audiotaped as part of the consent process. Participants are informed of their right to refuse to answer any questions they find objectionable and intrusive and to stop the interview at any point without explanation. Copies of the signed consent forms, as well as audio tapes, are kept only for the principal investigator’s records and will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study, in accordance with Institutional Research Board protocols. The only exception to this is the pseudonym key, which is destroyed immediately after data analysis.

**Data Analysis**

“In ethnography, research analysis and data collection begin simultaneously” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 474). Because of this, an exorbitant amount of information is collected and needs to be distilled into a more manageable product that results in a thick text description or narrative (Merriam, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In an ethnographic study, the researcher is “representing in words what you have lived through as a person when your stated purpose was to study a culture” (Driskill & Brenton, 2011, p. 66). However, representing this in words, or narrative form, requires the organization of data—breaking information into manageable parts, developing codes, and searching for possible patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007): “Analysis is the search for patterns, cultural artifacts, and cultural knowledge in order to discover the relationships that exist among data” (Spradley, 1980, p. 85). Maxwell (1996) stresses the importance of beginning data analysis after the first observation or interview and continuing to analyze until the research concludes—being in continuous introspection. Data analysis is the process of inductive reasoning, reflection, and theorizing (Merriam, 2009), which leads to
gaining an understanding of what has been studied by refining interpretation continuously (Basit, 2003). Research or data collection is complete when the work has been saturated, meaning no new information is being garnered.

In order to make sense of the copious amount of data, looking for patterns or themes that emerge across the observations and interviews helps determine what the culture of the ballet industry values in terms of light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes. Although the interviews are audiotaped for this study, they are not transcribed. Instead, they serve only as a back-up for verifying field notes taken during the interviews. Creswell (2007) divided the data analysis of an ethnographic study into five parts: 1) data management, 2) coding and developing themes, 3) describing, 4) interpreting, and 5) representing. The multiple data sources help ensure triangulation, and in turn produce a rich, thick description of results (Merriam, 1998). Not only does triangulation help credibility, but it also helps “build a coherent justification” for the categories and themes (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).

Ethnographic observations in this study are not performed with a list of established criterion for what constitutes light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes; instead, attributes emerge from what is valued or devalued by the culture and both the positive (bright) and negative (dark) implications of how each is manifested in terms of leadership is documented. Social desirability is not interpreted in the universal sense, but rather in terms of what is sanctioned and unsanctioned by the “society” of the ballet industry. The crux of the issue is whether a dimension is light or dark, having positive or negative implications, or both, for the individual or organization—in terms of the specific culture. People norm to social desirability and the culture transmits that in
certain environments, in this instance the ballet industry. Taking into consideration the ballet industry’s “society” and the notion that traits can have effects and paradoxes, dimensionality certainly exists within attributes.

In qualitative analysis, themes are not always immediately recognized so to wade through the data, employing a coding system, symbolic analytic markers, helps to break the whole into parts. The codes emerge on their own after doing a holistic reading of all of field notes from the observations and interviews. Since the study requires looking across individual companies at the cultural dynamics of the ballet industry as a whole, coding is performed for both the interview and field notes once all data has been collected. Although the observational field notes reveal patterns or themes, the interviews help enhance these by providing details, specific examples, and anecdotes. Once multiple codes across the data appear, the principal investigator creates subcategories of the initial categories so as to prevent the data from being too broad or general. The codes are helpful in finding patterns and relationships among items across the data: the commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures within the codes allow for the emergence of themes. The coding and themes are reviewed by the co-investigator for consistency and comprehensiveness prior to interpreting results.

Within and across steps, the triangulation of data enables corroboration and clarification of the findings, respectively, so as to ensure relationships, patterns, and themes between observations and interviews. This process requires reflexivity, circling back to the data after studying each organization so that the process evolves along the way in order to create a complete picture of the collective culture of the ballet industry in final narrative. Even before stepping foot into the actual settings, understanding the
companies or industry’s presentation is necessary, meaning examining their websites, mission statement, and considering prior productions seen at the companies. Ultimately, systematically and rigorously revealing the methodology and one’s self as the instrument of data collection enables one to understand how the text is derived. Capturing the collective culture of the ballet industry is the essence of the study, but also while doing so through the ethnographer’s own voice.

Once themes across all data, not separate companies, are prominent, the interpretation process or description, finding examples to support the themes, is necessary. Instead of simply organizing information, this allows for interpretation and analysis—making inferences and developing conclusions about what the ballet culture values in terms of light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes. To organize the data into valued leadership attributes, and highlight the light and dark dimensions of each that manifest in the culture the framework reflected in Table 2 is utilized. The table enables the delineation of light and dark dimensions of each leadership attribute that emerge as valued within the ballet industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Attributes</th>
<th>Valued/Sanctioned by the Ballet Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Light (positive implications)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Attribute</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Attribute</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Leadership Attribute</td>
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<td>Leadership Attribute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Attribute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Attribute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Light and Dark Leadership Attribute Dimensionality Table.
Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the process of “moving up from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape. We are no longer dealing with just the observable, but also the unobservable, and are connecting the two with successive layers of inferential glue” (p. 261). The connection eventually creates a representation of the culture of the ballet industry—a narrative, which includes themes, quotations, data, and examples to support these, and commentary on how the themes relate to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). The co-investigator of the study also validated the data analysis and interpretation. As Richardson (2000) said, “Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’—a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it” (p. 923).

**Validity and Reliability Issues**

Since qualitative research is subjective, ensuring dependability, credibility, and confirmability is necessary (Driskill & Brenton, 2011). In order for an ethnographic study to be trustworthy (reliable and valid), it has to be plausible, consistent, interconnected, and accurate in detail (Stake, 2003). In order to ensure the validity or trustworthiness of this research study, prolonged data collection, triangulation, and the development of thick descriptions is utilized, ensuring verification throughout the research process. The data collection not only helps build relationships with participants, but also immersion in the culture. Because of the principal investigator’s prior experience with ballet, this engagement in the culture caused data to be scrutinized. Within and across steps, the triangulation of data also enabled corroboration and clarification of the findings, respectively, so as to ensure relationships, patterns, and themes between observations and interviews.
In an ethnographic study what is being determined is the participants’ view of their culture (Fetterman, 1999; Driskill & Brenton, 2011). Although their reality is ultimately assessed through the researcher’s observations and interviews, internal validity is a strength of qualitative research. The narrative derived by the ethnographer is congruent with the participants’ reality. Thus, ensuring reliable data collection, as described above, results in internal validity (Dane, 1990). However, data analysis can also bias a study, but the accuracy of coding and solidifying themes through multiple examples again ensured internal validity and reliability. The reliance on a co-investigator during data analysis and interpretation also enhances internal validity. Ultimately, this study will be deemed valid in the eyes of readers by how credibly it is perceived as measuring the lived experiences of the participants.

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalized to other situations. This report provides enough details about the study’s context, methods, and findings so that the reader can determine whether parallels can be drawn to other situations and contexts. This same specificity helps in replication of this study, but ethnography is about creating a picture of a culture, which is idiosyncratic, and so a similar study in a different culture may produce different results. The culture of the ballet industry is a single entity or culture that cannot be replicated because again it is socially constructed and thus what they value in terms of light and dark leadership traits would vary in a different cultural context. Although the settings or ballet companies are concentrated in the three regions of the United States, since the study examines the culture of the ballet industry as a whole and not separate ballet entities, the extrapolation
of the data beyond these geographical regions seems plausible in that one is looking at the “collective culture” of ballet.

**Ethical Considerations**

A primary ethical consideration in this study is assuring that responses remain confidential so as to prevent repercussions for participants (i.e. a perspective was not in line to that of a superior). Clarifying the principal investigator’s presence and reiterating the objectives of the study helps address this in that this is not a comparative study of the different ballet companies, but rather looking across to performing a collective study of culture and the dark and/or light dimensions of leadership attributes. Acting as an observer-participant increases access to the views and insights of the participating organizations while remaining on ethical ground.

**Summary**

Different ballet methods exist depending on the area of origin: Russian, French, British, Danish, Italian, and American. Three particularly popular methods are the Vaganova Method, the Cecchetti Method, and the Balanchine Method. With the Vaganova Method, the goal is precise, clean movements, albeit with a softness underneath while the Cecchetti Method is about solidifying the basics so that movements can be more internalized, and thus the dancer can become more self-reliant. The Balanchine Method revolves more around speed, meaning a dancer must be extremely fit and flexible, while still emphasizing the lines of movement.

While technical methodologies may be the basis for how ballet dancers are trained, their everyday behavior also shows “methods to their madness.” To most onlookers, a distinguishing feature of a ballerina is that on which she stands—the pointe.
shoe; in fact, dancers can use at least twelve pairs a week, very often more (Bentley, 1982, p. 38). To provide support for a dancer, a toe or pointe shoe includes a hardened toe area called “the box”, which is made of layers of paper and fabric that encase and support the dancer’s foot. No ballerina simply takes the shoes from the box and places them on her feet; instead, there is a method to their preparation:

We take them out of their plastic bags, pour Fabulon in the toes (to harden them), sew on ribbons and elastics, cut out the satin toe (it’s slippery), pull out the insole (it’s excess), soak the toes in water or alcohol (they’re too hard and too small), step on them (they’re too round), bend the shank in half (it’s too straight), shave the leather off the bottoms with a rasp (it’s too slippery), and bang them on the wall (they’re too noisy). We then put them on for a fifteen-minute ballet and as soon as it is over throw them away (there is not life in them). [. . .] But not one of us thinks a moment about it. To us they are simply toe shoes—essential, but enemies that must be beaten. (Bentley, 1982, p. 39)

Just as different methods of ballet exist, so too do a variety of research methodologies, and although the methodology for this study could not simply be “taken out of the bag and worn,” ethnography provides a viable means of assessing the light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes in the culture of the ballet industry.
CHAPTER 4
Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

Ballet began as an art form for kings, a court practice; however, when King Louis of Versailles stopped dancing in 1682, ballet became something for the masses (Kelly, 2012). This, coupled, with the creation of the first proscenium stage in France at the Palais Cardinal (later known as the Palais-Royal) in 1941, made the dancer the center of attention (Kelly, 2012). The “presentation” of the dancer became vital in that he/she was now facing an audience and was required to have more technique (Kelly, 2012). But these performances also “marked a significant juncture in the history of the ballerina, as from this point, she moved from a decorative object to an object of desire.” (Kelly, 2012, p. 14): now, instead of being simply a pretty presentation, she was being analyzed, scrutinized, objectified, and critiqued.

The research reported here does not represent a “significant juncture” (Kelly, 2012, p. 14) in American ballet, but methodologically it does represent a shift from focusing on individual dancers to exploring the industry-wide culture of the American ballet. The objective of this study is to initiate an exploration of the attributes valued among those selected for leadership roles, and the light and dark dimensions of those attributes that manifest within the culture. It also seeks to examine how the industry nurtures these attributes among individuals groomed and selected for leadership positions and to what extent they are allowed to manifest the light and dark dimensions of attributes. Similar to the evolution of the dancer, this chapter will be both presentation and analysis, presenting the results or themes that emerged from data analysis.
Demographic Description of Participants

This qualitative study, which consists of ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews, was conducted in three classically-based professional ballet companies in the United States: one located in the Rocky Mountain region, one in the Midwestern region, and one in the Pacific Northwest region. In total, approximately 3.5 weeks were spent in observation, with approximately one week at each ballet company. During this time, 75 semi-structured interviews were conducted, 40 of which were with males and 35 with females. Of those interviewed, 40 were dancers, 8 were artistic administrators, 2 were executive administrators, and 7 were production staff.

Observations. Observations were conducted, where the principal investigator was an observer-participant, in each of the three ballet companies over 3.5 weeks, spanning a two-month period, with approximately a week at each organization. The specific settings accessed for observations were: practices, rehearsals, meetings (in all levels of the organization), and performances. The scope of the observations focused on everyone present (e.g. dancers, choreographers, support staff, etc.), not just those who had leadership rank in the company so as to provide a more holistic assessment of what the culture values in terms of leadership and the light and dark dimensions of those attributes.

Observations were not performed with a list of established criterion for what constitutes light and dark, rather the focus of observations was on what is valued in the culture and what attributes were exhibited by leaders. All levels within the organization were observed in order to understand distinctions and interactions among groups.

Interviews. Coupled with the observations were follow-up, face-to-face interviews of members (all over the age of 18 years of age) in the participating ballet
companies. To delve into the organization, the principal investigator interviewed members of the *corps de ballet* as well as solo dancers, principal dancers, or those of higher rank in the organization (e.g. director, choreographer, etc.); both those on the stage and behind the scenes were also interviewed, as understanding the interplay of all subgroups was needed to get a complete picture of ballet culture. In order to understand who and how leaders embody the culture, data reflecting all aspects, regardless of their amount of time in the organization and the instruction they receive or give within the organization, was collected.

Stratified sampling was utilized with participants solicited from among the *corps de ballet*; the soloists and principal dancers; administration, which was divided into two categories, artistic (e.g. choreographers, artistic directors, ballet mistresses and masters, etc.), and executive (executive directors, finance, marketing, development, etc.); and production (e.g. costume shop, stage manager, music, electrician, etc.). The ballet companies’ rosters formed the basis for creating a deliberative sample from within each of the specified categories. The reason for the spilt of the administration category is that while both are heavily involved in the organization, they really focus on two different aspects, with the artistic being the creative bent and the executive being the business aspect. While both talk in terms of the product—the ballet performance or what goes on stage—their foci are quite different. While some roles, like costumes or music, may have an artistic flair to them in that they certainly play integral roles in the final product or performance, these are placed in the production category, not artistic, because ultimately the artistic staff decide their direction: these departments merely execute or produce the artistic vision.
Each of the ballet companies visited also have coordinating academies or schools that serve as possible feeder programs for the professional companies; however, because students are not considered professionals, and therefore unpaid, those affiliated with the academy or school portion of the organization, whether that be student or adult, are not included in interviews. Each company also has a board of trustees, which ultimately serves as the boss for both the Artistic and Executive Directors; however, board members, while perceivably considered leadership, were not included in the study in that while they have a foot in the ballet world by serving on their board, they have occupations (e.g. bankers, doctors, lawyers) outside of the ballet industry; therefore, their knowledge of the ballet industry was presumed to be somewhat limited in that they are not immersed in it on a regular basis. For purposes of this study, the board members’ involvement was thought of as having their proverbial noses in the business, but not their fingers: board members are up to their ankles with their involvement, while those within the organization are up to their necks.

The Rocky Mountain region organization, the first visited, also the largest of the three companies, provided 30 interviews. The breakdown of interview participants by role in this organization is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number Interviewed</th>
<th>Percentage in Role Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corps de Ballet</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal and Soloist Dancers</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration (Artistic)</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The dancers comprise the largest section of the organization, which makes sense since they are ultimately the product, the performers on stage. In turn, the largest percentage of interviews, a combined 14 (46 percent), were conducted amongst dancers. This organization also had the most stratifications within dancers of the three companies visited. Although the principal dancer role is customary, the soloist category within this organization has been divided into: First Soloists, Soloists, and Demi-Soloists. The breakdown of interview participants by dancer category in this organization is presented in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number Interviewed</th>
<th>Percentage in Role Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Dancer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Soloists</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soloists</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demi-Soloists</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Stratified sampling breakdown of the principal and soloist category dancers in the Rocky Mountain ballet company.
Although an assumption might be that the principal role would be the smallest because it is the most coveted role, the pinnacle of a career, ballet companies do not have a specified number within each category. The rankings within the organization do not have predetermined sets, but instead merely reflect the talent pool at the given time (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). A principal dancer, while having outstanding technique, must also have a blend of artistry and musicality, the ability to inspire and move the audience when he/she is the sole entity on stage: they must be able to command the performance when literally all eyes are solely on them. While dancers comprised 14 interviews, scheduling these was somewhat difficult since this organization was a member of the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA). Instead of simply being able to send out emails directly to solicit participation, an executive administration liaison had to do such. Moreover, because of union rules around work days, the liaison and principal investigator had to collaborate to find interview times that would work within schedules and still adhere to the dancers’ contract.

Currently one of the top ten ballet companies in the United States (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016), the Rocky Mountain regional company has a large executive staff just to ensure the organization runs smoothly. As the numbers reveal, the executive side of the organization is certainly heavier than artistic, with 27 members compared to 6, respectively; yet, the executive administration side encompasses more departments—marketing, finance, development, special events, outreach, etc. Artistic administration is primarily concerned with the dance. In total, across all groups, the organization consists of 85 people (again not including those affiliated with the academy) of which 30 were interviewed, for a total of 35 percent of the organization.
The ballet company located in the Midwestern region had no rank among dancers. The breakdown of interview participants by role in this organization is presented in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number Interviewed</th>
<th>Percentage in Role Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dancers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Artistic)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Executive)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Stratified sampling breakdown of interview participants in the Midwestern ballet company.

Not being an AGMA union like the Rocky Mountain region ballet company made access to dancers easier in this organization. Additionally, since they had a scheduled lunch break in their day, this helped provide a convenient time to conduct interviews. This particular organization also has one role that is unique, a title not reflected in either of the other two ballet companies studied, and that person’s role encompasses aspects of both the artistic and executive sides of administration. The individual occupying this role was included in the artistic administration staff because of his interactions with dancers, something not common on the side of the executive staff. The location of his office, which was in the artistic suite, and his constant interactions with the Artistic Director (he
is married to her), also helped solidify his inclusion into the artistic side of the organization. The 85 percent, instead of a 100 percent, reflected in the executive side of administration is simply, as shown in the table, the result of one person not being interviewed. Because of the size of this organization, the percentages reflected are 78 percent or above, with two being at 100 percent. The high access to groups certainly impacted the overall interview totals: 33 people total are in the organization, with 28 participating in interviews for a total of 84 percent of the organization.

The third, and final organization visited, located in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States, was also the smallest. The breakdown of interview participants by role in this organization is presented in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number Interviewed</th>
<th>Percentage in Role Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corps de Ballet</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Dancers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Artistic)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Executive)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Stratified sampling breakdown of interview participants in the Pacific Northwestern ballet company.
This organization is also a blend of the other two ballet companies in terms of the number of dancer rankings. They do rank, unlike the Midwestern ballet company, and they have the designation of principal dancer, like that of the Pacific Northwestern company, but every other dancer in the company merely is deemed the *corps de ballet*, meaning no soloist category exists. While they do have the label of “aspirant” for dancers, these were not included in the interviews because they are not official members of the professional company, and several of those at this level were minors and therefore did not qualify for participation in the study.

The single individual representing the production side was not always on site, making an interview difficult. The same can be said for the one person not interviewed in the executive administration side, resulting in 80 percent of that group being interviewed. This individual is freelance and was not readily available during the visit. However, as can be seen with the other roles in the organization, most were accessible, with 68 percent or above in each group being interviewed. Although 68 percent is not shown in the table, this is a result of the dancer categories being combined, giving a total of 16 dancers, 11 of which were interviewed. In total, the organization has 24 individuals and 17 were interviewed, for a total of 70 percent.

Although the tables do not show specific titles, the principal investigator was not confined to interviewing or interacting with individuals holding the same titles in each ballet company since the objective was not to construct a comparative study, but rather to gain an industry-wide perspective. Since the sample of ballet companies was selected to be representative of the industry as a whole, the total amount interviewed across the three ballet companies is important to consider. Because of the differences of ranking amongst
the three locations, the delineation of dancers has been eliminated in Table 7, to make the ballet companies more comparable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Within Organization</th>
<th>Total Number Across all 3 Organizations</th>
<th>Total Number Interviewed Across all 3 Organizations</th>
<th>Percentage in Role Interviewed Across all 3 Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dancers</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Artistic)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Executive)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Stratified sampling breakdown of interviewees across all three ballet companies participating in the study.

The production side of these organizations had the lowest participation in interviews overall, due to their lack accessibility and not always being on site. Since only one of the three ballet companies was actually in production mode, meaning in the midst of a performance, at the time of the principal investigator’s visit, this helps explain the limited need for production staff on site.

The artistic staff in all three organizations is by far the smallest portion of the overall organization in terms of total number existing in the organizations; however, their influence cannot go unnoted in that they essentially have a hand in every aspect of the organization. The artistic administration sets the season’s repertoire and then works with dancers to create the performance. In turn, the productions or performances determine the financial needs, the marketing aspect, and the ticket sales, just to name a few aspects of
the executive side. Furthermore, the artistic side determines the rankings of the dancers.

Lastly, the production, while certainly aware of the executive administration aspects, creates the artistic vision on stage, whether that be sets, lighting, costumes, etc. Thus, the principal investigator considered it important to try to interview as many artistic staff as possible, as evidenced by the 72 percent.

The executive aspect of administration is large relative to the artistic, ranging from executive directors, to development, to marketing, to human resources, and the list goes on, explaining why only 51 percent, compared to the 71 percent of artistic administration were interviewed; because of the breadth in the executive side of the organization, it would be difficult to capture all aspects.

When thinking of the ballet, the first thing that comes to mind is the ballerina, the dancer, another important interview category. However, with their long hours, and the strain on their bodies, resulting in a need for rest and/or physical therapy, to solidify a time with dancers for an interview was sometimes difficult. Since the degree of rankings vary across the participating organizations, comparing is difficult; however, themes reveal that ranking does impact both leadership roles and light and dark dimensions, which is why as much stratification as possible is included in the tables provided.

Ethnic diversity in these ballet companies is certainly evident: this was apparent in the observations, but through interviews and attended meetings, diversity had little impact on the study’s research questions. Yet, in one observed meeting, immigration was the entire topic, with the focus being the differences between a visa and a green card for a dancer and the incurred cost for the ballet company. An 01-visa costs approximately $3000 for the company to start the process, and while that is not an exorbitant amount of
Running head: GETTING TO “THE POINTE”

money, a company has to think of the investment in the dancer, meaning for the total payout to be cost effective the dancer would need to stay with this organization for five years. Another part of the same meeting discussed the problems associated with dancers on visas reentering the country after a ballet company goes on tour. Discussion reiterated the panic and anxiety for dancers when their visas or green cards are expiring and they fear deportation. One executive staff member was working on an 800-page visa document for just one dancer. No real visa exists for dancers, although a circus performer can obtain a specific one, and although at first that is deemed merely comical, it is in fact a true statement (GE3, personal communication, January 19, 2017). While certainly prevalent in terms of the ballet industry, this particular demographic proved to have little bearing on the research questions of this qualitative study, meaning it did not appear to impact leadership attributes and their light and dark dimensions.

However, gender is a different story, as revealed through the anecdotes, examples, and quotes in the themes that emerged from data analysis. Thus, the demographic gender breakdown should be considered as presented in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Within Organization</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number Interviewed</th>
<th>Percentage Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancer</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Artistic)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Executive)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8. Gender breakdown of all three ballet companies in the qualitative study.

There is a larger percentage of female dancers across all participating ballet companies. One dancer who commented on this fact remarked in his interview that ballet is to females what baseball is to males when trying to explain the supply and demand in terms of the ballet world (EC6, personal communication, January 25, 2017). The datum shows an almost even split between genders in terms of those in artistic administration positions. Executive administration shows more spread with 59 percent being female and 41 percent being male. The disparity in numbers continues in the production side, which was also male dominated in the participating ballet organizations. In total, 75 interviews were conducted, with 40 males and 35 females, representing 53 percent and 47 percent, respectively. Although a slightly larger percent of males was interviewed than females overall, the proportions are appropriate to gender distribution and role within the organizations.

Profile of Organizations

Since the focus of this study is on industry norms, the individual ballet companies were not separately profiled in the analysis. Ethnographic observations and interviews were carried out within each participating ballet company, focusing on how the membership of each socially constructs the culture of that specific organization, as an exemplar of the industry at large. Nevertheless, some background information about each ballet company visited is important to provide a feel for the place.
Rocky Mountain Ballet Company. The ballet company located in the Rocky Mountain region is considered to be one of the top ten ballet companies in the United States and consists of 40 company dancers, 10 second company dancers, and a thriving academy (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). However, at one time, the academy or school associated with the company was considered the “bastard child” of the organization and was hemorrhaging money to the point that the board decided to close it (UE3, personal communication, December 5, 2016). Although, the school was later revitalized around the year 2000 and has seen amazing growth, currently having 700 students, and is actually a viable feeder program for the professional company (UE3, personal communication, December 5, 2016). This ballet company also has the most delineations of dancer ranks of those visited: with nine categories ranging from Apprentice I to Principal Artist, meaning multiple steps to reach the top. The company is considered a classical ballet company, as were all that were visited, but their particular repertories are less varied than the other two sites; again, their season concentrates more on traditional, classical ballets.

The company is also the only one participating that is unionized under the American Guild of Musical Artists (AMGA), meaning they have a labor agreement with specific language around everything from work day hours, breaks, performances, pay scales, to even the use of fog machines. The contract is reviewed every six months, and if the language is ever negated, the dancers grieve the error(s), which they can and will do; in fact, the dancers seem to know the contract better than the administration. Recently dancers were asked to perform at a gala that used a fog machine, and since it was against the contract, a waiver had to be obtained, evidence that upholding the contract is taken
seriously (UE11, personal communication, December 2, 2017). Additionally, during the visit, the principal investigator observed that the Artistic Director’s Administrative Assistant had to watch the clock closely to be sure to adhere to the contract language of having rehearsal schedules posted 48 hours in advance. Unlike the other two ballet companies visited, company class is not required, per the contract, and, because optional, attendance cannot be taken. They also have union representative dancers, one of which was interviewed, to serve as liaisons between dancers and administration. At the time of the visit, the Artistic Director, who has been in this role for approximately a decade, is also serving as the Executive Director, handling the helm of both the creative and business side, because their Executive Director had recently take a position with another Midwestern ballet company (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). This dual role is agreed upon for one year, and the person is very happy for this joint effort to be completed this upcoming summer (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016).

The website (redacted, February 15, 2017) revealed that the company has had five Artistic Directors since its inception, all of which have been male.

This company has also fairly recently moved into a new facility, providing a house for both the company and the academy or school, with spacious studios. This space is also connected to their own theatre, very convenient when staging performances and for practices and rehearsals. However, the new space is very fragmented in that it creates distinct, separate locations for each area of the organization: the executive side, the artistic side, and the dancer or studio side. Because of this segregation, collaboration and communication are somewhat hindered. In fact, this bifurcation of the space was
compared to being like East and West Berlin, on two different sides of the wall, and thus numerous informal hallway meetings ensue (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016).

According to its website (redacted, February 15, 2017), this company is the oldest of the three visited sites, founded in the early 1960s, and grew out of a civic ballet. The original founder of this company is also credited on this same website with establishing the first ballet department in an American university. During a fundraising event that the principal investigator attended, the company also laid claim to the oldest running production of *The Nutcracker* in America, with approximately 25 performances a season. In fact, the time of the study happened to be during *Nutcracker* season, with this year being the retirement of the current production, which is the 4th rendition and between 27 and 28 years old. Currently, the organization is working on a new version of this evergreen performance with new costumes, props, and sets, but with 61 years of tradition, the emphasis at the fundraising event was that they are still paying homage to the original choreography of the ballet company’s original founder.

At the fundraising event, the Artistic Director stressed that the original 1944 grandfather clock that appears in the production will remain because of sentiment. Also, the budget for this new rendition alone is $2.4 million, with a 16-month campaign, explaining why this organization has by far the largest budget of the three companies visited. To put this into perspective, according to signage at the fundraising event, each Sugar Plum Fairy tutu costs approximately $2500 and has over 200 hand-sewn jewels. *The Nutcracker* includes 250 costumes that begin production five months prior to performance, and all of the netting in the tutus, with each tutu taking 40 hours to
complete, will stretch the length of six football fields. This production is the quintessential example of how important tradition is, not only through the clock, but also the fact that during the fundraising event, it was shared that the new, painted front curtain background has a myriad of ornaments, each representing a different decade or version of The Nutcracker the company has done: they want to pay homage to their founder and own history.

This company is also the only one visited that actually has departments within the executive administration, meaning the departments consists of more than one person, also allowing for movement in the vertical advancement in the organization. Because of their size, and the fact that the organization does not naturally discuss their culture, the organization recently conducted 360-degree reviews of their leadership, but this comprises only a handful of people in the organization (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). While individuals have seen their results, the organization as a whole has not. One of the branches of this organization is the music department, having both a Music Director and Assistant Music Director. Observation revealed that all rehearsals and practices have a pianist, who largely plays from memory an accompaniment fitting for the movement. This music, because it is live, causes dancers to be on their proverbial toes, as does performing with an orchestra routinely, in that tempos often ebb and are idiosyncratic each time they are played.

Development and outreach are also a large part of the Rocky Mountain ballet company. They are cognizant of the stereotype that ballet is an elite art form, and thus must strive to make it a relevant medium for all: they believe ballet is more than tutus and tiaras and constantly ask themselves how to make ballet accessible to all while grappling
with the question of how to ask for donations and funding for rhinestones when some people do not have food to eat (UE5, personal communication, December 5, 2016). As such, the company is very civic-minded, and therefore, they have piloted several programs, like senior citizen classes for those over the age of 55. These are not watered down classes, but instead for retirees looking for mental and physical stimulation (UE5, personal communication, December 5, 2016). They also reach out to those who are incarcerated or in correctional facilities, to provide help with rehabilitation. Furthermore, the company has a program for the homeless, but this has proven challenging since according to the state, which helps with funding, to be eligible to receive “services”, a person has to be chronically homeless for three years, meaning they have been documented in the system for three years, a problem for the nomadic homeless population (UE5, personal communication, December 5, 2016).

This company also tries to educate people before performances or during intermission. Prior to a production of Cinderella, they had a person dress up like a beggar outside the theatre, similar to how the Fairy Godmother in the production acts like a beggar. Interesting was how people reacted to the disguised person. Later, the “homeless” individual was brought into the theatre and given a seat, and some were aghast. The moral or lesson that was then imparted by the staff is that people should acknowledge all people, that nobody should be invisible. They emphasized that while everything may be stripped from a person, as far as material belongings, the physical body still exists and with that body, through ballet, beauty can be created (UE5, personal communication, December 5, 2016).
After the September 11 tragedy, the company also used performances of *Ghost Dances* to explore how ballet expresses a myriad of emotions and helps one cope with sadness and loss (UE5, personal communication, December 5, 2016). In the late nineties, they also created “I Can Do”, an impact program inspiring children not to drop out of school and that ties dance to life experiences. This company believes that people need beauty in their lives and that ballet can provide that: ballet is something the world needs, not just superfluous entertainment (UE5, personal communication, December 5, 2016). Thus, when they have unsold tickets, they actively seek opportunities to give free tickets (actually very good seats) to organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Veterans Association, the nearby Air Force Base, etc. (UE5, personal communication, December 5, 2016).

This company, because of its belief in civic duty, is also very aware of the population in which their company resides. They are part of a well-educated, conservative, religious community, which influences their season programming (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). They need to project a feeling of family or wholesomeness, so they have to be cognizant not to stray too far from the culture of the surrounding community or city in which they are located. They are always striving to find a balance; for example, last season they performed a ballet that depicts a three-way love triangle within an office setting and were aware of how this might be controversial. Through marketing, they made announcements about the subject matter possibly being considered avant-garde. Some people were surprised that the company chose to highlight this aspect because they felt it was not problematic (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016).
Because of the city’s conservative religious nature, stereotypes are at times perpetuated; male dancers have the reputation of being homosexual, and this assumption can create issues for young males wanting to enter the world of ballet, which is somewhat ironic since this particular city has a growing gay and lesbian population, making for an interesting clash at times with the otherwise conservative, and also religious, population (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). A nearby large university also exemplifies the conservative nature of the city in that when the company does ballet productions there, costumes have to be approved, so as not to be deemed too revealing (UE7, personal communication, December 1, 2017). Recently, a performance poster had to be edited prior to display at the university because the dancer’s shorts showed too much leg (UE7, personal communication, December 1, 2016). Ironic in an art form that prizes itself on finding individuals with good legs and beautiful feet. Those in leadership positions, especially at higher levels, are not from the area, and most of the dancers, because of the prior reputation of the academy, come from other places as well, so understanding the community in which the art form is located is paramount in being successful and staying relevant to the audience.

**Midwestern Ballet Company.** The Midwestern ballet company is a much more scaled down version than the one just described, a medium-sized ballet company, and the only professional ballet company in the entire state. This company has grown rapidly over the past few years, increasing from 16 dancers to over now over 30 (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017) and has a budget of approximately $2.5 million (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017), about half of that of the Rocky Mountain region company. While classical ballet is part of the season’s programming, they are
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much more a blend of classical and contemporary, evidenced by the current season and the fact they try to present some of the finest choreographers of the 20th and 21st century, including highlighting women choreographers (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). This blend of modern and classical is also evidenced by the fact that in March of 2012, they launched a performance or dancer series comprised of new works merging visual elements of sets, props, costumes, and lighting with digital technology and media to enhance the body in space (GP4, personal communication, January 18, 2017). This lean toward the contemporary is apparent with them adding a five-week intensive contemporary summer course; the fact they own the theatre allows them to do more than just movement studies, but instead educate young choreographers (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). The reason for this mixture of contemporary and classical ballet is their philosophy that ballet is changing; no longer is this an art where it is about “tricks” (e.g. nine pirouettes in a row), so a dancer has to understand movement and quality, more contemporary aspects (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017).

This ballet company is currently celebrating its 43rd anniversary, with its beginnings in the early 1970s, again starting as a civic ballet company. Like the Rocky Mountain ballet company visit, this company too has its own theatre connected to its practice facilities, again an ideal situation when taking a production from rehearsal to performance. However, according to the company’s website (redacted, February 15, 2017), being the only professional company in the state, they do some touring, totaling over 50 performances per season total. The company consists of 24 professional dancers, a number that includes the apprentices. Not being a top tiered company in the United
States, they realize the caliber of dancer that enters their organization, and their goal is development; in turn, dancers sometimes leave for the proverbial “bigger and better” ballet company (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). The comparison was made to a college basketball team in that they are lucky to hold onto talent for multiple years; they get the undrafted kids, and after developing their talents, the kids do a “college” transfer (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). For multiple dancers within the organization, although coming from various locations, this is the only company with which they have been associated. Although this company has a strong academy with 270 students, the school is viewed as an after school program, not professional training (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017); however, if a talent is noticed, the person would be brought into professional company classes. Because the number of males in ballet is significantly less than females, they offer free dance classes for boys to try to develop interest (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017).

While this space is not as segmented as that of the Rocky Mountain ballet company, the artistic suite is still distinct from the executive administration. The Artistic Director and Executive Director are, as in most ballet organizations, two distinct roles, and in this organization, one is a female and a male, respectively. The Executive Director comes from a radio background (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017) and the Artistic Dancer, in addition to being a prima ballerina, ran her own leotard business and has a patent with Bloch for a foot thong (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Everyone spoken to in the organization realizes the tension between these two roles and individuals; a large part of this is due to the fact they are considered equals in
the organization, both reporting to the Board of Trustees (they have had three Board Presidents within the last six years), meaning no real “boss” or “ultimate say” exists in the organization, which creates friction when the two have very different visions and philosophies about the organization (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017). This particular organization is very “flat” in that departments are singletons, with little to no room for advancement: they start at the top, as directors, before ever having actually started at the bottom. Also, in this organization, the artistic staff is the only one that really deals with dancers. In fact, if a dancer complains to the Executive Director before speaking to the Artistic Director, he or she would be fired, reiterating the strain between artistic and executive (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Both individuals in the Artistic and Executive Director positions are currently working without a contract. Although the Artistic Director discussed a new contract with the board, the Board President revealed that the Director’s contract was dependent on the termination of another personnel member, so contract terms were not reached (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). Because of the tension between the Artistic and Executive Directors, an outside consultant has been brought in to provide structure and direction to both roles on how to effectively run a non-profit organization; this consultant reports directly to the board about his findings (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017).

Unlike the larger ballet company visited, this company does not have a Ballet Master or Mistress, a person employed by the company to teach and rehearse dancers. Because of this, the Artistic Director and Creative Director were observed often teaching company class, a requirement, so the top leadership is actually dealing with dancers on a
daily, routine basis. However, company dancers can also help stage productions, which was the case during the principal investigator’s visit, with senior members observed leading class. Rehearsals have piano accompaniment, but these individuals play mainly from sheet music, and more conversation ensues between the pianist and the teacher about what song is appropriate. Due to the organizational layer of Ballet Master or Mistress not existing, the line of “boss,” according to dancers, can sometimes be blurry in that their teacher is also their employer. The personal and professional boundaries are not always distinct; from observation, the Artistic Director plays the roles of boss, teacher, and even mother (although she does not prefer that role [GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017]), for some, in that this is the first time some of the dancers have been away from their family for a period of time. One instance of this was observed when a dancer seemed annoyed that the director did not like the fact he was vegan (GD7, personal communication, January 17, 2017). In another instance, a female dancer with a split open foot came looking for medical assistance, and the observed remedy turned out to be glue. Another female dancer with a concussion from a car crash was discussing that she was concerned not with her injury, but that she was not going to be able to be part of the upcoming performance, one that her entire family was going to view. The Artistic Director, who has just been nurturing a hurt foot, had to be the stern boss and simply reiterated she would not be dancing.

This company too realizes the importance of knowing their community. Being the second largest city in the state, they have several competing arts organizations, and all are vying for the same pots of money from foundations and donors (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017). The belief is that a more well-rounded repertoire of
dance—classical and contemporary—helps appeal to a larger populace. An artistic staff noted that although topless dancing can be put on stage in New York City, that is not the case in this community (GA3, personal communication, January 19, 2017). In a smaller community, dance is not the focus, so a company has to be cautious not to push the envelope too much, or the audience will push back (GE3, personal communication, January 19, 2017). This company is careful in the works it selects so as to keep pushing slowly, bit by bit, so the community will be more accepting of fresher, edgier, works. Numerous billionaires reside in the city in which the company is located, but currently they do not have one on their board, which is not the same with other competing arts organizations (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). Also, people tend to put their money toward more religious or environmental endeavors (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). While their individual donations have tripled, foundational giving has plummeted. In 2009, more than 60 percent of revenue comes from foundational giving whereas currently 80 percent comes from interactions with individuals (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017). Disagreement exists about whether this is the proper funding model in that some feel it should be more of a 50/50 split because the current mode eliminates one side of the revenue stream (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017).

**Pacific Northwestern Ballet Company.** The third ballet company, located in the Pacific Northwestern region of the United States, is the smallest of those companies visited and is a resident company of the Center for the Performing Arts of the city. With only 20 members, they still manage to blend both classical and contemporary works, much like the Midwestern ballet company. However, unlike other two companies, this
organization does not have a theatre connected to its rehearsal facilities; in fact, according to the company’s website (redacted, February 15, 2017), they tour an average of 25,000 miles annually. Since its founding, the company has visited 100 cities in 32 states, from Washington, to Florida, to Alaska (redacted, February 15, 2017). In 2015, the company presented 30 performance of *The Nutcracker* in 16 cities in four states—in less than six weeks (redacted, February 15, 2017).

The space in which the company resides is also shared with other area non-profit organizations, but the space itself is very small. The space in which the company rehearses is small as far as depth of the studio, but perhaps the most noted aspect is the height of the ceiling: they are so low that lifts cannot be performed properly. Two ceiling beams are constantly smacked by hands during practice, and when partnering, it was observed that the dancers always have to be aware of their placement in the room, so as not to allow their partner to hit the beam. Moreover, rehearsal, practices, and even performances do not have live music, but instead are done with track or recorded soundtracks. In fact, company classes, which are required, often were done to instrumental versions of popular radio music. However, soon they will begin a campaign to move to a larger, more adequate space (EE2, personal communication, January 24, 2016). With all of the travel, the dancers have to be accustomed to adapting performances for new spaces and residing in close quarters with each other during travels and in hotels. Since dancers’ social circles are somewhat limited to each other because of their long work hours, dating amongst dancers is not uncommon. However, within this small organization, three married couples exist: two sets of principal dancers are married and the Executive Director is married to the Ballet Mistress/Associate Artistic Director (EC5,
personal communication, January 26, 2017). With these close relationships, the travel and close arrangements are sometimes easier to digest. However, this intimacy also could explain the lack of confrontation amongst people in the company; in fact, the Artistic Director claims her fault is that she avoids confrontation (EA1, personal communication, January 27, 2017). This dance company also has a school, but it is not necessarily seen as a pre-professional track, but instead simply tries to instill a love of ballet. At one time, the school was a separate entity from the company, not affiliated with such, but was sold back to the company, by the current Academy Director, so all could be under the same umbrella (EA1, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Of the companies that participated in the research study, this is the youngest, being founded in the late 1970s. However, the current Artistic Director, a woman, is the also one of the original founders, meaning the company has had one Artistic Director during its lifespan (EA1, personal communication, January 27, 2017). While the other two companies began has civic groups, this company, based on website (redacted, February 15, 2017) information, started as an ensemble that presented regular seasons at local high schools. For an interim of time, in the mid 1990s, they formed an alliance with another company in a different state, allowing each company to share production costs for the professional troupe while maintaining separate administration offices, board of directors, educational outreach programs, and dance schools; however, this collaboration was dissolved in the mid 2000s so each could create their own, stronger, organization (EA1, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Like the Midwestern ballet company, this organization has very little movement in that individuals act as a department, sometimes more than one department. Thus, a job
description actually looks like three jobs in one. In fact, unlike having an entire costume
department, that took up a large portion of the bottom floor like in the Rocky Mountain
ballet company, this organization, based on observation, does not have a costumer on
site. They have seamstresses who help with such sporadically and even the Artistic
Directors sews costumes while the Ballet Mistress/Associate Artistic Directors creates
head-pieces. Additionally, while choreographers do visit, as was the case a week prior to
the principal investigator’s visit, the Artistic Director also choreographs a great deal for
the ballet company. In this organization, nobody has an assistant, not even the directors.
This was by far the “leanest” organization in the study. In fact, as observed, not only did
the Artistic Director and Ballet Mistress teach company class, but so do principal
dancers.

Like the other visited companies, the influence of the community is certainly
evident. The most obvious stereotype of the city in which the company is situated is
“hippy”, but knowing this, the city somewhat embraces this eclectic notion. At the
Saturday market, the principal investigator observed that tie-dyed toilet paper can be
purchased and outside the courthouse is a free-speech plaza where hordes of Volkswagen
vans are often parked. The city also has a large homeless population, clearly evident at
the bus station, in that when those incarcerated individuals are released from a prison a
few hours away, they are given bus far to the city in which the ballet company is located.
Thus, the released prisoners get out off the bus and stay (EE2, personal communication,
January 24, 2017). Overall, this organization is more laid-back than a typical ballet
company, and perhaps even a little closer than normal, perhaps because of all of the
touring. A word frequently heard during interviews was “positivity” or “positive energy”,

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which can only be attributed to the community influence. The community is unique in terms of size and the amount of entertainment available; at one time, they were the smallest population to have a symphony, opera, ballet, and university sport. Although they have support, all of the money within the community gets spread out amongst the various activities, so they channel that positivity to help the company survive and grow (EE1, personal communication, January 26, 2017). Because they are a fairly large dance company for the size of their community, they have learned to survive differently, by touring extensively. While this certainly has disadvantages, like no development opportunities, and numerous risks associated with injury and travel, in contrast, the advantages are they have a larger variety of audiences, reach rural communities, and provide art to places that would not have it otherwise.

When seeing a storyline or character ballet like *Sleeping Beauty* or *A Midsummer Night Dream*, usually in the program is a synopsis of the plot or action, helping set the proverbial stage of the audience. Although the cultural themes and leadership dimensions that emerge from analysis of data collected at the three ballet companies participating in this study will be presented collectively, as representing the industry as a whole, having a synopsis of the individual companies helps prepare for the “feature performance”—data analysis.

**Ballet Industry Cultural Themes**

When purchasing tickets to a ballet, a quandary can occur over seat location. Sitting closer to the stage allows facial expression, fine footwork, and intricate costumes to be observed, while farther back in the audience, perhaps even the balcony, reveals more of the whole stage, so a better picture is revealed. Similarly, this descriptive
analysis will create a composite picture of the three companies participating in this study, as exemplifying the culture of the American ballet industry as a whole, while still being able to get an up-close-and personal perspective as well: it is the “best seat in the house”.

Observations of daily routines at the three ballet companies included in this ethnographic study revealed a high degree of similarity. A composite picture of the artifacts and behavioral norms that shape the rhythms of daily life in a ballet company will be presented, with distinctions among the organizations noted where applicable.

**Structure of the day.** Most occupations or jobs have a routine, and the ballet, not just an art, but also a profession, is no different. For a dancer, the day is very structured, and schedules, as observed, are usually posted 24-48 hours in advance, with not only practices, rehearsals, performances, etc. scheduled, but also downtime and breaks. Dancers really only see a studio(s) or a stage throughout their day. A studio, normally spacious, has walls of mirrors, reflecting back every movement, whether those be perfect or flawed. The social sphere is really just other dancers, with the only other addition being the teacher, choreographer, or person doling out instructions, commands, praise, and critique. Individual space is pretty non-existent in that even dressing areas are shared. Observation revealed that dancers usually carry a bag that holds their belongings (extra clothes, shoes, etc.), and this is really their only personal space. Other facets of the organization—the artistic, the executive, the production—have meetings and events to attend, but their day has much more flexibility and is not scheduled down to the minute. They have a space, even if that is a cubicle, that is their own, and in those areas, they have times when they can work independently on their assigned project or can shut the office door and have a moment to themselves.
A dancer is always visible, and literally and figuratively, on their toes, whereas other departments have more “breaks” within their day: they are not having to “perform” or “be on” all the time in that they have more independence in their day. Their social opportunities are larger in they have opportunities to interact and collaborate with other departments. Those differences in flexibility can also be seen around punctuality.

Dancers must arrive on time, knowing that tardiness would receive a reprimand or at least a public announcement of their entrance. However, in other departments, meeting start times are less definitive or fluid, with people often coming late to the party, sometimes thirty minutes late or not all, leaving others to wait or just proceed without the person. Observation revealed that often times these same late individuals are the same people that expect punctuality in dancers. Additionally, unlike a dancer’s schedule, which seems rather set, meetings are always being moved so as to accommodate others’ schedules (e.g. Artistic Director). “Being present” is an underlying expectation, meaning people are expected to arrive with a consciousness, being physically present and ready to engage.

In the ballet companies observed, often the most important person at the table was the Artistic Director because of their influence on all facets of the organization and therefore others’ days are dependent on his/her day. Yet at the same time, the Artistic Director is often off-site, dealing with the board, traveling to see other company’s productions, trying to solidify donations or contributions, etc. In fact, they can be gone 10-14 days a month, which proves interesting since they are such an integral part of the organization and others are dependent on their artistic vision (UE11, December 2, 2016).

Nobody’s day is nine to five, especially in divisions other than dancers. A dancer’s body has limitations, although those do not always like to be acknowledged by
artistic staff, and they need rest. However, the rest of the organization is expected to work as long as it takes, to put in the extra hours. Really the only day of rest is Sunday and that is not always a guarantee (GE3, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Bottom line in these ballet companies is that employees understand they work until the job is done, and done “perfectly”, so clock watching is not a possibility. An understanding is that survival in the ballet industry requires a passion or dedication to the art form: members want to nurture the love of ballet or otherwise they could not continue to do the work and long hours. For the most part, American dancers follow a 34-week contract, but that depends on the size of the organization, while administrative staff work year round (EA1, personal communication, January 27, 2017). In the companies studied, there was variation with contracts, with the largest organization having a full 34-weeks, the mid-sized organization striving to have that same length, but being dependent on how many tours could be added to the regular season, and with the smallest company, the dancers only a 24-week contract.

Collaboration. The artistic staff, especially the Artistic Director, was really the only person observed to cross lines, meaning the only individual who deals with both the executive administration and dancers; therefore, other portions of the organization—executive and production were seen as more isolated. While production staff did interact with dancers during a performance, the pace of the performance and their focus on the mechanics and logistics, results in a different, more surface-level, relationship. In each of the three ballet companies observed, the executive side, while interacting amongst themselves within departments, did not deal with dancers, the main “product” of the organization. Because of this, and the fact that physical spaces in each of the companies
have distinct areas for groups within the organization, an “us versus them” mentality was observed to exist with little ensuing collaboration. Because the space is segmented, communication, a critical part of collaboration, appeared to be impacted; discussions were had amongst departments, but not across the organization, unless in a meeting setting in which multiple divisions were present. In fact, one production administrator said, “We like to say communication [is valued], but we are really silo. We don’t have constant flow” (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). Another noted, the ballet industry, not just his specific company, is “moving toward a collaborative model, but kicking and screaming. We selfishly hoard our individuality” (UA1, December 2, 2016). Often times when asking about attributes or culture, responses divided the organization into three separate groups—artistic, executive, and dancers—in that the mindset is all are working toward different things, instead of a collective whole. An executive administrator remarked:

I like doing my own things, but there is not a team atmosphere. There are times departments need each other, but we are currently silos, cliques. We have a knowledgeable team; they are good at their specific jobs, but I wish they were more engaged overall. We don’t understand all the different departments, so we fail to see the company from the top all the way to the dancers. (UE9, personal communication, November 25, 2016)

This lack of collaboration and communication amongst groups was also evident in small aspects like individuals in the organization not having, and/or checking, company emails: they still want to use their own preferred forms of communication instead of thinking
about the whole. Moreover, calendars are often not universal or shared because people are still of the mindset this is more convenient.

One dynamic observed that results from the independence valued by the culture of these organizations is that people can be working on different tasks and become too isolated. This often requires individuals to see a job all the way to completion rather than relying upon a collaborative effort. Everyone in the organization is promoted, if there is some level to actually move to, as a result of the work they do individually. As such, they are expected to give 120 percent at all times: “People are expected to make active, physical contributions. People get their hands dirty at all levels” (UE7, personal communication, December 2, 2017). As one dancer put it, “Come in and do your job. You are expected to sweat and give whatever gas you have” (US4, personal communication, December 2, 2016). Another dancer remarked, “You have to sacrifice and focus on the dance. It can’t be a task: it is your life” (EC1, personal communication, January 24, 2017). All levels of the organization are expected to have a sense of ownership for their work, and that idea of being “present” at work is certainly important in that the expectation is to give the best at all times.

One issue that stems from this is that because these ballet companies are so thin as far as personnel, employees are often performing double and triple duties, and this was observed in all facets of the organization: in two of the three organizations studied, Artistic Directors were observed acting as costumers or marketers, executive administrators acting more like production by setting up spaces and cleaning theatres, or even dancers being the greeters before productions or during intermission. Departments are not very deep in most organizations, unless it is rather large, so numerous “chiefs”
exist: “there is no money for a salary bump, but we can give people title bumps—from Indians to Chiefs” (UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016), which further serves to inhibit collaboration. A book commemorating one of the ballet company’s anniversaries had misspellings, and almost included a fabricated biography of a former Artistic Director because people failed to collaborate on the project: they did not go to the people with knowledge, but instead pushed on by themselves (UP3, personal communication, December 7, 2016). Yet, even while pushing on, using one’s talent, there is recognition of limits in this industry. According to one artistic staff member, who has also worked in the technology industry, in outside business, a performance, or task, is a stepping stone to either a promotion or more money, but that does not really exist in the ballet industry: sometime all there is the current level (GA2, personal communications, January 16, 2017).

Dancers were observed to be the most isolated group in the organizations studied. Their craft is very specialized, so they really just have each other. They often expressed feeling left out of the executive side completely. Since they themselves are the “product” of the organization, many expressed a lack of understanding why they are not at least asked for ideas about marketing or development. One executive administrator expressed agreement saying, “Dancers should be more involved [in the marketing and overall business] because people know their faces. Dancers could bring in their own audience” (GE6, personal communication, January 18, 2017).

Artistic and executive administration. Lack of collaboration was also evident in that the executive and artistic aspects of these organizations, while working for a common goal, have very different paths on how to arrive at this. Two contributing factors
were documented: first, their physical separation in facilities was not conducive to collaboration, but secondly, and more importantly, their philosophies about the organization differed. The executive side showed evidence of being more focused on the money, while the artistic side concentrated on the performance, the dance. One dancer remarked, “The actual company is the dancers, and the artistic, the art. The executive is just the business side: they make the art work” (US2, personal communication, December 6, 2016). But in reality, it takes both of these to bring a performance or season to fruition.

In each of the ballet companies, everyone encountered on the artistic side of the organization had a ballet background; in fact, they were all dancers who had been immersed in the ballet culture from an early age, and most had experiences outside of their current company. Yet, executive administration was a different story: they often had no background in ballet and/or their only experience in the industry was in their current organization.

The integration of these two subcultures within one organization proves interesting. Ballet, being an old art form, requires institutional knowledge, so newcomers are often looked at with uncertainty: “there is not a lot of room for bull shit, so if you don’t believe in ballet and aren’t willing to learn the world, you won’t make it very long” (UE2, personal communication, December 5, 2016). On the administrative side, having no prior experience in ballet really seems to create challenges in that they are selling a business they do not really understand and that also requires a whole new vocabulary/jargon. This lack of terminology reportedly creates hiccups with press releases at times, but also can create issues when picking out a photograph for marketing (GE2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). An image that looks good to the
untrained eye (meaning no ballet experience) will quickly get critiqued by artistic staff for not having proper arm placement, feet turnout, etc., and so timelines have to be adjusted to allow for revisions (GE2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). The marketer, the person without the ballet background, often is perplexed that the picture does not meet the “industry standard” or ideal, but since the picture will be seen by those involved in the ballet industry it makes sense that it should properly reflect the art (GE2, personal communications, January 20, 2017). Another instance occurred during marketing of The Nutcracker, when the Artistic Director did not understand why the sole marketing focus was on this particular show and the ticket sales and not the art as a whole, the future of ballet. However, this same marketing department, while albeit on slightly different pages, recognized the beauty of the art, how ballet can speak to the visceral level, when a women was crying after a performance. Frustration often ensues with those that do not understand the art form, even though they were hired. “If you don’t understand the vision, I have to explain all the details myself, and then I might as well do it myself” (GA2, personal communication, January 16, 2017), which in turn impacts collaboration and results in individual performance. Yet, when a person, who comes from the outside, takes it upon his or herself to learn the art, it does receive praise: “A few months ago I probably couldn’t have spelled Tchaikovsky, but with Nutcracker approaching, I did a little research. Ballet and she [Artistic Director] makes me want to be better and learn more” (GE2, personal communication, January 20, 2017).

Because of their different backgrounds and vantage points, executive tends to view the Artistic Director as a micromanager or as someone said, in a nicer manner, “He [Artistic Director] has his fingers in every pie” (UP2, personal communication,
December 2, 2016). An executive administrator recounts how an event was organized, and then artistic came in and redid everything because the image did not not mesh with the idea in his head (UE6, personal communication, December 2, 2016). In a meeting, an Artistic Director states, “I surround myself with people who are smarter than I am,” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016) but then in almost the next breath adds, “I am very pushy and loud” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016), which seems to be contradictory. People may be in the room, but the question is whether their opinions are really valued. A similar example comes up in an observed meeting with an outside lighting expert when the Artistic Director comments, “I am always open to ideas,” but then when the two “experts” disagree, the director reminds the outsider, “I am letting you know my vision and ideal”. The principal investigator is not really sure with two different artistic visions in the same space, whose ideal will win. Throughout the meeting constant reminders or remarks are made about how this is the ideal of a particular individual—the Artistic Director. When finances are questioned, the response is, “I am just continuing to think broader and grander.” Another executive administrator recalls a battle between the Artistic Director and an outside choreographer over costumes, with the mentality being this is my ballet company and this is my ballet, respectively (GP1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). A dancer explains that his vision of the Artistic Director’s role simply has not been a match with reality: “The director should be more like a deep sea current—driving and taking people places. It shouldn’t be director-centric; the director is not the performer, but I realize the company is known by the Artistic Director” (UC4, personal communication, December 5, 2016). In turn, some Artistic Directors have an unrealistic expectation for the size of the expected audience
and how much money can be earned within a given town. An Artistic Director admits that at times, artistic can be “too close” and lose perspective, but at the same time felt that executive administration is too pragmatic and only concerned with what can be sold. Yet, at the end of the day, they recognize the divide between artistic and executive as a problem, “We are all too busy to be having problems organizing each other” (GA2, personal communication, January 16, 2017). An executive administrator felt:

The dreams are always too grandiose, but the finances help reign people in. Creativity never knows when to stop or quit, so people have to know when to quit and how far they can realistically take something; you can’t just keep pushing. The limits actually make people the most creative. Being able to do anything you want isn’t good for the imagination; forcing people to live within parameters is what makes them great. (GE6, personal communication, January 17, 2017)

He went on to explain how a sculptor became renowned for his use of burlap, a medium he never would have chosen if money had not been an issue at the start (GE6, personal communication, January 17, 2017). An artistic or creative person simply sees the possibilities of the end product, and he/she looks through proverbial walls to put that on stage, but at the same time, he/she must realize that the executive side creates those “walls”. But in turn, then the team can collaborate to figure out how to go under or around the walls. At times instead of collaborating, people work to achieve “their way”: “I have a sense of diplomacy and unique ways of getting my way. You have to realize who is in your camp, who is your ally” (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). With words like “ally”, it sounds more like strategizing for war, rather than trying to collaborate. Although working for the same organization, the two sides of the
organization really seem to have a different focus, and as a result, an organizational perspective is sometimes not clear. In fact, when asked how people learn what is an articulated value in a ballet company, the answers across the board, regardless of division (artistic, executive, production, or dancer) are osmosis or observation—watch and learn. Naturally people observe those who seem to have better relationships with leaders or those that excel in their craft; yet, constant watchful eyes can create angst:

I am not longer an underdog here and feel anxiety on how to conduct myself because people are always watching. I came here as a 19-year-old, trying to absorb the company culture. I am 24 and now my job is to pass on the culture and be an example. I am in the mid-stages of my career, but it has all been a very quick-switch. (GD4, personal communication, January 17, 2017)

An artist staff member compared learning the culture to folklore that is passed from generation to generation and that is learned without even realizing it (GA3, personal communication, January, 19, 2017). However, when two entities within an organization work quite differently, the “folklore” is quite different, the question becomes who should one watch: “I have personally seen visionary conflict between artistic and marketing and development [executive]” (UE3, personal communication, December 6, 2017), which leaves people confused on who to please. Another administrator, where the Executive and Artistic Director are male and female, respectively, says, “Mom and Dad just need to get on the same page because ‘the kids’ get confused on who is laying down the law” (GE2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). A costumer, part of production staff, which deals with both executive and artistic staff, said, “Artistic and management don’t operate on the same page” (UP1, personal communication, December 7, 2016). Some expressed
the opinion that if the ballet industry is not highly collaborative and communicative, the organization as a whole can suffer: “we are inconsistent on the brand, and because we all don’t understand the brand, we have a hard time marketing it and selling it” (UE10, personal communication, December 6, 2016). Another executive, with a background outside of ballet, felt that a ballet company cannot articulate its mission.

Although board members were not included in the stratified sampling interviews, board were mentioned in interviews. Some noted that board members did not necessarily hold season subscriptions or attend performances, which could contribute to a lack of clear organizational mission: one Artistic Director stated a similar opinion regarding an Executive Director who “attends” performance, meaning the person is in the building, not actually in the theatre watching the production (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017).

A person working in Human Resources, with no ballet background, even alluded to the “industry standard” or ideal about how business is conducted (UE1, personal communication, December 5, 2016). Artistic staff do not understand why people cannot be classified as an independent contractor, even when they are not, or why children cannot be transported in a car alone for certain productions (UE1, personal communication, December 5, 2016). In this instance, the executive administrator is looking through the lens of legality and liability, while the artistic is just focused on getting the best product or performance on stage. A costumer recalls being put in a precarious situation with a costume sale: old costumes were being sold and any money generated was to go into miscellaneous income. However, a request from artistic was made to do the sales in cash and report a smaller sale so that money could be kept in the
costume shop budget, with no regard for the fact that companies are audited (GP1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Since these directives were coming from two sides of the organization—executive and artistic—the costume designer felt caught in the middle, to the point she had to seek advice from outside the company (GP1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Another executive administrator realizes, “You have to have high expectations, otherwise it would be crap. But while still dreaming, there has to be realities within that dream” (UE5, personal communication, December 5, 2016).

Most people within the participating companies, from top to bottom, and from all angles of the organization, see a disconnect or even a breakdown in some instances between artistic and administration; stress is created from the friction of trying to produce beautiful artistry, and in turn a beautiful production, with not enough money and or people. Most of those interviewed, regardless of role, said money is an issue, whether that be from an organizational level or salaries: “cash flow is always an issue, and we are often stealing from Peter to pay Paul. Finances are a daily challenge” (UE3, personal communication, December 6, 2016). All these ballet companies expressed a desire to grow and to be recognized nationally, but with growth comes ensuring sustainability, and the executive side, in large part, has to be able to foresee and maintain this. At the same time, those coming from outside the ballet world can create issues, only having an understanding of the arts and ballet can cause blinders (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). This suggests a balance between artistic and executive, from those within and outside ballet, is important because those differences allow the organizations to thrive. These companies seem to have great dancers, who in turn, and with help, create
a great product. But the process of getting there appears to be rather clunky, and often the organizations cannot articulate their short and long term goals (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017; UP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016).

One Executive Director is not surprised with the lack of organizational goals, feeling that artistic staff lacks planning: “Think of the dancer. They learn five to six dances simultaneously, but in the moment, they are supremely focused. All they think about is the here and now” (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017).

**The Ideal.** Within each of the organizations observed, the Artistic Director was recognized as always having a vision, whether for a performance or season, a dancer, or the organization as a whole, and he/she is constantly working toward the picture in his/her head. At the crux of that idea is, “Everything is beautiful at the ballet” (UA2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). This creates an intense drive for perfection within the culture of these ballet companies. The ideal is considered an industry standard; “what is ballet if not a little unrealistic, a little unattainable?” (EC9, personal communication, January 27, 2017). There is a constant grapple with defining perfection, but at the end of the day, it is considered the culture of the industry. “We can get lost in our own thinking—our idea of perfection. I care about my feet, but most of the audience doesn’t care about my feet” (EC4, personal communication, January 23, 2017), despite the realization is that most onlookers would not know one step from another. Most dancers at some point allude to this same idea: that they knew what they were signing up for when they entered the industry. Most have embraced this idea from early childhood, and one dancer, when asked when he began ballet, said, “Consciousness” (US4, personal communication, December 2, 2016). Also several people describe themselves as having a
type-A personality, and thus thought of this industry ideal and their own self-imposed notions like the chicken and egg debate, not sure which really came first; therefore, people often are their own worst critics. However, “dancers become what they know: they become the culture of the company, especially if one has been at only one company” (GA2, personal communication, January 16, 2017).

That idea of beauty, upholding the elegance of ballet, exists in all actions. According to dancers, something as small as a headpiece falling off or a prop being dropped in a performance will get a person reamed. If a dancer is rowdy on a plane, not reflecting the properness and delicacy of dance, a meeting will be held as a reminder of professionalism. Even with music, the idea is to never shortchange the production, the beauty or ideal: “Ask for what you need because I am going to be really upset if this sounds thin” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016). They have the mindset to think about what fits best, not the budget: the aspirations are always wanting bigger and better, and because of this, “We don’t always appreciate success: we always want a little better.” (UE6, personal communication, December 2, 2016). In fact, the standard of a dancer is, “We are all expected to do difficult things all the time. That is the standard of the industry and is just viewed as acceptable” (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2016). The belief is that the organization needs to be nimble, both mentally and physically, so as to be poised at the forefront.

The perspective on the ballet industry that emerged from these three companies is a culture of perfectionism, again always striving for beauty, and that bleeds over from the dance or performance side of the organization into all aspects of the industry. However, just like the budget, there is a recognition that limits do exist. Often times, people forget:
95 percent can be plenty, good enough, especially when that last five percent can be aesthetic and have no demonstrable return on the bottom line. It is so incremental, it’s not of value. Nobody is perfect, but we sometimes look for a problem that doesn’t exist, so we can solve them. If you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. (UE6, personal communication, December 2, 2007)

But this would never be articulated aloud, merely in an interview behind closed doors. While a growth mindset, the belief that talents can be developed through hard work, good strategies, and input from others, is certainly important, sometimes blinders exist to what is possible. When comments are made that aspects of a production are not affordable, usually the Artistic Director wants an itemized list so he/she can see from production to production if that is debatable or fact: they have a difficult time understanding there are limitations and that the ideal in their head may not be able to be brought to fruition.

While individual work certainly impacts success, no role in the organization feels the pressure of the ideal more than the dancer: “we aren’t human; we are dancers” (GD4, personal communication, January 17, 2017). In fact, while a dancer strives for that ideal, an Artistic Director shared that a great dance career is 25 percent talent, 25 percent luck (right place at the right time) and 50 percent hard work or perseverance; dancers are striving for the unattainable ideal (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016), where half of the equation is really beyond their control. Dancers also recognize this “equation” in that they articulate that only a small few who become dancers have all of the classical traits of a dancer—the feet, the body, the legs—so more people than not often walk into opportunities that change their lives: someone gets injured, someone goes out, or someone from the outside comes in and views a dancer differently.
Dancers realize that this profession is more than just ability. Others, besides dancers, in the industry even contribute their success to luck: a costumer said, “I was in the right place at the right time” (UP1, personal communication, December 7, 2016). A dancer even admits that when her dancing did not get her noticed, she said, “You make your own way. I had to make myself useful to get noticed. I became useful in rehearsal, knowing the counts, knowing the sets. I became the person in the room she [Artistic Director] relies on for combinations” (EP1, personal communication, January 24, 2017). This notion of something besides talent and technique is confirmed with the idea that with a great dancer, “There is a magic or electricity: they are glamorous” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016), yet beauty or glamour is in the eye of the beholder. A dancer describes this notion of glamour or awe as “charisma on stage” (UP1, personally communication, December 3, 2016) while another says, “In the end, we are a classical ballet company so you have to conform and mesh. You have to be interesting though: they want us to be eye-catching, not blah. You have to bring something else to the table besides dancing” (EC2, personal communication, January 23, 2017). Thus, dancers have to seem like that object of perfection or that ideal in that they are creatures of the stage and the audience must fall in love with the dancer: they have to be “unattainable creatures who work on a lighter plane” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2017), which is a pretty lofty sounding job description. Everyone in the organization is expected to keep pushing, but especially the dancer; yet, that ideal seems unattainable when told, “You did that perfect. Now do it better” (UC2, personal communication, December 6, 2016). An Artist Director also says, “I want perfect, not close enough” (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Dancers are very
cognizant of the subjectivity of their craft and therefore, “You try to make everyone
happy, and the higher up their ladder the person is, the heavier you weigh their opinions”
(US4, personal communication, December 2, 2016); the notion of “playing the game” is	en often expressed and that personal integrity is often lost as a result. A male principal
dancer says he realized early on, “Ballet is an art form and is subjective: you are

That ideal is further complicated by the fact that it is dependent not only on the
observer, but also the type of production. Classical and contemporary ballet have
different skill sets and therefore, the ideal is different for various types of performances.
One dancer remarks that it all depends on the repertoire, “If contemporary, he wants to
push you in the style and aesthetic of it, and if classical, he is even specific about
technique [e.g. look Russian]” (US4, personal communication, December 2, 2016). This
ideal, coupled with the subjectivity, creates a “love hate relationship with yourself. You
want to produce the ideal, but you are under the constant pressure of the Artistic Director,
who expects everything. It’s like a race without a finish line: you can always do more
because there is not such thing as perfection” (UP1, personal communication, December
3, 2016).

**Body image.** Because of the ideal, the dancer, the product of the industry in that
they are the performance, often feels that ideal is all aspects, including their bodies. This
is not surprising since their bodies are what produce the art form. “We are an ideal. We
are selling an ideal, and we must fit the ideal. I am aware of every single calorie that goes
into my body” (UP1, personnel communication, December 3, 2016). However, while
even dancers are aware of what they consume, and they dance for approximately eight
hours a day, which burns countless calories, some are still told they need to lose weight. In fact, a dancer approximates that at least half of their professional company, at one point or another, have experienced the “weight talk”, and not always done tactfully. Even if a weight talk is not had, sometimes comments occur that are the same idea: “You don’t have the same stunning athleticism as you had when you came here” (GD3, personal communication, January 20, 2017); “I like you better when you were skinny” (GD13, personal communication, January 18, 2017); or “Be careful where those boots come on your leg; you know your calves can look thick” (GD3, personal communication, January 20, 2017). Everybody who expresses skewed notions around body image does not blame the leadership of the organization, but instead just chalks it up as an industry norm, that it is just a byproduct of the ballet. However, when an instructor says, “Make yourself look attractive, will you please?” a question becomes who continues to cultivate this culture. Several dancers admit they pinch their “fat” everyday, whereas a common observer would probably say they do not have an ounce of fat. During the study, the principal investigator was with a company in which not a single morsel of food was seen to be consumed: everyone just drank water. When asked to describe the body image for a male and female dancer, the common response, even from those not dancers in the organization, are athletic or Greek-god like, and Balanchine or tall and thin, respectively. The principal investigator simply records the forlorn statement: “Sadly, I am more of an Apollo than a Greek” (UC5, personal communication, December 5, 2016) when used to describe why he does not get certain roles. The consensus is also that the expectations for the female body are generally harsher and unattainable. An artistic staff remarks about the female body, “It needs to be more extreme, almost too thin, but still strong and
flexible,” (which again almost seems paradoxical) (UA3, personal communication, December 6, 2016). Dancers recognize this extreme expectation and admit, “We are crazy, I mean think about what our bodies do all day long, but that vacuum [the industry] sucks you in” (UC5, personal communication, December 7, 2016). A story of a summer intensive is recounted where right above the CD player sat a scale. All the dancers had to wear pastel colored leotards, highlighting any extra ounces, and people were weighed on the spot in front of everyone (EE2, personal communication, January 24, 2017). Another girl recounts experiences at a different company than her current employment where female dancers were told what they should eat, or avoid, over a holiday break, or how their waists were measured and then inches removed to show what their optimal weight should be, or told to only eat green apples and drink water to lose the pounds (EC7, personal communication, January 25, 2017). A dancer recalls a friend, also a dancer, who was told she was overweight and then went on a juice-fast to remedy the issue. Even though her body was put through hell to remedy the “problem,” at the end of the season her contract was not renewed (EC5, personal communication, January 25, 2017).

While not about weight, another expectation of the body is flexibility, being as limber as possible, but like body frame/bone structure, a person does not always have control over this, and thus this becomes another unattainable industry standard. That idea of flexibility also comes into play with being able to do a myriad of dance styles, and understanding the language of each style so a dancer can communicate properly; as one dancer said, “Adapt or die” (GD1, personal communication, January 20, 2016). However, dancers justify this ideal body image because they understand a company cannot look like an “island of misfit toys” (GD4, personal communication, January 17, 2016).
Mirror. Part of body dysmorphia that occurs is a result of the mirror, the ever watchful “eye” staring back at a dancer. Although dancers recognize the mirror as a tool, they also realize at some point in a career, it becomes its own entity, and with it, every dancer describes a love-hate relationship. During observations, the principal investigator watches some dancers simply stare intently at the mirror, watching every move, while others are more discreet, casting side glances, checking their posture and feet. Regardless of how and when, they all look at the mirror. When they are bending, they literally watch themselves until their eyes can no longer see. Even the observed instructors are aware of this mirror fixation: “Stop looking in the mirror; get out of the mirror, and look up.” A dancer often is repeating the same words in their own mind, but cannot pull their eyes away because they want perfection. Between the mirror, the constant critics, and the constant battle against body image and avoiding injury, those in the ballet industry “tend to blow things out of proportion. We really have to fight the cynicism, turning small things into huge things (US4, personnel communication, December 2, 2016). “With the mirror, you see everything that you want to change. How can you look at something 24/7 and not start to pick it apart?” (US2, personal communication, December 7, 2016): they are hyperaware of their bodies. A dancer admits she tries to pump herself up while looking in the mirror, but at the same time thinks she would look better if she had not eaten yesterday. All dancers interviewed, except for one, said they miss the mirror when they are on stage, and that it is weird to take away that crutch, and at times, even scary, but then also a relief. A dancer recalls a summer when she was able to dance without mirrors and the liberation she felt and how it allowed for development of new skips.

Several times, when asked about the mirror, dancers used the word “narcissism”,
a fitting word because like the Greek young woman, they do stare at themselves all day. Even when a dancer is not dancing, but doing something simple like stretching his foot with a band, he is staring into the mirror, checking every detail: he is not performing, merely in a “relaxed” position and yet still is striving for perfection. Dancers admit they get “stuck in” the mirror, often to the point that translates to outside the studio: they look at their reflections everywhere, pieces of glass and windows because “we become obsessed with what we see” (EP1, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

Several dancers mention the fact that mirrors seem like circus or fun mirrors, warped mirrors, that skew the body. In fact, others even feel that there are “fat” and “skinny” mirrors, labeled such for how they make a dancer feel about their body. Thus, of no surprise, is that most people try to find a placement in front of the “skinny mirror” because it helps their self-esteem. However, the mirror is really meant to be a tool to track progress, a place to create a visual with the body, a study of self, and in turn develop muscle memory. All were taught at some point, but at times, that is forgotten and for some, it becomes an instrument of torture with which they can rip themselves apart: “It is a friend and an enemy; it is a helicopter parent, constantly nagging you” (EC5, personal communication, January 26, 2017).

**Company class.** In all three of the companies observed, dancers started their day with company class. Class was a requirement at two of the three visited; only the organization that was unionized made company class optional. Class is seen as a time to stretch and prepare for the more “intense” rehearsals and performances that follow as well as the place where technique can be honed. All classes observed began with barre work or exercises, providing the opportunity to stretch and warm the body. Testimony
confirms this is the norm. Dancers were observed to be creatures of habit, preferring to occupy the same spot at the barre each class. The observed cultural norm is to treat these preferences as reserved spots: nobody would dare take another dancer’s spot, especially if the dancer is of a higher rank. Also, principal dancers settle into their spots first, with other dancers following suit, in that rank does dictates priority within the industry.

Class is one of the first opportunities of the day to receive feedback, but the general premise is to be seen and not heard, which explains how quiet it is: “they [instructors] see us first as athletes and second as artists” (UC5, personal communication, December 5, 2016). That feedback is not a dialogue: “I can speak up [because of my rank], but most times, I don’t. You have to realize we are cogs, and we are just here to work, so just do what you are told.” (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2016). All corps de ballet dancers said they would not speak up, especially in a large group setting, like company class, but even not really in another type of rehearsal. Regardless of the fact this is class, if an organization is ranked, there is always the looming pecking order. At the end of the day, all of the people in the same room, doing the same routines, are vying for the same spots, positions, and roles: “We compete for roles, due to the nature of the form. We compete for attention from the director; ultimately, pleasing her and being in her eyes gets you the part you want and gets you featured” (EP2, personal communication, January 24, 2017). While it would be nice to think of this group as family, and some dancers actually did use that word, these individuals are competition, and that is always in the back of the mind. “Family” came up at several times, from dancers and artistic, albeit from different perspectives, but never from executive or production. A dancer remarks, “We are family, very close, maybe a little too close. We
see each other all day, every day, so these are your friends. Our social life is really each
other” (UP5, personal communication, December 7, 2016). Add in competition, at times
even romance, and that adds whole other layers of complexity. An Artistic Director felt
differently about the word “family”, and in fact even went so far as to say that she hates
when dancers use that word because a ballet company is not a family, but an
organization; in turn, dancers are colleagues, not family members.

Competition is always present in the ballet industry: this is instilled in dancers
from a young age in that in the professional world, a limited number of spots exists,
especially for female dancers. At school and adolescent training, they nurture this
psychological competitiveness, often comparing students to each other so dancers long to
be able to have another dancer’s feet, or lift their leg as high as another, and the list goes
on. As a student, and even in the professional realm, a dancer needs to be better than the
person next to him or her: “Like mainstream media, we have a version of pretty. We want
people with strong feet and good turn out, and they [artistic staff] can point to people in
the room and say, ‘I want you to to look like _____’” (UC5, personal communication,
December 7, 2016). That student mentality never goes away: “We are raised in a
subservient culture: you think of yourself as second. Insecurities take over your lift and
dancing, but you always remember that thousands of girls want your job” (EC4, personal
communication, January 23, 2017). This does not work for a person’s well-being, but it
simply cannot be switched off when a person arrives at the professional level. With this
competition, even in the best of cultures, instances exist where people turn on each other.
During an observation, people were frustrated that certain individuals were not pulling
their weight and the artistic staff in the room simply said, “Don’t be naughty” as a
reminder not to critique peers. Ultimately, people do not have control over their place in the organization or the part they receive: someone else decides that. A person can look at their peers and think they are better fitted for the role, but at the end of the day, those ideas must succumb to the wishes of the director or leaders, and that can cause deep frustrations for individuals. Some of those frustrations turn into resentment, but others turn into longings: “There are scenarios where people compare their self to one specific person, and it can create dominance in the relationship. Scenarios happen where people worship their colleague and can’t see their flaws: they are too romanced by the other person’s position” (EP2, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

Although in company class all are working on the same routines or sequences, the sense of individuality can still be seen sneaking through with dancers’ livery or attire. Some female dancers start the class with pointe shoes while other change after the barre. Someone unfamiliar with the ballet world might even be shocked to not see rows and rows of black leotards and pink tights. Instead, observation revealed leotards have a plethora of patterns and colors (e.g. red leotard with silver piping, purple crushed velvet, orange dance shorts, leotards with lace backs), some don tights while others have bare legs. Some leotards cannot even be seen until the sweatshirts and jackets are shed as the workout becomes more intense. Necklaces and earrings are worn by some, just trying to maintain that sliver of individuality. Also, female dancers are often thought to always wear their hair in a bun, and while most have it up, it is not the typical “ballet bun”, and some even let loose, having their locks free-flowing. A male dancer admits that when he became a professional dancer, it took him a few years to break away from the traditional
black and white leotards on which he had been reared in training and school (EP2, personal communication, January 25, 2017).

Overall, class is more laid back than a rehearsal. People are not concentrating on learning new steps or perfecting a performance, but instead they are settling in for the day. Although dancers are following the sequence laid out by the instructor, they are finding their own pace, especially at the barre, taking the time to stretch cantankerous parts of their body and listening to their body to know what needs additional attention. Furthermore, based on observation, their attention to detail is very much dependent on the teacher; growing up, we have all encountered rigorous or easier teachers, and ballet, even as a professional, it is not different. Regardless of the person, the sequences are coming at a rapid pace, and instructors often use their hands to mimic their words and what a dancers’ feet or legs should be doing. However, when that more difficult teacher enters a room, every dancer seems to step up their game, and if the Artistic Director is leading class, all are alert because the instructor is also the boss. Regardless of the teacher, especially when staging a piece, the idea is first to help dancers know the steps, so they do not get lost in the footwork, and then overlay the musicality, the nuances, the passion.

**Injury.** In dancers’ minds, a difference exists between being hurt and injured. Pain, or being hurt, is just part of the art; in fact, a veteran dancer remarks, “I feel pain everyday” (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2016). But being injured means a dancer needs rehab or rest so they can come back. While they understand they should not push through injury, for risk of permanent damage, at the same time, there is a self-imposed fear of losing ground, falling down the hierarchical ladder, or even worse, being
“Injury can be seen as weakness, and we are afraid we will lose our spot” (US4, personal communication, December 2, 2016). A dancer felt selfish when she took time off to take care of her own body; after spraining her ankle in a performance, she then rolled the same ankle during a later performance and had to take time off: “I felt ashamed and lazy that I wasn’t willing to break my ankle for Nutcracker” (EC4, personal communication, January 23, 2017). Because it is viewed as a weakness, dancers often hide injury: they just do not want to miss out on being able to dance. This is a “quasi-irrational but rationale fear” (UC5, personal communication, December 5, 2016), and this notion was proven correct when another principal dancer explains the reason she has her current rank is because a dancer left because of injury. Another dancer shares that the only reason for her current rank is because she was able to step in during another member’s maternity leave. A dancer always wants, and feels the need to dance, even when injured because they have the notion they are dancing on borrowed time because of the age limitations associated with the industry. A dancer “must be their own biggest advocate. You have to know when it is too much. If you push too hard, you will get injured or remain injured. The need is to strive for balance, but that is not always encouraged” (US5, personal communication, December 6, 2016). All dancers interviewed realize the mental game around injury: “If your mind can get through it, then your body normally will too” (UC5, personal communication, December 7, 2016). Another dancer put it, “Being injured teaches you how mindset effects daily work and the process of healing (EP2, personal communication, January 24, 2017). A male dancer, with a chipped vertebra, who is still dancing remarks, “Sometimes, even if you recover, you will never be viewed the same” (UC5, personal communication, December 7, 2016).
and several dancers reinforce, not just about injury, but in general, that artistic staffs’ perceptions, once there, are near to impossible change: “Once something is in his [Artistic Director’s] head, it is there forever” (US1, personal communication, December 7, 2016). Dancers believe they get pigeonholed, even around injury, and they cannot escape that idea. A dancer remarks that an artistic staff member has a stigma about his turns, to the point, that the dancer himself has started to develop it. Most of the dancers who shared they have been injured had a common injury, either a break or fracture of the fifth metatarsal—the bone that attaches the little toe to the mid-foot. All those who had experienced injury, even if not this particular type, realize that when injured, a dancer is not part of the goal, the performance, and sadly, a dancer feels, “She [the Artistic Director] worries about the show, not the person” (EP1, personal communication, January 24, 2017). Also when out, they feel they are putting pressure on their colleagues, especially if a company is small; thus, even when injured, dancers continue to perform. A dancer performed *Sleeping Beauty* on a sprained ankle: the Artistic Director did not know and according to the dancer, did not need to know (EC4, personal communication, January 23, 2017). That same dancer also danced a different show with a bulging disc in his lumbar and another in his neck. “If you are injured, you are vilified by the organization” (EC3, personal communication, January 26, 2017), so the thought is it is better for those casting not to know. At times, even previous injuries can haunt a dancer in that casting can sometimes come down to “he doesn’t get injured” (EC3, personal communication, January 26, 2017), instead of technique.

*Culture of Leadership.* Since this study focuses on the leadership dimensions of the culture, understanding this particular facet is also important; yet, this is really a
microcosm of the whole. When asked about leadership, members of these ballet companies indicated they tend to think of the industry’s leaders in terms of three different factions—artistic, leader, and executive—and at times, even want to differentiate between their qualities or dimensions. The principal investigator really had to push people to identify commonalities amongst the departments. The dancers are often grouped with artistic in that at least these two groups interact. Artistic leaders are seen as more creative whereas executive are viewed as more pragmatic and analytical. While both were viewed as problem solvers, overall they were thought to be solving different types of problems. Yet, leaders are seen as working toward a common goal—the production—albeit from different perspectives. Although an Executive and Artistic Director might mention board members, those within the organization did not see past their own walls, which makes sense as they do not interact with the board. Additionally, while the directors understand the role of the board, they also feel they are leading the organization, with the board simply being an overseer, like a check and balance. The fact that both these roles are considered equals makes for an interesting power struggle; both are vying to be the ultimate leader, but that is not how the organizational flow chart works.

However, despite this seeming equality on paper, most everyone in the organization recognizes the Artistic Director as the ultimate say, if for no other reason than he/she produces the product, the dancers, and in turn, the performance. An Executive Director even acknowledges that he values that the industry has recognizable leaders in Artistic Directors, people who had made a name for themselves through their dance careers (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017); however, most Artistic
Directors do not have the same feelings about their counterparts. They struggle with a person who views ballet as a business and not an art, because the business is the art. One artistic staff member, not a director states, “Executive Directors are simply babysitters because Artistic Directors have proven incapable of handling finances” (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017).

Although more than one leader always exists in a room full of people, in that there are formal and informal leaders, usually one person is ultimately in charge, whether that be the person doling out instructions or critiques to dancers or the person with the most seniority or highest rank at the table. As aforementioned, rank dictates one’s place in the organization and his/her ability to share their opinion. In a meeting, although people share openly, the final say is from the one with the most rank. Although a discussion might ensue and collaboration may be involved, one person still holds the power. In a studio, the leader, although dancer leaders exist within the same space, is still the person regarded as the teacher. Although dancers, who are leaders in their own right, can emulate and model, the instructor, the teacher, the Ballet Mistress or Master, decides the pace and direction of the room. What is interesting at times is when that same formal title of instructor is bestowed on a dancer, and they morph from a peer to an instructor, whether this be in company class, leading the sequences, or staging a performance. Dancers really struggle with this transition in that they are not accustomed to a peer being the central voice. In one company, the dancers staging the current production were a male and female pair, actually a married couple, and this seemed to make their delivery a little more palatable for some: “The two have a lot more clarity because they have a singular voice” (GD3, personal communication, January 20, 2017). However, the female teacher
in the married couple, despite being a senior member of the company, said, “I worry because I don’t want to make people mad. We don’t have the title of Ballet Master/Mistress” (GD2, personal communication, January 19, 2017): all are aware that rank matters. Some people are very aware when people are doling out criticism and critique without the proper leader rank and feel these people lack tact: “I struggle with him leading class because he is my biggest competition. When I do something wrong, he gives correction right away, but I question if he is being patronizing. I don’t know his motivation” (GD12, personal communication, January 20, 2017), which is why the person goes on to explain that he takes this critique differently from that of a formal leader like an artistic staff member (Artistic Director, Ballet Master, Ballet Mistress, etc.).

Because dancers are professionals, they struggle when their own leadership dimensions or qualities are overlooked, and as a result, a dancer also feels the tension between individuality and collaboration. As a member of the corps de ballet, they strive to have a similar look, work and move as a group, but at the same time, to rise in the ranks, a dancer must also be noticeable, have something distinct that separates him or her. Somewhat paradoxical is the notion is that they must strive to be perfect, but at the same time, perfection can be boring, so they have to understand when to blend in and when to stand out from the crowd. However, “sticking out” at the wrong times, like not being on the music or missing a count, is a negative. Individuality has to seem controlled, not careless: an idiosyncratic flourish, “a whoosh of energy that comes for the artistry” (UP2, personal communication, December 7, 2016) can be tolerated by all, from dancer to music to executive. Part of that understanding comes from knowing one’s rank in that
with ranked companies, a dancer is regarded by such, and the higher up the proverbial ladder, the more individuality, within reason, a dancer can have: “Individuality comes with rank because you are more valued and more welcomed; in the corps, you need the same mentality. You have to look the same. As a principal dancer, you are the character and your own life experiences become part of that” (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2016). This friction between collaboration and individuality can also be seen with the idea of ranking in a company, which depends on the size. The belief is that more ranks can cause dancers to miss out on parts because it is more about who has the role of principal, rather than being open-minded to who can perform the dance. On the contrary, no rankings can also mean that people are pushed into roles too quickly before they have mastered technique and are therefore a little “in over their heads”: “we are asking children [new professional dancers] to do principal roles, which is unrealistic” (GD3, personal communication, January 20, 2017). However, since dancers change and morph, the idea of no rank also allows for fluidity. To an extent, a dancer can be self-centered, a leader, on stage, but at some point, he/she has to be about the unit, the whole, the collaboration, as well. Although all are dancers in the organization, most still feel the need for rank—to be separated out on ability—to have them stand out as individuals based on their abilities and the leadership. This makes sense in that a principal dancer must be able to command a stage by his or herself, so a sense of individuality or leadership is needed. However, even that individuality or independence has a ceiling, because again beauty—whether that be group or individual beauty—is dependent or realized by the Artistic Director. That subjectivity, whether conscious on the part of leaders or not, creates favorites, at least in the minds of dancers. They believe that
“everybody remembers everything and it will come back around and impact the perception of the individual” (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2016). Even production aspects, like music departments, understand that things “have been codified and decided about ‘our way’” (UP3, personal communication, December 7, 2016) and that way is usually that of the Artistic Director.

Most people in the organization do consider the Artistic Director role to be the “North Star”, meaning deciding a company’s direction, and they seem to be viewed as more permanent fixtures. An Executive Director even reiterates this sentiment, “I am the replaceable one, and I know that” (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017). A general consensus is that since most Artistic Directors were dancers, and wonderful as a performer, that they are not accustomed to the focus not being on them. While they could provide an undercurrent of calm, stability, and appreciation, they do not always happen because they have not sorted out the differences in the role between dancer and Artistic Director. Most people with this sentiment, even dancers, are able to sympathize with this because it is a hard transition to being the one not literally in the lime light or spotlight on stage. Most people interviewed recognized that a great dancer does not necessarily make a great Artistic Director: they are two different skill sets, but the dancer, now promoted to this leadership position, thinks, “You know the industry because you have danced for forty years and people knew your name everywhere” (GA3, personal communication, January 19, 2017). One dancer takes a different stance than most and comments, “A principal dancer is alone in the spotlight for so long they forget what it is like to work with a group. They are famous because of their name and their work, not the group. A corps member, who stands in line with everybody else, would make a better Artistic
Director” (GD3, personal communication, January 20, 2017). A now executive administrator, former dancer, recalls being told by her Artistic Director at the time, “You will never be as good as I was” (EE2, personal communication, January 24, 2017), evidence that is hard to let go of the days of performing. Sometimes because of the training as dancers that Artistic Directors experience, they have an unrealistic expectation for their own companies. Trainings in the “big leagues” can be so different from what dancers in smaller, regional companies can experience. Because not all people have “Nature, God, timing, and New York City” (EE2, personal communication, January 24, 2017),” people can get hurt, people can be demoralized, people can crash and burn. A dancer once was put into several ballets simultaneously and was mixing up the various parts, so he asked the Artistic Director for clarification, to which the response was, “You must prove yourself to me in order for me to think you’re worthy” (EC6, personal communication, January 25, 2017).

That idea of proving one’s self worthy is evident as dancers try to conform and mold themselves to the desires of a leader or teacher. Class, whether they be company class or a rehearsal or even performance practice, is clearly a time for feedback, or notes as this is called in the ballet industry, but a dancer comments that it is important to remember, “This [ballet] is not a democracy. You have a leader, his [or her] minions, and the dancers. As a dancer, you say, ‘yes sir’ and ‘yes ma’am’. This is just a benevolent dictatorship” (UP1, personnel communication, December 3, 2016). Thus, whatever direction is given is expected to be followed, and the same idea of simply taking instruction is seen with the leadership in the room: the person provides the critique or direction in that they are the “expert”. Dancers often have the sense that instructors want
them to have more of a student mentality than a professional mentality: “At the age of 30, I cannot be a student. But I guess in some ways, I still am; I just listen and absorb. I dance to get a part” (UC2, personal communication, December 6, 2016). Artistic staff seem to forget dancers have been promoted to a professional and therefore want to have more direct involvement in the building of their career. Yet, when feedback is given, the expectation is for people not to have to be told twice: fix the mistake or error. When dancers are told not to be the first in the room to lower their leg, the fact is, somebody has to be first: it is inevitable. Dancers realize details do matter, but they wonder if being lectured in front of the entire company, to be made an example, really corrects that detail. The words “bullying” and “abusive” were used to describe the feedback process and that it was the only tool in the instructors’ tool belts; an artistic staff even admits, “We will humiliate if needed. [. . .] I yell, but it is a positive yell. You have to know what to yell out. I beat up some people; I don’t let them be indifferent” (GA2, personal communication, January 16, 2017). However, on the flip side of the same comment, came, “I am their [dancers’] eyes. I am their mirror. I don’t sugarcoat” (GA2, personnel communication, January 20, 2017). While the word “bully” may be debatable, the principal investigator saw first hand how constant criticism can be concentrated on an individual in the room, to the point that the instructor physically manipulated the dancer’s body to make his point. The industry norm sometimes seems to be “beatings will continue until morale improves” (GA2, personal communication, January 16, 2017), but sometimes companies try to combat this with pizza parties to help boost morale or cakes for birthdays, which also seems to defy the body image and “no eating” idea that exists within the industry.
Feedback can be very generalized or more individual, with most dancers expressing during interviews they wish for more feedback, especially during company class. Although some positive comments are given during class, which is very dependent on the person leading the class, most of the observed feedback tends to be negative reinforcement; for example, “This isn’t Scottish dancing: control your body;” “What I am not getting is the musicality, the feel of fondue. You just clunk the foot down: there should be tension—now reach;” “Stretch. This isn’t feel good. Yes, this should hurt like hell;” “A pirouette is not a swizzle. Control it;” and “This is like a cage fight, the result of too many years of not controlling positions.” One company studied is more of an anomaly in that most comments are not really feedback, but rather mere direction, or generic praise. This is problematic for dancers in that they realize the absence of feedback is to avoid confrontation; the dancers feel shortchanged since they are not being pushed. However, a dancer admits, “When they liked me, I was hardest on myself” (EE2, personal communication, January 24, 2017). However, one executive administrator, with no dancing background, feels this negative reinforcement should not be startling since most artistic staff were dancers themselves; therefore, they are reared in the same environment, constantly receiving negative feedback or criticism, so it is all they know how to deliver (GE2, personal communication, January 19, 2017). A person in production put it in a similar vein, “Ballet masters and mistresses proved their worth by years of dancing. They didn’t audition for their current role; they were just promoted into it because of their dancing” (UP2, personal communication, December 7, 2016). This same rationalization is used by an executive administrator, albeit in a different company, to
describe how she rationalizes artistic staffs’ passionate outbursts during meetings or how
nobody thinks it out of place when an angry person rips up a paper and storms out of a
meeting.

Dancers, especially those in lower ranks, feel that again favoritism comes into
play and that rank impacts the amount and type of feedback given. The thought is that
principal dancers are more “protected” from feedback: “There is not a whole lot of
punishment if they don’t do a fantastic job. Often when you get to a certain level, you no
longer have to have the edge in the role” (UP4, personal communication, December 2,
2016). A principal dancer even confirms that notion, “As people get promoted, it
becomes more difficult to get criticism” (UP6, personal communication, December 7,
2016). Multiple personalities exist within a class or room, and feedback can be
internalized differently; some people need to be told to “fix-it” while at the same time,
some struggle to digest what they are told and cannot recover from being critiqued. In
turn, the principal investigator observed how negative reinforcement impacts some
dancers. Their body drops, along with their level of effort and energy: they are impacted
both physically and mentally. However, some dancers stand in their own way (not being
prepared with shoes, using their children as an excuse for tardiness, etc.), never accepting
fault. Some artistic staff believe that those who cannot take critique are not confident,
have an ego, or lack the technique to fix the issue: “If you cannot take the critique, you
won’t last” (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017).

While some dancers express they feel they could speak up, they quickly follow
with the caveat, “But I don’t,” while others, especially in the lower ranks of dancers said
they would never even consider such a blatant action. Some female dancers did remark
that their gender is far less able to speak up than males; women have a harder time being assertive because they realize the supply and demand within a company. This certainly proves true when during an observed choreographing session with female dancers, the choreographer did not ask their opinion once, but simply gave directions and commands. However, when choreographing the same section of the ballet for males, there was a dialogue, with dancers offering input and suggestions; the Artistic Director even asked a dancer, albeit a principal, “We are spit-balling. Do you have anything to add?” After interviewing a dancer from both these groups, the rationalization of this was that the Artistic Director is female and when working with males feels more liberated from the rules of interaction. Moreover, because there is a stigma that less competition exists with males, because male dancers are “rarer,” they are encouraged to be more playful and therefore less persecuted than females. Additionally, most would agree contemporary works allow for a little more collaboration between artistic staff and dancer because of movement quality, but when the performance is classical, the process is very individualistic, with the teacher putting their own stamp on the movements. Overall though, the belief is still to simply take the feedback: “dancers get little input. When dancers took ideas to administration, they were told to stick to what they know” (UP4, personal communication, December 6, 2016), and this is supported by the fact that after a note or reprimand, they just dance, perform it again.

The ideal again resurfaces in feedback in that sometimes it is borderline unattainable—striving for that unreachable perfection. Female dancers are often told to soften their pointe shoes because they are too loud against the floor. Pointe shoes themselves are hard because of the box, and dancing is done on a hard, albeit sprung
floor; both are needed to prevent injury and so the notion of simply making any of those aspects softer seems a little out of reach. Even remarks or feedback in observed meetings made to those who are not dancers in the organization seem unreachable, “Be yourself with better taste, and I wouldn’t have to tell you what to do.” Often times dancers feel the only feedback given is that something was not good enough: the critique lacks instruction on how to fix or improve. Simply saying, “You guys look like shit” (UC3, personal communication, December 6, 2016) does not make a dancer better. That strive for the ideal or perfectionism is difficult when the feedback has no explanation how to perfect or make it better. However, observation reveals that some instructors do try to help break apart the issue by explaining that momentum will help get a leg around, and that momentum is created from the back leg or emphasizing that fifth position has to be made in order to make it to the next step. “There is an air of stoicism, not knowing what they are thinking,” (EC9, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and so without explanation, “You learn to fix by trial and error—just make it happen (UP2, personal communication, December 7, 2016). An Artistic Director, who is trying to explain a movement in an observed class, finally is frustrated and states, “I don’t know. Do whatever I am doing.” A guest choreographer tells a dancer, who questions his hand placement during a lift, “Figure it out. Dance is hard” (EC2, personal communication, January 23, 2017). A dancer admits that his jumps are not the highest and that he can not do as many turns as his peers: “But it doesn’t have to be that perfectionist culture. You can fall in love with flaws. There is no such thing as perfect. Sometimes I cannot even enjoy a role because I am so concerned with how I am doing it, trying to make it perfect” (UC5, personal communication, December 5, 2016) so he continues to simply try his
best, despite the constant critique of his “tricks”. Another dancer has similar feelings, “They forget we are humans and have limitations. They do accept mistakes: they are just not okay and sometimes the mistakes feel like the world is ending” (US5, personal communication, December 6, 2016).

A dancer, especially, should be “keenly and consciously aware of how they say something and what they need to say” to leaders in the room (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2016). Everyone in the room, especially dancers, should be aware of what comes out of his or her mouth, but the same could also be said of instructors, the title leader(s). Artistic staff often are wearing multiple hats, and often dancers sense they are overworked and dealing with other things: “they come into the studio in a bad place and this translates to the company, which is not a motivating environment” (US5, personal communication, December 6, 2016). Since most artistic leaders were dancer themselves, a dancer feels that artistic staff believes, “You suffer because I suffered” (UC2, personal communication, December 6, 2016). In fact, stories were recounted, although these did not occur in the companies visited, of dancers having cigarette butts put out on their legs or legs smacked with sticks to ensure they are lifted higher. The overall attitude of the dancers is that people are not motivated by only correction and critique, some positive needs to be incorporated into feedback. A pianist notes that routines are done repeatedly with no sense that dancers are going to peak prior to the performance. But when they do peak or reach that “perfection” too early, instructors keep giving feedback, all the while not understanding why the performance is not progressing any further. He felt too much preparation and feedback can be problematic, especially when not enough repertoire exists to cut the tension in the room
(UP3, personal communication, January 20, 2017). Not enough variety exists within a dancer’s day to keep the day interesting. A dancer said, “We dance a lot and get tired. It is important to have a person in front of you who is consistent, positive, and realistic, who expects you to do your best and work hard all the time. If you don’t like the people you are working or learning from, makes for a long day” (EC10, personal communication, January 23, 2017). However, liking the person in front does not mean they do not provide feedback; nobody wants a leader that is passive or avoids confrontation: “people get frustrated and it impacts morale. Motivation can be hard when paid so little and someone who works so little is allowed to do that and not disciplined in a severe manner” (EA2, personal communication, January 26, 2017). A common complaint in all three companies and across all areas is that problems and mistakes need to be addressed, albeit in the appropriate manner: people cannot shy away from conflict.

**Leadership Dimensions**

Against the background of the culture of these ballet organization, the dimensions—attribute, behaviors, and attitudes—valued by the culture among individuals selected for leadership roles will be analyzed. Looking at the culture holistically, allows for highlighting of leadership dimensions, with a leader being an individual in a position of authority within the ballet organization to influence others within the culture.

**Attributes.** Flexibility or nimbleness, whether that be mental or physical, is considered essential for all leaders, in all levels of the organization. Naturally, flexibility starts with the dancers’ bodies: the level of physical flexibility exhibited by those selected for leadership positions is truly awe-inspiring for an audience. However, these individuals also have to be flexible in terms of parts and roles in that they are always
understudying in case a person gets injured. As a result, mental nimbleness is needed to memorize all the performances and their corresponding steps. They have to be flexible because at times they are substituted in at a moment’s notice, sometimes in roles in which they are not altogether comfortable. With the variety of dance expected, versatility is essential since “you have to be able to handle anything thrown at you (EC1, personal communication, January 25, 2017). Furthermore, while they are learning new aspects, they are also receiving them from different personalities, meaning adapting to what others want. No longer can a dancer simply rely on classical technique: they have to be pliable, literally and figuratively, to learn more contemporary works. One Artistic Director summed up a dancer’s need for flexibility by saying they need to be a chameleon (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016).

Although as seen through observation, adaptability is required with artistic staff in that sometimes dancers just cannot perform a step as planned: individuals have limitations, and as a result, steps have to be reconfigured. In an observed session where a choreographer is staging a performance, the Artistic Director has to rethink the possibilities when a step causes a male dancer to leave a bruise on his partner’s arm. In the same rehearsal, there are candid conversations, at least with the male dancers, when the expression on their faces reveals that the step is just awkward for their bodies. The finances of these ballet companies also require leaders to be flexible in that there is never quite enough revenue. When an Executive Director overestimates ticket sales for a performance, resulting in a loss, he/she has to be able to deduce how that money will be recouped: they have to be flexible and willing to readjust their projections. Because finances ebb, artistic staff have to be flexible with the vision in their head: they have to be
willing to adapt their ideas, which is sometimes a struggle. One Artistic Director shared that for their next performance, *Alice in Wonderland*, because of improper budgeting, the company is $22,000 shy of what it is needed to produce her vision: she has to be flexible with her wants. However, sometimes that “flexibility” means paying for her wants out of her own pocket, reiterating that the ideal will not be sacrificed (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Costumes, or production, have to be flexible, again because sometimes white professional white tutus, at $400 each, are outside the budget, but at the same time, $35 spandex rehearsal tutus are not the answer either (GP1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Musicians have to be flexible as well because they have to be able to adjust tempos to the artistic staff’s whim: sometime their musical expertise has to be replaced by the preferences of others.

Consistent with the value placed on “the ideal” in the culture of these ballet companies, perfectionism is another attribute selected for among leadership. Leaders exhibited and expressed a yearning for perfection, to meet that ideal in their head—whether that be precise movement for a dancer, a flawless performance for an artistic staff, or robust ticket sales for executive. The “commitment to excellence” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016), and the ability to help others achieve it, is considered necessary for some to emerge as a ballet leader. But that striving for perfection or the ideal also creates an environment that allows for constant scrutiny and critique that is par for the course. As observed, the production staff wants perfection from a technical standpoint, and as dancers are swirling off the stage in a performance of *The Nutcracker*, they are still insistent, despite all the backstage flurry, that mice costumes be hung properly on hangers, and that accoutrements like hats, prop facial hair, etc. be put
back in the proper place and upright and neat. Even amidst what appears to be backstage chaos because of the constant preparation for the next scene, they are striving for perfection. Repetition is part of a dancer leader’s world because they will do it countless times to perfect a movement that to the naked eye looks flawless. Also, with tiny details on costumes, that certainly could not be seen by the audience, they make sure they are flawless from head to toe—repair a sequin, move a button so that a jacket is a proper fit, find a shoe (for a contemporary work) that has an appropriate width heel. According to an Artistic Director, “All successful dancers have unattainable ideas” (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Artistic staff’s idea of excellence runs deep in that they carry thoughts over from their dance world into the more official leadership realm. Something as small as a dancer brushing a curtain when he/she comes off stage is enough to receive a scolding: curtains should hang in perfect folds and not be disturbed. Headpieces falling off or a prop being dropped, albeit an accident, is not acceptable: their perfectionism mindset says use more bobby bins and figure out what to do with those sweaty hands, respectively, so these issues do not happen. An Artistic Director says, “Good is the demise of great”, helping explain why they want that ideal (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Even a Development and Education Coordinator realizes the various demands of her role are overwhelming, and really beyond a single person’s scope: “Largely elements are out of my hand, but I feel responsible. I want to be perfect (EE2, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

Leaders in these ballet companies are also independent, perhaps in part because the organizations that are not structured to facilitate collaboration. Dancer leaders are independent in that with or without an instructor they “make it happen”: they can be seen
practicing all alone in a studio, listening to their own body to fix their mistakes. They literally, and figuratively, stand on “their own two feet,” and are not reliant on others to a movement happen. Instead of having to be told to watch film to master a step, the dancer, of their own accord, is watching video and past choreography to understand the nuances that must be brought to the stage. They will ask other dancers to repeat the step and watch their movements, trying to model. The administrative leaders on both sides of the organization—executive and artistic—thrive through their independence: they have to make things happen on their own. Although some dancers feel as they rise in the ranks that they receive less feedback, this might be due in part to artistic staff helping them to become more independent: “Leaders [. . .] really help people become more independent, to become more critical of themselves for this is how the outcome can actually be reached” (EE3, personal communication, January 26, 2017). Leaders in the ballet industry, with the amount of work present, have to be independent and take initiative to ensure that the work, whatever that might be, gets done: in an organization that lacks depth as far as personnel (e.g. administrative assistance, etc.) they cannot wait for direction, but instead must make it happen.

Artistry is also an attribute observe among those leaders who thrive in the ballet companies included in this study: all individuals in leadership position had mastered the skill of entertaining. Whether a soloist or corps member, dance leaders stand out from the proverbial crowd; they have a quality—the “glamour” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016) that was previously mentioned—that makes their movements look flawless. They lose the audience in their movement and themselves in the character; their skills and presence on stage are at an unbelievable level. While artistry is expected of
dancers in that they themselves are the artists, this is also an attribute needed for executive leaders. They have to be able to coordinate fundraiser events, tea parties for Cinderella, and do so with seeming less effort. Their showmanship ultimately helps the product. A foundation fundraiser for a new version of The Nutcracker simply could not be a presentation: the food spread was elaborate, complete with appropriate themed napkins, cupcakes donning ballerina and nutcrackers, a display of nutcrackers that paid homage to old traditions and new ideas. For artistic staff, their artistry is seen in the season’s complete repertoire: they are able to entertain audiences by compiling a season that will entertain all by including different styles, different emotions, different storylines. The artistry is where all ballet leaders are able to flourish in their creativity; if “life is a show” (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017), then ballet is just a microcosm.

Intelligence also helps a person rise through the ranks in these ballet companies: being smart appears to allow one to thrive, and survive, in this industry. A dancer has to be a quick-learner evidenced by all the choreography that comes their way each day. They have to be intelligent about their bodies, whether that be body image or injury; they have to listen to their bodies because poor decisions can impact the quality of their dance and ultimately their careers. Artistic staff have to be savvy enough to deduce how to make their ideal a reality. They need minds that can see the complete picture and how the parts—the dancers, the costumes, the lights, the sets, the props—make the whole. They are constantly creating what is like a large puzzle, so they have to be intelligent enough to see where a piece fits. The executive staff has to use good judgment about money and be smart about what development and marketing tactics will work: “if you push button A twelve times and B pops up, and you don’t want B, you have to stop pushing button A.”
You have to stop being an idiot and do something different” (UE10, personal communication, December 7, 2016). The executive side of the ballet industry is where the most “newcomers” exist, meaning coming from outside the ballet world, and those people have to be intellectual enough to embrace and learn the industry and art form. Often times, executive staff will take ballet class, as adults, to try to learn the art, to try to walk in a dancers’ shoes (GE2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). Since ballet has not made a strong argument for its existence historically, part of the intelligence, regardless of the role in the organization, is being smart enough to make that argument, to help ballet finds its place. Although ballet ultimately only works if people pull together, individual acumen, intelligence, and expertise allows that “teamwork” to happen.

**Behaviors.** The daily grind of any job takes dedication or loyalty, and the ballet industry is not immune: leaders must exhibit dedication to the craft or art form. Since “this job is sacrifice” (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2017), this takes a dedication or focus to endure. When the job takes a toll each day on the body, it takes tenacity to dance each day. When toes are bleeding, and a person can barely walk, it takes perseverance to put a foot into a toe shoe. Persistence is necessary when a dancer is overlooked for a role and yet still has to dance in the performance and watch another dance their desired part. Each and every dance, after countless hours of practice, and a tired body, they push on, all the while not complaining or vocalizing their inner turmoil. In a profession, where 30 is considered old, no retirement is available, and salaries are meager, dedication to the dance is the only possible answer. The executive administration, knowing that money is limited, dedicate themselves to amassing as many funds as possible. They strive to have as many performances as possible, even if that
means traveling. Artistic staff are dedicated to the ideal, to the vision in their hand: they
do whatever it takes to make that a reality. All in the organization want to present as
many performances, to as many audiences as possible—a dedication to share the art
form; thus, explaining why for most ballet leaders, “this is their life, not their work”
(EE3, personal communication, January 26, 2017). A Marketing Director said, “You have
to be dedicated to the art, to have an ability to work, and accomplish within the chaos. It
can be beautiful fun” (GE2, personal communication, January 19, 2017).

Dancers use their body, while administration uses their words, but whatever the
medium, being able to communicate is important in this industry. Since ballet is an art
form dancers rely on their bodies as an instrument of communication: body language can
project an infinite number of feelings, emotions, and attitudes. Dance is emotion in
motion, and George Balanchine even felt it not necessary to try to include emotion in
choreography because the ballet is an art form connected to the human body, and in turn,
it will tell a human story regardless. Whether a variation (solo dancer) or a pas de deux
(partner dance), dancers are able to tug at the heart strings with their virtuoso. As the
choreographer or the artistic staff, knowing what a dance should/can express, as well as
what it does not have the ability to express, is important to know when to push the
dancers: they are the person behind the scenes, who establishes the message to be
communicated through the steps and patterns. In rehearsal, sometimes the feedback is,
“Express yourself,” “Communicate”, or “Perform”, which is not asking a dancer to
perfect their technique, but instead to breath life into their work: their artistry or
musicality is vital because this can make the difference between a ballerina moving a
person to tears or leaving them cold. Although some would argue that negative
reinforcement or feedback is not the most productive, correction is still a form of communication; through feedback they are trying to perfect the message that audiences will see. A common question in the industry is whether technique or artistry is more important, but the reality is, both are needed. An Artistic Director remarks about artistry, “It can be learned, but not taught” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016). This artistry, this ability to communicate and make the audience feel, is what helps separate a dancer from an athlete. The artistic side of the industry has to find the delicate balance of surveying a room full of dancers, getting everybody on the same page, and getting what they want out of each person in the room without stifling their ability to communicate nonverbally. Additionally, production side of the industry plays an integral part in communication: costumes, lighting, and sets have to fit the “story” the ballet is telling. These production aspects can quickly let the audience know if they are in for a more contemporary or classical work, the setting of the work, or the type of the emotions that might be elicited. A marketing director even says, “You will move quicker if you can embrace the artistry,” and in his role that means communicating the artistry to the masses via media (GE2, personal communication, January 20, 2017).

Another behavior observed to be valued among leaders in the ballet organizations studied is being detail-oriented, to the point that some even admitted, “I can get hung up on the small things” (UA2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). An Artistic Director spends hours highlighting the fine details of their new version of *The Nutcracker*. Most people would not notice that a window pane will depict a frost pattern instead of just a skim with random snowflakes, or that in the second overture there will be an 18th century puppet theatre to pay homage to the time frame, or that in each set
something is balancing on a pearl to illustrate the delicacy of the dance. In a several hour meeting focused on lighting, the mantra seemed to be that it is all about the details because they make the magic. That extreme attention to detail is also what helps a dancer, and the product progress: dancers are constantly fine-tuning. Each and everyday they are trying to perfect the minutiae of each step, the placement of each hand or foot. For example, a dancer’s hands and wrists should always appear relaxed and natural in that the hands act an extension of the arms, flowing naturally and gracefully. A dancer must remember to never flex their wrists and always leave space between their fingers. These small details are just about the hand, much less all the nuances that comes with each and every different movement. Balanchine was even rumored to train his dancers by having them hold a little ball in their hand so their hands would be rounded instead of flat. The executive administration especially has to pay attention to the details in that they deal with money; if they are off in any way, the whole organization is impacted. These small aspects are what the artistic staff “clean” everyday. Noting that the rate in which a male dancer lifts his leg should be the same rate as when a female dancer lifts her arm or advice to look up and lift their chest after a roll may seem frivolous, but in fact, make a large impact on the quality. Their “good eye” allows them to see the details as well as the whole work simultaneously. A Chief Operating Officer comments, “You have to know the details of what you are trying to sell” (UE3, personal communication, December 6, 2016). Paying attention to the details happens with both the positive and negative; an executive administration looks at the details of their membership program and the huge eye-opener is that what works in the film industry is not working in the ballet industry. They have tried different ways and the program is still lethargic. He admits that he has to
try ideas in marketing that are outside of the ballet world; otherwise clues and nuggets—details—will be missed because “you will have blinders on” (UE10, personal communication, December 7, 2016). An Executive Director urges his staff to visit their website to see what modifications are needed: the more people looking will help catch the little details that have been overlooked.

Ballet is an art and therefore shows individuality, at least to a degree. A choreographer is the ultimate example of individuality in that he/she puts their personal stamp on every single movement or step to produce a performance: they put their own spin on each story. As observed by the principal investigator during rehearsals at a company, something as classical as Swan Lake can be transformed into a more stylish contemporary tale, just by an individual’s different take. Similarly, The Nutcracker, a holiday tradition, can be re-envisioned by an Artistic Director, putting their own personality into the piece as observed in a foundation event. A dancer, even those in the corps de ballet, still has to show individuality, holding their own amongst the group. But a principal dancer must exhibit individuality, commanding a stage all alone and filtering their own experience into a role (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2016).

Being able to stand out, not stick out, from the crowd helps them rise to this rank (December 3, personal communication, December 3, 2016). Individuality in the movement is not only seen through the dance, but also the music: they have to know their individual role in the group or team. However, most audience members are so engrossed in the dance that they fail to notice the individuality of the composer and musicians: with each performance, no matter how much rehearsal, they have their own sense of phrasing and interpretations. Even in daily company class, the individuality of the pianist was
observed by their choice of song. Most would expect Bach or Beethoven in ballet, which is why the principal investigator smiled when a pianist snuck a polka into class. The individuality of the artistic staff is evident simply by the way it was observed that each holds class; some are more relaxed, some more vocal, some more positive, some more rigorous; but that individuality is what can keep class from becoming stagnant, especially when the walls of a studio are all that a dancer sees each day. The Artistic Director perhaps has the most freedom and so their individuality has free reign in most regards (usually not finances). They determine the season, they determine ranks, they determine the direction of the performance (costumes, lighting, sets): their preferences and individuality can be seen in all aspects, which is why some companies are more classical and some are more contemporary.

Longevity also helps solidify a leadership role within these ballet companies. With time, a person, regardless of which division of the industry, can prove he or she can withstand the “trial by fire” (EC7, personal communication, January 26, 2017). Moreover, the ballet industry needs leaders who are “constants”, people who have experience within an individual company. They also do not want their leadership to be a revolving door. Their time in the industry and/or organization has allowed them to experience numerous roles and as such “they have paid their dues” (EC9, personal communication, January 27, 2017). While answers vary about what helps a person rise through the ranks in a ballet company, all admit that time is a contributing factor; longevity allows for a person to prove themselves. Longevity helps a person know the ballet industry and/or a particular organization and in turn, “they become what they know: they become the culture of the company” (GA2, personal communication, January
20, 2017). Time within the organization, or industry, can also be construed as loyalty: the person is invested and loyal to the mission of the art form. With that longevity comes knowing the “tricks of the trade”, meaning when, and how often, to push.

**Attitudes.** An appreciation for the art form is the only way to survive, and thrive, in the ballet industry, and this appreciation is often what fuels the attribute of dedication. In fact, every person interviewed alluded, or outright said, an appreciation or passion is needed for this particular art form. No dancer would do what they do each and every day and experience the toll on their body without an appreciation for the art; that passion existed as children, which is why most cannot even fathom a different profession. This appreciation and love for the ballet can never be extinguished, which is why numerous people never leave the profession: they simply step into different shoes (GA2, personal communication, January 20, 2017). No administrator would keep the pace they do without their dedicated work ethic (GE3, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Dancers are often Ballet Masters or Mistress and Artistic Directors, wanting to share their love and knowledge of the dance with the next generation (GA3, personal communication, January 19, 2017). This appreciation is what makes them so detail-focused because they want to be able to highlight all the idiosyncrasies of each step.

Executive administrators have degrees that would allow them to have more lucrative professions, but all admit their love and appreciation of either non-profit organization or ballet itself push them into the industry. However, an executive administer remarks, “I admire the passion and the drive, but it can be difficult to manage” (GE3, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Yet, a Box Office Manager, remarks about passion,
“I’m drawn to the leaders who envelope the art. They advocate for the art” (GE4, personal communication sales, January 20, 2017).

An attitude of competition is prevalent for those in those in leadership roles, or those aspiring to be. With aspirations for bigger and better, leaders rise through the rank by their competitive nature. Although colleagues might stand next to a dancer at the barre, they are the same people who stand in the way of a role; they are the person the dancer must outperform to catch the director, choreographer, or teacher’s eye. That competition is what fuels dancers who really should not be dancing when they are injured: they do not want to be replaced or out danced by their peer and lose their spot. The competitive nature is what keeps a dancer looking for their angle, be it their dancing prowess, their ability to recall counts, or their ability to embody a character role. Their scrappy nature, both mentally and physically, allow them to thrive in a cutthroat industry; that competitive nature is what allowed them to become a professional in the first place, dancing their way to the top—a professional company—when countless others wanted that spot. The artistic staff’s competitive nature is not only with the outside world—other companies—but also themselves. They are striving to out do their last season, to top themselves, whether that be with a more challenging ballet, with a new and fresh choreographer, or with new costumes and set that will impress. However, they are also competitive with other companies; the principal investigator was astonished to hear how up-to-date the visited companies were with other ballet companies—their competitors. They could cite how they incorporate more female choreographers into their repertoires or how another company is stuck in their ways, doing the same old ballets year to year. The ballet industry is somewhat small in terms of leadership, meaning companies often
simply trade leaders; thus, it is important to “keep up with the Jones” as far as what they are doing, so it can be outdone, but also for the purpose of keeping job prospects in sights. An offhand comment by an artistic staff about a current Artistic Director of a different company is that his competitive drive has kicked in and he is branching out of his comfort zone because he wants to be the next director of the American Ballet Theatre. Executive administrators, the more business side of the industry, are thriving because of their competitive attitude. They constantly want to beat their last season’s sales: they are constantly trying to get ahead with marketing and fundraising. Their competition keeps them on their proverbial toes, causing them to reinvent themselves while paying homage to the traditions of the art. Ballerinas are often compared to athletes, a fair comparison because both want to be at the top of their “game” and that only comes from outperforming the competition.

Coupled with that competition is often times a fearless attitude, a willingness to taking risks. In class, dancers are often told “to go for it”, meaning take a risk, let go, and try the step. In a *pas de deux* (partnering), especially that involves lifts, a ballerina has to be fearless and trust her partner. If she has fear, when she leaves the ground, the move will never work because the body stiffens from fear and the gracefulness is lost. To even venture on to pointe shoes, a dancer has to be fearless: they balance, spin, slide, and linger on the mere tips of their toes, just praying their ankles are strong enough to handle the tasks. For a dancer to keep dancing with an injury shows fearlessness, perhaps to a reckless degree, in that they think their ability can combat the injury. Their fearlessness is always what keeps them dancing with their paltry salaries and no retirement system; they do not fear their future. Because ballet is their life and they consider the stage “a temple,
a scared space” (UP1, personal communication, December 2, 2016), their fears are secondary. The artistic and executive staff have to be fearless, continuing to push the boundaries. Failure cannot be an option: they have to make the performance happen. For artistic, they have to be fearless to try new things, to keep thinking “outside the box”, incorporating new works and new choreographers. They have to be fearless and take chances on new dancers; especially in companies without rank, they are bold and brave with who they cast, knowing they can perfect the part even though a dancer might not have countless years as a principal dancer under their belt. They cannot fear the budget, set for by the executive administration; instead, they have to strive for the ideal, the vision in their head, knowing that “perfection” will come. With the executive side of the ballet, fearlessness is needed daily because the finances are always of concern: they cannot fear being in the red, but instead must concentrate on staying in the black. They cannot fear that the funding will not come, but instead focus on going out and solidifying the funding.

Confidence, not to be confused with arrogance, is also a necessity. To be at the professional level of ballet, all aspects of the organization must believe in themselves and their abilities. When a dancer admits they do not have the feet or body of the prototypical dancer, their confidence is what keeps them dancing. In order to make it in this industry, they have to believe in themselves or they would have hung up their pointe shoes long ago. When self doubt tries to creep in, their self-confidence as to be there to say, “You are capable of this step or this performance.” With the constant bombardment of criticism, their inner confidence must keep them going, the belief they are capable. When a dancer is passed for a part, his/her confidence convinces them they are worthy to
perform this art form. The constant rejection and biting criticism usually helps build a
dancer’s confidence, helping construct their “armor” in an ethereal art form. Failure and
adversity helps build character and confidence, and the ballet industry is not immune.
Artistic staff, most of which are dancers, carry that dancer confidence in their leadership
positions: giving direction to a company requires confidence, otherwise the person would
always be second guessing themselves. They have to be confident in their abilities
because they are critiquing individuals: their belief in their abilities and expertise is what
what they rely upon when instructing. Confidence is what makes “the ideal” in their head
seem obtainable and within their grasp; that confidence and creativity allows this
perfection to become a reality. The executive administration has to be confident that the
budgets will balance so that they can keep the doors open another season. Confidence is
needed, otherwise they would question their ability to sale the “product”. When an
outsider enters the ballet world, and that is usually on the executive side, he/she must be
confident in that they can become accustomed to this industry, that their skill set is
transferable to this art. This confidence is needed by leaders in the ballet industry because
in order to command a “room”—whether that be a stage with a dancer, a studio for an
artistic staff, or a board room for an executive: “no question of their authority exists”
(EC2, personal communication, January 23, 2017).

Light and Dark Dimensionality

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the extent to which attributes valued
among those selected for leadership roles have both positive (light) and negative (dark)
manifestations within the culture of the ballet industry. Having compiled the
ethnographic data illuminating the culture of three ballet companies and the attributes
valued among their leaders, the next section of this analysis will focus on highlighting the ways in which these leadership attributes have both positive and negative manifestations within the culture of these organizations as a whole. For purposes of this analysis, any negative manifestations observed of the leadership attributes valued within the culture of these organizations will be labeled “dark”. Similarly, all positive manifestations of the same leadership attributes observed will be labeled “light”. This analysis is consistent with the application of these constructs employed by Judge, et al. (2009) in his generic analysis of the light and dark dimensions of leadership traits. It accords with Kelly’s (2012) observation that, “From the beginning, the image of the ballerina has been cast in contrasting ways. This is the source of her duality (Kelly, 2012, p. 2). This analysis will explore that duality as it relates to the dimensionality of leadership attributes. A summary of the analysis is presented in Table 9 which delineates whether a leadership attribute is considered light or dark in terms of its manifestation in the culture of the three ballet companies interviewed for this study. The dimensionality of each leadership attribute is highlighted in the following discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Attributes</th>
<th>Valued/Sanctioned by the Ballet Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Light (positive implications)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>adaptability, compromise, cooperation, versatility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>beauty, ideals, high expectations/goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>self confidence, resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistry</td>
<td>aesthetics, glamour, composure, emotion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 9. Light and Dark Dimensionality of Leadership Attributes Valued in the Ballet Culture

**Flexibility.** Flexibility or nimbleness, valued among ballet leadership, was observed to have both light and dark manifestations. The positive aspects of this attribute allows leaders to morph and adapt to situations. In fact, the word “rigid” does not come to mind with a ballerina in that he/she needs flexibility to be able to perform languid movements and to mesmerize audiences with their beautiful bodily lines. As for the artistic and executive sides, the ballet organizations in this study evidenced efforts to remain flexible by emphasizing compromise, cooperation, and versatility through the constant observed revisions to choreography. Ballet, although an art, is a business, and
the ballet industry has constantly tried to be flexible, reinventing itself throughout the years in the hopes of staying relevant (GA2, personal communication, January 19, 2017): the ballet world is normally perceived as an elite art form, a long way from the sex, scandal, and suffering of its early origins (Kelly, 2012).

Yet, the same flexibility has a dark dimensionality—a failure to understand the “range of motion”. Leaders do not realize an end must be in sight, limits do exist: people, and organizations, have capacity. A dancer struggles to accept that their body simply cannot perform that move: that no amount of stretching or critique is going to make the body be able to perform a move: a literal range of motion exists for the human body, and that must be accepted at some point, or injury occurs. While versatility is needed to keep all the movements, instructions, and various dances straight in a dancer’s head, there is a point, no matter his/her mental nimbleness, when the mind just cannot hold another piece of information. In rehearsals, dancers seem befuddled when a move has been tweaked countless times and their mind is struggling to tell their body which version to perform. Artistic staff’s failure to understand the range of motion is that at some point, the dance has to be the dance; correction cannot just continue to be made because it creates confusion. “We have a tendency in dance to manage by I don’t know what it is, but I will know it when I see it. We cannot give people direction, so we make correction after correction” (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2016), and all those various corrections can create a muddiness that has to be waded through by all. At times, a teacher or choreographer has been so flexible and has adapted so much, he/she has to ask, “Now what did I say to do here?” Moreover, in an industry where money is tight, there is a point that finances cannot be stretched any further. There comes a point where difficult
conversations need to occur about how deficits impact programming and how changes in productions are going to have to be made. When a production is $22,000 shy of what it needs, the finances cannot be pliant or limber. But when conversations make it seem like they are, stealing from Peter to pay Paul, there is a failure to understand the range of motion, meaning a lack of understanding that certain aspects of a business are unbendable in order for the organization to stay afloat. Although flexibility is necessary, those in the ballet industry fail to lose sight that certain aspects must be unyielding. Constantly being malleable means people “don’t know the target” (GD5, personal communication, January 20, 2016); in turn, aspects like meeting times and expectations seem to fluctuate.

**Perfectionism.** Perfectionism among their leaders allows ballet companies to strive for goals never reached before, pushing beyond their own limits; by always exceeding one’s own goals, the output is second to none. Although the light side of perfectionism allows for the creation of the ideal, the beauty to be created, the dark underbelly is that, “It can take over your whole life” (GD11, personal communication, January 18, 2017), creating a skewed perception of reality. Perfectionism has its own devils and manifests differently for different roles. For a dancer, that skewed perception of reality can cause a disregard for health. On a daily basis they push themselves to their physical limits, but at extremes, this perfectionism is what creates the industry’s skewed, unattainable body image and the mindset that dancing through an injury is necessary because the beauty, the ideal, is the most important aspect. That dark side of perfectionism is what causes a dancer to use the mirror not as a tool, but as a torture device of critique, highlighting every extra ounce of body fact or footwork that is not exactly right, creating a mental unhealthiness. A daily mind game—a skewed perception
of reality—is why a dancer creates skinny and fat mirrors. That perfection is what causes an artistic staff to have a skewed perception of reality in that every small thing becomes important—a brush of the curtain coming off stage, a headpiece that accidentally drops, an arm placement that is slightly off. “They begin to take everything too seriously: they cannot distance self from self” (GP1, personal communication, January 19, 2017) because they are so caught up in the idea of perfection in a performance. The dark side of perfection causes executive staff to make unreasonable projections for ticket sales. Whenever a new version of *The Nutcracker* is launched, naturally ticket sales will be higher because audiences flock to see what is different about the production. But when an Executive Director makes the same projections for following years, not factoring in the fact sales will drop because the newness has worn off, that is proof of a skewed reality (GP4, personal communication, January 18, 2017). The dark aspect of perfectionism is in both administrative sides of the organization because it compels them to go their own way, to be self-entitled, because their version of perfectionism is the “correct” one according to them. The notion of perfection is very subjective, further explaining why those ideas do not always match for artistic and executive. Not only are those in the American ballet culture striving for an ideal—a skewed perfection of the reality—that the industry has helped created, but they also create a version of perfectionism in their own mind, whether that be how a move should look (dancer), how a production show look (artistic), or how the ledger or bank account should look (executive).

**Independence.** As exemplars of the American ballet industry, the companies in this study are very lean in terms of personnel, and every individual, no matter the role, is meant to live up to the clichés of “carry their own weight,” “give whatever it takes,” “or
“make it happen.” However, like any attribute, especially at the extremes, there is a counter-effect, a dark dimensionality to independence—disconnection. The level of independence in each division of the industry—dancer, artistic, and executive—has created a separation from the other: they try to endure on their own, creating silos, an “us” versus “them” mentality. This explains why everyone interviewed thought of the organization as three distinct areas instead of one organization. Because of the independence, people do not ask for help. Dancers, although usually in a group, rarely ask for help. They are constantly receiving critiques or feedback, but figuring out how to fix these mistakes is usually done on their own. In small, more intimate rehearsals, where dancers actually sought advice from other dancers, the fear was also expressed about the helper’s motives in that those offering help are the competition. Because of that competitiveness, a dancer somewhat has to be independent, creating that disconnection in order to both survive and protect themselves.

That same independence helps create a principal dancer, the ability to command a stage by themselves, but they can feel disconnected: the common phrase, “It is lonely at the top” comes to mind. On the contrary, some corps de ballet members explain that with the independence for a higher-ranked dancer comes the additional disconnect of complacency: corps members do not feel principals have to work as hard, and their idea is reinforced by the fact there is a belief they receive less feedback. The dark side of independence—that disconnect—can also been seen with artistic staff in that they become blind to the fact that others can help make their dream a reality: instead of delegating, they often continue to take on tasks, which is why they often wear so many hats. Their independence sometimes can also impact their effectiveness. A dancer cannot
just be left to their own accord with feedback; they need explanation with the correction. Artistic staff would say that the executive administration’s independence—their inability to fully understand and immerse themselves in the art—leads to a disconnect with the art form, the product, being sold. On the contrary, executive, because of the independence on the side of artistic, never feel they are brought into the conversation, that their opinions do no matter—further evidence of disconnectedness. Because of the various factions that exist because of the independence in the American ballet industry, overall effectiveness is impacted. Without collaboration between departments, an organization is not as strong as it can be. A dancer remarks, “You can’t have a separateness or a divisive quality” (GD3, personal communication, January 20, 2017), but that is the dark underside of independence.

**Artistry.** Artistry goes hand in hand with the ideal that exists in the ballet industry and means being able to make an effective or attractive presentation and the ballet companies pride themselves on the attractive, whether that be physical appearance/body image, the performance, or the overall aesthetics of the season. Yet, underneath that artistry or showmanship is a darkness—the lack of authenticity, a façade. The false front for dancers can been seen in that although they project beauty, they are battling a dysmorphic view. They are putting on the façade that all is in order, yet some dancers practice for a full day while consuming nothing but juice. Their artistry has them project that they are fine with their body, yet in between dance moves, the principal investigator can see them pinch what they consider to be an ounce of fat on their body or compare themselves to their counterpart. That “glamour” (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016) is covering up the eating disorders, the injury, and the constant
pressure that weighs on a dancer. For executive administration that artistry is their ability to “window dress” the issue. They can distract others from the fact that money is an ever-present issue with galas and fundraising events that are lavish and show no issues. When creating and marketing a new production that cost $5 million dollars, how would the common populace ever fathom that money is tight? Production puts on the façade of showmanship by making sets look extravagant and costumes look pristine when in reality “band aids and duct tape are holding them together” (UA1, personal communication, December 12, 2016). The lighter side of artistry helps blind audiences to the dark dimension—the façade—what is lurking beneath the lights, glitter, tutus, and tiaras.

Intelligence. Intelligence, the mind, is considered a beautiful thing by those in the world of ballet. Members of the observed ballet companies valued intelligence because it allows for the industry ideals to become possible, for all the pieces of the puzzle to become a complete picture. Intelligence is seen as making possible the ability to create, yet at the same time, rationalization is the darker shadow of that seemingly positive or light attribute: everyone in the organization is smart enough to justify and rationalize their dangerous behaviors. A dancer, all the while knowing they are injured, convinces themselves it is necessary to keep dancing for not only the benefit of their own career, but also the benefit of the group because they cannot let others down. They reason that they will “take it easy” so as to not to injury themselves permanently. Dancers rationalize that just a few more pounds will get them to their ideal weight and that will be enough. Despite their mental and physical fatigue, they defend working so as to be able to impress the Artistic Director or visiting choreographer; they rationalize that with more practice they will have better feet, higher jumps, or more artistry. Artistic staff, while the mental
prowess creates a performance from nothing, rationalize that there is someway—more money, more time, more practice—to make the performance better. They defend their push that the money can come from somewhere else or that another donor can be acquired, when in reality all have already been tapped. They make the excuse that more rehearsal will make everything better instead of simply considering that doing something over and over does not necessarily make it better. Executive and production staff are intelligent enough to know when the money is gone, and yet they keep wanting to expand. In the ballet world all are smart to an extent, but that same intellect causes them to be blinded by the fact their mere intelligence causes them to rationalize away the problems.

**Dedication.** Dedication or loyalty is prized in the ballet organizations participating in this study, according to all interviewed. The light aspect of dedication observed is that people are committed to their craft, and in the ballet world that is necessary, otherwise, the turnover would be enormous. However, again, dedication has dimensionality, meaning it is not purely just light or dark: with that positive resolve and zeal also comes the darker side, consumption. Executive administrators often remark that ballet is life for dancers and/or artistic staff. An Artistic Director, when asked about others’ perception of her, says “They think I have no life outside of ballet, that I live, eat, and breathe ballet. They say I basically sleep here” (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017), and interestingly, she did not say they were wrong. At the same time, artistic staff sometimes wish for their same enthusiasm or drive to be mirrored by the executive side. However, executive would say their commitment is just as evident, which is why they sometimes work seven days a week or work 14 weeks without a break. A
term often used in conjunction with female dancers is a “bunhead”, a girl who does ballet and only talks about ballet. Usually her schedule is filled to the brim with dance, allowing nothing else to fit in her life. During interviews, this term was sometimes used by interviewees to describe their own lives: they are consumed to the point that after ballet class, they either watch ballet video, sew their pointe shoes, or simply practice more. Ballet, and other dancers, are their social circle. However, one dancer, recognizes the darker side of dedication, “I started later in life so my life doesn’t revolve around ballet. I am lucky to be part of this world, but I am excited to go back to other worlds” (GD4, personal communication, January 17, 2017). However, even within this statement, this dancer, while not outright, is admitting that right now her world is solely ballet: she cannot have “other worlds” simultaneously. Dedication and consumption go together, an interesting play of light and dark, respectively.

**Communication.** Communication certainly has light or positive qualities in that it allows avenues for creativity; ballet is an art form based on movement and the body’s ability to express itself. That same communication allows choreographers to breathe life into steps to create a storyline, a production. Communication in the ballet organization in this study was seen as helping to close the “distance” between people because it helps break down barriers between departments or barriers around ideas. Communication was also valued for efficiency, helping to ensure the work is occurring, allowing people to make the product better or tackle a production from the start. Yet, when communication ceases to be dialogue in these organizations, the extreme, darker version surfaces—directive. The dancer experiences this first hand: while their body may be the ultimate form of expression, their every move is being dictated by someone else. Moreover, there
is no dialogue, only directives, happening in a rehearsal or company class. Instructors are having a one-sided conversation, simply doling out directives or yelling out critiques. Dancers routinely admit they are “to be seen and not heard”, and that is not a light dimensionality. A dancer described her take of communication as, “Obedience: you have to take it a lot” (EC4, personal communication, January 23, 2017). Artistic Directors and staff are often considered the leaders in the room not just because they have the loudest voice, but they are the sole voice. Even when they are leading a department meeting, or a lighting meeting, and others are expressing ideas, those really do not seem to be heard because in the end, the decision lies with one. It is not a collaborative process, although the guise is present. Between artistic and executive administration, the issue again is the directive: they are both giving orders, because they cannot seem to agree at times about the focus, and others are confused about what is the clear vision or goal. Not one organization visited seemed to be able to articulate a vision or mission at every level of the organization; usually the highest person in the organization could, but if that person is the sole keeper of that knowledge it seems more like a directive than part of the culture.

**Detail-oriented.** If the “devil is in the details,” then those selected for leadership roles in the ballet industry may be on the road to success, as evidenced by the companies participating in this study. To pull off large scale productions like they do, all departments have to be detail orientated. Revision after revision is made to sets to capture just the right color, making it look majestic not circus-like, or the image of a nutcracker is redone to be more classic and less Captain Crunch. Costumers search through mountains of fabrics looking for the perfect jacquard or passing on a swatch of pink tulle because it is too bubblegum hued instead of carnation. Details are critical when after a two-hour
rehearsal a choreographer has only managed to set two dancers. However, being detail-orientated, at its extremes, can become obsession: we “dwell on the small stuff” (EC1, personal communication, January 25, 2017). This obsession with detail often earns the Artistic Director the label of “micromanager,” dictating every facet or decision. Detail-orientated, like perfectionism, allows for a polished result and higher expectations, but at the same time when it becomes fixation, a leader can lose sight of the objective or goals. Most of those in the industry feel there is no vision, no forethought about the long-term. In fact, at one organization, both dancers and Executive Director are concerned that next season has not been outlined because of the concentration on the details of the immediate. Also, because of this craze to fix the nuances, the process can be slow, sometimes painfully slow to the point of tedious, evidenced by it taking weeks to set a performance, or almost a year to create a set of costumes, or two years to bring a production to fruition. Also because so much time has been fanatically invested into these details, changes are not always welcomed. The attention or focus has turned into a fetish in that all energy has been devoted to fixing this one small aspect so a leader is often not open-minded about modifying it. Furthermore, details can be quite subjective (color preference, heel width, speed of the music), at times getting so focused on the one aspect so as to infuriate colleagues. When the executive team misses a deadline, because the artistic staff has been tweaking a small item, people become angry at each other and again the real objective can be lost.

**Individuality.** Individuality, as evidenced in the ballet companies participating in this study, is different from independence; it is about being able to stand out from the proverbial crowd, being distinguishable from others. The light dimensionality of
individuality allows for each person to be unique. Dancers are not expected to all look alike, nor are all individuals elevated to leadership roles expected to be the same: each person’s distinctions or idiosyncrasies are valued as creating well-balanced team. Yet, there is evidence in the culture of these ballet companies that there comes a point with individuality when the pendulum can swing too far, and the dark side—selfishness—becomes apparent. The focus becomes solely “me,” with “we’” being abandoned. Selfishness occurs when a dancer chooses to get ahead—show their individuality—by diminishing, or stepping on, others. When a male dancer constantly blames his partner, saying she is why they cannot perfect a step, merely to look good in the eyes of the instructor, they are being selfish. Corps members express that principal dancers think that the performance is all about them, which is why they usually do not go to principals for assistance or help, whether that be about a movement or the culture as a whole. They feel principal dancers are selfish and hoard that knowledge. In such a competitive environment, dancers even wonder when they do get a morsel of feedback from another dancer if is coming from the right place or is the other dancer being selfish or has ulterior motives. An Artistic Director usually reaches their leadership level because of their individuality as a dancer, but as several expressed, it can be hard to step out of the spotlight and remember that it is about leading an organization, not the individual. Artistic Directors often feel they are the personal brand: they are the face of the organization, and in turn, they make the organization about them. In fact, an Artistic Director even comments, “I am the business” (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Collaboration suffers and they become consumed by making it their way, their ideas, and their vision. Everyone’s individuality is sacrificed because of this individual’s
uniqueness, which he/she believes is best. In the ballet industry, departments seem self-absorbed with their own uniqueness and think they can handle it on their own: they create an anniversary book, spanning 50 years, in their own silo, they create a production segment by segment instead of talking about in totality, or they plan a production without dealing with the financial boundaries.

**Longevity.** Longevity, or time in a ballet organization, is valued as providing prospective, history, and an understanding of tradition. Those leaders in the organization who have spent a great deal of time there understand the culture, and knowing such is important for a leader to understand where an organization or industry can go, what can be changed, and how to go about that change. Yet, complacency, the darker dimension, was observed to also seep into these organizations. Artistic staff often mention this when speaking about executive administrators: “they think good is good enough” (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017) because they have become accustomed to the culture and organization. Dancers feel that other dancers become comfortable because of their longevity, and that time in the organization breeds a smugness, an “I’ve got this” mentality. Having reached the level of principal dancer, they have reached the top, with no room to advance, and so they “settle in”, and in the opinions of those on the lower rungs of the hierarchal ladder, they do not work as hard or get as much feedback: they take their role for granted.

**Appreciation.** A love or appreciation for the art form was considered essential to survival by those in the ballet companies participating in this study. If a person does not believe in the beauty of ballet, he or she will not survive in the ballet culture. However, appreciation can quickly become a version of its dark self: that appreciation turns into
bias, into blinders, a partiality that does not allow members of the culture to see the truth. People in these organizations, at least on the dancer and artistic side, have been born and bred in the industry and so they simply accept things as normal. These blinders, along with intelligence becoming rationalization, makes them think the industry and its ideal are normal—the body image, the injury, the critiques, and the hours are all simply part of life. This sometimes can create a conflict with executive administration, those who have spent time outside the ballet industry, because they are not as biased about ballet. They see the beauty of the ballet, but they seek something else as well lurking beneath it: “A lot of my complexes come from ballet, but so do my strengths of character” (EC3, personal communication, January 26, 2017). The love of the art taints the view. When asked to describe experiences of the ballet industry has positive or negative, a dancer says, “I don’t know who I would have been without ballet. I cannot extrapolate it out: it is who I am” (EC7, personal communication, January 27, 2017); she did not really answer the question, but that makes sense because she entered into ballet at a young age because her feet were internally rotated and she was using it as therapy. Yet, despite the touching story that ballet totally transformed her body, she also tells the principal investigator horrific stories about body image and injury. Her appreciation and love of ballet, and the bias it has created, create a conflict within her. Other dancers put it in a different way, “With every pro, there is a con. You have to be a little crazy to take this on as a career” (EC5, personal communication, January 26, 2017), or “I love ballet; it is a beautiful art form, but the values for females have rubbed me the wrong way” (EC3, personal communication, January 26, 2017). A once dancer, now an executive staff member, when asked to summarize her experiences with the industry, comments that because of ballet:
I have struggled with a lot of things for a very long time. The tears coming to my eyes should be a sign of something. The negatives are right there, but I am pretty torn. It depends really on what I am looking at. I have been successful to a degree so it has to be a good match in some ways. Yet, these self conscious aspects, the continued struggle to be secure, stay with you a long time and filter into other aspects of your life. (EE2, personal communication, January 24, 2017)

Both the light and dark dimensionalities of appreciation can be seen in her answer: there is a love of the ballet that can be blinding.

**Competition.** Healthy competition was observed in the ballet companies in this study, but it was also seen as taking a darker dimension, becoming aggression/hostility. While competition was observed to create teamwork and increase productivity as well as increase motivation and creativity among members striving to get better, to outperform their neighbor in the ballet companies studied. That same rivalry was also seen to quickly turn into dancers sabotaging other dancers, whether that be mentally or physically. Dancers admit that they know fellow dancers long for them to become injured so they can take their spot, so they can achieve glory in the midst of some else’s pain. When the environment is so cut throat that failure is a wish for others, that is not just competition. Part of the ballet world for both dancers and artistic staff is casting, and the environment can be so hostile that dancers no longer have the ability to separate professional from personal: “they think that an Artistic Director has a personal vendetta against them” (EC1, personal communication, January 25, 2017). The bleed over from competition into aggression is also clearly evident between executive and artistic staff: they are constantly trying to outperform the other, speaking ill of each other along the way. This does not
create collaboration, but instead division, and everyone in the industry is able to see that separation, although nobody wants to accept fault.

**Fearlessness.** Fearlessness was observed to allow leaders in the ballet culture to make decisions when others are unable to do so. It is what allows them to first take action to try a new step, to tackle a new performance, to construct a grand set or costume, or create new marketing strategies. However, the seedy side, the darker dimension, of fearless was also witnessed as riskiness. Dancers perceive it necessary to take chances and be fearless to succeed, but there are also risks with the demands that they take on their body, and not just with injury. The longer the career, the riskier dance becomes, because with age comes limitations that sometimes just cannot, and will not, be accepted, and so the dancer keeps pushing. They risk their health and their career to dance another day. Those risks are evident when although a female dancer wants to start birth control to prevent pregnancy she cannot because of how the hormones change her body (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Artistic staff know policies and procedures exist, and fearlessness becomes risky business when an Artistic Director tries to circumvent those policies by trying to do costume sales in cash so that sale amounts can be doctored (GP1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Certainly the industry wants leaders to challenge the way things have been done, but not to the point that the “road less traveled” is done so with recklessness or no thought. Executive directors appear risky, not fearless, when they cancel Cinderella teas or change funding streams without consulting other facets of the team to discuss the impact. They also seem risky when they adhere to a budget or projects when everyone else in the room knows them to be too high.
Confidence. The fine line between confidence and arrogance was also witnessed in these ballet companies as the duality light and dark dimensions of confidence, respectively. Although confidence allows members of these organizations to command a room or stage, it could also become narcissistic or arrogant behavior quite easily. A dancer’s preoccupation with a mirror is just a small example of being consumed by the sense of self. One dancer even admits, “We [dancers] value ourselves” (UC1, personal communication, December 2, 2016), and this creates a need for attention; couple that need with the small amount of praise in the ballet industry, and it is no wonder dancers long to catch the eye of the Artistic Director; that attention from a formal leader allows them to rise in the ranks. That need for attention increases with each increase in rank, until ultimately one becomes a principal dancer and is able to take the stage all by themselves. Although artistic staff also need confidence, some one would argue that this has slipped into “ego” (EE2, personal communication, January 24, 2016) or “hubris” (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017) and is really a mask for the person’s insecurities. That confidence becomes dark when a leader, in whatever capacity, leads to make themselves feel superior. A dancer remarks about a confident leader, “They make it work for everybody, including themselves” (EC1, personal communication, January 25, 2017), whereas on the flip side, an egotistical leader, according to another dancer, “Thinks only about yourself and nothing else; it needs to be about the group (GD11, personal communication, January 18, 2017). A narcissistic leader is only about, “What’s it in for them?” (GD13, personal communication, January 18, 2017), and some dancers feel that is the case when an instructor only gives harsh feedback in that she/she gets a power trip from the critique, putting others down to make themselves feel more powerful.
However, an Artistic Director retorts, “Some people don’t want to be teachable. Ego is their defense: they are afraid to try” (GA1, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Interestingly, both people in this “conversation” feel they have confidence, whereas to the recipient, it comes off as arrogance. Another dancer admits that there is a duality with confidence, “Arrogance gets in the way; you have to let go of pride, otherwise when you try something new it will be ugly” (GD10, personal communication, January 18, 2017). An Executive Director feels the Artistic Director is not merely confident in her decisions, but instead, her ego drives the decisions, causing her to not be able to accept that her answer may not be the correct one. He claims only an arrogant leader, “would go in the wrong direction and justify it; when you eat what you kill it effects everyone” (GE1, personal communication, January 20, 2017). To the narcissistic leader, those concerned with only themselves, not the group, leading means that an individual success is based upon how much “business” that particular person brings into the organization; this model prizes personal development and undermines teamwork and integration.

The evidence presented in this chapter highlights the thin line between light and dark manifestations of leadership dimensions in the culture of ballet companies participating in this study. Cultural values socially designated within these organizations have been identified, as well as the manifestation of their light and dark dimensions among those selected for leadership roles highlighted within these organizational contexts. Results help to clarify the ballet culture and what it values in terms of leadership attributes. While past research has focused on identifying light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes in individuals, people cannot be separated from their environment, their situation, their culture (Judge et al., 2009). In order to fully
understand light and dark characteristics, the researcher needs to see what characteristics play out, and how they are strengthened by certain settings, in this instance the ballet culture. Ballet has been described as “a culture where deprivation and degradation co-exist alongside the pursuit of an ideal, often rendering the ballerina a victim of her own beauty and artistry. It’s that Black Swan/White Swan duality that fascinates, intimating that there is so much more to the ballerina than meets the eye,” (Kelly, 2012, p. 4). The presentation and analysis of data from this study provides insights into how that duality is embodied in the leadership of a subset of companies in the American ballet industry.
CHAPTER 5
Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions

Introduction

In each observed ballet company in this study, even something as simple as a bow at the end of the performance was outlined in detailed during rehearsal and then practiced repeatedly. This is consistent with testimony previously reported by Bull (2012), who noted that even in the curtain call, the ballet industry is striving for perfection:

The everyday nature of what we do is another of the oddities of the dancer’s life. Every night the curtain comes down and the next morning we’re back at the barre again: another day, another set of plies. It can fool you into thinking that life is like this, that there will always be another chance to try again to get it right. (p. 203)

Similarly, this chapter will serve as the curtain call to this study, presenting summaries and conclusions drawn about the culture of the American ballet industry based on the ethnographic data presented in the previous chapter. These conclusions are presented with several caveats respecting the extent to which the data on which they are based can be extrapolated to the American ballet industry as a whole. First, the American ballet industry consists of 130 separate companies. Ethnographic data for this study was collected at only three of these organizations, during an abbreviated period of time, totaling 24 days. Second, to the extent that organizational culture is primarily a local phenomenon (Shein, 2010), extrapolating results of this study to the ballet industry as a whole assumes that cross-organizational values, norms and basic assumptions have developed to promote the survival of the industry as a whole (Latta, G. F., personal communication, March 3, 2017). It is these collective aspects of culture, rather than their idiosyncratic norms, that make each of these organizations representative of the American ballet industry. Elements of research design that lend credibility to the industry-level interpretations to be derived from these data include: the participating ballet organizations spanned three distinct regions of the United States—Rocky Mountain region, Midwestern region, and the Pacific
Northwestern region. Additionally, the three ballet companies represent the full range of sizes that exist within the industry (large, medium, and small, respectively), so as to create a more accurate depiction of the industry. Finally, all three companies were visited during the same time of year, so as to minimize variations in cultural norms and artifacts that might be due to seasonal differences. Nevertheless, the conclusions presented below must be viewed as provisional until confirmed through more extensive and controlled empirical methods.

Summary of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to profile the culture of the American ballet. Most previous research on ballet culture has focused on examining the individual or topics associated with the physical body instead of assessing the culture of the industry and its values. Dancers’ personal insights abound in books, but little exists that is research-based and that looks across the culture as a whole. If dancers truly experience a “loss of self” for the “ballet establishment” (Gordon, 1984, p. xviii), understanding the relationship between the ballet dancers and their social situation—the ballet culture—is necessary.

The second purpose of this study was to identify the light and dark sides of leadership attributes that are nurtured and honed by ballet culture across the industry. “It [ballet] is such a gorgeous profession. It looks so easy. And yet, there is a dark side to being a dancer that people don’t see, and it’s nurtured and perpetuated [. . .]” (Kelly, 2012, p. 143). This study sought to assess both the light dimensions and the dark dimensions simultaneously. What is also not well understood is to what extent those selected for leadership roles are expected to embody both light and dark dimensions of the ballet culture, or whether these individuals represent those uniquely skilled at navigating between the light and dark extremes of the culture. This study sought to provide some initial insights regarding this question as well.

The third purpose of the study was to explore how the culture selects leaders to reflect the light and dark characteristics that the organization values. While much is known about the ballet culture in general, what was less clear is what light and dark dimensions of leadership were
valued by the culture, and specifically, to what extent light and dark dimensions of leadership are fostered among those groomed and selected for leadership roles. The beauty of ballet often distracts from the duality of light and dark aspects of its culture, but it is important to know how the culture, and its values, impact the individual in terms of leadership advancement—getting “on pointe.”

Examining the culture of the ballet industry is important because evidence suggests that leaders embody the culture of the organizations they serve (Kets de Vries, 2006), but the question remains to what extent those who emerge as leaders in the ballet industry reflect both the light and dark dimensions of leadership attributes valued by that culture. By assessing the light and dark leadership dimensions that are valued in three specific ballet companies, this study provides a preliminary assessment of the characteristics valued and promoted within the culture of the American ballet industry.

Interpretations

This section discusses the interpretations of the study’s findings as they related to each of the study’s three research questions. These interpretations, and the conclusions derived from them, are based on the assumption that the ballet organizations studied are representative of the American ballet industry as a whole, given the caveats stated above.

The primary overarching research question guiding this ethnographic study was:

RQ1. What is the industry-wide culture of the American ballet?

This study suggests the industry wide culture of the American ballet is largely consumed by “the ideal”—from technique to artistry to body image. Dancers are willing to make sacrifices, at times at the risk of their own health (injury), for their art form, to strive for beauty. This mindset is evidenced in the remark by one dancer who stated, “Everything is beautiful at the ballet” (UA2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). This commitment to the ‘ideal’ was characteristic of each ballet company in this study and was embodied by each individual member, regardless of their role. The perfectionism that underlies the commitment breeds an individualism that appears
to be characteristic of the culture of the ballet industry. While in some instances it may appear
that more collaboration might make the organizations or industry more efficient, because of the
leaness of the organizations, those in them have become accustomed to “standing on their own
two feet”, both literally and figuratively. That “soloist” mentality can get in the way of
collaboration, especially at the more administrative levels, where the artistic and executive
administration are sometimes seen as being committed to different versions of the ideal.

Verbal communication in the ballet industry, as reflected in the data from this study, is
used sparingly and is dominated by rank. When watching a ballet, there are no words, simply
movements, and this same idea seems to translate to the entire organization, in that unless one is
the highest ranked person in the room, he/she is merely taking and receiving instruction and
feedback. Even in executive or artistic meetings, where all should be on more equal playing
fields, rank is still apparent, in that although voices share thoughts, giving the guise of
collaboration, ultimately the Artistic Director gets to “pull rank” and have the final say. Also, in
an industry consumed by “the ideal”, feedback can sometimes be quite harsh, but in the end is
believed to create the needed quality: they cannot settle for good, but instead constantly strive for
great, that seemingly elusive perfection. The façade of beauty is further exemplified even in
tangible objects in that although sets look extravagant and costumes look pristine, in reality “band
aids and duct tape are holding them together” (UA1, personal communication, December 12,
2016). A pointe shoe, with its pretty, pink satin outer shell, nicely hides the hardened box within,and the culture of the American ballet industry is no different: beautiful on the outside, but “hard”
on the inside. The colloquium, “beauty is pain,” captures the notion in ballet culture that beauty
does come at a high cost, a painful one, both in the physical and mental sense. While the art form
allows for beauty to be inherent in the culture, simply because of the gracefulness of the
movements, that beauty is not just a product, but a process, something that must be achieved at
some cost to those who produce it.
The following secondary research question guided the interpretation of cultural data collected:

*RQ2. What are the attributes valued among individuals selected for leadership roles within the ballet culture?*

Various leadership dimensions, comprised of attributes, behaviors, and attitudes, were extracted from analysis as being prized in the organizations studied. Table 10 provides a concise definition of each leadership dimension valued among individuals selected for leadership roles within these organizations. By extrapolation, these attributes are presumed to be representative of leaders in the American ballet industry as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Attributes Valued in Ballet Culture</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>the quality of bending easily without breaking; willingness to change or compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>refusal to accept any standard short of flawlessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>freedom from the control of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistry</td>
<td>creative skill or ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>the quality of being committed to a task or performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>the imparting or exchanging of information or meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail-orientated</td>
<td>focusing on the intricacies of a situation or aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuality</td>
<td>the quality of character of a person that distinguishes him/her from others of the same kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longevity</td>
<td>the time which something continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>the recognition and enjoyment of someone or something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 10. Definitions of Attributes Valued Leaders in Ballet Culture.**

Although each leadership attribute is delineated from the next, the definitions had to be carefully considered so as to create distinctions because some could easily be intertwined. For example, perfectionism, detail-orientated, and artistry work to create the beauty that is so strived for in the ballet industry. In order to perfect *port de bras* (movement of the arms), a dancer must have perfect precision in moving from one position to another, while also paying attention to details like hand and finger configuration. But when accomplished, this is turn, shows their artistry. Similarly, with independence and individuality, one begets the other. Longevity seems like the easiest attribute to master, but at the same time would not be possible without dedication and appreciation; yet, one’s dedication and appreciation only increase with time. Communication, at least on some level, involves intelligence because expression and meaning have to be considered, whether that be through words or movements: being smart with the “message” is needed, otherwise all is unclear. Fearlessness, competition, and confidence also reinforce each other: confidence feeds competition, which fuels fearlessness, leading to greater confidence in a vicious cycle. Unconsciously, the first leadership dimension identified, not only in the table, but also in the actual data analysis, was flexibility, fitting because this dimension is the umbrella under which all others
cohere. Flexibility is needed so a person can adapt to the necessary situations, settings, or people in the ballet industry.

Researchers in other types of organizations have observed leadership attributes to manifest both positive and negative dimensions (Hogan and Hogan, 2001; Hogan et al., 1994; Judge, et al., 2009). Kellerman (2004) asserts, “Leaders are like the rest of us: trustworthy and deceitful, cowardly and brave, greedy and generous” p. 54), Thus a sub-question relating to the leadership attributes valued in the ballet culture sought to highlight the positive dimensions of these attributes:

Q2a. What are the light dimensions of those attributes in the culture of the ballet industry?

The light (positive) dimensions of each of the leadership attributes this study suggests are valued within the culture of the American ballet industry are presented in Table 11, together with examples of how each was manifested in the organizations studied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Attributes Valued in Ballet Culture</th>
<th>Light Dimension (positive implications)</th>
<th>Example(s) of How Manifested in Ballet Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>adaptability, compromise, cooperation, versatility</td>
<td>dancers’ ability to perform movements with their body; dancers’ ability to learn various routines simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>beauty, ideals, high expectations/goals</td>
<td>the overall quality of the performance/production; the languid and precise movements of the dancers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>self confidence, resourcefulness</td>
<td>one-person departments throughout organizations, which requires level of expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistry</td>
<td>aesthetics, glamour, composure. Emotion</td>
<td>expectation of movement quality for dancers; Marketing Director’s ability to capture and sell the emotion of ballet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11. Light (Positive) Dimensions of Leadership Attributes Valued in Ballet Culture with Examples.

The range of light attributes collectively serve to embody the “ideal” so prized by members of the ballet companies in this study, and by extrapolation, the industry as a whole. From the most fundamental, visible elements of flexibility, artistry, and perfectionism to the more embedded, obscured attributes of independence, competition
and fearlessness, the light dimensions of leadership attributes represent extremes of excellence in human nature (Latta, G. F., personal communication, March 3, 2017). Extracting examples of these dimensions from the ethnographic data proved challenging because they were so deeply embedded in the data. It was not so much that they lacked prevalence, but that they were more assumed or taken for granted, because, “Everything is beautiful in the ballet” (UA2, personal communication, December 2, 2016). Due to the sheer abundance of beauty in the culture of the ballet, it is sometimes less obvious because it is always present. Of note is the fact that several of the light or positive examples hinge on the dancer—their movements, their ability to command a stage, to communicate with their body—which should be of no surprise because this is what people are normally attracted to with ballet.

Just as every leadership attribute has positive manifestations (light dimensions), they may also manifest in negative ways (dark dimensions) (Judge and LePine, 2007; Judge et al., 2009; Kellerman, 2004). The second sub-question of research question two sought to highlight these negative, or “dark”, manifestations of leadership within the culture of the ballet industry.

RQ2b. What are the dark dimensions of those attributes in the culture of the ballet industry?

Dark leadership dimensions typically present as the opposite of a light dimensions, representing essentially two sides to the same coin. Table 12 presents these negative or “dark” dimensions of the leadership attributes this study suggests are valued within the culture of the ballet industry, together with illustrative examples representing a subset of the data presented in Chapter 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Attributes Valued in Ballet Culture</th>
<th>Dark Dimension (positive implications)</th>
<th>Example(s) of How Manifested in Ballet Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility</strong></td>
<td>limitless, confusion, fluctuation</td>
<td>continued modification of dance movements to the point of confusion for both dancer and teacher; fluctuating money balances and expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perfectionism</strong></td>
<td>unattainableness, skewed perception, unhealthiness, unreasonableness, self-entitlement</td>
<td>obsession with ideal body image to the point of extremes (e.g. juice only diet); dancing through injury for fear of looking weak or loosing spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independence</strong></td>
<td>disconnect, separateness/factions, complacency, divisiveness</td>
<td>an organization being thought of as three separate factions instead of an organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artistry</strong></td>
<td>facade, distraction</td>
<td>being injured but remaining silent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intelligence</strong></td>
<td>rationalization, justification</td>
<td>convincing self that the mirror is a torture device, not just a tool; rationalizing eating habits in order to maintain weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dedication</strong></td>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>over-performing to the point of exhaustion; long hours for all those in the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>directive, obedience</td>
<td>constant negative critique from artistic; dancers being seen and not heard in rehearsals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Detail-orientated</strong></td>
<td>obsession, micromanagement, tediousness</td>
<td>Not being able to brush a curtain when exiting staff; rebuke when an accident happens like a fallen headpiece or prop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individuality</strong></td>
<td>selfishness, competition, self-absorption</td>
<td>constant need for dancers to stand out of the crowd at all cost; lack of collaboration amongst departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Longevity</strong></td>
<td>complacency, settling</td>
<td>belief that the ideal is the “normal”; executive administrators viewpoints that good is good enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appreciation</strong></td>
<td>biasedness, blinders, skewed reality</td>
<td>skirting of ethics so as to be able to produce desired production (e.g.,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. Dark (Negative) Dimensions of Leadership Attributes Valued in Ballet Culture with Examples.

During analysis, two overarching observations about the nature of the dark dimensions of leadership revealed in this study were revealed. First, during the conscious effort to extract unique examples of how the dark dimensions of leadership manifest in the ballet culture, several examples integrated multiple attributes. For example, unhealthy body image incorporates dark aspects of fearlessness, competition, dedication, perfection, detail-orientated, and individuality; the same could be said of injury. This makes sense because as noted previously, the leadership attributes presented Table 10, the attributes, while distinct, are nevertheless mutually reinforcing, each breeding the next.

The second overarching observation about the nature of the dark dimensions of leadership is how intertwined they are with the light dimensions. This reflects the fundamental dimensionality of light and dark aspects of leader attributes (Judge, et al. 2009; Hogan and Hogan, 2001; Hogan et al., 1994). When creating the table, it was easy to get light and dark confused because of the dimensionality that exists within each leadership attribute. When reading Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the characters are sometimes
confused because they are the same person; likewise, the light and dark dimensionality can become blurred because they co-exist.

The final research question addressed in this study was:

3. How does the culture of the ballet industry nurture these attributes among individuals groomed and selected for leadership positions?

Because this study provided only a snapshot, instead of an extended longitudinal ethnographic account of the ballet industry, and interviews focused more on the present tense, the results did not yield extensive data about how leaders are nurtured. Those interviewed for this study seemed to lack a consciousness that leaders are groomed. Rather, leadership in these ballet companies was conceived as more of a matter of survival or longevity, with promotions being based on endurance and seniority. In fact, dancers often expressed that time within the organization helped them rise through the ranks, but also that catching the favor of the instructor also played a large part. One Artistic Director shared that a great dance career is 25 percent talent, 25 percent luck (right place at the right time) and 50 percent hard work or perseverance (UA1, personal communication, December 2, 2016); dancers are striving for the unattainable ideal, where half of the equation, including becoming a leader, is really beyond their control. Additionally, all the Artistic Directors interviewed knew they had achieved their current role because of their career as a dancer, not necessarily because of their ability to lead. Thus, the study did not yield was what expected with respect to the question of how leaders in the ballet industry are groomed, rather it suggests that the question itself was naïve and ill-informed with respect to how leaders emerge within this culture. The evidence gleaned from this study suggests a more relevant question to ask about leaders
in the industry is not so much how they are groomed, but how they emerge (Latta, G. F., personal communication, March 6, 2017). Thus, the data this study yielded informs research question 3, but does not fully answer it; nevertheless, the collected data is relevant to the sub-questions about how the light and dark attributes that are expected and allowed to be exhibited by leaders in the ballet culture.

The first sub-question relating to nurturing leaders in the ballet industry concerns expectations for exhibiting the light dimensions of attributes values among its leadership:

*RQ3. To what extent are leaders expected/allowed to manifest the light dimensions of these attributes?*

Based on data from this study, evidence suggests the ballet culture *expects* individuals who are placed in positions of leadership to manifest the light dimensions outlined above. This accords with Gordon’s (1983) assertion that leaders are expected to “become the culture” (Gordon, 1983). It appears the leaders in the ballet industry must embrace the culture in order to survive and be promoted. From a young age, dancers and artistic staff are taught “the ideal” and what that specifically looks like in the ballet industry; similarly, with an executive administrator if they do not reflect the culture they will not last long. Thus, the culture expects the leaders to reflect the positive qualities of their culture. In this way, ballet culture imposes homogenization, meaning a person, especially a leader, must embrace the light dimensions. Whatever critical perceptions an individual had before joining a ballet company erode, and he/she depends on the members of the organization and its leaders “for guidance, interpretation, explanation, and normative control over activity and choices” (Baron, Crawley, & Paulina, 2003, p.
Again, reflecting that ideal—manifesting the lighter dimensionality of leadership qualities—is what makes the ballet industry beautiful to an outsider.

A second sub-question relating to the nurturing of leaders in the ballet culture concerns the cultural tolerance for how dark dimensions are manifested among leaders:

*RQ3b. To what extent are leaders expected/allowed to manifest the dark dimensions of these attributes?*

The ballet industry *allows* for the dark dimensions of leadership attributes to manifest. While the members of the organizations studied understood that they are dark, that is not positive for the group; they hope, and believe, the light will overshadow the dark. Since the dedication and passion for the art form creates the notion that ballet is transcendent, they take the good with the bad, thinking the light wins out. They are “blinded” by the light, the beauty, just accepting the dark dimensionality as a byproduct. “Anguish was created by the ballet establishment” (Gordon, 1983, p. 7), suggesting it is part of the culture. Not one person, when asked to describe their experience in the ballet industry as positive or negative, chose one or the other, because both light and dark leadership dimensions make separation difficult. In fact, a dancer, just recently told her contract will not be renewed next year because of her age (42 years-old), made a comment that echoed these sentiments: “Ballet is a beautiful product, but has negative underbelly” (EC3, personal communication, January 26, 2017). Another dancer reinforced this view by stating, “We are still not that different from those rats in the Paris Opera Ballet” (EC3, personal communication, January 26, 2017). She even referenced a recent YouTube clip from the New York City Ballet’s Young Patron’s Circle that provides a side-by-side comparison of a business man and dancer’s day. Watching it, the parallels are striking,
but the last scene, with the man coming to watch the ballerina and them meeting while drinking their champagne, conjured up notions of the disturbing relationship between abonné and dancer that used to exist in the early days of the profession in France when ballerinas were the flowers of the gutter (Kelly, 2012).

The interplay between light and dark dimensions of ballet have been written about before at the individual level. With ballet, “There’s a lot of rigidity that frees you. There are ways of using tradition to move forward and not sideways. It’s about knowing what matters, and following the right path” (Kelly, 2012, p. 202). Data from this study suggests the same tensions exist within the culture of the industry as a whole: that despite all the rigidity allowed for—the dark dimensionalities—the negative aspects of culture are expected to never overshadow the “ideal” embodied in the light dimensions. Those who occupy leadership roles in a ballet company appear to navigate the duality of a culture that expects them to embody the light dimensions of leadership attributes valued in the industry, while being allowed to exhibit the dark dimensions of those same attributes. Nevertheless, it is beyond the scope of this study to understand how effectively this interplay of light and dark dimensions is actually embodied by the leadership of the American ballet industry, or to what extent doing so may contribute to the beauty and complexity of the dance.

**Contributions and Implications**

Most of the scholarly literature on the American ballet industry focuses on the physical—the dysmorphic view of the body and injury associated with the art form. Moreover, countless personal autobiographies or memoirs exist of dancers recounting their experiences, straddling both the positive and negative perspectives (e.g. Winter
Season, Holding on to the Air). The contribution this study makes to this body of work is that it provides a systematic assessment from a social scientific perspective of the culture of the ballet. While the study is small, it does provide an initial set of insights into the culture of ballet that goes beyond individual first person narratives. Several people in the organizations studied deemed the interview questions difficult, and one even remarked, “We don’t talk about culture a lot” (EP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016), admitting that when the company recently completed 360-degree surveys, “We were forced to talk about it. We are all just too busy (EP2, personal communication, December 2, 2016).

The ballet industry is a very closed off world, as evidenced by the quick and numerous declined invitations to participate in this study. The principal investigator recalls one phone call intended to solicit participation from a Southern ballet company where the Administrative Assistant said something similar to, “We would love to help with your study, but we are going through a transition in leadership and are a hot mess. We just don’t need anybody seeing that.” While this was an abbreviated study, it still provides a snapshot into a culture that the outside world often deems elite and unapproachable.

Although light and dark characteristics or dimensions of leadership are usually focused on the individual level, to fully understand them, consideration must be given to the workplace, the cultural setting. People cannot be separated from their environment, their situation, their culture (Judge et al. 2009; Zacarro, 2007). With its focus on the ballet culture, this study may have some implications for other non-profit arts organizations. Other organizations may find utility in the approach taken for gaining
insights into their own culture of leadership. Since Judge and LePine (2007) hinged the notion of dark and bright characteristics on whether they are socially desirable or undesirable, ultimately the focus is in terms of the specific culture; thus, an implication would be for an organization to seek understanding of their own culture, so they too can determine what leadership dimensions are valued and how those are manifested in terms of light and dark dimensions. The context of the culture ultimately helps determine what is dark and what is light.

Limitations

The study had the following limitations: (a) the principal investigator in this study not only participated in the ballet culture as a child and adolescent, but also has a daughter that has just stepped foot into the ballet culture, which therefore means the principal investigator has a prior impression of ballet culture; (b) the sample of ballet companies was drawn from three states; therefore, results may not be generalized to all states; (c) the majority of organizations approached turned down the principal investigator’s invitation to participate in the study, raising questions about whether those organizations differ in significant ways from those that did agree to participate; (d) the time spent with each organization was very abbreviated; (e) due to the focus on culture of a particular type of dance/art, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other dance organizations or to organizations outside of dance; (f) many variables beyond the culture of the ballet could impact the light and dark leadership characteristics of those in the ballet industry. These variables may include: the quality and diversity of instructional ballet programs one has experienced, parental involvement, educational attainment, time in a particular ballet company, ancillary services provided by ballet companies, the
quality of the ballet facilities, and economic background and status of the leader, none of which were included in the scope of this study. However, the strengths off-setting these limitations include the access to all levels of personnel in the organizations studied, the number of interviews conducted, and the geographic dispersions of the organizations studies (i.e. not just one state or one region). Again, the conclusions of this study are predicated on the extent that the ballet organizations researched in this study are representative of the American ballet industry as a whole.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Ballet “can fool you into thinking that life is like this, that there will always be another chance to try again to get it right” (Bull, 2012, p. 203), and research is no different in that recommendations for further study will allow more opportunity to advance and “get it right”, meaning a better understanding of the ballet industry. The first recommendation would be to conduct future studies that include a larger sample of American ballet companies and for the researcher to have more prolonged time in each setting. As the principal investigator experienced first hand when trying try to solicit participation into the study, the American ballet culture is very closed off, with most companies not even entertaining the notion of a letting an outsider inside their world. After countless rejections, the principal investigator started to wonder even more about what dark underbelly exists underneath the tutus and tiaras, and so a more comprehensive study, with an abundance of companies, would help truly highlight the culture, along with is dark and light leadership attributes. The more prolonged ethnographic study would simply allow for confirmation of results. As people grow accustomed to a researcher’s
presence, they let down their proverbial hair more, allowing the normal routines to better play out: the researcher becomes one of the group, not an outsider, and so is let into the inner circle.

Cultural norms can “increase people’s motivation to exert effort on behalf of the group and its goals” (Hogg, 2006, p.124), resulting in social mobilization or a rise through the ranks of leadership. When identification with a certain culture occurs, the more influential the prototype, and unsurprisingly, those within the group look for those who are most prototypical, those are more socially attractive, viewing those people as a leader (Hogg, 2001 & 2006). Another opportunity for a future study would be to research how, or if, leaders in the ballet industry successfully navigate the thin line between light and dark manifestations of leadership attributes (Latta, G. F., personal communication, September 8, 2016). In essence, the question still remains whether ballet leaders needed a balance of light and dark attributions and or an imbalance, and if so, whether light or dark qualities, help a person “get on pointe”— rise through the ranks.

The dancers have the least voice in the organization, ironic since they are whom most think about when mentioning the ballet because of their presence on stage. A recommendation for a future study would be to simply interview dancers to reveal the true duality of a dancer’s life, the consummate role of the industry. Often times the accounts from dancers are written after retirement, when they have hung up their dancing shoes, so getting a perspective would help spotlight the culture in which they are currently immersed.

The image most conjured of the American ballerina is the symbol created in the mind of Balanchine, founder of the New York City Ballet. While that lanky physique has
certainly become iconic, the question is, “Was it society, or was it Balanchine?” (Kelly, 2012, p. 193), meaning that in part, society, influenced by media, has created its own picture of ballet culture. Yet, that exposure comes at a cost in that it creates media bias or stereotypes within the American culture. The analysis in this study adopted an unbiased perspective, seeking to neither prove or disprove any particular perspective or conclusion. The emphasis throughout was on capturing an insider’s view (emic) on what is often considered an extraordinary world. However, the reliance on ethnographic methods ensured a subjective perspective on reality. After his interview, one dancer commented that this particular company had once been part of an American reality television series. Yet he remarked that “reality” was an unfit term for the show (UP1, personal communication, December 3, 2016). A recommendation for future study would be to uncover the discrepancies between reality and public perception, using more objective assessment techniques. If in ballet “each drop of sweat deepens one’s dedication and takes one from real life. Dancing is a commitment that refutes real life” (Bentley, 1982, p. 20), then it would be interesting to know the difference between the media portrayal and their true reality: is there reality in the statement, “the myth machine continues to produce its romantic rhapsodies” (Gordon, 1983, p. 211)?

Ballet is usually deemed an art, although at times, the term “sport” is used because it certainly takes athleticism to perform their feats. Thus, a further study could be to see if the same light and dark dimension identified in this study play out not only in other performing arts organizations, especially different types of dance companies, but also the world of sports. With concepts like body image, competition, and injury, future studies could provide a nice comparison between the arts and sports world.
A final area for future study would be to address the issue of leader emergence from a more nuanced perspective. Rather than focusing on how leaders are groomed, this study suggests a more appropriate way to study the issue of leader emergence in the ballet industry would be to focus on factors that cause dancers to rise through the ranks, and the implications of these practices for organizational dynamics (Latta, G. F., personal communication, March, 7, 2017).

In conclusion, when thinking of the ballet, the pointe shoe/toe shoe is probably the most iconic symbol. Young girls dream of slipping their foot in their first pair and tying the satin ribbons around their now strong enough ankles. Dancers are even superstitious about their pointe shoes: if they fall in a pair, they immediately go in the trash, so as not to jinx yet another performance. But if the performance is grand, the shoes keep up their end of the bargain, then they can even be thanked with an actual kiss. “Getting on pointe,” is an accomplishment, whether that be in the literal sense, or in the more figurative sense of rising to leadership roles; yet, it also means having the proper fitting—knowing, understanding, and embracing a culture that embodies an interplay between light and dark dimensions of the leadership attributes that are socially valued.
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Running head: GETTING TO “THE POINTE”

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Running head: GETTING TO “THE POINTE”


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Dear [Name of the Head of the Organization]:

We would like to extend an invitation to your ballet company to volunteer for participation in a research study being conducted through Xavier University’s Leadership Studies Doctoral Program. The purpose of the study is to examine the culture of the American ballet industry and what is valued in terms of its leadership. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of Ashley L. Whitely’s program of doctoral study in collaboration with Dr. Gail F. Latta, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of the Leadership Studies Doctoral Program. This letter will outline what your organization’s participation would entail; should you agree to participate in this study, a brief letter of support (please see attached template), on organizational letterhead, will be required.

As a participant in this study, you would permit me to observe regular, ordinary member activities that occur throughout your organization, and to approach individual members to solicit their consent to be interviewed as part of the study. Institutional consent to observe activities within your organization in no way obligates individual members to be interviewed in conjunction with this study. As part of this study, I specifically request permission to observe member activities relating to: meeting, practices, rehearsals, and performances. If there are any areas or aspects of organizational behavior where you wish to restrict access, you may specify them in your letter of support. In addition, you agree to provide the researcher access to a listing of the organization’s membership, specifying roles and contact information so they be individually approached about participating in interviews about the perceptions and experiences in the ballet company. Members will be invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, lasting approximately an hour in length, with the option of follow-up interviews. Interviews will be conducted only with members who individually consent, and with permission will be recorded to insure accuracy in transcribing. Organizational and individual confidentiality of all observations and interview responses will be strictly maintained.

During observations the researcher will be taking field notes, and with permission, interviews with members who consent will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in transcribing responses. Audio recordings will be destroyed once transcribed. All field notes and interview transcripts will be used solely for the purposes of this research, will be accessible only to the co-investigators, will be stored in a secure location, and will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. The name of the organization and all its member information will be kept strictly confidential. No identifying information pertaining to the company or any of its members will be reflected in the final written report of findings: all information and data collected will remain confidential.

There are no direct benefits or compensation to the organization, other than the satisfaction of contributing to a study aimed at increasing our understanding of culture and leadership in the ballet industry. There are no known risks to your organization or its members associated with participating in this study and standard protocols will be followed to ensure the confidentiality of both. The study is designed to combine data collected from multiple ballet companies; so no individual or company will be identifiable in the study report. Data collection for this study is expected to occur from October 2016 to January 2016.

Thank you for taking the time to consider being part of this study aimed at better understanding the American ballet culture. You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods being used. Please contact the co-investigators at the email addresses or telephone numbers provided: Ashley Whitely, alh1130@hotmail.com or 513.720.7542 and Dr. Latta at 513.745-2986 or lattag@xavier.edu. This project has been reviewed and approved by Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board, and questions about your rights as a research subject should be directed to them at 513.745.2870.

Sincerely,

Ashley L. Whitely
Leadership Studies Doctoral Candidate
Xavier Universi

APPENDIX B
Organizational Letter of Support Template

[Contact Date]

Dear Ms. Whitely,

I have reviewed the requirements for participating in your research study, *Assessing Light and Dark Leadership Attributes in Ballet Culture* being conducted through Xavier University’s Leadership Study Doctorial Program. I understand that this research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of your program of doctoral studies in collaboration with Dr. Gail F. Latta, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of the Leadership Studies Doctoral Program, and that the purpose of the study is to examine the culture of the American ballet industry and what is valued in terms of leadership attributes.

We will be granting you permission to conduct your research in our organization as outlined in your letter dated mm-dd-yyyy, allowing for observations of regular organizational activities, and to approach members about participating in confidential, individual, voluntary interviews. [If there are any restrictions to areas, please note these.] To facilitate your access to company members, we will be providing you with a listing of organizational membership, detailing roles and contact information so that recruitment for individual interviews may be carried out. If there are any members we do not grant permission for you to approach, their names will be omitted from the list.

We look forward to collaborating with your during this process.

Thank you,

[Signature]

[Typed Name]

[Job Title]

THIS LETTER OF SUPPORT WILL NEED TO BE PROVIDED TO THE RESEARCHER ON ORGANIZATIONAL LETTERHEAD

APPENDIX C

226
Email Script for the Initial Contact of an Individual Participant

[Contact Date]

Dear Member of [Ballet Company]:

Your ballet company has consented to participate in a research study being conducted through Xavier University’s Leadership Studies Doctoral Program. As a member of this organization, we are extending an invitation for you to individually participate in this study by volunteering to be interviewed by the researchers. The purpose of the study is to examine the culture of the American ballet industry and what is valued in terms of its leadership. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of Ashley L. Whitely’s program of doctoral study in collaboration with Dr. Gail F. Latta, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of the Leadership Studies Doctoral Program. This letter will outline what your participation would entail; the attached informed consent form details your rights as a participant, should you agree to be interviewed as part of this research.

As an individual participant in this study, you will have an opportunity to sit for an interview to be held in a private location of your choosing. You will be invited to share your perceptions and experiences as a member of this ballet company and other ballet organizations with which you have been affiliated. The attached informed consent form outlines what your participation would entail and details your rights as a participant if you agree to be interviewed. Your organization’s consent to participate in this study in no way obligates you to volunteer to be interviewed. If you do consent to be interviewed, you will only be expected to answer the questions you choose to. You may stop the interview and withdraw your participation at any point, if you change your mind, and the information you provide will be omitted from analysis.

There are no direct benefits or compensation to you as a participant in this research, other than the satisfaction of contributing to a study aimed at increasing our understanding of culture and leadership in the ballet industry. There are no known risks to you individually or as a member of your organization associated with participating in this study and standard protocols will be followed to ensure the confidentiality of all information shared with the researchers. Data collection for this study is expected to occur from October 2016 to January 2016. The study is designed to combine data collected from multiple ballet companies; so no individual or company will be identifiable in the study report.

Thank you for taking the time to consider being part of this study aimed at better understanding the culture of the American ballet industry. If you have any questions about this research or your participation in the study, please feel free to contact Ashley Whitely at 513.720.7542 or Dr. Latta at 513.745-2986 or lattag@xavier.edu.

Sincerely,

Ashley L. Whitely
Leadership Studies Doctoral Candidate
Xavier University

APPENDIX D
Participant Informed Consent Form

Your organization has consented to participate in a study of organizational culture and leadership being conducted through Xavier University’s Leadership Studies doctoral program. As a member of this organization, you are being offered the opportunity to participate in the interview portion of this study. This form is to outlines the scope of this research opportunity and your rights should you consent to participate in this ethnographic study of organizational culture. Data collection for the study will take place from December 2016 to January 2017. Your name and contact information were provided by your organization. If you decided to participate in this project, you will be asked to sign this form as confirmation of your consent.

Information and Purpose
You are being asked to participate in a research study that is focused on examining the culture of the American ballet industry and what is valued in terms of leadership attributes.

Your participation
While your organization has granted permission for observations of the company, this form is requesting your participation in a semi-structured interview, lasting approximately an hour. The questions will revolve around your ballet experiences in this ballet company and the culture of the ballet industry as well as your observations about leadership attributes. If willing to be included in follow-up interviews, please denote below. You may pass on any question, and at any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and/or your participation in the study without explanation. No penalty exists for discontinuing participation. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provide will be destroyed and omitted from the final analysis.

Some individuals may be invited for follow-up interviews, but this invitation is neither guaranteed or obligatory. The invitation will be to participate in 2-3 additional, optional half hour interviews. Your willingness to participate in any one of these subsequent interviews will constitute your consent to participate at that time, and will not obligate you to agree to future interviews. These follow-up interviews would have the same conditions and terms as the initial interview, and you will have the same rights and privileges as in your initial interview.

Benefits and risks
There are no direct benefits or compensation to the organization, other than the satisfaction of contributing to a study aimed at increasing our understanding of culture and leadership in the ballet industry. There are no known risks to your organization or its members associated with participating in this study and standard protocols will be followed to ensure the confidentiality of both.

Confidentiality
During your interview the researcher will be taking field notes, and with permission the interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in transcribing responses. Audio recordings will be destroyed once transcribed. All field notes and interview transcripts will be used solely for the purposes of this research, will be accessible only to the co-investigators, will be stored in a secure location, and will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. The name of the organization and any participants, as well as any identifying information, will not be included in the final written report of findings: all information and data collected will remain confidential.

Researchers’ Information
You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods being used. Please contact the co-investigators at the email addresses or telephone numbers provided: Ashley Whitely, alh1130@hotmail.com or 513.720.7542 and Dr. Gail F. Latta, at 513.745.2986 or lattag@xavier.edu. Questions about your rights as a research subject should be directed to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board at 513.745.2870.

By signing this consent form, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information and have had the opportunity to ask and have my questions about the study answered. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation at any time.

☐ Please check this box, if you would be willing to be contacted for follow-up interviews.

☐ Please check this box, if you choose to opt out of having your interview audio recorded.

☐ Please check this box, if you would be willing to have the interview audio recorded.

Printed Name ____________________________ Signature ____________________________ Date

THE DATE APPROVAL STAMP ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY XAVIER UNIVERSITY’S INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD.
APPENDIX E
Organizational Script Detailing Researcher’s Presence

Ms. Ashley L. Whitely is conducting research through Xavier University’s Leadership Studies doctoral program, in partial fulfillment of her program of doctoral studies in collaboration with Dr. Gail F. Latta, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of the Leadership Studies Doctoral Program. The purpose of her study is to examine the culture of the American ballet industry and what is valued in terms of leadership attributes.

Ms. Whitely has been granted permission to observe normal day-to-day activities in our organization that are representative of the industry as a whole. She may be present during one or more of the activities in which you participate, but will not be interacting directly with you. She will only be observing the dynamics of organization members in general, not the behavior of specific individuals. No one will be individually identified in these observational sessions, nor will our organization be identified in any findings reported.

Additionally, we have provided Ms. Whitely a listing of organizational membership, detailing roles and email addresses, so that she may invite some of you to participate in individual interviews about your experiences in the ballet industry. Your decision whether to participate in one of these interviews, if asked, is entirely voluntary and will be kept strictly confidential. No one in the organization will know whether you agree to be interviewed or not. She is interested in the dynamics of how we represent the American ballet industry; both observational and interview information will provide clues into the industry as a whole, not our specific organization.
APPENDIX F
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Demographic Questions
1. How long have you been involved in the ballet industry?
2. With how many different ballet companies have you been associated in that period of time?
3. What is your current role in this ballet company?
4. What training was required for your current role?
5. What trajectory or path did you take to assume this role? Please include if you have had other roles within this and other companies with which you have been affiliated.

Culture Questions
6. What qualities, attributes, and behavioral norms are valued among members of this organization?
   a. What positive influence do you see these organizational dynamics having on members of this organization?
   b. What negative influences have you observed these organizational dynamics having on members of this organization?
7. To what extent are the norms you experience in this ballet company similar or different from other companies with which you have been affiliated?
8. How have you come to know these values and behavioral norms?
   a. What if any role have you had in communicating or transmitting these values and norms to others in your organization?
   b. Have you ever found yourself at odds with these values or behavioral norms? If so, please describe that experience was like for you and any consequence that resulted for either you or the organization.
9. To what extent do you try to reflect/embrace or resist/defy these cultural norms? If so, why and in what ways?
   a. Do these norms play any role in increasing or diminishing members’ motivation to exert effort on behalf of the organization and its goals?
10. To what extent do those who rise to leadership roles in your organization reflect the values, attributes and norms you describe?
   a. Does embodying or embracing these qualities have positive implications for the individuals and/or the organization and its members?
   b. Does embodying or embracing these qualities have any negative implications for the individuals and/or the organization and its members?
   To the extent they do not,
   c. Describe the ways in which individuals in leadership roles depart from what is value and expected of the members of the organization?

Knowledge Questions
11. What are the commonalities among those who are considered to be leaders in this ballet company? What differences are there among these leaders?
12. Who is considered a “leader” in the company?
   a. Why is he/she considered a leader?
   b. What leadership attributes or behavior do these individuals exhibit?
   c. What non-leadership attributes or behavior do they lack or restrain from exhibiting?
13. Who is not considered a “leader” in the company?
   a. Why is he/she not considered a leader?
   b. What leadership attributes or behavior do these individuals not embody or exhibit?
   c. What non-leadership attributes or behavior do they possess or exhibiting?
14. Describe the process of becoming a leader in the ballet industry. In other words, how does one rise in the ranks or become a leader in this organization and others with which you have been affiliated?
   a. What is the typical trajectory and persistence of a leader in this organization?
   b. Does time within the organization influence the likelihood of an individual assuming a leadership role?
15. How are the attributes and behaviors valued among leaders cultivated among the membership of this organization?  
   a. How do you know that the particular attribute or behavior is valued? Please cite examples.  
   b. How do you know that the particular attribute or behavior is not valued? Please cite examples.  
16. Describe the effects of these leadership attributes on the subordinates in the company.  
   a. What positive effects of these attributes and behaviors have you observed?  
   b. What negative effects of these attributes and behaviors have you observed?  
17. How do your experiences and observations of leadership in this ballet company compare to those witnessed in other ballet organizations with which you have been affiliated?  

**Opinion Questions**  
18. What are your opinions about the qualities, attributes and behaviors this ballet company, and others with which you have been affiliated, value among their members, and leaders in particular?  
   a. Do you think any of the leadership attributes represent unrealistic extremes?  
   b. Do you think leaders in your organization embody a balanced representation of these values norms?  
19. To what extent do you personally strive to exhibit the qualities, attributes and behaviors valued among the leadership of this ballet company?  
   a. Is this similar or different from your aspirations in or ballet organizations with which you have been affiliated?  
   b. In what ways do your own values depart from the qualities, attributes and behaviors valued by these organizations?  
20. When did you first become aware of the effects of these values on your own behavior and aspirations?  
   a. Would you describe the impact of these efforts to be successful? Please explain.  
   b. Would you describe the impact of these efforts to be positive with respect to your overall wellbeing?  
   c. How about with respect to your own leadership aspirations?  
   d. Have there been any negative effects or impacts you have experienced related to your efforts to reflect or embody the qualities, attributes and behaviors valued by others in your ballet company or other companies with which you have been affiliated?  

**Feeling Questions**  
21. What are your feelings towards the qualities, attributes and behavioral norms valued in your ballet company and what it expects of you as a member?  
22. Despite your best efforts, in what ways do you think you personally fall short of exhibiting the qualities, attributes and behaviors valued by your ballet company and others with which you have been affiliated?  
   a. Do you think your perceptions of yourself are consistent with the views others hold of you in the organization?  
   b. Do you experience anxiety or frustration related to this perception of yourself? If so, do you consider these feelings to be beneficial or not?  
   c. Have you ever expressed frustration related to these perceptions to your friends, family or other members in your organization?  
23. What are your feelings towards those in leadership roles in your ballet company?  
   a. What factors do you think underlie these feelings?  
   b. What do you think would cause you to have more positive feelings about the leadership of this organization and the industry as a whole?  
   c. Are there things you think would cause you to have more negative feelings about the leadership?  
24. Overall, do you feel the impact of the values of the ballet industry on you have been mostly positive or negative?