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AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study explores the experiences of body image in women employed as performers within the cruise ship industry. Previous research within the dance population has predominantly focussed on ballet dancers. We were particularly interested in understanding how the unique environment of life aboard a cruise ship impacted body image. We interviewed nine female cruise ship performers aged 25 to 34 years regarding their experiences of body image aboard a cruise ship and how they had experienced body image as a cruise ship performer. The three key themes were: industry-based demands on body image, impact of the environment on body image, and social influences on body image, each of which highlighted both negative and positive influences. The findings highlight the impact of cruise ship experiences and industry standards on female ship performers' perceptions of body image and the importance of recognising ship-specific (and more general dance genre-specific) body image in future research.

Keywords

body image; cruise ship; qualitative; performer; dance

Biography

Jenna Chin is a professional performer and dance scientist whose research focusses on the intersection of body image and supplementary fitness training in dancers. She is primarily interested in the lesser explored genres of dance science such as musical theatre and revue dancers as this is her performance background. In 2019, Jenna received her MSc in Dance Science from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. Jenna has performed regionally in the United States as well as for an international cruise line.

Lucie Clements is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Chichester and a Chartered Psychologist. In 2017 she received her PhD from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and has authored a number of publications in dance psychology. Lucie researches the psychosocial underpinnings of optimal performance, including the training environment and significant individuals in nurturing healthy dance engagement. Some of Lucie's recent research focusses on creativity, understanding what it means to achieve not only technical excellence in dance but also to flourish creatively. Lucie also delivers dance psychology workshops to dancers, teachers and parents.

Introduction

The present study explores influences on female body image within the cruise ship performer population, with a particular focus on exploring the effects of living and working aboard a cruise ship. Body image is known to relate to physical activity (Sabiston, Pila, Vani, & Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2019), and exercise interventions have shown positive results in improving perceptions of body image in the layperson (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009). However, where exercise is one's occupation, the aesthetic, technical, and workload demands on bodies increase, so the relationship may not always be positive. Dance is a clear example of an occupation with strict requirements in relation to bodies. A dancer attempts to reach and sustain an ideal weight while also striving to conform to a specific aesthetic which emphasises a thin, yet graceful physique (Radell, Keneman, Mandradjieff, Adame, & Cole, 2017). There are numerous aspects of life on board a ship that may have an impact on body image. These range from practical limitations including access to fresh or unprocessed food and close proximity to colleagues, to more traditional dance practices such as the use of weigh-ins, fitness photos, and mandatory fitness requirements which are typical methods of overseeing cast physique and maintaining conformity to a specific body size.

Body image plays an important role in dancers' wellbeing (Radell, Adame, Cole, & Blumenkehl, 2011). Dancers are impacted by a pressure to be thin, and may relate to disordered eating (Francisco, Narciso, & Alarcão, 2012). Whereas a fair amount of research has been published regarding body image within ballet and contemporary dance (e.g., Francisco, 2018; Killion

& Culpepper, 2014), one unexplored area is that of cruise ship performers. Whilst aboard a cruise ship, dancers may perceive expectations to conform to specific body sizes and types, in addition to living and working in confined conditions which may exacerbate these pressures. In this research, we adopt a phenomenological approach, presenting the first study to explore the experience of body image in cruise ship performers and investigating how the specific nuances of this dance genre and environment may impact body image. We also examine which aspects of the environment contributed to performers' perceptions of body image expectations.

Body image is a psychological concept about the physical self and is defined as one's perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of their external manifestation (Cardoso, Reis, Marinho, Boing, & Guimarães, 2017; Grogan et al., 2013; Kim, Park, Joo, & Park, 2015). It is well-suited to a phenomenological approach. Body image may be either positive (i.e. comparable to body appreciation; Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005; Tiggemann, 2015) or negative (i.e. comparable to body dissatisfaction; Pollatou, Bakali, Theodorakis, & Goudas, 2010), although the two concepts may not necessarily be opposite to each other (Langdon & Petracca, 2010). Negative body image is positively related to eating disorders and mental health (Cash & Fleming, 2002; Griffiths, Parsons, & Hill, 2010; Noles, Cash, & Winstead, 1985; Stice, 2002; Tylka & Subich, 2004), while positive body image is positively associated with optimism and self-esteem (Swami & Harris, 2012; Tiggemann, 2015).

Importantly, body image is a complex and multidimensional construct influenced by factors including sociocultural (e.g., peers, colleagues,

social media) and individual pressures (e.g., personal expectations, beliefs, or values; Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Van Zelst, Clabaugh, & Morling, 2004; Zoletić & Duraković-Belko, 2009). Dancers, who can be considered both an athlete and an artist (Koutedakis & Jamurtas, 2004; Ravaldi et al., 2003), may differ in their experience of body image from a non-dancer. Ideal dance body image is contradictory by nature; dancers balance the physicality and strength demanded by dance with the thin physique idolised and perpetuated within the industry by norms (Dantas, Alonso, Sánchez-Miguel, & del Río Sánchez, 2018; Francisco, 2018; Mills & Dee, 2016). Meanwhile, dancers must be sufficiently healthy and nourished to undertake up to 45 hours of physical activity per week (Caine, Goodwin, Caine, & Bergeron, 2015). Many aspects of the dance environment such as tight clothing (Price & Pettijohn, 2006), mirrors (Radell et al., 2017) and the need to maintain a low body weight to satisfy employer requirements (Swami & Harris, 2012) expose dancers to changes in perceptions of both actual and ideal body image by increasing close intrapersonal scrutiny of their bodies and encouraging interpersonal comparison to others.

Relative to matched non-athletic controls (Ravaldi et al., 2006) and vocational dance students (Robbeson, Kruger, & Wright, 2015), ballet dancers report higher levels of negative body image and preoccupation with weight. Further quantitative findings have indicated that ballet dancers have higher body dissatisfaction, lower positive body image, and perceive increased pressure to be thin compared to the general population or other athletes (e.g., Byrne & McLean, 2002; Francisco et al., 2012; Ravaldi et al., 2006; Robbeson et al., 2015). These findings are irrespective of anthropometric measurements which indicate most dancers are healthy or below average weight (Kosmidou, Giannitsopoulou, & Moysidou, 2016; Swami & Tovée, 2009; Wilmerding, McKinnon, & Mermier, 2005; Zoletić & Duraković-Belko, 2009). As the skill level of a dancer increases, negative body image and preoccupation with weight may also increase (Robbeson et al., 2015).

A dancer's psychological profile may also impact body image. For example, dancer identity – how strongly one identifies as being a dancer – negatively relates to body appreciation and dance-specific body image in modern dancers (Langdon & Petracca, 2010). Ballet dancers show high prevalence of perfectionistic tendencies (Nordin-Bates, Cumming, Aways, & Sharp, 2011) and pressure to be thin (Byrne & McLean, 2002; Francisco et al., 2012). These psychological characteristics are often seen as barriers to improved body satisfaction and body image (Cumming & Duda, 2012), indicating a complex interplay between industry norms, traditions, and psychology of individual performers'.

Although a number of studies have been published in dance, genre-specific norms may impact body image differently because different dance genres and environments have differing demands. Whilst classical ballet tradition strongly emphasises thinness, higher levels of positive body image have been observed in street dance and contemporary dance where there is less emphasis on thinness, which may be due to a focus on strength and inclusivity (Swami & Tovée, 2009). One underexplored area of dance is the cruise ship, where performances are revue-style or musical theatre shows. This requires performers to master multiple dance genres including, but not limited to, jazz, commercial, modern, ballet, tap, and

ballroom. Shows range from 30 - 90 minutes in length and can include a combination of skills including dancing, acrobatics, or puppetry (Wanke et al., 2014) often while singing, meaning that dancers are expected to be versatile performers who may not align with one specific dance style.

Industry-specific cruise ship practices and the unique demands of living on board a cruise ship may also impact body image. Weight management policies and practices implemented by internal departments and external agencies responsible for casting can potentially lead to unhealthy behaviours by provoking feelings of comparison and weight concern in performers (Francisco et al., 2012). Costumes are often small or revealing and can include Vegas-style bra and G-strings or midriff-baring tops and "hot pants." Benn and Walters (2001) suggest that the normative practice of resizing existing costumes can create perceived expectations to realise or maintain a specific body size. In addition, access to quality food is limited and sometimes even restricted. Arguably, the norms within the cruise ship entertainment industry could potentially lead to more negative body image perceptions among ship performers, especially when combined with the environmental demands of the ship environment.

Cruise ship communities are unique environments in their blending of many cultures (Terry, 2011; Thompson, 2002), sustained separation from family and friends (Wolff, Larsen, Marnburg, & Øgaard, 2013), and constantly changing conditions (Larsen et al., 2012). Colloquially referred to as "ship life," the lifestyle is further complicated by the fact that one lives where one works (Bolt & Lashley, 2015). Ship-wide and department-specific rules and regulations range from banning items with heating coils to limiting crew access to the guest gym or dining areas. Individual cruise lines vary on how strictly they enforce these rules (Bolt & Lashley, 2015). Departments tend to live together (Wolff et al., 2013); for ship performers, this will often be near or directly next to the theatre in which they most regularly work. Additionally, many ship performers are required to share a room, causing a lack of privacy. This distinct socio-cultural configuration creates a microcosm of the world at sea.

Body image is associated with disordered eating and mental health in both males and females (Cash & Fleming, 2002; Griffiths et al., 2010; Noles et al., 1985; Stice, 2002; Tylka & Subich, 2004), yet research has focused almost exclusively on women. This is most likely because a higher prevalence of eating disorders exists in the female population (Button, Aldridge, & Palmer, 2008), and females tend to be at higher risk for negative body image when compared with males (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009). Although men are increasingly included in samples (Sabiston et al., 2019), it was deemed necessary to focus on one sex alone given that the phenomenological experiences of both dance and body image differ substantially between men and women. Since there are more women than men in dance, only women were selected for this first exploratory study while simultaneously recognising the need for a secondary study focussed on males.

In sum, research has explored experiences of body image for women in ballet or contemporary dance, in particular highlighting experiences of negative body image in dancers who are expected to remain thin (Danis, Jamaludin, Majid, & Isa, 2016; Mills & Dee, 2016; Nerini, 2015; Price & Pettijohn, 2006; Ravaldi et al., 2006). However,

there remains a need to understand how different dance genres and related contextual factors may influence women's body image among the cruise ship performer population. The need for research in this population is especially evident when one considers the unique impact both the ship environment and the performance industry have on one's physical and psychological well-being. Developing this area of knowledge may aid in the development of interventions or changes to cruise ship environments. Quantitative research may overlook some of the effects of environmental or social attributes of 'ship life', and hence we adopted a phenomenological approach to understand the performers' experiences.

Qualitative research has shown variation in how participants define and understand the concept of body image (Bennett, Scarlett, Hurd Clarke, & Crocker, 2016; Blood, 2005). Phenomenological research facilitates understanding of human, subjective perception and offers participants a chance to share their expertise through their own words. Thus, qualitative methods allow researchers to explore body image perceptions and provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the aspects of the construct through the search for meaning and patterns within a participant's ideas. As a result, we used a qualitative approach to explore the individual perceptions of body image in cruise ship performers. We were specifically interested in the role of the cruise ship environment in these experiences.

Method
Participants

Nine female participants ranging from 25 to 34 years (M = 29.11, SD = 3.14) in age from the United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada were recruited. In line with the recommendations of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), we recruited participants via purposive sampling (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) using the following inclusion criteria: a) identifying either as a dancer, dancer-singer, or be required to dance significantly as part of their contracted performance duties; b) having completed at least one five-month contract on any cruise ship; and c) having completed their most recent contract within the last 12 months. Participants had a healthy mean BMI of 21.80 kg/m^2 (SD = 1.22; World Health Organization [WHO], 2000). No participants fell outside of the WHO recommended healthy range. Participants had held a mean of 3.75 (SD = 2.05) contracts, which ranged in length from two to ten months. All participants provided informed consent.

Materials

The present study entailed a semi-structured interview to explore perceptions of body image in the ship performer population. We conducted pilot work to determine the appropriateness of the interview schedule in addressing the research aims. Two women were interviewed separately for 24.68 and 40.53 minutes respectively, and had performed on different cruise lines to one another. The pilot work confirmed the relevance of the questions, with small changes to the phrasing of the questions.

Procedure

The study received institutional ethical approval. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling (the deliberate selection of participants who possess particular qualities; Smith et al., 2009). The lead author conducted all interviews online (Jowett, Peel & Shaw, 2011)

which were audio recorded using Voice Memos (Apple, 2019). The interviews lasted between 33.25 and 83.65 minutes (M= 63.97, SD=15.52).

To enable participants to speak openly about their experiences, we used a semi-structured approach. Questions were primarily open-ended, with clarification and elaboration probes used as needed (Patton, 2002). The interview guide included questions about interviewee background (e.g., *"Could you tell me about your dance background?"*); life on board the ship (e.g., "*Can you tell me about the day-to-day environment of the cruise ship?*"); and experience of body image (e.g., "*What does 'body image' mean to you?*").

Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed following the guidelines of IPA, a qualitative analysis process that takes the lived human experience into consideration (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). In IPA research, the researcher attempts to comprehend complex topics through the participant's perspective. The researcher becomes integral as they attempt to interpret the meaning participants attach to individual experiences and make sense of the participant's world (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). IPA provides an account that is "concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.53). In recognising our interpretation of the information that the participants provided, we disclose that the first author has lived experience of working on a cruise ship, while the second author is a psychologist (Smith et al., 1999).

In order to produce methodologically rigorous qualitative research, the guidelines for qualitative research in psychology were followed (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). For example, the researchers' perspectives were recognised throughout the study. As the lead researcher has personal experience of performing on cruise ships, personal bias was acknowledged before and during analysis. To enhance trustworthiness, the first author led the analysis and a colleague acted as a critical friend in terms of initial coding. The colleague found similar results and provided additional insight which was then integrated with the original results. Finally, the second author coded two transcripts in order to determine reliability and to account for any possible bias due to the first author's experiences of performing on a cruise ship.

Results

We aimed to gain an understanding of body image experiences of cruise ship performers, recognising the role of the cruise ship environment. All performers danced significantly as part of their contracted performance duties, yet performer identity varied within the sample. Two participants self-identified as a singer who dances, two as a dancer, and one as a dancer/singer. Three referred to themselves as "equal parts singer and dancer" (Danielle), while another described herself as a performer but considered herself "a dancer first" (Melissa).

Participants described body image with a mental or psychological emphasis, such as "how you view yourself" (Zoe), "how I see my body" (Melissa), or "how you feel in your own body" (Tori). Leigh explained that her positive view of her body "just kind of came with age ... with just

growing up and growing into your body and growing into your confidence." Similarly, Danielle noted that for her, this change occurred alongside "deciding to make a lifestyle change and honestly age too."

Three key themes emerged from the overall theme of body image in cruise ship performers: (a) the dance industry; (b) the cruise ship environment; and (c) social aspects of ship life. These themes and their respective sub-themes can be seen in Figure 1 below.
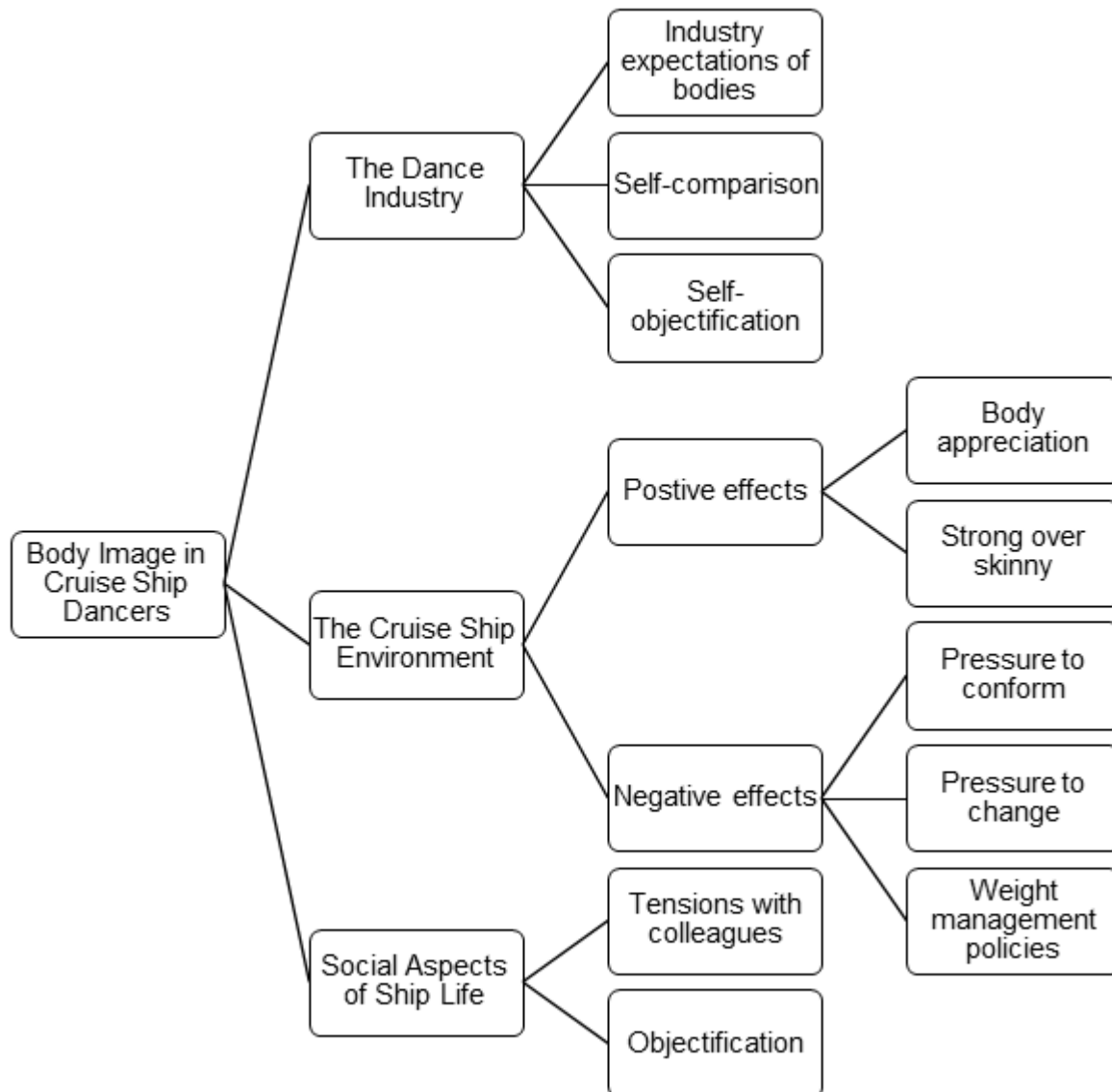

Figure 1. Flowchart of themes and subthemes found through analysis.

Dance Industry Impact on Body Image

The participants described the impact of being a performer on expectations of the dancer's body. For example, Melissa explained, "Body image is a weird thing in the performance world [laughs]. It's a very skewed thing." Similarly, Heather said, "For our industry we kind of do have to be strong and fit which most of the time does mean people end up being quite slim and what society and the media deems to be very attractive." Ava also discussed the industry standard: "Being in good shape is part of the job too, so it's something to be expected."

Industry Expectations

The participants described the way industry standards had impacted their perceptions of their own body image, such as a 5 feet 9 inches tall Tori, who said: "I'm a tall person too, so I'm very conscious of how big I am otherwise because it's difficult to cast me." When asked to describe her own body image, Heather said, "I would say average build, but actually that's completely inaccurate in terms of, for a dancer and musical theatre artist." Natasha said:

> I always liked the way I looked dancing when I was thinner. . . . I've always thought lines looked better on leaner bodies. . . . I personally place a huge amount of self-worth on what I look like and on what my body looks like. . . . Unfortunately, a lot of dance auditions and shows, that's where the value is. . . . I think there was something about being thin and being a [sigh] a dancer that feels good. When I don't have that, it's almost like I don't know where I fit. Like … who I really am.

Self-comparison

McKayla explained how the industry's emphasis on body image, especially casting based on body type, increased awareness of others' bodies: "I've always been conscious of my body … Dancing and auditioning, going in front of people, getting typed in or out based on what you look like." The idea that the industry emphasises self-comparison was also evident for Danielle and Zoe who respectively said, "We live in a world of comparison" and, "Just being a dancer … you're always like comparing yourselves to the dancer beside you." Tori had accepted this: "You do compare yourself … that's the nature of what we do in general as performers."

Self-objectification

Some participants referred to their bodies as objects to be shaped and transformed as needed; Heather described her body as "an instrument, not an ornament." To contextualise this idea of self-objectification, the women described the importance of "selling" oneself during auditions and onstage. Tori said, "My body is my instrument… like the product that I'm marketing ... sounds a bit cut and dry but it's true … I am my own business … my body, my instrument is my production." Similarly, Heather said, "I like to see [my body] as what it is, and in terms of how I look on stage, I view myself as a product almost, not as me a person."

The Cruise Ship Environment

All nine participants reported that life on board a ship "is a whole different world" (Melissa). Heather compared this to "a mini world, or a mini city, where you get kind of all different types of employment, also the class system, and … it gets intense 'cause it's all just condensed." Aligning with this, the women described ship life as "monotonous" (Melissa) and discussed ways "to make life liveable" (Tori). McKayla explained, "It's a weird lifestyle. . . . It was like a huge adjustment for me coming on here. It was definitely a challenge. But I couldn't understand it until I

actually was doing it and you're living it." Heather succinctly explained, "When you work on a ship, you give up certain aspects of your life."

Positive impact on body image

Body appreciation

Participants discussed how working on ships changed their perceptions of body image in some way. For Ava, this was an improvement: "[I] end up getting to be like some of my best shape because you're performing, you're really physical with your job, but then also you go to the gym." Zoe reiterated this positivity: "I've seen like how good I can be, like at my peak." Leigh noted that cruise ships embraced her body, explaining she had been "able to expand my career more than I thought I'd be able to because they are casting my body type." Danielle provided a potential explanation for the role of the environment: "[Ships] gave me the time to regroup and really like focus on being happy with what I looked like." Summing up this theme, Natasha remarked:

> I never thought of myself as a pretty girl until I worked on ships. . . . I loved my body. I loved it. It wasn't like I felt so fat or anything. . . . I felt like that was like my peak, physical shape. . . . I felt really like unstoppable.

Strong over skinny

Working on ships changed perceptions of the ideal body type for the women. For example, Zoe said, "I think before working on ships it was just like 'oh, I need to be skinny.' But now it's more like 'no, like I need to be fit.'" Tori explained how her perception had changed after working on ships:

> It's not just about being this skinny pretty little thing. It's about being powerful and being strong. . . . It's not just about like I have to be skinny. It's about like I want to be strong. I want to be capable. I want to be able to dance these numbers.

In line with this, some participants had repositioned their view of themselves as athletes. Tori said, "I've really come to refer to myself as an athlete, as a performer." Similarly, Ava stated, "I'm like an athlete on stage." The change in perception impacted some of the women's motivation to reach or maintain a specific body type. Tori explained that working on ships "impressed upon me the idea that like to really be competitive in my field, which I needed to be in really good shape." Danielle likewise felt ships "made me realise that … it is hard work to look the way I wanna look and it doesn't just come, it's not handed to you."

This positive perception was impacted by individual background. For example, Leigh felt as though the ship standards had "encouraged a healthier body image." She acknowledged that "growing up kind of near the classical ballet world, I was always like aware of body image because they really like the really super thin girls and I didn't really fit [the] mould."

Four participants explicitly discussed how ships impacted their relationship with supplementary fitness training. Leigh explained, "Being able to be on a ship and have a job that make[s] time for the gym, really let me enjoy it." Likewise, Heather described her changed relationship as "become[ing] more healthy because it has become a lot more about being able to do what I need to do for the show as opposed to me wanting to look skinny."

Negative effects

Only one participant described feeling as though ships negatively impacted their self-perception. McKayla explained that the experience of being on board a ship impacted her perception:

> Being on a ship is also hard for [body image] … You're isolated, you have a lot of time to like

think about it. . . . I feel like [my body]'s reconfigured here. . . . I feel like it's changed. . . . I do think it like messes with your body, being on a ship. It's just a totally different lifestyle, routine, everything changes.

Melissa experienced a negative impact on her relationship with fitness training:

I realised later … I was doing it for somebody else. And I was doing it for somebody else for so long, I didn't know what I was doing anymore. . . . I just kept wanting to hit what they wanted and wanting to make sure they were happy with what they saw, and I forgot all about [my own goals].

Pressure to conform

Five participants described feeling pressure to conform to a certain body type, due to the normative traditions of the ship environment. Melissa explained, "I mean fitness and body image and their policies and all that stuff, it affects everything I do every day 'cause that's part of my life." Heather further elaborated on this point:

Body image really does matter to some of these lines. . . . they do want their girls to be able to wear hot pants and belly tops as well as deliver the actual goods … whether I really had the desire to have tight abs or not … my body would have to be going towards that particular image.

Natasha described a similar experience: "It just felt like I needed to have that like long, lean body all the time… and it just felt like that was kinda my character … my persona. Not even onstage, but just in general … everyone on the ship just knew me as this like skinny dancer." Likewise, Melissa said, "They want everyone to be unique and show personality and be their own person, but also fit into their bubble of size." Heather discussed the impact of the ship environment on her perception:

The people you're closest to, spend the most time around, and see the most of, you see their naked bodies backstage, are the other dancers.

So, you kinda get the perception that that kind of body is what's normal, when actually it's not. . . . your perception of what is normal does become skewed.

Tori attributed the ship standard to the reuse of costumes: "You're going into costumes from other people and there's only so much you can, you know take in or let out." However, Melissa admitted, "I don't wanna watch a certain sized person in the costumes that we wear either."

Pressure to change

Three participants described their feelings after being asked to gain or lose weight while employed on a cruise ship. Heather said, "It's not that my body wasn't able or that I thought I looked disgusting, but just constantly being told that I looked too skinny was actually quite upsetting …. It was more the aspect of feeling watched …. I felt constantly monitored." On the other hand, Melissa was asked to lose weight: "They wanted me to get fitter before I were to be offered [another] contract. So, I was cleared by their standards, I guess." McKayla explained this discrepancy: "I think to the company, fitness is being thin."

Weight management policies

The use of weight management policies such as weigh-ins, fitness photos, and measurements was a difficult topic for ship performers, with mixed opinions on the matter. Ava admitted, "It'd be nice if we didn't weigh in but that's also part of the job so I dunno … in limbo on that one." Zoe favoured some policies over others:

I don't understand the weight, because people can like gain muscle weight or you know fat weight, so that I don't agree with that policy. The measurements I understand 'cause then you can actually see where people are gaining and losing so I get that, and as long as you don't have to do like a drastic costume change, then I think it's fine.

Participants offered their understanding of why these policies existed. Some agreed they were "just a formality that the office requires" (Tori) or "just … [a] guideline" (Melissa). Ava saw them as being quite ambiguous: "There's not really a number scale, not a specific policy, it's just more so if the manager of the cast member feels concerned for their health in either direction." Natasha described the use of policies as "literally a reason to fire you if they want to." Heather went on to give a practical explanation of the policies: "to regulate your weight and because … there's not a person whose sole job is to seamstress."

Participants described negative experiences with weight management policies: "Having to be weighed in was destructive for me" (Danielle). She later said, "Since the ship, I would just stop weighing myself and I'm happier with how I look and how I feel." Similarly, McKayla said, "The fitness photos do put an added pressure. . . . It's like you're being compared to other people and I think it's terrible."

Some participants found weight management policies to have a more positive impact on their perceptions. For example, Zoe was "more aware of [my body image] because we do have those weigh ins." Ava admitted to disliking the policies at first but eventually came to terms with them: "It was just more so trying to accept the fact that it's part of the job and to just remind myself that it's a number, whatever that number is on the scale it's not a reflection of my worth."

Social Aspects of Ship Life

All of the women reported that living and working on a ship impacted their daily life, because "you all live on the same hallway, kind of like college" (Ava) and are "with these people all the time" (Tori). Ava explained how this impacted personal space and time: "You work together all the time pretty much. You see them every night except one, but then you usually hang out on your night off 'cause then, they're like your built-in family and friends. Hopefully." Similarly, Tori said, "Because of the nature of being a performer and living in that environment where you're all living on top of each other, you'd almost have to like reserve time by yourself. You'd be like, 'I'm having a me day.'" Melissa reiterated this sentiment:

> There are moments when you're on board where you wish you were not right next to the people who you spent all day, every day with. . . . There's nowhere else to go. It's not like land where you can just go home or go to your room. I mean some people don't even have their own cabins.

Tensions with intra-departmental colleagues

Participants described the ways in which singers had more freedom on board than dancers. For example, McKayla said, "Privileges are different as well. . . . It definitely creates a bit of a hierarchy among us." Heather explained, "Singers did have more money and their own cabin." Alongside this, different standards were set: "I think there's a big difference there between [dancers and singers] when it comes to physical appearance and costumes and the way you're moving" (Heather). Danielle admitted: "I felt like they were a little bit easier on me because I was a singer/dancer and not just a dancer."

Objectification by inter-departmental colleagues

The women expressed feeling frustrated or misunderstood by the rest of the crew. Melissa explained, "They don't realise the years of work and money and training that have gone into us

doing that job." Ava echoed this sentiment: "It's not like we just rolled out of bed and decided I'm gonna be a dancer or a singer, like we've spent our lives prepping for this and we've gone through all the auditions and rejections." McKayla explained inter-ship interactions in a similar manner: "People in the crew, some people hate us. It's like really odd, like we're treated like you don't ever work and you guys get to party and like play all the time … it's very physical what we do."

Natasha described feeling devalued by other crew members: "It was relatively demeaning … very sexist … it was objectifying." Similarly, Danielle admitted that "there were some jealousies between some of the women."

Discussion

This study explored cruise ship performers' experiences of body image. Body image, and specifically negative body image, is a pervasive topic within the dance community due to the high levels of self-criticism and body dissatisfaction found in dancers (Danis et al., 2016; Mills & Dee, 2016; Nerini, 2015; Price & Pettijohn, 2006; Ravaldi et al., 2006). Body image is influenced by social and cultural factors (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Van Zelst et al., 2004; Zoletić & Duraković-Belko, 2009) and participants expressed the impact of the ship environment on their perception of body image. The women generally understood body image to be a multidimensional concept, referring to how one feels, perceives, and values one's body as well as physical capability. These findings align with body image literature which suggests the concept comprises multiple aspects (Fisher, 1990) – such as perception, cognition, affect, and behaviour – and indicate a potential for quantitative

methods to produce reliable results in this population.

A unanimous opinion expressed by the participants was the impact of both industry and ship standards, steeped in tradition, on their perception of body image. When studying body image in athletes or dancers, it is important to consider sport-specific body image (Bennett et al., 2016). Participants agreed that a dance-specific body image existed, describing the need to be "fit" (Zoe) and "in shape" (Ava) in a way that met both the aesthetic and physical demands of their chosen career. Most notably, Heather's comment about her body not actually being "of average build" demonstrated the difference between general body image and dance-specific body image; dance idealises a thin physique above and beyond that which is deemed aesthetically pleasing in the general population. Furthermore, the women referred to themselves "as an athlete" (Tori), echoing findings that dancers are athletes (Koutedakis & Jamurtas, 2004; Ravaldi et al., 2003) and that dance-specific body image should be considered when studying body image in dance populations (Dantas et al. 2018; Francisco, 2018; Mills & Dee, 2016). Researchers must recognise the unique pressures and demand of the population which may differ from a generalised female sample.

Just as sports-specific body image differs between sports (Byrne & McLean, 2002; Kosmidou et al., 2016), the findings suggest body image varies between dance genres. In her research on ballet and the body, Pickard (2012, 2013) argues that the genre of ballet is a "distinctive and exclusive world," in which there are specific values including an ideal body influenced by history and tradition. Thus, an individual dance genre can

constitute a distinct culture. In the present research, aspects such as weight management policies contributed to the performers' perceptions of control over body size exerted by the ship environment. However, the specific instigators of this control were unclear and are mostly likely due to continued traditions.

Given that perceptions of body image are influenced by cultural factors (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Van Zelst et al., 2004; Zoletić & Duraković-Belko, 2009), the idealised body image of a given genre will differ between genres because the values and traditions will also differ. Participants described ship-specific body image as distinct from other dance genres, referring to a need to be "fit" and not just "skinny" (Zoe). The ship-specific ideal body image described by participants does not neatly match the body types valued in other genres such as ballet or modern dance which tend to emphasise thin or strong bodies respectively (Langdon & Petracca, 2010). That participants understood the impact of ship-specific body image on casting reiterates the need to consider the impact of genre when studying body image in the dance population.

Participant training background impacted perceptions of body image. Unlike some ballet or contemporary dancers who have been most commonly studied in dance science research, ship performers train and perform in a variety of styles, and the participants' training backgrounds ranged from classical ballet to musical theatre. Therefore, no one cast will be uniform in background as would be more typical if researching a classical ballet company. Research has indicated high levels of negative body image and body dissatisfaction in ballet dancers (Francisco, 2018) but less so in contemporary or modern dancers (Langdon &

Petracca, 2010; Swami & Harris, 2012), indicating that genre-specific body image may relate to the physical demands of each dance type. Of the women who indicated their perception of their body image had improved whilst on ships, two had trained heavily in classical ballet and the other had encountered weight management policies at university level. This suggests that the training environment affects perceptions of body image which persist throughout a dancer's career. Participants who had more mixed training backgrounds did not attribute any positive improvement in body image perceptions to the ship environment. While ship performers should be considered its own genre, the importance of early training on perceptions of body image is evident (Monteiro, Novaes, Santos, & Fernandes, 2014; Nerini, 2015; Nordin-Bates, Walker, & Redding, 2011). Further research is warranted to determine if training background predicts perceptions of ship-specific body image.

Some participants seemed to manage the imposed standards via self-objectification of the body which is consistent with previous dance science research (Radell et al., 2017; Tiggemann & Slater, 2001). Examples of this included describing the body as "a product" (Tori) or "an instrument" (Heather); therefore, body objectification was seen as a necessity in order to meet industry standards. These findings support the objective self-awareness theory (Wicklund, 1972) in which viewing oneself as an object is achieved through internal self-focus. The theory also suggests that if one views an attribute of oneself negatively before self-reflection, a larger discrepancy will likely exist between the current evaluation and the aspiration. For example, viewing one's physical body negatively should lead to a larger difference

between one's current perception of body image and one's ideal body image after self-reflection. However, in contrast to this, self-objectification allowed some participants to make sense of and accept the standards imposed upon them by allowing the women to disassociate from the ship-specific ideal body type. Although a possible cause of negative self-perceptions, self-objectification allowed the women to mediate the potential discrepancy between imposed standards and self-evaluation. This suggests that whilst certain aspects of self-objectification theory hold true for ship performers, the act of self-objectification can also act as a coping strategy for ship performers by preventing internalisation of external expectations and pressures.

Conclusions & Limitations

Dance-specific body image differs between dance styles as individual genres can be considered unique cultures (Pickard, 2012, 2013) and body image is influenced by cultural factors (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Van Zelst et al., 2004; Zoletić & Duraković-Belko, 2009). Participants described ship-specific body image as separate from the ideal body image valued in other dance genres, justifying the need to identify cruise ship performers as a distinct dance genre. For ship performers, body image perceptions were impacted by participant training backgrounds as well as ship standards and industry norms. Some women used self-objectification in order to manage industry standards and disassociate from ship standards, both supporting and contradicting self-objectification theory (Wicklund, 1972). Educating both dancers and employers about body image traditions and the myriad ways in which dance can impact on body image perceptions may help

improve dancers' own perceptions as well as the culture within the dance industry. The ship environment also played a role in the women's perceptions of body image, and participants described a need for better resources on board ships to help manage the stresses of their environment. Providing reliable access to fitness facilities, quality food, and mental health resources could greatly improve the physical and psychological wellbeing of ship performers.

Due to the lack of body image research with male participants (Francisco, 2018), only females were included in this study. Male body image research is limited in general (Sabiston et al., 2019), but research has increasingly included gender (Tiggemann, 2015) and gender identity in dance (Ravaldi et al., 2006). Studies indicate that men also experience negative body image (Wilmerding et al., 2005) and that male aesthetic athletes, including dancers, were also prone to eating disorders (Byrne & McLean, 2002; Nordin-Bates et al., 2011). It is possible that male dancers would report similar levels of negative body image if comprehensively investigated. Further research should aim to explore if the same themes exist for male ship performers. The sheer dearth of literature available on cruise ship performers alone justifies the need for further research. Although one could refer to a qualitative research design as a limitation, it was essential to first perform an exploratory study in order to gain insight to this unique population. Having contextualised body image within the ship performer population, the option for a quantitative study is now available (Ochieng, 2009). Future research should aim to establish reliability of quantitative measures for ship performers as well as continue exploring perceptions via qualitative methods.

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