

The Myth of the Audition

Mechanisms of Mobility into and within the New York City Dance Labor Market

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Abstract

There is a dearth of social research on dance labor markets. Recent research has begun to address the living and working conditions of dancers, but has not addressed characteristics of the labor market itself such as hiring practices and mobility. Existing data on professional dancers excludes significant portions of the population by failing to fully account for the multiple jobholding patterns of dancers. The author conducted surveys and interviews with New York City based professional dancers, choreographers, and artistic directors involved in small and medium scale concert dance, and found that this dance labor market differs significantly from traditional professional and technical labor markets. This dance labor market has higher rates of informal hiring, and consists primarily of uncompensated or undercompensated jobs. Workers in this labor market exhibit multiple jobholding behavior both inside and outside of the dance field, and in fact spend more time working at non-dance performance jobs than dance performance jobs. These findings have implications for dancers' mobility into and within the field, dance workers' ability to financially sustain themselves while working in the field, and the creative products that choreographers are able to produce.

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The Myth of the Audition

Every week hundreds of professional dancers and aspiring professional dancers flood open auditions for dance jobs in New York City. These so-called “cattle call” auditions typically consist of hundreds of dancers crammed into a small space, desperately trying to stand out from the crowd in hopes of being the one chosen for a job. This our cultural narrative surrounding dance jobs in New York City. It is a compelling story that we tell: that of the young starry-eyed dancer who moves to New York to attend tens if not hundreds of auditions, and if he or she is talented enough he or she will be picked from the crowd at some of these auditions and will be able to build a career in the field. However this narrative does not necessarily match the lived experiences of many members of the dance community. The present research aims to investigate the hiring processes at work within the dance community and the ramifications of these processes for dancers’ careers and for the dance produced.

There is a dearth of social research surrounding the professional dance labor market. This labor market is comprised of dancers, choreographers, and the systems that bring these two groups into contact with one another and set the terms of their relationship. Despite some recent attempts to elucidate these lives and careers, we still know relatively little about who the dancers in this labor market are and the nature of their interactions with it. Over the last several decades, research on artistic communities in general and the dance community more specifically has focused on jobholding patterns as well as the living and working conditions of artists (Alper, 2000; Dance/NYC Junior Committee, Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, 2012; Menger, 1999; Netzer, Parker, 1993). Yet little research exists on the mechanisms at work within the dance labor market. Performance is an inherently public act, but the processes that put certain performers on stage and keeps others off of it remain opaque.

The present research is interested in the dance labor market itself. It is concerned with hiring practices and the implications of these practices for mobility into and within the dance labor market. Taking New York City as a case study, it aims to unearth the mechanisms by which dance performers enter and move through the dance labor market. This research aims to answer the following questions: (1) how are dancers and dance jobs most frequently matched with one another? How often are they matched through formal methods and how often are they matched through informal methods? For the purposes of the present research we will define formal processes as hiring through auditions or from associated dance schools. We will define informal processes as hiring through contacts, word of mouth, audition by personal invitation of the choreographer, or unsolicited direct application to the choreographer. I hypothesize that hiring practices will be more frequently informal in the dance labor market than in traditional technical or managerial labor markets. (2) What characteristics differentiate this labor market from traditional labor markets? And finally, (3) what are the ramifications of these processes for dancers' careers and for the dance that is produced?

Literature Review

Finding and Defining “Professional Dancers”

In order to answer the above questions, we must first define whom to include and exclude from the category of professional. Studying artists of any kind is an elusive task. We have such poorly defined collective understandings of what exactly a professional artist is, and this confusion is reflected in the disparate definitions used by various researchers who study artists. Traditional measures of professionalism such as credentials, union membership, salary, and hours worked fail us in studying this field because they all exclude a significant portion of working dancers.

The multiple jobholding patterns of artists, including dancers, further complicates matters. Data about professional dancers that is collected by the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and even the National Endowment for the Arts do not account for the complete population because the definitions that they use do not capture the reality of a profession characterized by multiple jobholding in multiple sectors. Dancers and choreographers often do not meet requirements based on income from or hours worked in the dance field, and thus are incorrectly categorized as workers in a non-artistic sector even when they consider their primary profession to be dance.

To study professional dancers, however, we must establish some criteria to distinguish them from non-professional dancers and workers in other sectors. Prior research on artistic labor markets of all kinds may be able to assist us in establishing these criteria. In *Muses and Markets*, Frey and Pommerehne (1989) delineate 8 possible criteria that researchers might consider when defining an artist:

1. The amount of time spent on artistic work;
2. The amount of income derived from artistic work;
3. The reputation as an artist among the general public;
4. The recognition among other artists;
5. The quality of artistic work;
6. Membership of a professional artists' group or association;
7. Professional qualifications (graduation from art schools); and
8. The subjective self-evaluation of being an artist ¹

¹For further discussion of Frey and Pommerehne's criteria see (Karttunen, 1998)

Frey and Pommerehne discuss the merits of these various methods of evaluation, but conclude that there is no universally preferable method of defining an artist. Depending on the specific labor market and the goals of the research, any combination of these methods may be most appropriate (1989: 146-47).

To determine the best approach for the present study, we must consider both characteristics of the dance labor market in New York City and the goals of this research. As very little research exists on dance labor markets, I will again turn to research on artistic labor markets of all kinds. In “Artistic Labor Markets and Careers” (1999), Menger discusses the unusual traits that characterize artistic labor markets. He argues that they are predominantly and increasingly characterized by short-term contractual relationships rather than long-term salaried relationships. This short-term relationship is more typically found in labor markets with low-trained employees, thus a “paradoxical picture emerges, in which rather highly skilled and quite differentiated workers maintain weak employer attachments” (546). Though artists are better educated than the general workforce, Menger finds that they still have higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of self-employment, and several forms of constrained underemployment.

Artists tend to hold multiple jobs both within and outside of their particular artistic field. Alper and Wassall discuss this phenomenon in *More than Once in a Blue Moon: Multiple Jobholdings by American Artists* (2000). This research was based on data from the Current Population Survey which queried workers about moonlighting, or the practice of working more than one job. They found that artists moonlight more frequently than all other professional workers, and that performing artists had the highest rate of multiple jobholding amongst artists at just under 20 percent (2000: 3). However, this rate only includes performing artists whose

“primary” occupation (defined as the job that they spend the most time doing) is artistic. It does not include performing artists who spend more time working in non-arts jobs, but who may be defined as artists by other criteria. Thus it is culling from the top of the field; it only captures artists who are able to financially sustain themselves with more than half of their working hours each week in their artistic field. The rate of multiple jobholding amongst all performing artists is likely much higher.

Though we do not have much specific information about multiple jobholding patterns amongst dance performers, data that has been collected on choreographers and other workers in the dance field suggests that multiple jobholding in the dance field may be higher than in other artistic fields (Alper, 2000; Dance/NYC Junior Committee, Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, 2012; Netzer, Parker, 1993). In 1993 Netzer and Parker found that about 80 percent of choreographers held at least one job in addition to their work as choreographers, and 30 percent held more than one additional job. Generally, between 24 and 50 hours a week were devoted to these outside jobs (Netzer, Parker, 1993). In 2012 Dance/NYC conducted a census of dance workers age 21-35 in New York City (Dance/NYC Junior Committee, Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, 2012). This census collected information about income, education, demographics, and jobholding patterns of dance workers. The authors distributed a survey through social media and email lists, and considered any respondent who had worked in the dance field in the last year, with or without pay, to be a dance professional. About a third of respondents were performers, but dance managers, directors, fundraisers, administrators, and educators were also included. The survey found that 46.7 percent of all dance jobs were freelance and only 18 percent were full time (16,

18). Less than 5 percent of jobs reported were full time dance performance jobs, and 69 percent of respondents held jobs outside of the dance field (11, 17).

Though the exact numbers are not well established, it is abundantly clear that dance performers often hold multiple freelance and part-time jobs both in the dance field and outside of it. Let us return now to Frey and Pommerehne's (1989) eight criteria for determining membership in an artistic profession. Both *the amount of time spent on artistic work* and *the amount of income derived from artistic work* would fail to capture many dance performers due to the multiple jobholding behavior described above. Any definition along these lines would exclude portions of the labor force that we are interested in capturing. *The reputation as an artist among the general public* or *the recognition among other artists* would bias the study towards the most prominent figures in the dance world and exclude newer members. *The quality of artistic work* could be interesting if there were a way to operationalize it, but no such objective measure exists and it would be presumptuous for this research to create one. Though some dance performers are members of unions or other professional artists' groups, *membership of a professional artists' group or association* is far from universal and would again exclude portions of the population that we are interested in capturing. And finally, *professional qualifications (graduation from art schools)* would not be a useful criteria because the training backgrounds of dancers in different genres are far too diverse. Professional dance performers come from backgrounds ranging from professional training programs such as the School of American Ballet, to B.F.A. programs around the world, to no formal training at all. Thus, the only criteria that remains is the subjective self-evaluation of being an artist. There is a degree of inconsistency in this measure; two people with identical professional profiles could answer this question differently. Nonetheless, it is the only measure egalitarian enough to capture the entirety and

diversity of the field. Failure to capture the diversity of the field is major shortcoming of much of the previous research on this population, and it is a shortcoming that the present research seeks to avoid by defining professional dancers as broadly as possible. By doing this I seek to capture the careers of working dancers who have been overlooked in the past and who have therefore lacked information about and support for their profession. For the purposes of this study, a person is a professional dancer if he or she says so. I also seek to define professional choreographers and artistic directors as broadly as possible. Therefore I apply this same principle of self-definition to choreographers and directors as well.

Social Capital

There is a great deal of literature examining the role of social networks in job acquisition. Mark Granovetter's seminal work in this field introduced the idea that in technical and managerial professions, jobs are obtained through social relationships more often through formal applications. Furthermore, he showed that participants in these labor markets tend to underestimate the frequency with which jobs are obtained through contacts (Granovetter, 1974). There exists a similar myth of formal processes in the dance community. This myth tells of the audition process as the primary facilitator of a successful dance career. It says that dancers who audition well get jobs and are able to piece together a career.

Research on networks and job acquisition has developed concurrently with the theory of social capital. Current research on networks and job acquisition falls within the domain of social capital research. One of the first sociologists to systematize social capital theory was Pierre Bourdieu. In 1986, he defined it as:

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition – or in other words, to

membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 248).

Bourdieu's definition of social capital is functional, emphasizing the economic and cultural resources that can be accessed through social networks. He stipulates that access to these resources via social capital is the very basis for the solidarity which forms social relationships (1986: 249).

James Coleman, another early theorist of social capital, focuses on the regulatory power of social capital and its role in facilitating the transference of human capital. In 1988 he broadly defined social capital as: “a variety of entities with two things in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure” (Coleman, 1988: S98). This definition encompasses a wide range of processes, ranging from intergenerational transmission of human capital, to the enforcement of norms within communities.

Research on social capital has focused on its three basic functions as (1) a source of social control, (2) a source of a familial support, and (3) a source of benefits through extrafamilial resources (Portes, 1998: 9). The present research is interested in this third function of social capital, and more specifically, its applications in the study of labor markets.

Recent literature on the role of social capital in labor markets, however, is rife with both empirical and theoretical disagreements. Different methods yield dramatically different answers to the fundamental question: do contacts matter? While it is clear that contacts are often used to obtain jobs, it has proven difficult to demonstrate a causal effect of social network resources on labor-market outcomes.

One family of research has studied the association of social capital and positive labor market outcomes. This research has demonstrated that (a) having social network resources is

positively correlated with labor market outcomes and (b) amongst those who use contacts to find work, the status of the contact used is positively correlated with the respondent's labor market outcome (Boxman, De Graaf, & Flap, 1991; Campbell, Marsden, & Hurlbert, 1986; de Graaf & Flap, 1988; Lin & Dumin, 1986). A major critique of this line of research, however, is that it does not take into account the role of social homophily, the principal that "individuals tend to choose others who are similar to them as friends" (Mouw, 2006: 80). It is difficult to know how much of this demonstrated correlation between social network resources and labor market outcomes is due to social homophily.

Single-firm studies have approached this question from the employer's perspective. Recent research that has studied the hiring processes at large firms has all found that applicants who were referred by a current employee were more likely to be hired than applicants who applied without a referral (Fernandez, Castilla, & Moore, 2000; Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Petersen, Saporta, & Seidel, 2000). The results of these single-firm studies imply that having contacts should improve an individual's labor market outcome. However studies of individual workers produce mixed results.

Research that has directly investigated the relationship between finding a job through social networks and positive labor-market outcomes has predominantly (though not exclusively) found no evidence that finding a job through contacts has a positive effect on wages or job prestige (Bridges & Villemez, 1986; de Graaf & Flap, 1988). Mouw (2003) suggests that one possible way to make sense of the discrepancy between these studies and the single-firm studies is to consider reservation wages, or the minimal wage at which a worker will accept a job offer. He suggests that well-connected workers may raise their reservation wage, and thus all of their accepted job offers are higher regardless of whether they were found via contacts.

Though estimates range from as low as 27.4% (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1975) to as high as 55.7% (Granovetter, 1974), it is well established that a substantial portion of the American workforce finds work through personal contacts. What remains unclear is to degree to which a high level of social capital is causally related to positive labor market outcomes. The present research does not seek to test this causal relationship, but rather continues in the tradition of Granovetter's 1974 research and the more-recent single-firm studies by seeking the mechanisms that most frequently and most successfully connect employers and job-seekers. It takes the New York City dance labor market as a case study to understand how this artistic labor market, characterized by scarce financial resources amongst employers and multiple jobholding patterns amongst workers, compares to traditional technical and managerial labor markets.

Very little is known about the institutional and infrastructural characteristics of the New York City dance labor market. Anecdotally, members of the dance community will tell you that there is an oversupply of dancers competing for very few jobs. These jobs are infrequent, unstable, and poorly compensated. Many highly qualified dancers remain unemployed or underemployed in the field. One goal of the present research is to empirically examine the accuracy of these anecdotal impressions to better understand the nature of dance jobs in New York City.

Methods

Given how substantially the dance labor market differs from better-understood technical and managerial labor markets and how little data we have on the structure of this labor market, the present research collected data from both employers (choreographers and artistic directors) and workers/job-seekers (dancers/aspiring dancers) in order to capture as complete a picture as possible. This is particularly essential in light of the discrepancies between these two

perspectives found in prior literature. This methodology was designed with the broadest possible definition of professional dancers and professional choreographers in mind, and seeks to capture anybody who self-defines as a member of these groups.

A sample of 119 choreographers and artistic directors was drawn from The New York Times and Dance/NYC dance listings. Every choreographer or company whose work was included in either of these listings during four months spaced throughout 2013 and had contact information available on the internet was included in the sample. I chose these two publications for sampling in order to capture the broadest possible range of dance produced in New York City. The New York Times dance listing is a curated listing that includes the most established and more renowned choreographers. The Dance/NYC listing is an open performance listing in which any company can list its own work free of charge. By sampling these listings I aimed to capture choreographers and artistic directors at different stages of their careers and who have achieved different levels of success. It should be noted that this sampling method imposes an additional criteria on the employers captured by the sample: they all produced work in New York City in 2013, and they all had some sort of professional internet presence.

I emailed this sample of 119 choreographers and directors explaining the research, requesting their participation in an online survey about their professional lives, and requesting a thirty minute interview. At the end of the survey, every participant was given the opportunity to enter their name into a drawing for \$200 and request a report with the research findings.² Those who participated in an interview were able to enter the drawing twice, doubling their odds of winning. Three weeks after the initial email, I sent a reminder email to those who had not yet completed the survey. Ultimately 50 choreographer and artistic director responded to the survey,

² Thank you to the Columbia College Office of Academic Affairs for funding this drawing

a 42% response rate. Of these 50 respondents, 32 completed the survey through to the end and 18 submitted partial surveys.

In these emails I also asked choreographers to pass along a dancer survey link to dancers with whom they frequently work. This yielded only two completed dancer surveys. Either choreographers were generally unwilling to pass the survey along to dancers, or dancers were generally unwilling to take a survey sent to them by their employer. I later pursued a different dancer sampling method, and these two responses are not included in the analysis.

Of the 50 choreographers and artistic directors who participated in the survey, 19 initially offered to participate in an interview. Ultimately I was able to interview seven of these 19 who initially offered. Five of the interviews were conducted in person, and two were conducted over Skype. All interviews were between 20 minutes and one hour in duration.

Dancer respondents were recruited through snowball sampling. I sent the online survey link to professional dancers and aspiring professional dancers whom I know personally. I asked these dancers to participate in the survey, and to pass the link along to other dancers they know. Additionally, the survey was publicized on social media and on the dance blog *Point of Contact*.³ At the end of the survey, dancers also had the opportunity to enter a separate drawing for \$200 and request a report with my findings.⁴ In total I received 38 responses to the online dancer survey.

³ I am grateful to Katherine Bergstrom and Garnet Henderson for publicizing the dancer survey on behalf of this research

⁴ Thank you to the Columbia College Office of Academic Affairs for funding this drawing

Dancer Sample n=38

Response rate to individual questions varies

Age	
18-25	85%
26-30	12%
31-35	4%

Gender	
Female	88%
Male	12%

Years in professional dance field	
0-1	34%
2-4	38%
5-7	12%
8-10	8%
11-15	8%

Main Genre	
Contemporary, Modern, or Postmodern	52%
Ballet	22%
Other	26%

Years of training before entering the professional dance field	
0-5	4%
6-10	12%
11-15	40%
16-20	44%

Choreographer and Artistic Director Sample n=50

Response rate to individual questions varies

Self-Identifies as Choreographer	
Yes	90%
No	10%

Self-Identifies as Artistic Director	
Yes	82%
No	18%

Age	
26-30	23%
31-35	18%
36-40	15%
41-45	18%
46-50	8%
51-55	3%
56-60	3%
61 or older	13%

Gender	
Female	74%
Male	26%

Years in professional dance field	
2-4	16%
5-7	16%
8-10	21%
11-15	16%
16-20	18%
21 or more	13%

Main Genre	
Contemporary, Modern, or Postmodern	73%
Ballet	8%
Other	14%

With a few caveats, these samples appear approximately representative of the New York City dance community at large. At first glance the samples appear over-representative of females, with females accounting for 88% of the dancers and 74% of choreographers. However, the Dance/NYC workforce census found that 84% of dance workers (including performers, administrators, choreographers, educators, etc.) in New York City are female (Dance/NYC Junior Committee, Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, 2012: 11). The dance field is predominantly female, and this is reflected in the samples.

All choreographer and artistic director respondents self-identified as a member of one of these two categories, and most self-identified as members of both. This suggests that the majority of employer respondents are choreographers who founded companies as platforms for their own work, not freelance choreographers or artistic directors of repertory companies. From here forward, for the sake of brevity, we will refer to choreographer and artistic director respondents simply as choreographer respondents with the understanding that the sample does also include a few artistic directors who do not identify as choreographers.

The choreographer sample captures choreographers at wide range of career stages. The dancer sample, on the other hand, is predominantly made up early-career dancers. 72% of the dancer sample is in the first four years of their professional careers. The most likely explanation for this is a bias introduced by utilizing my personal network to locate respondents. This early-career bias is an important caveat, especially given that we find differences in job-obtaining practices at different points in dancers' careers. It is also possible that this is indicative of the short duration of dancers' careers.

The other important caveat is that both the choreographer sample and the dancer sample almost exclusively represent small and medium scale concert dance. As a function of both the

listings from which choreographers were sampled and the personal networks I utilized to access dancers, commercial dance workers were not included. In New York City, commercial dance workers are primarily, though not exclusively, dancers and choreographers working on Broadway musicals. Furthermore, the samples do not account for the largest institutionalized ballet and modern dance companies. Several came up in the initial sample, however these institutions were unwilling to participate in the research. Companies such as these are few and far between, but they occupy a prominent position on the public eye. These are the companies we've all heard of, such as American Ballet Theater, New York City Ballet, and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. It is likely that many of my findings do not apply to these large institutionalized companies, especially those findings pertaining to informal hiring processes and financial compensation.

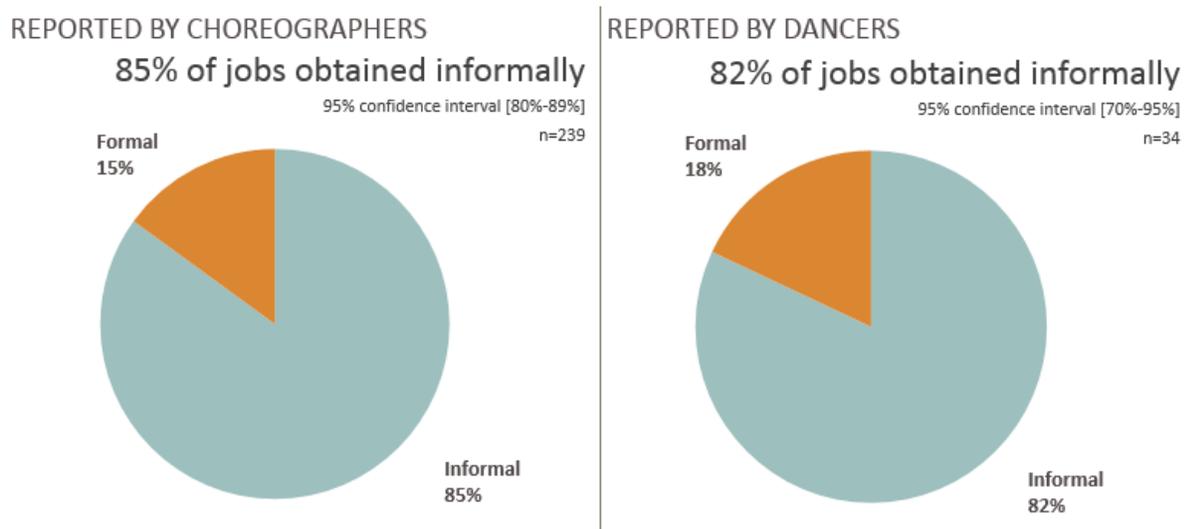
Given these caveats, we will bear in mind that findings of this research are most relevant to medium and large scale concert dance workers. Furthermore, we will continue to consider how an early-career skew in the dancer data may affect our findings.

The choreographer survey asked respondents to list the dancers they had worked with when they first founded their company, and to explain how they came to know and work with each of these dancers. They were asked to do the same for their current company members. From these responses, I recorded the total number of dance jobs that they reported from each phase in the company's life and noted if each job was obtained formally or informally. The dancer survey asked respondents detailed questions about how they obtained their first dance job, as well as how they obtained one dance job that they had held in the past year. Again, I recorded the dance jobs reported by dancers at each phase in their career and whether each job was obtained formally or informally.

The choreographer data contained information about 239 dance jobs from the perspective of the employer, and the dancer data contained information about 34 dance jobs from the perspective of the employee. In some of our analysis we will treat the job itself as our unit of analysis, independently of the respondent who provided information about it, in order to understand characteristics of the jobs themselves.

Results (1): How are dancers and dance jobs most frequently matched with one another?

Formal and Informal Hiring



Of the jobs reported by choreographers, 85% percent were obtained informally, 95% CI [80%-89%]. Remarkably, jobs reported by dancers yield similar results, despite trends in previous literature that show discrepancies between jobs reported by employers and employees. 82% of jobs reported by dancers were obtained informally, 95% CI [70%-95%].

Recall our discussion of previous literature on hiring practices in traditional technical and managerial labor markets. In traditional labor markets, we find estimates of informal hiring

practices ranging between 27.4% (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1975) and 55.7% (Granovetter, 1974). Comparing this estimate to our estimate of 82%-85% we find significantly higher rates of informal hiring practices in the dance labor market.

Qualitative data from the interviews and survey short answer questions suggests several reasons this may be the case. The vast majority of choreographer respondents do not have a school attached to their companies. This suggests that for most respondents, formal methods means open auditions. Dancers and choreographers alike expressed a strong dislike of the audition process. Perhaps this is to be expected from dancers. In the words of one dancer respondent, auditions are “high-stress low-return” situations. It is demoralizing for dancers to constantly put their talent, their bodies, and their intellect in competition with hundreds of other dancers in high stakes situations that rarely pay off. More surprisingly, choreographers also expressed a dislike of the audition process. In the interviews, many choreographers described auditions using similar words that dancers did such as “chaotic” and “overwhelming.” One said that selecting one or two dancers from hundreds is an impossible task within the limited timeframe of an audition.

Furthermore, many choreographers said that they dislike auditions because they don't think that they are an effective way of finding dancers whom they want to work with. As one choreographer wrote, “you can't tell from one audition or class what their work habits really are. Many dancers look fantastic in an audition but don't know how to push themselves in rehearsals. Some dancers will do wonderful work in rehearsals but flounder in an audition - especially if they are yet unfamiliar with your work.” Many choreographers described this same problem: auditioning well is a skill in it itself, and having this skill is not always reflective of skill in rehearsal or performance.

Most critically, choreographers find that auditions do not communicate the personality traits that are most important to them in dancers. Almost universally, choreographers emphasized that, in addition to technical skill, it is critical that their dancers have certain personality traits that are conducive to effective and efficient work in the studio. Frequently emphasized characteristics include “committed,” “reliable,” “intelligent,” “passionate,” “trustworthy,” “kind,” “dedicated,” and “mature.” Ultimately, many choreographers find that traits such as these are even more critical than the technical abilities of their dancers in determining the quality of their work. Making dance is a physically, creatively, and emotionally intimate process. It involves a small group of people working together, often collaboratively, for extended periods of time. Even one dancer with an attitude problem can jeopardize the process. Choreographers find that the audition process does not communicate these critical personality traits, and thus that matches made through auditions are inferior to those made through personal contacts.

Additionally, creative processes differ greatly between choreographers, and not all processes work for all dancers. Several choreographers told stories of dancers hired through auditions who left the company shortly after being hired when they discovered that the way they worked was not compatible with the choreographer’s creative process. Hiring informally guards against this kind of poor match, because all parties are aware of each other’s working methods before hiring.

It is conceivable that preferences such as these would exist in most labor markets; after all what employer doesn’t want dedicated, amiable, and intelligent employees? We must explore why these preferences lead to more informal hiring in the dance labor market than in traditional

labor markets. Both opportunity and necessity may facilitate the high rates of informal hiring in the dance labor market.

The dance labor market in New York City may present unusually numerous opportunities for informal hiring to take place. First and foremost, it is a relatively small and geographically constrained community. The majority of professional dancers are freelancers, working with multiple companies at any given time. This facilitates the creation of ties between dancers in different companies, rather than the creation isolated sub-communities of dancers within companies. Furthermore, there are numerous spaces outside of the workplace where dancers and choreographers from different companies congregate such as classes, theaters, and non-profits that support the arts. This enables the intermixing of dancers and choreographers from different workplaces, creating ties that facilitate informal hiring.

The dance labor market also has a specific set of characteristics that make informal hiring processes more necessary than they are in traditional labor markets. Most crucially, workers in the dance labor market frequently work for little or no pay. When an employee is being financially compensated for her work, it is perhaps less crucial that she is intrinsically motivated to do the work. For example, ideally, a manager in a large corporation shows up for work consistently and does good work out of intrinsic motivation, however even if intrinsic motivation fails, this worker will likely show up and do her work anyway out of fear of losing her paycheck. This motivator is not as strong with unpaid or underpaid dance jobs. Intrinsic motivation, passion for the work, and dedication to the work become the only things that guarantee a dancer's reliability. These characteristics are even less identifiable in an audition than in an interview (a common formal hiring mechanism in traditional labor markets), yet are more crucial to the success of a dance company's work. Both the increased opportunity for informal hiring and the

increased necessity of discerning personality traits of workers may contribute to elevated levels of informal hiring in the dance labor market.

Formal and Informal Hiring Strategies at Different Career Moments:

Choreographers

At all points in a choreographer's career, he or she is more likely to hire dancers through informal methods than through formal methods. However, early-career choreographers utilize informal methods at a higher rate than late-career choreographers. The choreographer data contains information about dancers whom the choreographers employed at the very beginning of their careers, as well as dancers whom they currently employ. 91% of the dance jobs from the beginning of the company's life were matched informally while only 80% of dance jobs from the current company were matched informally, $\chi^2(1, N=239)=5.2, p=.023$. This suggests that choreographers are significantly more likely to hire dancers informally earlier in the choreographer's career than later in their career.

One potential explanation for this is the resources, financial and otherwise, that it takes to hold an audition. Holding an audition requires money to rent space and advertise, time to plan and organize, and enough of a reputation that dancers will want to attend. Early-career choreographers are more likely to lack these resources than late-career choreographers, and thus may be unable to hold auditions. But this is not the most compelling explanation. Recall that choreographers typically prefer informal hiring to auditions, which suggests that we should be asking what compels late-career choreographers to hold auditions, rather than what prevents early-career choreographers from holding auditions.

In both the surveys and interviews, choreographers were asked to tell the story of how their company began. The selected stories below are drawn from interviews and short answer

responses. These stories, about the founding of companies and choreographic careers, are representative of those typically told by choreographer respondents:

“When I finished my MFA, I moved back to New York and began working with a group of dancers that I knew from school.”

“After working as a dancer for many years, I started developing solos and duets and show [*sic*] them at various showcases in NYC...then in the following year, I decided to put together an evening of my recent works and invited dancers that I knew to be part of it.”

“I had a group of younger dancers who were always dancing in my works at grad school... I was comfortable enough to share my dream with them, which was to have a dance company I direct, and all of them were on board to begin the journey with me.”

With few exceptions, the choreographer respondents began their careers as dancers before moving into choreography. Most studied dance at undergraduate colleges or conservatories, and many hold Masters of Fine Arts in dance. When they first begin creating their own work, most were deeply embedded in a community of dancers through the companies they performed with and in their peer networks from college and graduate school. At this early point in their careers, they had access to vast network resources that they could use to find dancers informally.

In the interviews, choreographers were asked what leads them to hold auditions despite their preference for informal hiring. Many explained that they hold auditions only when they cannot find enough dancers through informal routes. This suggests that the most critical factor is not that choreographers are unable to hold auditions at the beginning of their careers, but rather that that are most able to hire informally at the beginning of their careers through their fresh academic and professional networks. As choreographers become more embedded in their own companies and their own work they become less embedded in these dancer networks than they were at the beginning, and must rely more on formal hiring.

It should be emphasized that even though informal hiring declines from 91% at the beginning of the companies' lives to 80% in the current companies, 80% is still a remarkably high level of informal hiring in comparison to traditional labor markets. At all points in the companies' lives, hiring is predominantly informal.

Formal and Informal Job Acquisition at Different Career Moments: Dancers

Dancers are also more likely to find jobs through informal methods at particular career moments. Only 68% of first dance jobs reported by dancers were obtained informally, while 100% of current dance jobs reported by dancers were obtained informally, $\chi^2(1, N=34)=5.8$, $p=.016$. These results are perhaps unsurprising. Aspiring professional dancers who have never held a dance job likely lack the professional networks that more established dancers use to obtain work. As dancers progress in their careers, they build professional networks through which they are able to find further jobs. This corresponds with what we have already established: both dancers and choreographers prefer using informal methods when they are able to, and informal methods are a more effective way to find work. Thus we would expect established dancers who have the network resources to find work informally to do so, while newer dancers with fewer network resources are more likely to rely on auditions. The benefits of professional networks appear to emerge fairly quickly. Recall that the dancer sample is biased towards early-career dancers; 72% of the dancer sample is made up of dancers in the first four years of their professional careers. Yet even amongst this early career sample, not a single dancer reported getting their current job formally. This suggests that it takes very few dance jobs, perhaps only one, to acquire the network resources required to find work informally.

One third of dancer respondents got their first job through an audition. We can imagine that these are predominantly dancers who lacked the network resources to find their first job

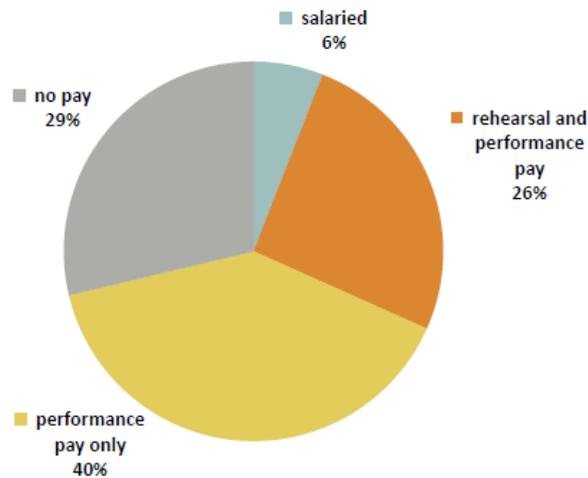
informally. Due to the low success rate of searching for dance jobs through auditions, we can also imagine that this group of dancers who successfully found work through auditions would be only a small subset of the aspiring dancers who lack network resources and thus are looking for their first job through auditions. This begs the question of what happens to the many aspiring dancers who lack network resources and who do not successfully find work through auditions. Perhaps some develop contacts through classes and workshops, or find work through alumni networks from their undergraduate institutions. Others might continue auditioning, only to give up after a period of time and leave the field. Further research into the lives and career paths of aspiring dancers is needed to answer these questions.

It should be noted that dancers were asked to select only one dance job that they had held in the past year to answer detailed questions about. As most dancer respondents held multiple dance jobs during the past year, it is possible that some of them currently hold jobs that were obtained formally, but chose not to answer questions about these jobs. Since dancers tend to be happier with matches made informally, if dancers selected their “favorite” job to answer questions about, this may have biased the current job results towards jobs obtained informally.

Results (2): What characteristics differentiate this labor market from traditional labor markets?

Financial Compensation and Multiple Jobholding patterns

Financial Compensation for Dance Jobs Reported by Dancers n=35



One of the most significant differences between the dance labor market and traditional labor markets is the level of financial compensation. Among dance jobs reported by dancer respondents [n=35], 6% were salaried, 26% were freelance with rehearsal and performance pay, 40% were freelance with performance pay only, and 29% had no financial compensation, 95% CIs [1%, 21%], [13%, 43%], [25%-58%], and [16%-46%] respectively. It can take months or even a year of rehearsal to create a work that might only be performed for a weekend or two. Most dancers spend the vast majority of their working hours in rehearsals, not performances. Dancers who are only paid for performances are not receiving compensation for most of their labor. If we combine unpaid dance jobs and dance jobs with performance pay only into one category, we find that 69% of dance jobs are uncompensated or undercompensated, 95% CI [51%-82%].

Multiple jobholding patterns are another distinguishing characteristic of the dance labor market. As we discussed in the review of literature, multiple jobholding is an established phenomenon in artistic labor markets. These patterns are reflected in the present research as well. 95% of dancer respondents held a job that was not a dance performance job in the last year, 95% CI [70%-99%]. On average, respondents held 3.3 dance jobs in the last year, but spent only 6-15 hours a week working at dance performance jobs while they spent between 21-30 hours a week working at non-dance performance jobs.

These rates of multiple jobholding among dance performer respondents generally exceed the rates documented in previous literature on multiple jobholding patterns amongst artists in general. This may indicate that dance performers have higher rates of multiple jobholding than other kinds of artists.

Results (3): What are the ramifications of these processes for dancers' careers and for the dance that is produced?

Ramifications of Informal Hiring Processes

In both the interviews and the surveys, choreographer respondents frequently said that they hire informally because it facilitates their optimal creative process. Many find that working with dancers with whom they have close personal relationships leads to a more fruitful professional relationship. However, we can also imagine that there may be negative consequences to such high levels of informal hiring. We can imagine that informal hiring is less effective than auditions at locating pure "talent," however each choreographer might personally define "talent." We can also imagine that this informal system may be protective of less "talented" dancers who have strong personal relationships with choreographers, keeping them in positions that could potentially be filled by more "talented" dancers. Some choreographer

respondents identified this dynamic, but maintained that informal hiring is still preferable because ultimately their work benefits more from having the right personalities than from having the most “talented” dancers.

In light of such high levels of informal hiring, we must also consider the effect of social homophily, the tendency of people to befriend those who are similar to themselves, on the creative process. Informal hiring likely leads to less diversity within companies than formal hiring does. One choreographer, who was amongst the few who expressed a preference for formal hiring, explained that she prefers to hire through auditions because they “tend to bring in diverse backgrounds.” In the contemporary dance community in New York City, dancers are taking an increasingly active role in the creative process. In an increasing number of companies, dancers are becoming creative collaborators and co-creators of the dance. Given this collaborative process, we can imagine that the diversity of a company might significantly impact not just how a work is performed but also how it is produced.

Informal hiring may not be the most effective way to bring in “talented” or diverse dancers, but it produces the best personality matches, which can facilitate a fruitful creative process. Informal hiring can both help and hinder the creative process and by extension the dance produced, and different choreographers navigate these consequences in different ways in accordance with their individual priorities.

Informal hiring processes also have significant ramifications for dancers’ careers. On the one hand, qualitative data from both choreographer and dancer respondents suggests that matches made informally ultimately lead to greater job satisfaction for dancers and more permanent professional relationships than matches made formally. Often, matches made formally result in poor working relationships when a dancer is ill-suited to a choreographer’s creative

process or the social environment of a company. These poor matches, which are short-lived and unrewarding to both dancer and choreographer, can be avoided through informal hiring.

On the other hand, informal hiring may also present a significant barrier to entry for aspiring dancers. Hiring facilitated by professional networks is inaccessible to new dancers entering the profession, making it difficult to “break in” to the field. Informal hiring may also discriminate more against some groups of aspiring dancers than other. In addition to networks built through professional dance work, informal hiring also occurs through relationships built at colleges, conservatories, and dance studios that offer open classes. Programs such as these are expensive, and those who can afford to attend enter the labor market with more network resources than those who cannot.

Conclusions

The Myth of the Audition

Auditions are pervasive in our cultural narrative about dancers’ careers. However the present research finds that in the New York City small and medium scale concert dance labor market, auditions account for only a small portion of hiring. 83-85% of dance jobs reported by respondents were obtained through informal methods. We found differences in the hiring practices and job acquisition methods used at different points in choreographers’ and dancers’ careers respectively. Choreographers reported using more formal methods later in their career than at the beginning of their career. This is perhaps because emerging choreographers are less temporally removed from their peer networks from undergraduate and graduate dance programs, and are often embedded in professional networks from their own work as a dancer. As choreographers become more embedded in their own company, they may have less access to these networks, and thus they become more reliant on formal mechanisms. Dancers, on the other

hand, are more likely to get their first dance job through formal methods than they are to get subsequent jobs through formal methods. Dancers looking for their first dance job likely have less access to the professional networks that facilitate hiring for more established dancers. Both dancer and choreographer respondents expressed a preference for informal hiring, and thus it only makes sense that both groups use it when they are able to.

This dance labor market differs significantly from traditional labor markets in degree of financial compensation and multiple jobholding patterns. The present research found that over 2/3 of reported dance jobs had no financial compensation or had compensation for performances but not rehearsal time. Nearly all respondents held at least one job outside of the dance field in the last year as well as multiple jobs within the dance field. Most spent more hours working outside of the dance field than within it each week. As we will discuss in more detail momentarily, this paints a picture of the grim economic reality of dance work in New York City. Despite little or no financial compensation, dancers continue to take dance jobs which they subsidize through their work in other fields.

Informal hiring practices have multifaceted implications for both dancers' careers and for the dance that is produced. On the one hand, informal hiring presents a formidable barrier to entry for dancers who lack network resources, which may discriminate more against some groups of aspiring dancers than others. Furthermore, it may lead to more homogenous dance companies if choreographers hire through their personal social networks. On the other hand, dancers and choreographers alike find that informal hiring produces better matches, leading to long-term relationships, higher job satisfaction for dancers, and a more fruitful creative process for choreographers. Informal hiring is more effective at screening for personality than formal hiring, but less effective at screening for "talent," so choreographers get a tradeoff. Many,

however, acknowledge this tradeoff, and maintain that informal hiring allows them to find dancers who best facilitate the success of their work.

So why do dancers continue to attend auditions? Most dancer survey respondents reported using auditions to look for work, though they prefer informal methods and believe that most dancers get work exclusively through informal methods. This is apparently inconsistent behavior. Perhaps it is because attending an audition is one of the only tangible steps a dancer can take to find work. The dance labor market is oversaturated with dancers, and most are unemployed or underemployed in the dance field. Searching for a job through contacts, while preferable, may feel elusive and vague. A dancer not receiving adequate employment through informal methods may turn to formal methods, despite believing them to be relatively ineffective. For dancers who are newer to the field and lacking in network resources, auditions may be the only option to find work. Remember that 1/3 of dancers reported finding their first dance job through an audition. This suggests that auditions are sometimes the foot in the door that dancers need to start their careers.

Limitations

It is important that we consider the limitations of the samples used in this research. Most significantly, research respondents were exclusively part of small and medium scale concert dance work in New York City. This means that commercial dance workers and dance workers in the few largest institutionalized companies are not accounted for. It is likely that research on these communities would yield dramatically different results. For example, entry-level positions at New York City Ballet are filled from the graduating class at their affiliated school, the School of American Ballet. The question of formal and informal hiring scarcely applies to this situation. The financial reality of commercial dance work and work in large scale dance companies is also

quite different. Though this work is still far from lucrative, these dancers enjoy union protection and are generally better compensated for their work.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future Research: Hiring Mechanisms, Mobility, and Barriers to Entry

Given the preponderance of informal hiring practices, we must consider how to equalize access to jobs for dancers or aspiring dancers who lack network resources. The present research does not seek to condemn informal hiring in any way; clearly it is an effective mechanism for matching dancers and choreographers who will have successful working relationships. However a by-product of this the exclusion of dancers who lack network resources, including early-career dancers looking for their first job, and particularly those early-career dancers who do not have academic networks to draw on from college or conservatory dance training. Further research is needed that focuses specifically on early-career dancers who are searching for their first jobs in order to better understand the barriers to entry that they face and what factors determine who is able to overcome these barriers. Additional research is also needed to understand how informal hiring mechanisms affect mobility within the dance labor market. Though informal hiring typically benefits established dancers more than early-career dancers, it may also limit the mobility of established dancers to certain segments of the dance labor market.

Further research is also needed to better understand how hiring practices differ in large-scale concert dance work and commercial dance work. It is likely that factors such as institutionalized schools, unionized dancers, and greater funding may lead to different hiring mechanisms and compensation patterns.

Future Research: Why is it so Hard?

These findings suggest that the vast majority of concert dancer performers work dance jobs for little to no pay. This is common knowledge within the dance community, and previous research on the dance community confirms these findings (Dance/NYC Junior Committee, Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, 2012; Netzer, Parker, 1993). This low level of financial compensation explains both the high rates of multiple jobholding amongst dancers, and why dancers must spend many more of their working hours each week working outside of the dance field than within it.

Choreographers face similarly difficult financial situations. The present research did not ask choreographer survey respondents about their financial situations. However previous research suggests that choreographers often lose money on their work. Netzer and Parker's 1993 study *Dancemakers*, commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts, found that in 1989 choreographers earned an average of \$6000 from their creative work, but incurred professional expenses of \$13,000 on average (Netzer, Parker, 1993).

The interviews conducted in the present research did not specifically ask choreographers about their financial situations. Nonetheless, in nearly every interview, choreographers chose to speak at length about the financial difficulty of working in the dance field, both as a dancer and a choreographer. Many of the choreographer interview respondents hold full time non-dance jobs and are single-handedly responsible for the administrative work of running their dance companies, in addition to their creative work.

The final question that I asked every choreographer was: "If you were to conduct your own social research on the dance community, what issue or issues would you raise as those most direly in need of being addressed?" The questions that choreographers brought up over and over

again were: Why is this so hard? We didn't go into the arts to make money, and we don't expect it to be lucrative, but why is it getting so difficult for dancers and choreographers to make dance and survive financially at the same time?

Anecdotally, dancers and choreographers find that they make less money than any other kind of artist, including other performing artists such as musicians and actors. One choreographer, who frequently stages her work with live musicians, said that her musicians would never perform without pay because that is not the expectation for professionals in their field, while her dancers perform without pay all the time.

Andy Horowitz, veteran dance administrator and arts activist, recently raised similar questions about the increasing financial unfeasibility of dancers' and choreographers' lives:

More than twenty years [after Netzer and Parker's *Dancemakers* was published in 1993] it is fair to say that not much has changed, except that in 2014 that same dancer has crushing student loan debt from an MFA, the cost of living in New York City has skyrocketed and the funding infrastructure for dance has imploded.

In brief, the choice to [pursue careers in the arts]...is becoming less viable for a significant swath of the population, and for those who do choose a career in the arts, the negative economic impact on their quality of life is significantly higher than it was 40 years ago...

...The vast majority of dancers enter the field with unrealistic career expectations, embarking on a life of personal uncertainty, financial precariousness and physical risk while the systems in place – the systems that allocate funding, the systems that evaluate quality and determine aesthetics, the systems that drive the marketplace even in the not-for-profit sector – persist not only with business as usual, but in perpetrating the illusion that this is an economically viable life choice (Horowitz, 2014).

Historically, concert dance has rarely operated within a market-value structure. The resources that it takes to produce an evening of dance (months of rehearsal time for the choreographer and dancers, rehearsal space, and production costs) usually exceeds the revenue that can be earned from ticket sales. Unlike other industries, this is not a process that becomes

more efficient as production technologies improve; it will always be time-consuming to make dance. Tickets to see dance would be enormously expensive if they entirely covered the cost of creating the performances.

Concert dance is sustained through patronage, both private and public. Recognizing that concert dance does not sustain itself in a market-value structure, but believing that its existence is a public good, governments and private citizens subsidize the existence of this art. In recent years, the availability of this funding has diminished significantly in New York City. For example, the New York City dance community depends greatly on funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Between 1992 and 2012, congressional appropriations to the NEA declined by an inflation adjusted 49% (“Arts Funding Snapshot: GIA’s Annual Research on Support for Arts and Culture,” 2012). This significant cut in already scarce funding for dance in New York City has taken, and will continue to take, a considerable toll on the ability of dancers and choreographers to make dance.

Careers in dance are rarely lucrative, however they are also not always as poorly paid as they presently are in New York City. One choreographer interview respondent told a story about a time that she and one of her dancers travelled to Europe for a symposium. One night when they were chatting the others dancers and choreographers, they began discussing the worst jobs they had ever had. The respondent had once worked at a laundry facility, where temperatures got up to 115 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer. Her dancer had once worked in a factory. The European dancers began telling stories of ridiculous performances they had been in, or silly costumes they had been forced to wear. The respondent said this was the first time it struck her that somewhere in the world there are people who have supported themselves their entire working lives through work in the dance field. This was an unfamiliar concept to her and her

peers in the New York City dance community. That kind of arts ecosystem is only viable with significant government support for the arts, which exists in many European countries, but is scarcely imaginable to dance workers in New York City.

In lieu of this kind of subsidization, which is not likely coming to the New York City dance community any time soon, there is no simple solution to the economic problems that plague this community. I conclude with this topic because, although it is tangential to my original research questions, it was overwhelmingly identified by respondents as the most pressing issue in the New York City dance community. We must continue this type of social and economic research on the dance community that focuses on the day-to-day lives of its members and the systems that economically support (or, as the case may be, do not support) the art form.

In conducting this research, I was encouraged to find that choreographers and dancers are very interested in these economic and social questions surrounding the discipline. The dance community, which is more highly educated than it ever has been before, is establishing organizations such as Dance/NYC and The Brooklyn Commune that conduct research on the lives of artists, provide platforms for this discussion, and provide essential resources to artists. Several choreographer interview respondents spoke about their interest in reforming the business of making dance, from changes as small as a common grant application that could be adopted by many funding agencies to reduce the amount of time choreographers have to spend writing grants, to as large as reconceptualizing the entire not-for-profit model.

As funding continues to dwindle and it becomes increasingly difficult for dance artists to make dance, it is vital that we continue this conversation. To ensure the future prosperity of the field, further research is needed on the dance business model and funding structures to learn what is working and what needs to change.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Emails

FIRST EMAIL:

Subject: Tell your story - research on the New York City dance community

Body:

Dear [choreographer name],

I am a student of dance and sociology at Columbia University writing a thesis about the New York City dance community. My research aims to elucidate the career paths of New York City-based dancers, and the processes that bring together choreographers and dancers. Very little research exists on this topic, and I plan to make my work available to dancers, choreographers, and company directors, all of whom I believe could benefit from a better understanding of this topic. I am conducting this research through surveys and interviews with New York City-based dancers and choreographers.

I want the story of your work and your career to be accounted for in this research. Please fill out the appropriate survey below, which will ask you questions about your professional life. To thank you for your time, all participants will receive reports on my findings and will have the opportunity to enter into one of two drawings for \$200. The survey will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete, and all responses will be kept strictly confidential. Results will only be published anonymously and/or in the aggregate.

Many dancers are choreographers, and vice versa. To preserve the dynamics of this research, however, each respondent may answer only one survey. If I contacted you myself, please answer the choreographer/director survey. If you received this email from a choreographer you have worked with or from another dancer, please answer the dancer survey.

CHOREOGRAPHERS/DIRECTORS:

Survey for choreographers and directors: [survey link]

This survey will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. At the end, you will have the opportunity to request a report on my findings, as well as the opportunity to enter a drawing for \$200.

It is crucial to the success of this research that I hear from as many respondents as possible. Please forward this email to your dancers so that they may choose to respond to the dancer survey and have their stories heard. Dancers will have the opportunity to enter a separate drawing for \$200.

DANCERS:

Survey for dancers: [survey link]

This survey will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. At the end, you will have the opportunity to request a report on my findings, as well as the opportunity to enter a drawing for \$200. This drawing is separate from the choreographer/director drawing.

It is crucial to the success of this research that I hear from as many respondents as possible. Please consider forwarding this email to other professional dancers so that they may choose to respond to the dancer survey and have their stories heard.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this research, or if you are interested in being interviewed for this research, I can be contacted by email at hmg2132@columbia.edu.

Sincerely,
Hana Goldstone

If at any time you have comments regarding the conduct of this research or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Administrator at (212) 851-7040.

If you would prefer not to receive any more emails about this research, click here: [unsubscribe link]

SECOND EMAIL: *Sent to choreographers who had not yet answered the survey three weeks after the initial email.*

Subject: (Reminder) Tell your story – research on the New York City dance community

Body:

Dear [choreographer name],

About three weeks ago I sent you an email about my research on career trajectories in the New York City dance community. I believe that this is an important but rarely studied topic, and I want the story of your work and your career to be accounted for. This email is a reminder asking you consider filling out the survey before the March 15 deadline. To thank you for your participation, at the end of the survey you will have the chance to request a report on my findings as well as the chance to enter a drawing for \$200. This is the last email that I will send you. Please do not hesitate to contact me by email at hmg2132@columbia.edu if you have any questions or concerns about participating.

Survey for choreographers and directors: [\[survey link\]](#)

For more information about this research, please see the original email which I have included below:

Appendix B: Online Survey Instruments

Page titles (shown below in italics) were not visible to respondents. Not all respondents saw all pages. Responses to earlier questions determined what pages were displayed. For example, if a respondent indicated that he or she did not have formal dance training, this respondent would not see the question about length of formal training. Text in the colored boxes explains the logic governing which questions were displayed to a respondent.

Dancer Survey

Page 1: Informed Consent

I am asking you to participate in a research study about dancers' career trajectories. My research aims to elucidate the career paths of New York City-based dancers, and the processes that bring together choreographers and dancers. Very little research exists on this topic, and I plan to make my work available to dancers, choreographers, and company directors, all of whom I believe could benefit from a better understanding of this topic.

This survey will ask you questions about your professional life, and will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. To thank you for your participation, at the end you will have the opportunity to enter a drawing for \$200. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and data will only be reported anonymously and/or in the aggregate. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time. If at any time you have questions regarding the research or your participation, you should contact the investigator Hana Goldstone at hmg2132@columbia.edu. If at any time you have comments regarding the conduct of this research or questions about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Administrator at (212) 851-7040.

Page 2: Eligibility

1. Do you consider yourself a professional dancer, or someone actively looking for work as a professional dancer?*

Yes

No

2. Do you live and/or work in New York City?*

Yes

No

3. How old are you?*

under 18

18-25

26-30

- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- 61 or older

IF: Question #1 = ("No") **THEN:** Disqualify and display: "Thank you for your interest. Unfortunately you do not qualify to participate in this research."

IF: Question #2 = ("No") **THEN:** Disqualify and display: "Thank you for your interest. Unfortunately you do not qualify to participate in this research."

IF: Question #3 = ("under 18") **THEN:** Disqualify and display: "Thank you for your interest. Unfortunately you do not qualify to participate in this research."

Page 3: Demographics

4. I identify my gender as:

5. How many years have you worked as a professional dancer, or been looking for work as a professional dancer?

- 0-1
- 2-4
- 5-7
- 8-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20 or more

6. Do you have formal dance training?

- Yes
- No

IF: Question #6 = ("No") **THEN:** Jump to page 6 - Genre

Page 4: Training

7. How many years did you train before you began to perform in a professional capacity?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21 or more

8. How many years of this training took place in New York City?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21 or more

9. Do you currently take dance or other movement classes regularly?

- Yes
- No

IF: Question #9 = ("No") **THEN:** Jump to page 6 - Genre

Page 5: Training 2

10. What kinds of dance or movement classes do you currently take?

11. How many times a week do you typically take class?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8+

12. Please list the different places that you currently take classes:

Page 6: Genre

13. Which of the following genres do you identify your work with (please check all that apply):

- African Dance Forms
- Asian Dance Forms
- Ballet
- Ballroom Dance
- Contemporary Dance
- Folk Dance Forms
- Hip-Hop/Street Dance Forms
- Improvisation
- Jazz Dance
- Latin or Hispanic Dance Forms
- Middle Eastern Dance Forms
- Modern Dance
- Musical Theatre Dance
- Native American Dance Forms
- Performance Art
- Physical Theater
- Postmodern Dance Forms
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

IF: Question #13 is not answered **THEN:** Jump to page 8 - Work

Page 7: Genre 2

14. Out of the genres that you checked above, which one genre would you say is your primary genre?

Piping: genres selected in question #13 on the previous page are piped into this question as multiple choice options

Page 8: Work

15. During the last year, how many hours a week on average have you spent working at dance performance jobs?

- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 15-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 40 or more

16. During the last year, have you held any jobs that were not dance performance jobs?

- Yes
- No

IF: Question #16 = ("No") **THEN:** Jump to page 10 - Dance Performance Jobs 1

Page 9: Work 2

17. During the last year, how many hours a week on average have you spent working at non-dance performance jobs?

- 1-10
 - 11-20
 - 21-30
 - 31-40
 - 41 or more
-

Page 10: Dance Performance Jobs 1

I'm going to ask you some questions about dance performance jobs that you have held. Consider all jobs, paid or unpaid, but do not include performances that you do not consider professional.

18. Have you ever held a professional dance performance job?*

- Yes
- No

IF: Question #18 = ("No") **THEN:** Jump to page 29 - Preferences

Page 11: First Job

I'm going to ask you some questions now about your first professional dance job.

19. Choreographer or company name:

20. Where did you most frequently perform with this choreographer/company? (list more than one space if applicable)

21. How many dancers worked for this choreographer/company?

22. Were you financially compensated for this job?

Yes

No

IF: Question #22 = ("No") **OR** Question #22 is not answered **THEN:** Jump to page 15 - First Work with Choreographer

Page 12: Freelance or Salaried

23. Was this first dance job freelance or salaried?

Freelance

Salaried

IF: Question #23 = ("Freelance") **THEN:** Jump to page 14 - Freelance

IF: Question #23 = ("Salaried") **THEN:** Jump to page 13 - Salaried

IF: Question #23 is not answered **THEN:** Jump to page 15 - First Work with Choreographer

Page 13: Salaried

24. How many weeks per year was your contract for at this first job?

25. What was your weekly pay?

- \$1-\$100
- \$101-\$250
- \$251-\$400
- \$401-\$600
- \$601-\$800
- \$801-\$1000
- \$1,001 or more

IF: (Question #25 contains any ("\$1-\$100", "\$101-\$250", "\$251-\$400", "\$401-\$600", "\$601-\$800", "\$801-\$1000", "\$1,001 or more") **OR** Question #25 is not answered) **THEN:** Jump to page 15 - First Work with Choreographer

Page 14: Freelance

26. Did you receive performance pay or stipend at this first job?

- Yes
- No

27. If so, how much per performance?

- I did not receive performance pay or stipend
- \$1-\$50
- \$51-\$100
- \$101-\$200
- \$201-\$300
- \$301-\$400
- \$401 or more

28. Did you receive rehearsal pay or stipend at this first job?

- Yes
- No

29. If so, how much per hour?

- I did not receive rehearsal pay or stipend
- \$8 or less
- \$9-14
- \$15-20
- \$21-25
- \$26-30

- \$31-40
 \$41 or more
-

Page 15: First Work with Choreographer

30. How did you first come to work with this company/choreographer?

- I auditioned
 I already knew the choreographer or director from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project
 I already knew one of the other dancers from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project
 Other: _____

IF: Question #30 contains any ("I auditioned") **THEN:** Jump to page 16 - Auditioned

IF: Question #30 = ("I already knew the choreographer or director from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project") **THEN:** Jump to page 17 - Knew Choreographer

IF: Question #30 = ("I already knew one of the other dancers from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project") **THEN:** Jump to page 18 - Knew Dancer

IF: Question #30 not in list ("I auditioned", "I already knew the choreographer or director from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project", "I already knew one of the other dancers from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project") **THEN:** Jump to page 19 - Current Work

Page 16: Auditioned

31. Was this audition open or by invitation only?

- Open
 By invitation

32. How did you first learn about the audition?

33. Were you acquainted with the choreographer or director prior to the audition?

- Yes
 No

IF: Question #33 = ("Yes") **THEN:** Jump to page 17 - Knew Choreographer

IF: (Question #33 = ("No") OR Question #33 is not answered) **THEN:** Jump to page 19 - Current Work

Page 17: Knew Choreographer

34. Please tell me about how you first met the choreographer or director and, if you had previously worked together, in what capacity:

Jump to page 19 - Current Work

Page 18: Knew Dancer

35. Had the choreographer or director asked this dancer to help find another performer?

Yes

No

36. Please tell me about how you first met this dancer and, if you had previously worked together, in what capacity:

Page 19: Current Work

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your current work as a professional dancer. You are almost done with the survey.

37. How many professional dance performance jobs have you held in the past year? (Consider multiple projects with the same company/choreographer to be a single job)*

IF: Question #37 = "0" **THEN:** Jump to page 29 - Preferences

Page 20: Current job if respondent held 1 job in the last year

This page will show when: Question #37 = "1"

I'm going to ask you a series of questions about this job.

38. Is the choreographer or company that you worked with in the past year the same as the choreographer or company with which you held your first dance job?

- Yes
- No

IF: Question #38 = ("Yes") **THEN:** Jump to page 29 - Preferences

Page 21: Current Job

Choose one dance job that you have held in the last year. Please elect a job that is different from any that you have answered previous questions about. I am going to ask you a series of questions about this job.

39. Choreographer or company name:

40. Where did you most frequently perform with this choreographer/company? (List more than one space if applicable)

41. How many dancers worked for this choreographer/company?

42. Were you financially compensated for this job?

- Yes
- No

IF (Question #42 = ("No") OR Question #42 is not answered) **THEN:** Jump to page 25 - Current First Work with Choreographer

Page 22: Current Freelance or Salaried

43. Was this job freelance or salaried?

- Freelance
- Salaried

IF: Question #43 = ("Freelance") **THEN:** Jump to page 24 - Current Freelance

IF: Question #43 is not answered **THEN:** Jump to page 25 - Current First Work with Choreographer

IF: Question #43 = ("Salaried") **THEN:** Jump to page 23 - Current Salaried

Page 23: Current Salaried

44. How many weeks per year was your contract for?

45. What was your weekly pay?

- \$1-\$100
- \$101-\$250
- \$251-\$400
- \$401-\$600
- \$601-\$800
- \$801-\$1000
- \$1,001 or more

IF: (Question #45 contains any (" \$1-\$100", "\$101-\$250", "\$251-\$400", "\$401-\$600", "\$601-\$800", "\$801-\$1000", "\$1,001 or more") **OR** Question #45 is not answered) **THEN:** Jump to page 25 - Current First Work With Choreographer

Page 24: Current Freelance

46. Did you receive performance pay or stipend at this job?

- Yes
- No

47. If so, how much per performance?

- I did not receive performance pay or stipend
- \$1-\$50
- \$51-\$100
- \$101-\$200
- \$201-\$300
- \$301-\$400
- \$401 or more

48. Did you receive rehearsal pay or stipend at this job?

- Yes
 No

49. If so, how much per hour?

- I did not receive rehearsal pay or stipend
 \$8 or less
 \$9-14
 \$15-20
 \$21-25
 \$26-30
 \$31-40
 \$41 or more
-

Page 25: Current First Work with Choreographer

50. How did you first come to work with this company/choreographer?

- I auditioned
 I already knew the choreographer or director from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project
 I already knew one of the other dancers from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project
 Other: _____

IF: Question #50 = ("I auditioned") **THEN:** Jump to page 26 - Current Auditioned

IF: Question #50 = ("I already knew the choreographer or director from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project") **THEN:** Jump to page 27 - Current Knew Choreographer

IF: Question #50 = ("I already knew one of the other dancers from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project") **THEN:** Jump to page 28 - Current Knew Dancer

IF: Question #50 not in list ("I auditioned", "I already knew the choreographer or director from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project", "I already knew one of the other dancers from a different context and he/she invited me to be a part of a project") **THEN:** Jump to page 29 - Preferences

Page 26: Current Auditioned

51. Was this audition open or by invitation only?

- Open
 By invitation

52. How did you first learn about the audition?

53. Were you acquainted with the choreographer or director prior to the audition?

Yes

No

IF: Question #53 = ("Yes") **THEN:** Jump to page 27 - Current Knew Choreographer

IF: (Question #53 = ("No") OR Question #53 is not answered) **THEN:** Jump to page 29 - Preferences

Page 27: Current Knew Choreographer

54. Please tell me about how you first met the choreographer or director and, if you had previously worked together, in what capacity:

Jump to page 29 - Preferences

Page 28: Current Knew Dancer

55. Had the choreographer or director asked this dancer to help find another performer?

Yes

No

56. Please tell me about how you first met this dancer and, if you had previously worked together, in what capacity:

Page 29: Preferences

This is the last page of this survey. Thank you for your patience and thoughtfulness in answering these final questions.

57. How do you go about discovering and/or obtaining new dance jobs? What methods do you think are most effective? What methods do you prefer and why?

58. How do you think most dancers get jobs?

59. What factors do you think most affect a dancer's ability to get performance jobs?

Page 30: Thank You

Thank you for completing this survey, I know that artists are busy people and I appreciate your time.

I am also interested in interviewing dancers. This interview would allow me to hear the story of your career with all of its nuances in a way that a survey might not capture. Additionally, respondents who participate in interviews will have the opportunity to double their odds of winning \$200! Your story will help this research better understand the lives and careers of members of this community.

If you would be willing to participate in a brief (approximately 30 minute) interview in person or over Skype please click [here](#).

Click [here](#) to request a report on my findings and to enter your name into the drawing for \$200!

Choreographer Survey

Page 1: Informed Consent

I am asking you to participate in a research study about dancers' career trajectories. My research aims to elucidate the career paths of New York City-based dancers, and the processes that bring together choreographers and dancers. Very little research exists on this topic, and I plan to make my work available to dancers, choreographers, and company directors, all of whom I believe could benefit from a better understanding of this topic.

This survey will ask you questions about your professional life, and will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. To thank you for your participation, at the end you will have the opportunity to enter a drawing for \$200. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and data will only be reported anonymously and/or in the aggregate. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time. If at any time you have questions regarding the research or your participation, you should contact the investigator Hana Goldstone at hmg2132@columbia.edu. If at any time you have comments regarding the conduct of this research or questions about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Administrator at (212) 851-7040.

Page 1: Eligibility

1. I am a: (check all that apply)*

- Choreographer
- Artistic Director

2. Do you live and/or work in New York City?*

- Yes
- No

3. How old are you?*

- under 18
- 18-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- 61 or older

IF: Question #1 is not answered **THEN:** Disqualify and display: "Thank you for your interest. Unfortunately you do not qualify to participate in this research."

IF: Question #2 = ("No") **THEN:** Disqualify and display: "Thank you for your interest. Unfortunately you do not qualify to participate in this research."

IF: Question #3 = ("under 18") **THEN:** Disqualify and display: "Thank you for your interest. Unfortunately you do not qualify to participate in this research."

Page 2: Demographics

4. I identify my gender as:

5. How many years have you worked as a choreographer or company director?

- 0-1
- 2-4
- 5-7
- 8-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20 or more

6. Which of the following genres do you identify your work with (please check all that apply):

- African Dance Forms
- Asian Dance Forms
- Ballet
- Ballroom Dance
- Contemporary Dance
- Folk Dance Forms
- Hip-Hop/Street Dance Forms
- Improvisation
- Jazz Dance
- Latin or Hispanic Dance Forms
- Middle Eastern Dance Forms
- Modern Dance
- Musical Theatre Dance
- Native American Dance Forms
- Performance Art
- Physical Theater

Postmodern Dance Forms

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Page 3: Genre

This page will show when: Question #6 is answered

7. Out of the genres that you checked above, which one genre would you say is your primary genre?

Piping: genres selected in question #6 on the previous page are piped into this question as multiple choice options

Page 4: Preferences

8. What different methods do you use to find dancers to work with?

9. What is your preferred method or methods of finding dancers to work with? Why?

10. What qualities do you look for in dancers that you work with?

Page 5: Teaching

11. Do you regularly teach dance or movement classes in New York City?

Yes

No

Page 6: Teaching 2

This page will show when: Question #11 = ("Yes")

12. Please list the studios, venues, or locations where you have regularly taught dance or movement classes during the last year:

Page 7: Projects

Please list up to two performance projects that you have worked on in the past year as choreographer or director. If you have worked on more than two projects in the past year, please choose the two that you consider most significant.

Project 1: (leave blank if you have not worked on any performance projects in the last year)

13. Title

14. Where was this work performed/where will it be performed?

Project 2: (leave blank if you have only worked on one performance project in the last year)

15. Title:

16. Where was this work performed/where will it be performed?

Page 8: Artistic Director: Founded Company

This page will show when: Question #1 contains any ("Artistic Director")

17. Did you found the company or performance group that you currently direct?

Yes

No

Page 9: Choreographer: Own Company

This page will show when: Question #1 = ("Choreographer")

18. Do you have your own dance company or performance group?

Yes

No

19. Do you ever create or set work on commission for other dance companies?

Yes

No

Page 10: Short Answers for Founder

This page will show when: (Question #18 = ("Yes") OR Question #17 = ("Yes"))

This is the last page of this survey. Thank you for your patience and thoughtfulness in answering these final questions.

20. In what year did you found your company or performance group?

21. Please tell me the story of how this group began:

22. Please list the dancers you worked with at the very beginning by name, and briefly how you came to know and work with each of them:

23. Please list the dancers you work with now by name, and briefly how you came to know and work with each of them. If you have already told me about some of them in the previous question, just list them again by name:

Page 11: Short Answer for Non-founder

This page will show when: Question #17 = ("No")

This is the last page of this survey. Thank you for your patience and thoughtfulness in answering these final questions.

24. Please list the dancers you currently work with, and briefly how you came to know and work with each of them:

Thank You!

Thank you for completing this survey, I know that artists are busy people and I appreciate your time. I am also interested in interviewing choreographers and artistic directors. This interview would allow me to hear the story of your work with all of its nuances in a way that a survey might not capture. Additionally, respondents who participate in interviews will have the opportunity to double their odds of winning \$200! Your story will help this research better understand the lives and careers of members of this community.

If you would be willing to participate in a brief (approximately 30 minute) interview in person or over Skype please click [here](#).

Click [here](#) to request a report on my findings and to enter your name into the drawing for \$200!

Interview Request Form

Page 1

Thank you for participating in an interview! Please enter your information below, and I will contact you to set up an interview in person or over Skype. This information will not be associated with your survey.

Full name:*

Email address:*

Page 2

Thank you! I will be in touch shortly.

Drawing and Report Request Form

Page 1

Please enter your information below to be entered into a drawing for \$200.

Full name:*

Email address:*

Phone Number:

Would you like to receive a report on the research findings?

Yes

No

Page 2

Thank you!

Appendix C: Choreographer Interview Questions

Choreographer and artistic director interviews were loosely structured around the following questions. Specific questions varied from interview to interview, and I often asked follow up questions that are not included below.

Eligibility (determined prior to the interview):

Are you 18 years of age or older?

Do you consider yourself a professional choreographer or artistic director?

Do you live and/or work in New York City?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, subject is not eligible for the interview.

Tell me the story of your career.

Tell me the story of the founding of your company.

When did you first start making work professionally?

Who were the dancers that you make your first professional works on? How did you know these dancer?

Where were these works performed?

Tell me a little bit about your present day company.

Who do you work with?

How did you first know them or find them?

How do you find dancers to work with? What methods do you prefer and why?

Have you ever held an audition for you company? What was that like? What about it worked for you and what didn't?

Tell me about the day-to-day logistics of your company. For example, how often do you rehearse? How often do you perform?

Tell me about your creative process.

If you were to conduct your own social research on the dance community, what issue or issues would you raise as those most direly in need of being addressed?