The Lived Experience of Hope in the Successful Early Career Transitions of Semi-Elite Amateur Ballet Dancers

by

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Abstract

The early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers have been found to elicit feelings of hopelessness (Sandham, 2012). Despite research highlighting the importance of hope in major change processes (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Jevne, 2005; Larsen et al., 2013; Larsen et al., 2014), the role that hope plays in early career transitions of young ballerinas who were unsuccessful at attaining professional careers has yet to be explored. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of hope during career transitions of semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers. I sought to answer, "How do former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers experience hope as they successfully transition to meaningful alternate careers?" Related objectives included exploring: (a) personal experiences that fostered hope; (b) barriers to hope; and (c) environmental factors related to hope during this transition. A qualitative study using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was employed with 10 women. Data were collected through three in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Participants were also invited to share artistic representations of hope during their career transitions. Four overarching themes were co-constructed: (1) hope not achieved; (2) hope as a process; (3) hope as internal to the self; and (4) hope as external to the self. I anticipate that findings will facilitate future research in this area in addition to informing parents/caregivers and ballet teachers how to better support former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers during their early career transitions.

Preface

This dissertation is an original work by Tricia Jane Sandham. The research project, of which this dissertation is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, “The Lived Experience of Hope in the Successful Early Career Transitions of Elite Amateur Ballet Dancers”, No Pro00075084, October 25, 2017.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Training to become a professional ballet dancer begins in early childhood, is time intensive, and requires a great level of dedication. Semi-elite amateur ballet dancers focus on attaining a ballet career and often do not explore other interests or possible careers. This single focus on ballet often leads to youth developing a strong dancer identity. While there are many semi-elite amateur ballet dancers who dream of attaining a professional career, very few will attain this goal. Therefore, the majority of these young dancers will have to give up their dream and transition to a different career. This early exit from ballet is often devastating for these dancers and they struggle during the transition to a new career. Specifically, these dancers face identity loss which leads to feelings of hopelessness (Sandham, 2012). Hope has been found to be positively related to many mental and physical aspects of professional athletes' careers (Curry et al., 1997; Eklund & Cresswell, 2007; Gustafsson et al., 2010, 2013, 2018; Lu & Hsu, 2013; Lundqvist & Gustafsson, 2018; Poczwardowski & Conroy, 2002; Snyder et al., 2006; Woodman et al., 2009). However, hope during athletes' career transitions, specifically semi-elite amateur ballet dancers, remains unexplored. As such, an important next step in hope research is to explore semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers' experiences of hope as they gave up their dream of attaining a professional ballet career and transitioned to a second career. The following chapter will introduce this research study and includes a statement of the research problem, a purpose statement, a description of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) and relevance to this study, the research questions, my own story during this transition, and definition of terms.

Statement of the Problem

Establishing a vocational identity is a critical developmental task which begins in childhood and carries forth into adolescence (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). If vocational identity is not

well-delineated by late adolescence, the impacts can be distressing and include negative effects on mental health, and a delay in the transition to adult work-life (Malanchuk et al., 2010). However, a high commitment to a chosen career without exploring other possible careers can have similar negative outcomes (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). Elite athletes are one example of this phenomenon (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Griffith et al., 2019). Many elite athletes focus on career goals to the exclusion of exploring alternative careers, leaving them unprepared for second careers (Gustafsson et al., 2018; McGillivray et al., 2005; Wylleman, 2019). Thus, retirement from an athletic career is often a stressful experience (Cosh, Crabb et al., 2013; Wylleman, 2019), leading to depression, loss of identity, alcohol and substance abuse, eating disorders, decreased self-confidence (Gustafsson et al., 2018; Wylleman, 2019; Wylleman et al., 2004), and anxiety (Gustafsson et al., 2018; Lavalle & Robinson, 2007; Wylleman, 2019). This can be summed-up as a sense of hopelessness with no apparent viable future.

The literature on career transitions of professional ballet dancers parallels that of elite athletes. Professional ballet dancers face many of the same challenges as they retire from performing careers, such as lack of alternative career exploration and loss of identity (Greben, 1989; Pickman, 1987). Furthermore, similar to elite athletes, for every professional ballet dancer, there are many young girls aspiring to reach that pinnacle of success (BenZion, 2012; Griffith et al., 2019). Since intense dance training often does not result in a professional dance career (Griffith et al., 2019; Hanna, 1988), many young semi-elite amateur dancers will need to transition to a second career. My research builds upon the understanding that semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers experience challenges similar to professional ballerinas during this transition (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012). We know these young women face a difficult career transition (Buckroyd, 2000; Griffith et al., 2019; Kiefer, 1996; Sandham, 2012; Stinson et

al., 1990). Unlike professional ballerinas who retire, semi-elite amateur dancers must cope with failing to attain their dream, a lack of career accomplishments to look back on (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012), and no specific professional support system to help facilitate their transition (Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham, 2012). Past research revealed that some former dancers are more successful than others in moving beyond their dance lives, but all reported that transitioning from the goal of a professional ballet career to a second career was difficult, and led to feelings of hopelessness (Sandham, 2012).

Feelings of hopelessness arise when people feel that they have no control over attaining the achievement they most desire (Alloy et al., 1988; Farran et al., 1995). Hopelessness causes one to focus on the past and perceptions of failure (Cutcliffe, 1997), making life choices more difficult (Farran et al., 1995; Schneider, 1980). Hopelessness disempowers individuals (Farran et al., 1995; Schotte & Clum, 1987), and contributes to feelings of low self-confidence and social desirability (Yerlikaya, 2006 as cited in Ozsaker & Vurgun, 2014). In contrast, hope is focused on a future in which one wishes to participate (Jevne, 1994). In therapeutic settings, hope contributes to therapeutic change (Hubble et al., 2010). Higher levels of hope are associated with more positive outcomes in psychological and physical health, as well as improved academic and athletic performance (Cheavens et al., 2005).

The role that hope plays in career transitions among former semi-elite amateur athletes, and specifically dancers, has not been investigated. However, hope has been found to be positively related to mental and physical aspects of elite athletes' careers (Curry et al., 1997; Eklund & Cresswell, 2007; Gustafsson et al., 2010, 2013, 2018; Lu & Hsu, 2013; Lundqvist & Gustafsson, 2018; Snyder et al., 2006; Poczwardowski & Conroy, 2002; Woodman et al., 2009). Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate the same in the major life transition from semi-elite

amateur ballet careers. Research is needed to better understand how hope can affect the trajectory of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers transitioning to second careers. A thorough literature search found no published study on this topic, suggesting that this may be the first attempt to explore the experience of hope in semi-elite amateur ballet dancers' career transitions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to build upon my master's research and explore the lived experience of hope during career transitions of semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers. I wanted to understand how hope facilitates the transition process for young female dancers. I also sought to uncover barriers to hope that these young female dancers face as they transition. Finally, I wanted to understand what environmental factors (i.e., family, friends, helping professionals) were related to hope during these early career transitions.

Furthermore, I sought to add to both the literature on early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers and the current understanding of hope. It was anticipated that the study's findings would have implications for adults involved in the dance world, helping professionals, and those adolescents on similar career paths (e.g., aspiring professional athletes and musicians).

Use of Qualitative Inquiry

To gain an in-depth understanding of hope in the context of the career transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers, I employed qualitative methodology. Specifically, I employed Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which focuses on the lived experience of the participant and the meaning which the participant makes of that lived experience (Smith et al., 2009). I selected IPA as the methodology for this study because its theoretical underpinnings support the study of the lived experience of hope during the successful early career transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers. A more detailed discussion on IPA will follow.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (McLeod, 2000; Merriam, 2009). The voice of the researcher is made explicit so that the reader can be given a context to understand the findings. Therefore, throughout this document the term “I” will be used to refer to myself as the principal researcher.

Research Questions

This qualitative study entailed one main question and three follow up questions:

How is hope experienced in the early career transitions of former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers unable to obtain a professional ballet career? Specifically, how do former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers experience hope as they successfully transition to meaningful alternate careers?

In follow up:

What personal experiences foster hope during the career transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers?

What are some barriers that semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers face during their career transitions?

What environmental factors (e.g., family, friends, situations) are related to hope for semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers as they face career transitions?

My Story and Perspective as a Researcher

I became interested in the experiences of hope during career transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers as a result of my own experiences as a semi-elite ballet dancer who transitioned to a second career. I cannot remember deciding that I wanted to become a ballerina; it was just something that I remember always wanting to be. My mother tells stories about me dancing around the house as soon as I was able to walk. As a result, when I was 4 years

of age, my mother enrolled me in my first dance class. I was hooked. Through the years, the number of classes I took increased alongside my love for ballet. By the time I was in my adolescent years, I was dancing 5- to 7 days a week for approximately 4 hours a day, and was fully committed to becoming a professional ballet dancer.

I attended two different professional ballet school summer intensive programs in my youth, when I was 10 and 15 years of age. These experiences were amazing as I got a glimpse of what life looked like while working towards professional status. Unfortunately, I was not accepted to either schools' full year programs because I was not a strong enough dancer. It was especially difficult to not gain acceptance into the full year program when I was 15 years old, as this is when I started to realize that my dream of becoming a professional ballerina might not be attainable. However, I was able to push these thoughts to the back of my mind and I continued to work towards a ballet career. Because of my intense preoccupation with ballet, I did not have the time or interest to explore other possible career paths. Nor did I have an alternative plan if attaining a professional ballet career did not come to fruition.

My realization that a professional ballet career would not be attainable came upon graduating from high school at the age of 18. This realization was very difficult for me as I lost my singular identity of a ballet dancer and was unsure what to do next with my life. I struggled for many years, holding a number of different jobs that served as a means to survive.

When I was 24 years old, I was still unsure what I wanted to do with my life, but I knew that I wanted to go back to school. My marks were not high enough to gain admission to university – another result of my preoccupation with becoming a professional ballet dancer. I applied to a general arts and science program at the local college. I remember the day I received my acceptance letter. I was so excited and so relieved to have direction in my life once again.

I took many different classes; however, my favorite classes were psychology. This was partly because I found psychology fascinating and partly because of the instructor, Joan Collins. Joan was an amazing woman who loved psychology, and she shared that love with her students. It was through Joan's mentorship that I decided I wanted to become a psychologist.

When I began my journey to become a psychologist, I didn't realize how competitive it would be and how long it would take me to attain this goal. Similar to when I was working towards attaining a professional ballet career, I did not have a backup plan. Thankfully, everything appears to be turning out, as I am now working on completing my PhD in counselling psychology and attaining registration as a psychologist.

Reflecting back upon my experience, hope, to me, was reinventing myself as more than a dancer. Going back to school, I started to identify as a student, an identity that I still hold today. Although, I still identify as a dancer, that is no longer my sole identity. My sense of hope was fostered through finding other interests and a new career path, specifically psychology. During the early phase of my transition, my sense of hope was fostered by my relationship with Joan Collins. I also realized that I was constantly looking toward the future, always working towards my hoped-for objects of a ballet career and a psychology career. Finally, my hopes changed over the course of my experience. I was very hopeful as I was working towards attaining a professional ballet career; when I realized that this was no longer realistic, I lost hope. Later on, my hope blossomed when I found my love of psychology, only to have my hope falter with the uncertainty of getting accepted to a graduate school.

My current research interest was also heavily influenced by hearing the career transition experiences of the semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers interviewed as part of my master's research (Sandham, 2012). These former dancers revealed similar distressing experiences to

mine (Sandham, 2012). Specifically, the women voiced that it was difficult to give up their dream of dancing professionally and many struggled to find a new life. These women faced transition challenges of not having other interests, losing their identity, and losing their social support system. Furthermore, tales of hopelessness were evident throughout some of the women's stories, with one clearly stating, "I had no clue what to do with my life, absolutely no idea" (Sandham, 2012, p. 83). This sense of hopelessness during the women's transitions is what led me to examine the role that hope might play. Although, the former ballet dancers in my study did not speak directly to hope, they identified experiences that aided the transition experience. As such, considering hope, these experiences might be likened to hope facilitators.

From my experience, I believe hope is important in the career transitions of semi-elite ballet dancers. Reflecting back on my own experience, hope was dynamic, future oriented, and fostered through reinventing myself, finding other interests, and my relationship with Joan Collins. Furthermore, despite feelings of hopelessness, semi-elite amateur ballet dancers in my master's research were able to find positives to overcome their challenging experience. I offer these thoughts to provide the reader with background to my own position in the research and to provide a context for the topic under discussion. In addition, it was important for me to be aware of my own preconceptions as I approached this study. In IPA, the researcher's preconceptions regarding the phenomena under study is understood to play an important role in the interpretation of how the participants make sense of their lived experience (Smith et al., 2009).

Definition of Terms

In order to understand the aim of this research, there are a number of terms used throughout this document that require a definition.

Vocation and Vocational Identity

Vocational identity has also been referred to in the literature as work identity, occupational identity, professional identity, and career identity (Sica & Aleni Sestito, 2020; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). A vocation is the meaning that one attributes to both work and oneself (Lips-Wiersma & McMorland, 2006). Work affects all aspects of life, including personal life and relationships (Vijaykumar & Lavanya, 2015). Viewing work as a vocation expands the notion of work from just a way to make money to a meaningful expression of the self in one's life (Lips-Wiersma & McMorland, 2006). In essence, a vocation is a calling that enables one to make a living doing what one truly enjoys doing, and to contribute to society in one's own unique way (Sica & Aleni Sestito, 2020; Vijaykumar & Lavanya, 2015). A professional ballet career is considered a vocation or calling rather than a job or occupation, as these dancers are paid to do a job in which they find great joy (Griffith et al., 2019; Rodriques et al., 2020; Wainwright & Turner, 2004, 2006). According to Wainwright et al. (2005), "Professional ballet is not just something that you do – in a very deep sense it is who you are" (p. 56). In essence, this vocational calling to dance is so compelling that it defines identity (Wainwright et al., 2005). For the purpose of this study, the terms vocation and vocational identity will be used in regard to discussions about a career in ballet .

Career Transition

A career transition has been defined as the period in which an individual disengages from his or her previous work situation and engages in a new work situation (Fernandez et al., 2008). There are multiple types of career transitions noted in the literature. For instance, Heppner (1998) identified three types of transitions which included a change in tasks within the same occupation, a change in occupation position, and making a change to a new occupation. With all

types of career transitions, there is an element of change involved for the individual such as a change in goals, routine, and identity (Ashforth & Saks, 1995). The term career transition will be used when discussing the semi-elite amateur ballet dancers' transition from working towards a professional ballet career to another career.

Semi-Elite Amateur Female Ballet Dancer

The term "elite" in regard to athletes has inconsistent definitions across research studies (Swann et al., 2015). For example, Swann et al. (2015) found eight main definitions of elite athletes across the sporting literature, based on participation at the international/national level, experience, professionalism, training, involvement in talent development programs, participation at the regional level, use of objective sport/country performance measures, and participation at the university level. As a result of these inconsistent definitions, Swann et al. (2015) developed their own definitions of elite using a formula which takes into consideration the athlete's highest standard of performance, success at the highest level, experience at the highest level, competitiveness of the sport in the athlete's respective country, and competitiveness of the sport on a global level. Four definitions of elite athletes were identified and included semi-elite, competitive elite, successful elite, and world-class elite. For the purpose of this study, the term semi-elite will be used in reference to the current population to be consistent with the definition by Swann et al. (2015). According to Swann et al. (2015), semi-elite athletes are those individuals whose highest level of participation is below the top standard possible in the sport, such as participating in talent development programs. In the ballet world, the highest level one can achieve is becoming a company member in a ballet company, for which attending a professional ballet school (i.e., talent development program) is necessary (Wulff, 1998). Half of the current participants attended professional ballet schools either during the summer or full year.

Those participants who did not attend professional ballet schools were identified by their ballet teachers as having the potential and had auditioned for professional ballet schools multiple times, however, they were unsuccessful at gaining acceptance. Therefore, a semi-elite amateur female ballet dancer will be defined as a ballet dancer who was identified by her ballet teacher as having potential and had auditioned at least once for a professional ballet school.

Professional Dancer versus Professional Ballet Dancer

According to the Dancer Transition Resource Center (n.d.), a professional dancer is defined as having at least one paid professional performance on his or her curriculum vitae. With this definition, a professional ballet dancer is also considered a professional dancer. However, a professional ballet dancer is defined as a trained dancer who is a member of a ballet company (The Free Dictionary, n.d.). None of the participants in the current study went on to become professional ballet dancers, however, some participants did go on to have professional dance careers (i.e., getting paid to perform) in forms of dance other than ballet (i.e., contemporary, Flamenco).

Female Ballet Dancer

For ease of reading, the term "ballet dancer" is used throughout the document to refer to female ballet dancers.

Overview of Dissertation

This document encompasses five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the phenomenon studied, the researcher, and the research questions. Chapter 2 provides the background knowledge regarding the topic at hand. Specifically, this chapter reviews the literature on identity development, elite athletes, athletic career transitions, ballet dancers, professional ballet careers, professional ballet career transitions, semi-elite amateur ballet career

transitions, hope theory, and hope research relevant to the career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and methods employed in this research. Furthermore, this chapter provides information on relevant ethical considerations. Chapter 4 addresses the key findings of this study and includes relevant participant quotes that highlight the experiences of hope during early career transitions. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the key findings in light of existing literature on hope and the broader field of psychology. The present study's limitations, potential implications of findings and future research directions are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following chapter provides the background to the research question and follow up questions under study. Specifically, this includes a discussion about personality development, identity development, and vocational identity development. A discussion on elite athletes and elite athlete career transitions will follow. This section also includes a discussion on ballet dancers, professional ballet careers, and the challenges and facilitators professional dancers face as they transition out of performing careers. A focus will be placed on a discussion regarding semi-elite amateur ballet dancers' early career transitions, which is the population and phenomenon under study. Finally, there will be an examination of hope theory and hope research as it relates to this research study.

Identity

Semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers' identity is often solely defined by being a dancer, and they face a loss of identity during the career transition, leading to feelings of hopelessness (Sandham, 2012). Thus, it is important to give space to explore vocational identity in this document. However, in order to discuss vocational identity, it is imperative to first discuss personality development and identity development, as they can be seen as building upon each other.

Personality Development

Erik Erikson, a renowned psychologist, has been influential in personality development theory. Erikson advanced a psychosocial stages theory of personality development that covers the entire lifespan (Erikson, 1950/1993; 1959/1994; 1968; 1982). According to Erikson, the personality develops over eight different stages across the lifespan. Each stage is characterized by a crisis that needs to be resolved before moving to the next stage. The crisis at each stage

involves a conflict between the psychological needs of the individual and the needs of society. Successfully completing each stage requires resolving the stage's two conflicting states (e.g., trust vs. mistrust), resulting in a healthy personality in addition to gaining basic virtues (e.g., hope), also known as character strengths. These virtues are then used to resolve subsequent crises at later stages. Impaired stage completion results in an unhealthy personality and difficulty navigating the future as completion of future stages is reduced.

The current study explored the time period when semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers realized that their dream of attaining a professional career would not be attained and they had to make an early exit from ballet as a career choice. This transition is shown to occur in adolescence (Sandham, 2012). Although Erikson (1950/1993; 1959/1994; 1968, 1982) noted that the seeds of identity are planted in the first stage, he felt that adolescence is a very important time as it is the period that is vital for the formation of identity. According to Erikson's theory, adolescence is characterized by the fifth stage, *Identity vs. Role Confusion*. In this stage, the adolescent experiences many cognitive and physical changes that are important to his or her sense of identity. Furthermore, the adolescent learns the roles that he or she will occupy in adulthood as well as re-examines his or her identity. In order to establish a sense of self, the adolescent participates in an in-depth exploration of his or her beliefs, goals, and values. Successful completion of this stage leads to a strong sense of self (i.e., identity) which is characterized by the virtue fidelity. Fidelity is the ability to stay true to the self and the social group that one belongs to in the face of conflicting ideological differences (Erikson, 1968; 1982). Failure to establish a sense of identity during the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage can lead to role confusion, which involves being unsure of the self and one's role in society (Erikson, 1950/1993; 1959/1994; 1968, 1982).

Identity Development

James Marcia, a psychologist, was also influential in the development of personality development theory. Marcia extended Erikson's theory of personality development by focusing specifically on the development of identity (Marcia, 1980). According to Marcia, identity can be defined as a self-structure, "an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (Marcia, 1980, p. 159). The more developed one's identity, the more aware he or she is of his or her differences and similarities as compared to others (Marcia, 1980). Furthermore, a greater developed identity is characterized by an increased awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses he or she holds for interacting with the world around him or her. The less developed one's identity, the less he or she is aware of his or her own differences as compared to others, leaving him or her more reliant upon external sources for self-evaluation. In other words, one does better and feels better about both himself or herself and others when he or she has a clear sense of his or her identity. Marcia noted that identity is dynamic, meaning it changes over time with new elements being added and discarded. Identity development is thus a life-long process beginning with infancy and ending in old age. In alignment with Erikson, Marcia noted that adolescence is an important time in the identity development process. The importance of identity in adolescence lies in the fact that this period of development is the first time that physical development, cognitive skills, and social expectations occur together to facilitate sorting through, and integration of, one's childhood identifications to allow for the development of the road to adulthood.

According to Marcia (1980), identity development is a complex process, which, at minimum, requires a commitment to a vocational path. Identity formation is a gradual and somewhat unconscious process of decisions that have identity-forming ramifications. Such

decisions include, but are not limited to, whether to attend post-secondary education or get a job out of high school, which post-secondary school to attend, and what to major in. Such decisions may be influenced by factors that can set back this decision-making process, such as external pressures, previously ingrained parental values, and indecisiveness.

Marcia (1980) developed four identity statuses that describe ways in which identity issues are dealt with in late adolescence: identity achievement, foreclosure, identity diffusion, and moratorium. These statuses are characterized in regard to whether one has faced a crisis, or in other words, has faced making a decision between meaningful options and one's personal investment or commitment to an occupation (Marcia, 1966; 1980).

According to Marcia (1966; 1967; 1980), those individuals in the *foreclosure* status are working towards and are committed to occupational and ideological goals. Further, it is noted that these individuals have experienced little in the way of a decision-making process (i.e., lack of exploring other possibilities). Rather, commitments are made through identifying with significant others (i.e., parents, teachers) and adopting the values of those significant others. Marcia (1967) also noted that the exploration process can be anxiety-provoking and there is evidence to suggest that a foreclosed identity may act as a buffer against the anxiety- inducing experience of exploring and making one's own decisions (Lillevoll et al., 2013; Marcia, 1967; 1980). Thus, a foreclosed identity status may also serve the paradoxical purpose of avoiding uncomfortable feelings resulting from not knowing something about the self and the daunting exploration process. Participants in the current study are examples of adolescents who typically fall into the foreclosed identity status. It has been shown that semi-elite amateur ballet dancers are highly focused on becoming professional ballerinas from a very young age, and as a result lacked the exploration of other possible occupations (Buckroyd, 2000; Griffith et al., 2019;

Pickard, 2012; Pickman, 1987; Sandham, 2012). Furthermore, it has been shown that there is a causal relationship between foreclosed identity status and the development of vocational identity (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Specifically, one can adopt a vocational identity at a young age through identifying with a significant adult in his or her life and committing to the adult's occupation without exploring other possible occupations. However, often this early occupational commitment and resulting vocational identity are not based on a realistic assessment of the self and although stable through adolescence, can be characterized by a lack of exploring other possible occupations, inadequate decision-making skills, and low career maturity. Thus, it is important to explore vocational identity.

Vocational Identity

Vocational identity is defined as one's conscious awareness of himself or herself as a worker (Sica & Aleni Sestito, 2020; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011), and answers the question "Who will I become at work?" (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). This concept not only represents one's perceptions of his or her interests, abilities, goals, and values in relation to a vocation, but also the meanings one gives his or her motivation and competencies in regard to a vocation (Sica & Aleni Sestito, 2020; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Vocational identity is commonly noted as being a central component of the overarching concept of identity (Erikson, 1968; Malanchuk et al., 2010; Sica & Aleni Sestito, 2020; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011) and, as such, facilitates both the choice of a vocation and the structure and meaning of one's life (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011).

Establishing a vocational identity is a vital developmental task of childhood that carries into adolescence (Malanchuk et al., 2010; Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Sica & Aleni Sestito, 2020; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Vocational identity development involves exploring various

careers, committing to a career, and reconsidering the career choice in order to ensure best fit. Once established, vocational identity serves many functions (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). It provides agency over one's career development, renders a sense of direction and meaning, and positively influences psychosocial adjustment, well-being, and life satisfaction.

If not well defined by late adolescence, a lack of vocational identity can have negative effects on mental health, and delay the transition to adult work-life (Erikson, 1959/1994; Malanchuk et al., 2010). However, a high commitment to a chosen career with a concomitant lack of alternate career exploration can have equally negative outcomes (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). Early vocational experiences in childhood, such as observing guardians or media, can have lasting effects on vocational identity that persist well into adolescence (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). One such effect is the child adopting a vocational identity at a young age based on identifying with an important adult in their life, or accepting a vocational identity placed upon them by others (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). This leads to a foreclosed identity status (Marcia, 1980, Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). In other words, the child will be highly committed to the vocation without exploring other vocational alternatives (Marcia, 1980). An example of this foreclosed vocational identity status has been found with athletic vocational identity (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Griffith et al., 2019; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011).

Although I have placed focus on identity formation (Erikson, 1950/1993, Marcia, 1980; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011) as a lens to view vocational identity and semi-elite amateur ballet dancers, it is important to acknowledge that there are alternative terms used in the career development literature to address the concept of viewing oneself in relation to career. For instance, Super used the term self-concept to denote how an individual views the self in relation to roles, situations, positions, performing a set of functions, or involvement within relationships

(Savickas, 2002). Super noted that an individual can have multiple self-concepts and defined a vocational self-concept as the self-perceived attributes that one considers important to work roles. According to Super (1969), the cornerstone of his theory of vocational development is the "formation, translation into occupational terms, and implementation of self-concepts" (p.7). The formation of self-concept involves exploring the self and environment, differentiating the self from others, identifying with role models, and playing different roles while assessing the results (i.e., reality testing; Super, 1969). Translating the self-concept into occupational terms involves identifying with an adult role model, experience in a role, or learning that attributes one holds fits with certain occupations. Finally, implementation involves the action one takes in regard to a specific occupation such as receiving education and training or obtaining employment in the specific occupation.

Similarly, Gottfredson (2002) noted self-concept as important to vocational development. Gottfredson defines self-concept as the view of oneself, in both private and public terms, which involves one's appearance, abilities, personality, gender, values, and place in society. According to Gottfredson's (2002) theory of circumscription and compromise, in addition to one's self concepts, one holds images of occupations which include personalities of individuals in specific occupations, work duties of specific occupations, lifestyles of those in specific occupations, rewards and conditions of these occupations, and appropriate fit between occupations and different individuals. These images of occupations are organized into a cognitive map of occupations based upon masculinity-femininity, prestige level of occupations, and the field of work. Individuals identify preferred occupations through assessing the compatibility between occupations and his or her self-image. The development of self-concept and occupational preferences develops in four developmental stages (also referred to as conscription). In the first

stage, *orientation to power and size* (3 to 5 years), children come to realize that there is an adult world with different roles, one of which is working a job. The second stage, *orientation to sex roles* (6 to 8 years), involves children developing same-sex occupational preferences while rejecting occupations of the opposite sex. During the third stage, *orientation to social validation* (9 to 13 years), children become attuned to social evaluation and begin to classify occupations by level of prestige. In addition, it is during this time that children and their guardians begin to develop perceptions of children's abilities and competitiveness levels for certain occupations. As a result, children at this stage incorporate social class and abilities into their self-concept and reject occupations that are not consistent with these new elements of their self-concept (i.e., establishment of a tolerable-level boundary). Occupations are also rejected based upon perceived level of attainment difficulty and a high risk of failure. Finally, the fourth stage, *orientation to the internal unique self* (14 years and up), is characterized by exploring alternative occupations that fall into individuals' zone of acceptable alternatives (i.e., view of where one fits into society) developed in earlier stages. In this stage, occupations are accepted or rejected based upon fit with personality, values, aptitudes, family needs, and the opportunities and barriers to different alternatives. After individuals reject occupations that they do not feel are a good fit with their self-concept, they begin the process of compromising, which is letting go of their most preferred occupation aspirations. According to Gottfredson (2002), compromising is either done through weighing of individuals' hopes of occupations with the reality of achieving occupations or experiencing a barrier to obtaining preferred occupations.

Taking the view of self-concept and career development into consideration as it relates to elite athletes, it is also possible that elite athletes, including semi-elite amateur ballet dancers, choose to pursue athletic careers based on evaluations that an athletic career would be a good fit

with their self-concepts. In keeping with the vein of career development, because the topic under study is focused on career transitions from a female perspective, it is important to briefly discuss gender issues and career.

Gender and Career

Traditional career development theories focused solely on career development from the white male perspective (Patton & McMahon, 2014), as women's paid employment was seen as temporary until they entered into their full-time career of homemaker and motherhood (Betz, 2005; Patton & McMahon, 2014). However, since the mid part of the 20th century, this has changed as working outside the home has become the norm for women rather than the exception, and as a result, it has become important to understand issues women face at work and the reality of multiple roles women hold (Betz, 2005). For instance, women tend to be employed in traditionally female occupations and are paid less than men (Betz, 2005; Schultheiss, 2020). Women also face many occupational barriers such as gender stereotypes, family/work conflicts, issues with the education system (Betz, 2005; Schultheiss, 2020), and socialized beliefs about one's abilities (Betz, 2005). However, perceiving a wide range of occupational options, social support, role models, and high self-esteem have all been found to facilitate women's occupational success (Betz, 2005). Conceptualizations of women's careers must take into consideration the relational and cultural aspects of women's lives in addition to placing a focus on understanding important relationships (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Thus, the following section will discuss social constructionist career theory.

Social Constructionist Career Theory

It is important to acknowledge that in the career development literature, constructivism and social constructionism appear to be used interchangeably (Young & Collin, 2004). Young

and Collin (2004) hypothesize this is because, despite these terms having unique aspects, the terms are similar and the field has yet to agree on definitive conceptualizations; thereby, causing ambiguity. Young and Collin (2004) highlighted the unique aspects by referring to constructivism as the construction of meaning and knowledge through an individual's cognitive processes while social constructionism denotes that meaning and knowledge are constructed through social processes and interactions, which take into consideration historical and contextual factors. Further, to ease ambiguity in the career field, Young and Collin (2004) subsumed both constructivism and social constructionism under the term constructivisms and referred to this as "meaning is constructed in a social, historical, and cultural context, through action and discourse in which we form relationships and community" (p. 378). For the purpose of this discussion, I will use the term social constructionism to refer to the social construction of knowledge and meaning as it relates to career development.

Brown (2002) described four assumptions underlining social constructionist career theories. First, everything is interconnected, and thus it impossible to separate individuals from their environments. Second, there are no absolutes, and thus human behaviour cannot be reduced to a set of laws. Third, human behaviour is context dependent. Fourth, the most legitimate source of knowledge is the subjective viewpoint of the individual. Social constructionist theories of career development are relevant to the current research project for a number of reasons. I take a social constructionist epistemological approach to this research, which I will discuss in further detail in Chapter 2. The social world and context are important to understanding the career development of ballet dancers. Finally, I view hope through a multi-dimensional and relational lens, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The following section will include a discussion of social constructionist career theories that I feel are useful frameworks to

view the career development of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers and the inevitable early career transitions.

Relational Cultural Paradigm

Schultheiss' (2007) relational cultural paradigm is a meta-theory for understanding meaning and mattering in worklife, which assumes that relationships are central to human functioning, a part of which is work. Specifically, the relational cultural paradigm emphasizes cultural shaping of meaning-making through relationships. Worklife is represented as the connections between work, relationships, and culture (including the cultural construction of gender). Schultheiss (2007) described four tenets of the relational cultural paradigm:

> These include (a) the influence of the family as critical to understanding the complexities of vocational development, (b) the psychological experience of work as embedded within relational contexts (e.g., social, familial and cultural), (c) the interface of work and family life, and (d) relational discourse as a challenge to the cultural script of individualism (pp. 192-193).

The relational cultural paradigm may be a useful framework to understand the influences of relationships (i.e., peers, caregivers, dance teachers) and multiple-contexts (i.e., home, ballet, school) during both the career development of ballet dancers and during the early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers

Systems Theory Framework

The systems theory framework (STF) is a metatheoretical framework for understanding career development which emphasizes a holistic view of career and the inseparability of career and life (McMahon & Patton, 2006). The STF highlights content and process influences of career development. The content influences are a set of interconnected systems that influence career

development and include the individual system (i.e., gender, personality, ability), the social system (i.e., important others), and the environmental/societal system (i.e., context, culture). The process influences characterize the dynamic relationships between the three systems and include recursiveness, changes over time, and chance. At the center of this theory is the individual system and since individuals do not live in isolation, it is important to take into consideration the influences of individuals' social systems and the different contexts that individuals are located within on career development. According to STF, career development is a dynamic process in which each system influences and is influenced by the other systems. The degree of influence and influencing that each system has over the other systems changes over time, with the past informing the present and both the past and present informing the future. Furthermore, this theory also accounts for the role that chance plays in career development. Overall, STF allows individuals to construct their own personal theories of career development (McMahon & Patton, 2006). The STF may prove to be a useful framework to conceptualize semi-elite amateur ballet dancers' holistic journeys to attaining professional ballet careers with the hope that their personal theories of career development will provide insights into transitioning to second careers.

The following sections will include discussions on elite athletes, elite athletes' careers, and the challenges elite athletes face as they transition to second careers.

Elite Athletes

Some scholars and dancers have made the argument that dance should be considered an art form rather than a sport (McEwen & Young, 2011). Others, however, have stated that due to the physically demanding nature of dance training and performing, dancers should be considered elite athletes (Francisco, 2018; McEwen & Young, 2011). According to McEwen and Young (2011), ballet requires both artistic and athletic skill sets. For the purpose of this study, ballet

dancers are considered athletes because both the artistic and athletic skill set are needed to reach a professional level, and thus the following section will provide a general description of elite athletes and the challenges they face during career transitions. A more thorough examination of ballet dancers, the population under study, will follow.

Throughout the years, the standards of high-level sport performance have increased, resulting in increased demands on young talented athletes hoping for sporting success (Lavallee & Robinson, 2007). As a result, elite athletes begin their training at an early age, put in countless hours of training during their childhood, and are encouraged to do whatever it takes to win (Lally, 2007; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007). This high level of training leaves these young elite athletes with little time to engage in activities outside of school and their respective sport (Lavallee & Robinson, 2007). As their training advances, many young elite athletes begin to compromise their education in favor of their athletic career (Kristiansen, 2017; Moazami-Goodarzi et al., 2020).

It has been found that the intense demands placed on these young athletes can have profound effects on the successful completion of developmental tasks throughout their lives, including those tasks required to form identity (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Lavalee & Robinson, 2007). Erikson (1968) stated that adolescence is a vital time for identity development, because it is a time when one is provided with the space to experiment in different roles guided by interests, values, and talents. For young elite athletes, the high demands of their sporting pursuit lead them to forgo the time-consuming identity exploration process, immersing themselves in their sport (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007), leading to what Marcia (1980) coined a foreclosed identity status. A foreclosed identity status results from one having a high commitment to a career at the expense of exploring other possible options (Marcia, 1980). Due

to this foreclosed athletic identity, young athletes often have difficulties with adult decision-making due to a lack of independence, a lack of career maturity, and they often display risk-taking behaviour (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007). Despite the negative consequences of adopting a solely athletic identity at a young age, the singular adherence to this identity is understood to be vital to reach a high level of performance (Griffith et al., 2019; Gordon & Lavallee, 2004). Furthermore, strongly identifying as a member of a sports team (i.e., social identity) has been found to increase the athlete's sense of self-worth, dedication to the sport, and effort put forth in the sport (Martin et al., 2018). Taken together, elite athletes forego their personal development for the sake of their pursuit of sporting excellence (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Griffith et al., 2019; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007), and, as a result, the ending of elite athletic careers is commonly extremely devastating (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Cosh, Crabb et al., 2013; Griffith et al., 2019; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007).

Elite Athlete Career Transitions

The following section will include a discussion of elite athletes' career transitions and the challenges faced during this transition, as there are parallels to the career transitions of professional ballet dancers as well as to the career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers. The body of research on career transitions of professional athletes has gradually grown within the last three decades (Park et al., 2013; Wylleman, 2019). While some elite athletes retire voluntarily, many are forced to retire due to injuries, deselection, or they have passed the peak age of athletes in their sport (Cosh, LeCouteur et al., 2013; Galli, 2019; Gustafsson et al., 2018; Wylleman, 2019). On average, elite athletes train for ten years to get to the professional level and spend five to ten years in their professional career, with retirement around 34 years of age (Gustafsson et al., 2016; Wylleman, 2019; Wylleman & Reints, 2010). However, the typical age

of retirement for athletes varies by sport, and depends on the sport's physical demand requirements (Cosh, Crabb et al., 2013; Gustafsson et al., 2016; Wylleman, 2019). Regardless, athletes retire at a younger age than their non-athlete counterparts (Cosh, Crabb et al., 2013). Thus, because athletic careers are relatively short, retirement is often a difficult and distressing experience for elite athletes (Cosh, LeCouteur et al., 2013; Cosh, Crabb et al., 2013; Wylleman, 2019).

As a result of having a singular athletic identity, upon retirement, many athletes face identity loss (Lally, 2007; Lavallee et al., 1997; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007; Wylleman, 2019). This loss of identity has been stated to be one of the most impactful factors in elite athlete transitions (Martin et al., 2014).

Due to the young age of retirement, elite athletes must transition into new careers that require a new set of skills (Cosh, Crabb et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2014; Wylleman, 2019). However, many elite athletes emphasize sporting ambition to the exclusion of a broad education, leaving them unprepared for second careers (Cosh, Crabb et al., 2013; Gustafsson et al., 2018; McGillivray et al., 2005). Therefore, after retirement, many athletes may need to return to school to gain the knowledge and skills for their second career (Wylleman, 2019; Wylleman & Reints, 2010).

Due to the physical nature of training, elite athletes become very in tune with their bodies, both in function and physical appearance (Gairdner, 2019; Galli, 2019; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007). When athletes retire, they leave behind the grueling training schedule, and as a result, their bodies start to change, often leading to body image issues (Gairdner, 2019; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007). Injuries are commonplace in the world of elite sport performance (Lu & Hsu, 2013), and effects of these injuries can plague athletes during their career transitions

(Gairdner, 2019; Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008). The amount of control elite athletes have in choosing their retirement also plays a role in how they view their career transition (Galli, 2019; Rea & Lavallee, 2015; Wylleman, 2019; Zaichkowsky et al., 2000). The less control one has, such as a forced retirement due to being deselected from a team, career ending injury, or reaching the age of retirement, can lead to difficulties adjusting to retirement (Galli, 2019; Gustafsson et al., 2018; Rea & Lavallee, 2015; Schinke et al., 2018; Wylleman, 2019; Zaichkowsky et al., 2000). Finally, retirement from an athletic career results in a loss of the athletes' social support network (Galli, 2019; Lally, 2007; Lavallee et al., 1997; Wylleman, 2019). Elite athletes form strong ties with their fellow teammates, and upon retiring, the main commonality of sport which bonded them is lost, leading to teammates drifting apart (Galli, 2019; Lally, 2007).

Taken together, loss of identity, lack of skills for a secondary career, body changes, injuries, forced retirement, and the loss of support networks all pose challenges for the elite athlete during his or her career transition. These challenges can lead to depression, alcohol and substance abuse, eating disorders, decreased self-confidence, anxiety (Gustafsson et al., 2018; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007; Wylleman, 2019; Wylleman et al., 2004), and suicide related behaviours (Lavallee & Robinson, 2007; Wylleman, 2019). This can be summed-up as a sense of hopelessness with no apparent viable future.

The current literature on elite athletic identity and career transitions provides a foundational understanding of the transition period, and how athletes adjust and cope during this time (Ronkainen et al., 2015). However, the literature does not explore the lived experience and meaning elite athletes make when faced with challenges during their careers, including career transitions. In order to address this gap in the literature, research using an existential approach has been employed to unpack elite athletes' lived experience and meaning making during

challenges, transitions, and changes throughout their careers (Ronkainen et al., 2015). Findings provided a rich description of elite athletes' careers, specifically highlighting their struggle to be themselves, their love of their sport, the use of sport movement as a way of expressing themselves within the world, and sport as a spiritual journey. The following section will provide a more in-depth description of ballet dancers, professional ballet careers, challenges faced by professional ballet dancers during their career transitions, and semi-elite amateur ballet dancers' earlier career exits.

Ballet Dancers

"In the world of ballet there is an undisputed expectation that dancers live for their work, or calling as it is usually perceived" (Aalten, 2005, p. 8). Ballet dancers begin training approximately between 3 and 6 years of age (Griffith et al., 2019; McEwen & Young, 2011; Pickman, 1987; Pulinkala, 2011; Wainwright & Turner, 2004). It is at this early age that the process of acculturation to the ballet world begins (Lee, 1988; Pickard, 2020) – a concept that dancers may be too young to comprehend or to understand the consequences as they begin training (Pickard, 2020). The culture of ballet has been described to involve " . . . dedication and discipline; perfection and body control; scrutiny and critique; comparison and competitiveness; power imbalances and deference to authority (e.g., teachers, coaches, directors, choreographers); and the expectation and value of silencing physical and emotional pain" (Kim et al., 2020, p. 1). Becoming immersed in the culture of ballet strengthens dancers' commitment to the art (Lee, 1988; Pickard, 2020), and marks the start of vocational training (Wulff, 1998).

Ballet training often begins at a local private studio and encompasses a structured class in which students are taught a ballet syllabus on which they are assessed and graded (Pickard, 2020). The ballet syllabus involves learning ballet literacy, which includes learning posture,

alignment of the body, approximately 200 ballet steps and respective combinations of these steps, as well as learning to read balletic form and movement (Pickard, 2012). As such, ballet training is physically and mentally intensive (Griffith et al., 2019; Pulinkala, 2011; Sandham, 2012; Wainwright & Turner, 2004) and requires an immense level of concentration and dedication (BenZion, 2012; Loch, 2015; Pickard & Bailey, 2009; Pickman, 1987; Sandham, 2012). Consequently, much of a committed ballet student's time (Alter, 1997; Griffith et al., 2019; Pickman, 1987) and energy is devoted to dancing (Pickman, 1987). Ballet dancers' busy schedules involve daily classes (Aalten, 2005; BenZion, 2012; Pulinkala, 2011; Wainwright & Turner, 2004), rehearsals, and performances (Pulinkala, 2011; Wainwright & Turner, 2004). In addition to the physical and time-intensive nature of ballet training, dancers must be passionate about ballet (Wainwright & Turner, 2004). Therefore, to reach the pinnacle of a ballet career, dancers must be hard working, talented, and have a deep desire to dance.

Serious ballet students will be forced to make sacrifices in other facets of life (i.e., friends and interests) as a result of their deep commitment to ballet (Pickard, 2020). For instance, the extensive amount of time dedicated to dance leaves little time for exploring other interests and possible occupations (Griffith et al., 2019; Pickard, 2012, 2020; Pickman, 1987; Sandham, 2012). Furthermore, it appears that hopeful dancers also do not have the motivation to explore other interests and possible occupations as they have a difficult time envisioning a future without a professional ballet career (Lee, 1988), leading to rejecting other possibilities to performing, including teaching (Stinson et al., 1990). Hence, these dancers are goal-directed from a very young age, resulting in tunnel vision in which most everything outside of the realm of dance falls by the way-side (Greben, 2002; Griffith et al., 2019; Loch, 2015; Roncaglia, 2006). Taken

together, this can limit the ballet dancers' knowledge and experience of the world outside of the world of ballet (Pickard, 2012).

Furthermore, the time-intensive nature of ballet training leaves little time for developing friendships with non-dancers (Buckroyd, 2001; Hamilton, 1998; Pickard, 2012, 2020; Sandham, 2012). Furthermore, ballet dancers may be seen as different than their non-dance peers (Buckroyd, 2001; Hamilton, 1998; Sandham, 2012), due to their busy dance schedules and turnout (Hamilton, 1998), which also contributes to difficulties making friends with those outside of the dance world (Buckroyd, 2001; Hamilton, 1998). This notion was further elaborated on by Stinson et al. (1990) who found that student dancers described finding it difficult to live a "normal" life, and felt that many non-dancers did not understand them. Consequently, the dancer's social circle largely encompasses other dancers (Hamilton, 1998; Sandham, 2012). Although dancers do share the competitive drive to be the best, which can put stress on relationships with dance peers (Buckroyd, 2001; Hamilton, 1998; Pickard, 2012, 2020; Sandham, 2012; Stinson et al., 1990), there is a bond that develops from commonalities, giving rise to deep friendships among dancers (Sandham, 2012; Stinson et al., 1990).

It has been clearly documented that committed ballet dancers tend to form their identities solely around dance because of their intense involvement with the art (Griffith et al., 2019; Pickard, 2012, 2020; Pickman, 1987; Warnick et al., 2016). According to Warnick et al. (2016), dancers at this young age do not solely choose a job, rather they choose a way of being. Over time, the dancer identity is strengthened, largely due to the exclusion of other interests and identity investments (Griffith et al., 2019; Hamilton, 1998). Accordingly, by adolescence, the ballet dancer begins to form a vocational identity (Griffith et al., 2019; Lee, 1988; Pickard & Bailey, 2009), which is one's conscious awareness of themselves as a worker (Skorikov &

Vondracek, 2011), and answers the question, "Who will I become at work?" (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). An example of the vocational identity of a dancer is clearly articulated by one young dancer interviewed by Stinson et al. (1990): "It is who I am. … If I couldn't dance I think I would feel like there was a part of me that was just totally dead" (p. 16).

An important stepping-stone to becoming a professional ballet dancer is auditioning and gaining acceptance into a professional ballet school (Pickard, 2020, Wulff, 1998). The experience of ballet training has been described to have a level of uncertainty and instability (Pickard, 2020). Subsequently, despite the hard work and dedication to ballet, only a few hopeful ballet dancers will gain acceptance into professional dance schools (Hamilton, 1998). Acceptance into an elite training program, typically at 11 years of age (Willard & Lavallee, 2016), signifies the dancer has talent, is unique, and has been specially selected (Pickard, 2020). While at professional ballet school, the dancer's commitment to attaining professional status is further strengthened (Pickard, 2020), as the goal of the ballet school is to train dancers to perform in the respective professional ballet company upon graduation (Wulff, 1998). The level of uncertainty and instability is also seen within professional ballet school training, as there are not enough positions in the company for every hopeful ballet school graduate (Buckroyd, 2001; Chua, 2014; Wulff, 1998). Although some graduates may find positions at other dance companies, or in the entertainment industry (i.e., Broadway; Wulff, 1998), most will not find employment as professional dancers (Buckroyd, 2000, 2001; Griffith et al., 2019). Therefore, despite years of training, many ballet dancers who train to become professional ballet dancers will not make it to the professional level (Pickard, 2020).

In Canada, specific statistics on ballet dancers who attain professional status versus those who do not are not readily available, as research in the field of dance in Canada appears to be

more broad than specific (McCaughey & Lussier, 2014). However, in 2014, a study was released which provided an overview of youth sports in Canada, which found an estimate of 277,300 youths between the ages 3 and 17 years take ballet classes (Solutions Research Group, 2014). Although not all youths involved in ballet classes will desire to make it to the professional level, a small proportion will (Clark & Markula, 2017). In comparison, there are only seven professional ballet companies in Canada (The Dance Centre, n.d.). These numbers highlight that, specifically in Canada, there are more youths working towards a ballet career than there are professional ballet dance company positions. These numbers also bring to light the notion that time, effort, training, and sacrifice does not always translate to success in the context of ballet for many young dancers (BenZion, 2012; Griffith et al., 2019; Hanna, 1988; Pickard, 2020), leading to an earlier exit from ballet than expected resulting in personally devastating effects on these young dancers.

Professional Ballet Careers

For those dancers who do make it to the professional level, the physical and psychological demands required to reach this pinnacle of success are also essential when working as a member of a ballet company (Aalten, 2005; Hanna, 2017). Ballet careers are demanding (Pickard, 2020) and involve daily classes, rehearsals, and performances (Aalten, 2005; Peric et al., 2016; Twitchett et al., 2010; Wainwright & Turner, 2004; Wulff, 1998), with little time off (Peric et al., 2016). The competition that is seen among young ballet dancers in studios is also seen among members of professional ballet companies (Buckroyd, 2001; Hamilton, 1998; Hanna, 2017; McEwen & Young, 2011; Wulff, 1988).

The intensity of a ballet career impacts dancers' peer relationships, resulting in members of the company being the main source of support for dancers (Greben, 1999; Warnick et al.,

2016; Willard & Lavallee, 2016). In addition, ballet dancers' intense careers leave them little time for exploring interests or alternative occupations (Gordon, 1983; Lee, 1988), bringing about a tunnel-like vision focused on ballet (Gordon, 1983). Finally, personal identity is solely defined as being a professional ballet dancer (Lee, 1988). While a singular focus on ballet has been seen as vital for career success in the past, recently it has been found that having a sense of identity, interests, and friendships outside of ballet is advantageous, as it allows for dancers to successfully persevere in professional careers (Kim et al., 2020). The latter finding suggests a positive shift within the culture of ballet.

Finally, despite the large physical and mental demands of a professional career, the financial rewards are substantially low (Greben, 1999; Griffith et al., 2019; Hanna, 2017). Specifically, in Canada, dancers are among the lowest paid workers in relation to other occupations in the arts field and occupations in general (Hill, 2019). For instance, professional ballet dancers have been found to earn an approximate average yearly income of $14,400.00 (Canada Council for the Arts, 2014), with most dancers having to earn additional income through teaching dance (Hill, 2019). This staggering statistic highlights the notion that ballet dancers do not dance for the money; rather, they dance for the love of ballet (Griffith et al., 2019; Rodriques et al., 2020; Wainwright & Turner, 2004, 2006).

Professional Ballet Career Transitions

The literature on career transitions of amateur ballet dancers is limited, and therefore, it is appropriate to look to the literature on career transitions of professional ballet dancers to draw possible parallels between the two populations. Professional ballet careers are short in duration (Turner & Wainwright, 2003) with the average age of retirement being approximately 30 years of age (Hanna, 2017; Roncaglia, 2006). There are many reasons for retiring from a professional

ballet career, both involuntary and voluntary, and include deselection, age, physical abilities, change of interests, family priorities, redundancy, and injury (Roncaglia, 2006). The following sections examine the challenges and facilitators that professional ballet dancers face during their career transitions.

Professional Ballet Career Transition Challenges

The overall sentiment of the end of a professional ballet career has been succinctly described as ". . . 'one of life's little deaths,'. . ." (Jeffri & Throsby, 2006, p. 57). As such, retiring from a professional ballet career can be terrifying for dancers (Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Pickman, 1987), often leading to worries about the relatively long and unknown future that lies ahead (Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006). Because of the intensive nature of the career, ballet dancers tend to ignore or deny that retirement is inevitable (Baumol et al., 2004; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Roncaglia, 2006), resulting in a lack of exploring alternative occupations (Greben, 1989; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Pickman, 1987; Pulinkala, 2011) and attaining higher education (Hanna, 1988; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Pulinkala, 2011). When it comes time to retire from performing careers, dancers may have little knowledge or training for alternative occupations, and lack the skills necessary for exploring occupational possibilities (Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Pickman, 1987). Consequently, many dancers are compelled to go back to school to obtain the training and experience needed for second careers (Gordon, 1983; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017). Since finances are limited for dancers (Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006) and obtaining an education can be expensive, going back to school proves challenging to former dancers (Baumol et al., 2004). Furthermore,

going back to school and retraining can be seen as starting over from square one, which can also be distressing for former dancers (Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017).

Professional ballet dancers face numerous losses after retiring from a performing career (Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Pickman, 1987), the most devastating loss being the loss of the dancer identity (Greben, 1992; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017). Retiring means giving up who the dancer has defined himself or herself as for most of his or her life (Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Pickman, 1987; Roncaglia, 2008; Wainwright & Turner, 2004; Willard & Lavallee, 2016). The loss of identity can lead to difficulties adjusting during the career transition (Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Willard & Lavallee, 2016). This overwhelming identity loss was highlighted by one former professional dancer: "when I retired I think you kind of lose yourself" (Willard & Lavallee, 2016, p. 271).

In addition, professional dancers also experience the loss of their social support network, as, due to the intensive nature of a ballet career, most of the dancers' friends are also members of the company from which they are retiring (Gordon, 1983; Greben, 1999; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Pickman, 1987). Finally, professional dancers face the loss of the structure (i.e., daily schedules) and the intense physical activity provided by a professional ballet career, the latter having profound impacts on dancers' body image (Wainwright & Turner, 2004). As a result of these losses, dancers may experience feelings of anger, frustration, and depression and cope using unhealthy means (i.e., substances and restrictive eating; Pickman, 1987).

Taken together, retiring from a professional ballet career is devastating. Dancers face financial difficulties, identity loss, loss of their primary social support network, and limited educational backgrounds. Furthermore, many professional ballet dancers choose to ignore the

reality of their dance career coming to an end, and as a result are left unprepared. Thus, for professional ballet dancers, retiring from their career leaves them with feelings of hopelessness.

Professional Ballet Career Transition Facilitators

In addition to the challenges faced by retiring professional ballet dancers, there are facilitators that aid in supporting the career transition. With respect to this present study, these facilitators may also apply to semi-elite amateur ballet dancers making the career transition, and may even be associated with hope.

The most striking facilitator is the age of retirement from a ballet career being approximately 30 years old, as the dancer is still young enough to successfully transition to a second career and has many work years ahead (Greben, 1999). Furthermore, dancers learn many skills that can generalize to second careers (Baumol et al., 2004; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Pickman, 1987; Roncaglia, 2006), making them worthy assets for general society (Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Roncaglia, 2006). These skills include: perseverance (Pickman, 1987; Warnick et al., 2016), strength of character (Warnick et al., 2016), team work, stamina, commitment, loyalty (Baumol et al., 2004; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006), attention to detail, concentration, determination, the ability to self-evaluate and make corrections, the ability to take directions and feedback, the ability to ask for help when needed (Pickman, 1987), and self-discipline (Baumol et al., 2004; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Roncaglia, 2006). Dancers are also hardworking (Roncaglia, 2006; Warnick et al., 2016) and comfortable working in highly competitive environments (Roncaglia, 2006).

In addition, there are many sources of support available for professional dancers during their career transitions (Baumol et al., 2004; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Jeffri, 2005;

Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Willard & Lavallee, 2016). Such supports include financial assistance, emotional support (Baumol et al., 2004; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Willard & Lavallee, 2016), counselling programs and services such as career counselling (Baumol et al., 2004; Greben, 1999; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Pickman, 1987), job search preparation, advice and information, and assistance with education and training (Baumol et al., 2004; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006). These supports are available from dance specific organizations (i.e., dance companies, unions, and dance transition centers; Baumol et al., 2004; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006), social support networks (i.e., family and friends; Baumol et al., 2004; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Willard & Lavallee, 2016), and helping professionals (i.e., career counsellors; Greben, 1999; Pickman, 1987).

Finally, there are various coping strategies employed by professional ballet dancers that have been found to be advantageous during career transitions (Roncaglia, 2010; Willard & Lavallee, 2016) such as accepting the reality of retiring from a performing career, renegotiating what it means to be a dancer (i.e., still considering self a dancer) (Roncaglia, 2010), developing a new/broader identity through the incorporation of new roles and identities (Roncaglia, 2010; Willard & Lavallee, 2016) and planning for retirement (Willard & Lavallee, 2016).

Taken together, there are many facilitators that can aid in the career transitions of professional ballet dancers. There are professional supports in place to offer professional dancers financial assistance, career counselling, and assistance with education and retraining. Professional ballet dancers who successfully transition utilize emotional support from family and friends. Furthermore, coping strategies such as acceptance, exploring new identities, and planning for retirement have been found to be helpful for former professional dancers.

Semi-Elite Amateur Ballet Career Transitions

Although there has been much research conducted on experiences of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers which has focused on various topics such as eating disorders, body image, injury, puberty, and identity (i.e., Mitchell et al., 2016; O'Flynn et al., 2013; Pickard, 2007, 2012, 2013, 2020), there has been limited research on semi-elite amateur ballet dancers' experiences with early career transitions, despite the knowledge that there are more amateur ballet dancers that are unable to make it to a professional level compared to those who attain professional careers (Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham & Nicol, 2015). What limited research there is on the unrealized performance careers of semi-elite amateur dancers comes from a few qualitative research studies (Sandham, 2012; Stinson et al., 1990), a systematic review of the available literature on the topic (Griffith et al., 2019), and anecdotal evidence gathered through a therapist's work with student dancers (Buckroyd, 2000). It appears that the only literature dedicated to exploring early career transitions of solely semi-elite amateur ballet dancers is my master's research (Sandham, 2012).

Most recently, Griffith et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review of the current literature exploring psychological implications, athletic identity, and career transitions of young dancers. The inclusion criteria included: (1) dancers between the ages of 14 and 22 years; (2) the dancers had to have at least 5 years of dance experience; and (3) the topic of study was career transitions of young dancers and included a discussion of available resources, athletic identity, or psychological impacts. Griffith et al. (2019) did not find any formal studies that met all three inclusion criteria, and concluded that there are no formal studies examining the career transitions of young dancers. It is important to note that for my master's research, I conducted a study which explored the career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers who were unable to achieve professional status and thus had to transition to another career (Sandham, 2012; Sandham &

Nicol, 2015). However, my study was not included in the systematic review conducted by Griffith et al. (2019). It is assumed the reason for this lack of inclusion was due to my study being retrospective in nature, in which participants who were over the age of 18 reflected back upon their experiences, which did not fit Griffith et al.'s (2019) inclusion criteria. I feel that the exclusion of retrospective studies is a disservice, as these types of studies provide valuable insights into the early career transition experiences of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers (Sandham, 2012; Sandham & Nicol, 2015). Despite this critique, the systematic review conducted by Griffith et al. (2019) supports my assessment of the dearth of research in this area and highlights that more research needs to focus on the early career transitions of this population.

The available literature on the early career transitions of semi-elite amateur dancers' sheds light on the notion that, for these hopeful dancers, realizing that a sought-after dance career will not be attained is extremely difficult (Buckroyd; 2000; Sandham, 2012; Stinson et al., 1990). For example, Stinson et al. (1990), who explored the experiences of dance students in non-professional programs, found that although dancers did not want to give up on their dream of a performing career, they did so because they felt they would not realistically achieve professional status. The following section will provide an overview of the challenges and facilitators this population faces as they transition to second careers.

Early Career Transition Challenges

It has been found that semi-elite amateur dancers and professional dancers face some of the same challenges as they transition to second careers (Buckroyd, 2000; Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham, 2012). For instance, since semi-elite amateur dancers solely identify as dancers, when they make an earlier exit from the dance world, they also experience a loss of identity. This loss of identity was highlighted by one former semi-elite amateur ballet dancer as she stated, "I think

it was really about identity. I was like, you took out ballet, like scooped it out of me, threw it in the garbage and I had nothing left" (Sandham, 2012, p. 88). In addition, not exploring other possible interests or occupations due to the intensive nature of dance training was also found to leave former semi-elite amateur dancers unprepared for life after dance (Buckroyd, 2000; Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham, 2012). This was found to be devastating for these dancers during their transitions (Sandham, 2012). When semi-elite amateur ballet dancers leave the dance world, they lose the opportunity to use dance as a coping mechanism for life stresses (Sandham, 2012). Finally, since semi-elite amateur dancers' social circles are largely made of other dancers, when they stop dancing, they also lose their main source of social support (Sandham, 2012).

Despite these similarities, there are challenges solely faced by semi-elite amateur dancers who are forced to make an earlier exit from dance (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012). For instance, former semi-elite amateur dancers must let go of their goal of a future performing career and accept the reality that a career is not possible. This can leave young dancers feeling foolish for wanting to dance professionally, which, looking back, may appear to have been an unrealistic endeavor, resulting in decreased self-esteem and depression. Similarly, because semi-elite amateur dancers do not attain professional status, they do not have past career accomplishments to look back upon to help them through their transitions. A lack of family support was also found to be a challenge during the early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers (Sandham, 2012). Specifically, former ballet dancers described the difficulty of having family members discount their experience of not attaining a professional ballet career as "not a big deal" and alluding to the notion of "just get over it". Finally, unlike transitioning out of a professional ballet career, there are no known specific professional supports in place to aid

in the early career transitions of amateur dancers (Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham, 2012; Sandham & Nicol, 2015).

Early Career Transition Facilitators

Although semi-elite amateur dancers face challenges during their early career transitions, there are also many facilitators which aid in the journey to life after dance (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012). In the context of this study, facilitators are considered something or someone (i.e., people, relationships, behavior, and activities) which appeared to make the early career transitions for this population easier (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). According to Buckroyd (2000), who has worked extensively counselling student dancers, dancers who do not reach professional status must mourn the loss of the dream to dance professionally, the structure that dance provided, and the loss of the dancer identity. It has also been found helpful for former semi-elite amateur dancers to broaden their sense of identity during their career transitions to include non-dance aspects (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012). In other words, former dancers must realize that although being a dancer may be a part of their identity, it is not their sole identity (Buckroyd, 2000). One former semi-elite amateur ballet dancer spoke to this idea as she stated that it took a 10-year journey for her to realize that she was more than just a ballerina (Sandham, 2012). Similarly, semi-elite amateur dancers have described exploring other areas of interest and furthering their education as vital for the development of new career/life directions (Buckroyd, 2000; Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham, 2012). For example, all former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers interviewed in Sandham's (2012) study made the realization during high school and all went on to attend post-secondary education. One dancer spoke of how post-secondary education helped her discover new interests through new friendships and the different classes she was taking.

Furthermore, in my master's research I found additional early career transition facilitators that were previously not highlighted in the literature on this population which included social support from family, new non-dance friends, dance teachers, and fellow dancers (Sandham, 2012). Participating in rituals to denote the end of the amateur ballet career helped former ballet dancers begin a new life chapter. For example, one former ballet dancer spoke of how the end of year ritual at her ballet school of throwing their berets in the lake was like throwing her ballet life away but having fun with tradition. Continuing to dance in forms other than ballet (i.e., jazz, tap, and pole dancing) helped former ballet dancers realize that they could still dance for fun and the love of dancing. Finally, focusing on the future was found to be a facilitator. For example, former ballet dancers interviewed in my master's research mentioned being excited about what their new life would bring, and became focused on their post-secondary studies (Sandham, 2012). This suggests that hope may play an important role in the transition of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers.

The Need to Study Hope in Early Ballet Career Transitions

The limited anecdotal and research evidence implies that the transition to life after dance for student dancers is difficult. Former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers face many of the same challenges professional dancers face as they transition to second careers including not preparing for the end of their ballet careers, lack of exploring interests outside of ballet, loss of identity, loss of coping mechanisms, and loss of social support from fellow dancers (Buckroyd, 2000; Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham, 2012). However, supportive friends and family, and self-exploration were helpful to both professional and former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers during their career transitions (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012; Willard & Lavallee, 2016). Furthermore, semi-elite amateur ballet dancers face added challenges as they make an earlier exit

from ballet (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012). These former dancers must cope with not attaining their dream, do not have career accomplishments to reflect upon, must deal with others discounting their experiences, and there are no specific professional supports in place to help these young dancers.

The lack of personal exploration while training, and loss of identity as a result of their career transition leaves many dancers feeling hopeless regarding their future. The idea of hopelessness is portrayed aptly in the following participants' quotes: "I had no clue what to do with my life, absolutely no idea" (Sandham, 2012, p. 83), "I was like this hollow person who had no interests other than dancing" (Sandham, 2012, p.88), and "I was 3 years old when I started, so it was something that I just always had done, and I could not even conceive of myself as being something other than a dancer" (Sandham, 2012, p.88). Feelings of hopelessness arise when people feel that they have no control over attaining the achievement they most desire (Alloy et al., 1988; Farran et al., 1995). Hopelessness focuses one on the past and perceptions of failure (Cutcliffe, 1997) making life choices more difficult (Farran et al., 1995; Schneider, 1980). Hopelessness disempowers individuals (Farran et al., 1995; Schotte & Clum, 1987), and contributes to feelings of low self-confidence and social desirability (Yerlikaya, 2006 as cited in Ozsaker & Vurgun, 2014). In contrast, hope focuses on a future in which one wishes to participate (Jevne, 1994). Although, there is some evidence that career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers cultivate feelings of hopelessness (Sandham, 2012), the experiences of hope during this transition have yet to be investigated. A quote from a recent study examining the experiences of professional ballet career transitions highlights the importance of hope during the transition period, "the place I was at before I left, there was nothing that could have been worse and then suddenly you're doing something and there's loads of hope again" (Willard &

Lavallee, 2016, p. 272). This highlights the apparent role of hope in the trajectory of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers transitioning to second careers. It appears that semi-elite amateur ballet dancers struggle to find hope during their career transitions, suggesting a research need. The following section includes an exploration of current theories of hope that are relevant to the current study.

Hope

In the context of the present study on the experiences of hope during the career transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers, hope is seen as a dynamic, complex construct that cannot be captured through the lens of a uni-dimensional model (Snyder, 1995). Therefore, the following discussion will include a description of four multi-dimensional models of hope (Dufalt & Martochhio; Farran et al., 19995) that are deemed relevant to this study. I will also discuss one uni-dimensional model of hope to help situate the literature on hope and vocational hope, and hope and elite athletes.

Conceptual Models of Hope

Farran, Herth, and Popovich

Farran et al. (1995) conducted a multidisciplinary review of the hope literature and developed a multi-dimensional model of hope in the context of healthcare. In this conceptual model, “Hope constitutes an essential experience of the human condition. It functions as a way of feeling, a way of thinking, a way of behaving, and a way of relating to oneself and one’s world. Hope has the ability to be fluid in its expectations, and in the event that the desired object or outcome does not occur, hope can still be present” (Farran et al., 1995, p. 6). According to Farran et al., (1995) hope comprises four attributes: an experiential process, a spiritual process, a rational process, and a relational process.

The *experiential process* (pain of hope) is described as the interplay of hope and hopelessness (Farran et al., 1995). In the dialectical relationship between these two opposing constructs, as we learn about hope, we learn about hopelessness, and as we learn about hopelessness, we learn about hope. When individuals are faced with life-changing events that elicit feelings of hopelessness, they are challenged, resulting in the realization of their strengths to overcome the obstacles and create opportunities to hope in a new way. According to Farran et al. (1995), learning to hope in light of an unknown outcome can result in permanent changes in the mundane. It also encourages one to experience life in a different way than others who have never had their hope challenged. The next attribute of hope described by Farran et al. (1995) is *spiritual process* (soul of hope). This attribute of hope is linked to faith: one's ability to find his/her soul and rise above difficult life-experiences. Farran et al. (1995) described the *rational process* as hope being grounded in reality and rational thought. When one is faced with difficult life-experiences, hope is fostered by approaching the experience from a rational and mindful space. The last attribute of hope is *relational process* (heart of hope; Farran et al., 1995). According to Farran et al. (1995), "Hope has also been described as something that occurs between persons – a relational process inspired by love" (p.10). Individuals can influence hope in others by being present or by communicating their confidence in the other that they will be able to overcome life difficulties.

This conceptual model set out by Farran et al. (1995) provides a framework of understanding hope as dynamic and embedded within a social context. An important aspect of this theory, is the understanding of the dialectical relationship between hope and hopelessness. It has been noted that feelings of hopelessness arise when semi-elite amateur ballet dancers must transition to a second career (Sandham, 2012). Given the literature on early career transitions of

semi-elite amateur ballet dancers, it was anticipated that painful feelings could arise, and it was important to acknowledge these feelings and the role these feelings play in the hoping process.

Dufault and Martocchio

Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) conceptual theory of hope originates in the field of nursing and, according to Eliott (2005), it is the most influential qualitative study in the field of hope research. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) define hope as "a multidimensional, dynamic life-force characterized by a confident, yet uncertain expectation of achieving a future good, which to the hoping person, is realistically possible and personally significant" (p. 380). This theory is composed of two spheres, generalized hope and particularized hope, and six dimensions: affective, cognitive, behavioural, affiliative, temporal, and contextual.

Generalized hope is defined as a broad sense of some future benefit (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985). In comparison, *particularized hope* is defined as a specific future benefit, in other words, a hoped-for-object. It is thought that generalized hope lays the foundation for individuals to develop particular hopes. If the particular hopes are not realized, then generalized hope aids individuals by either facilitating the development of alternative hopes or by comforting the individuals during this loss. Furthermore, there also may be times in individuals' lives when all they have is generalized hope, when "hope is quite enough" (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985, p. 381).

In regard to the six dimensions, the *affective dimension* focuses on the sensations and emotions that are elicited during the hoping process (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985). The *cognitive dimension* focuses on the manner that one wishes, imagines, perceives, thinks, remembers, learns, generalizes, interprets, and judges. *The behavioural dimension* focuses on the actions that one takes in regard to hope. The *affiliative dimension* focuses on relationships in

relation to hope. The *temporal dimension* focuses on time in relation to hope. Finally, the *contextual dimension* focuses on life situations that encompass and influence hope. The process of hoping is characterized by changes within and across these dimensions. Further, one can have multiple hopes active simultaneously, and if hope is lacking in one area, it can be borrowed from another dimension.

Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) conceptualization of hope provides a framework of hope that is dynamic and embedded within a social context. This theory of hope describes the dynamic and complex nature of hope and is in line with how I view hope. I view it as a strong foundation for the current study. I also view hope as dynamic and influenced by actions, emotions, relationships with important others, and context. Furthermore, this theory is also in line with my theoretical perspective, social constructionism, which will be described in more detail later on in this document. I believe that to study the experience of hope during transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers, one must take into consideration the social world of these dancers and how they make sense of their world within this context.

Benzein, Saveman, and Norberg

Benzein et al. (2000) conducted a phenomenological-hermeneutical analysis to explore the meaning of the lived experience of hope in healthy, non-religious, Swedish adults. Their findings suggest that hope can be interpreted as an internal and external process. According to Benzein et al. (2000), the internal process is described as hope related to being, both in regard to the self and the world. Hope as being in relation to the self is described as a will to be and to live, which is attained through personal meaning making and is not easily affected by external forces. This internal process is "experienced in the present and where the future is enacted" (Benzein et al., 2000, p. 308). Benzein et al. (2000) described hope as being in relation to the world, as the

feeling of one being a part of the “larger” world, and provides a feeling of satisfaction knowing that life is a never-ending circle in which one is a small part. Thus, hope is knowing one’s roots and seeing the development of future generations. In regard to the external processes of hope, Benzein et al. (2000) described this as hope related to doing, and is both future and action oriented. This involves hoping for something, and developing short- or long-term goals to achieve it. Hoping for something involves a level of courage as it requires one to take risks. However, a deep sense of gratification is gained when one attains these short- or long-term goals. Therefore, uncertainty and possible disappointment about not attaining goals encompass hope.

According to Benzein et al. (2000), these processes are reciprocal in nature, as the internal process is a prerequisite for the external, and the external process facilitates the internal. Further, the external process of hope was found to be reconstructed throughout the various stages of life, lending to the conclusion that hope is related to the life process.

The theory of hope provided by Benzein et al. (2000) provides a framework that views hope in terms of the meaning that one makes from a retrospective vantage point. The authors stated that hope is closely tied to being human and can change throughout the life process. This theory may provide a lens to view the retrospective stories of hope in former semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers and how their hopes have changed throughout their lives. Furthermore, semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers strongly identify with their dancer identity (Sandham, 2012); in essence it is what being human is for them. Thus, I believed that interviewing these former semi-elite female ballet dancers had the potential to elicit intimate and personal discussions about their own unique meaning of being a ballet dancer.

Scioli, Ricci, Nyugen, and Scioli

Scioli et al.'s (2011) conceptual model of hope was developed through a comprehensive review of hope across many disciplines. The authors define hope as "a future-directed, four channel emotion network, constructed from biological, psychological, and social resources" (Scioli et al., 2011, p. 79). This network consists of four channels, subnetworks, and five developmental roots, hierarchical levels, of each channel (Scioli et al., 2011). The four channels include mastery, attachment, survival, and spiritual systems. These systems develop semi-autonomously, and work in conjunction with each other to facilitate one's hope.

The first channel is *attachment*, and it is described as a belief in the continued presence of an important other who facilitates a sense of trust and connection (Scioli & Biller, 2010). The second channel is *mastery,* which refers to feelings of a sense of purpose and empowerment that is collaborative and goal-orientated. The third channel is *survival,* and it entails having a belief that one is free from harm, there will always be options available, and a feeling that everything will be fine (Scioli & Biller, 2010). The fourth channel is *spiritual*, and it is described as one's spiritual or religious beliefs (Scioli et al., 2011).

The five developmental roots include: (a) hope-related motives; (b) endowments and supports; (c) hope traits; (d) faith system; and (e) hope behaviors (Scioli et al., 2011). These hierarchical levels are dependent upon the development of each previous level, thus "…the strength of the upper levels depends on the firmness of the lower levels" (Scioli et al., 2011, p. 79). The first and most foundational level is *hope-related motives* (Scioli et al., 2011). The authors have described this level as the biological foundation that is present from birth, our innate drives of hope; in essence, the blue prints of hope. According to Scioli et al. (2011), the second level is *endowments and supports.* This level refers to the role that family, culture, and

spiritual beliefs play in fostering hope. The third level is *hope traits,* and it entails personality or character traits that are internalized by the individual. The fourth level is *faith,* which according to the authors, is a prerequisite to hope. Faith refers to not only one's religious beliefs, but also faith can come from a higher power, family, or friends. Finally, the fifth level is *hope behaviors*, which entails the actions and work needed to foster hope.

Scioli et al.'s (2011) conceptual theory of hope provides a framework that views hope as a developmental construct. This theory of hope states that hope is innate and present at birth, and it is influenced by characteristic traits and contextual forces such as family, culture and spiritual beliefs, that change over time. I view career transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers within a developmental context, as the transition involves the re-evaluation of both roles and beliefs about oneself in order to find a new direction in life. Viewing hope as a developmental construct, offers explanatory value with respect to how former semi-elite female ballet dancers may experience hope as it developed and changed over time.

Snyder

Snyder's (1995) conceptualization of hope is a uni-dimensional theory, focusing on how one cognitively appraises attaining his or her goals. Snyder's theory, which originates out of the field of psychology, defines hope as "the cognitive energy and pathways for goals" (1995, p. 355). According to Snyder, setting and attaining goals is a necessary component of human existence, and comprises agency and pathways.

Agency is defined as the "cognitive willpower" that individuals possess to move them towards their goal (Snyder, 1995, p. 355). *Pathways* are individuals' "perceived ability to generate routes" to their goal (Snyder, 1995, p. 355). Hope is produced only when one has both agency and pathways for his or her goals. Therefore, individuals with higher levels of hope have

high agency and pathways. In contrast, those with lower levels of hope have low agency and pathways.

Critique of Snyder's Hope Theory. It is important to provide a discussion and critique of this theory because the majority of the hope literature in psychology conceptualizes hope using Snyder's (1995) theory. Thus, in order to provide a context for the current literature, a discussion of Snyder's theory is warranted.

Snyder's (1995) hope theory is the most widely-used conceptualization of hope in scientific research (Hirschi et al., 2015; Yotsidi et al., 2018). Scioli et al. (2011) criticize Snyder's (1995) uni-dimensional theory of hope due to its single focus on goals, with no attempt to capture the attachment, survival, or spiritual dimensions of hope. As a researcher and near-psychologist, I see Snyder's theory as simplifying hope to one aspect, thus not allowing for the investigation of the dynamic and complex nature of hope (i.e., relationships, emotions, context, and time) that is described in multi-dimensional theories of hope (i.e., Benzein et al., 2000; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1995; Scioli et al., 2011). I believe that hope is fostered though the attainment of goals, but hope is also influenced by our thoughts, emotions, relationships, and spiritual beliefs. As such, I see Snyder's (1995) theory of hope as less relevant when compared to multi-dimensional theories of hope and when considering how each captures the rich and complex descriptions of hope in this study. I believe that more research using multi-dimensional conceptualizations of hope is needed to capture the complex picture of hope and career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers.

Hope and Identity

Dance students' identities are often consumed by the desire to be a dancer; so, when they leave dance, they experience a loss of identity (Buckroyd, 2000; Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham,

2012), resulting in feelings of hopelessness (Sandham, 2012). While there are a number of threads in the literature suggesting the importance of hope to identity, the literature on hope and identity is not yet well-developed (Larsen & Stege, 2012). Furthermore, there is no literature specific to the identity crisis that transitioning dancers face. Erikson (1968), who developed a stages theory of personality development, identified that the first task of infancy is the development of hope through the experience of a trusting relationship. Further, Erikson (1968) described identity at the infancy stage as “I am what hope I have and give” (p. 107). Eliott (2005) conducted a comprehensive review of hope literature and concluded, “Hope does seem to be part of who we deem ourselves to be, with relevance to the best and the worst of what we are. And as we wish to know ourselves, so we wish to know about hope” (p. 38). Current research has also drawn connections between hope and identity. Larsen and Stege (2012) conducted a study examining the experiences of client hope in early counselling sessions. The researchers found that clients’ hope was fostered through instances of supportive identity development and moments when the therapist directed attention to positive aspects of the clients’ identity. Finally, O’Hara (2013) examined qualities of therapists that might foster hope, and found a positive relationship between differentiation of self and hope. Specifically, the more self-differentiated one is, the higher hope he or she has. Self-differentiation was defined as one’s ability for autonomous thinking and a clear sense of self while in relationships with important others (O’Hara, 2013). Taken together, this limited literature points to important but largely unexplored connections between hope and identity.

Vocational Hope

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of hope during career transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers. The following section offers a discussion about vocational hope and some critique of this body of literature.

Over the last decade, vocational hope has become of interest to those in management and vocational psychology (Hirschi, 2014; Hirschi et al., 2015). Although there has yet to be an agreed upon definition of vocational hope, it has been referred to as hope specifically related to career or work context. It has been shown that hope may play an important role in all vocational pursuits, especially in the current career environment which is characterized as uncertain and dynamic, requiring adaptability, resilience, and self-directedness (Hirschi et al., 2015). Although there has been a recent increased interest in vocational hope, the literature is still limited (Hirschi, 2014; Hirschi et al., 2015). What research that has been conducted on vocational hope has used Snyder's (1995) theory of hope (Hirschi, 2014; Hirschi et al., 2015; Juntunen & Wettersten, 2006; Kenny et al., 2010; Sung et al., 2011; Yotsidi et al., 2018).

Of the research conducted on vocational hope and career development to date, findings suggest that hope is positively related to the development of vocational identity (Diemer & Blustein, 2007; Juntunen & Wettersten, 2006), career decidedness (Hirschi, 2014), career planning (Hirschi, 2014; Kenny et al., 2010), career self-efficacy beliefs (Hirschi, 2014; Juntunen & Wettersten, 2006), career adaptability (Korkmaz & Cenkseven Onder, 2019), proactive career behaviors such as networking (Hirschi, 2014), career exploration (Hirschi et al., 2015), and is considered a motivational factor in career development (Sung et al., 2011) among adolescents, post-secondary students, and working adults.

In addition, the Hope-Centered Model of Career Development (HCMCD), which is based upon Snyder's (1995) theory of hope, has been developed to foster skills that are needed for career self-management such as self-awareness, work awareness, and career adaptability (Niles, 2011; Niles et al., 2010; Niles, 2014). The HCMCD identifies seven career competencies for career self-management which include hope, self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting, implementing, and the adaptability of the worker. Although all components of the model are needed for effective career-self management, hope is the cornerstone of HCMDC, as hope affects all facets of career development, including gaining self-clarity, goal setting and planning, and implementing and adapting to a career (Niles, 2011).

Employing Snyder's (1995) definition of hope, hope has been found to be a vital career resource that facilitates active involvement in career management (Hirschi, 2014; Hirschi et al., 2015; Niles, 2011; Niles et al., 2011, Niles et al., 2014), and attainment of meaningful work (Juntunen & Wettersten, 2006). Previous literature on early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers points to struggles with relationships and painful feelings (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012) for which Snyder's (1995) theory does not take into consideration. Therefore, more research will need to be conducted on hope and career development through the lens of multi-dimensional theories of hope, specifically the role of hope in career transitions.

Hope and Athletes

The literature speaking to hope and athletes is limited (Gustafsson et al., 2010, 2018; Lundqvist & Gustafsson, 2018), and much of what has been explored is based on Snyder's (1995) theory of hope. Topics in athletics that have examined the role of hope are sports injury, burnout, athletic achievement, and athletic performance.

In regard to injuries, it has been found that hope predicted athletes' subjective well-being and rehabilitation beliefs and rehabilitation behaviors (Lu & Hsu, 2013). Hope has also been found to be vital in the athletic population in developing personal strengths, motivation, and pursuing goals in the face of challenges (Curry et al., 1997; Snyder et al., 2006; Woodman et al., 2009). Further, hope has been found to be preventative in burnout in athletes (Eklund & Cresswell, 2007; Gustafsson et al., 2010, 2013), with low-hope athletes experiencing greater burnout than their medium and high-hope counterparts (Gustafsson et al., 2010). In a qualitative study exploring coping responses to success and failure in elite athletes and performing artists, it was found that hope was a facilitator in helping them get through difficult parts of their performance (Poczwardowski & Conroy, 2002). Although no studies examining the role of hope in athletic career transitions were found, it has been hypothesized that hope may play a positive role in athletic career transitions both within and out of sport (Gustafsson et al., 2018).

Despite limited literature on hope and athletes, what is available indicates that hope is important for athletic endeavors. It has been shown that hope aids athletes in the face of injury and burnout, and facilitates developing strengths, motivation, reaching goals despite challenging obstacles, and in performance. However, the role that hope plays in career transitions among former semi-elite amateur athletes, and specifically dancers, has not been investigated. Thus, more research needs to be done in this area. Further, since the majority of research on hope and athletes is based upon Snyder's (1995) uni-dimensional theory of hope, more research needs to be done exploring hope and athletes using multi-dimensional hope theories in general, and specifically career transitions, in order to capture the dynamic and complex picture of hope with this population.

Hope and Grief

Not achieving a professional dance career is a difficult loss for semi-elite amateur dancers (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012; Stinson et al., 1990), one which needs to be mourned to allow them to successfully move on to second careers (Buckroyd, 2000). However, this loss has been found to be discounted by family members as “not a big deal,”, which former ballet dancers have described as challenging during their career transitions (Sandham, 2012). Hence, it is important to briefly discuss hope and grief.

Grief has been described as a reaction to a loss in which the individual tries to maintain his or her pre-loss assumptions, adjust to the new post-loss reality, and incorporate the new reality with his or her emerging assumptions (Doka & Martin, 2010). However, when a loss is not, or cannot be, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported, disenfranchised grief ensues (Doka, 1999). According to Doka (1999), society has a set of rules that have developed around grief (i.e., who can grieve, the appropriate object of grief, and length of time). However, there are some circumstances in which these “grieving rules” do not correspond to characteristics of the loss endured (i.e., attachments, sense of loss, feelings), which forces the individual to grieve the loss in isolation. One such circumstance is when the loss is not recognized by society as significant, rather seen as something minor (i.e., loss of a pet; Doka, 1999). There is evidence to suggest that the loss of a professional ballet career experienced by semi-elite amateur ballet dancers is not seen by others as a significant loss and thus is not openly grieved (Sandham, 2012), leading this population to experience disenfranchised grief during their career transitions.

Going through the grieving process alone can make it difficult to mourn the loss (Doka, 1999), which has been echoed in research on the early career transitions of semi-elite amateur

ballet dancers (Sandham, 2012). The research on the role of hope in the grieving process, and specifically disenfranchised grief, appears to be unexplored. However, a recent book on narratives of hope and grief from the vantage point of academics has provided anecdotal evidence for the importance of hope in the grieving process (Shelton & Sieben, 2020). Since hope has been found to be an important resource in major change processes (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Jevne, 2005; Larsen et al., 2013; Larsen et al., 2014), it is presumed that hope would also be vital during the process of grief and disenfranchised grief, including grieving the loss of a ballet career. However, more research is needed to explore the role of hope in the grieving process, and specifically the grieving process of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers as they give up their dream to dance professionally.

Summary

Establishing a vocational identity is a vital developmental task of childhood that carries into adolescence. If not well defined by late adolescence, a lack of vocational identity can have negative effects on mental health and delay the transition to adult work-life. However, a high level of commitment to a chosen career, with a concomitant lack of alternate career exploration, can have equally negative outcomes. Elite amateur athletes, as a group, often represent this phenomenon. A foreclosed identity status poses challenges as these individuals face the reality of not attaining a professional athletic career and must transition to second careers. These challenges include a loss of identity, lack of skills for a secondary career, body changes, injuries, forced retirement, and the loss of support networks. Similar challenges and feelings of hopelessness have been noted in the career transitions of professional ballet dancers. However, research on the career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers is limited. What research does exist suggests that this career transition is difficult for these former ballet dancers. They

face some of the same challenges as professional dancers, including not preparing for the end of their ballet careers, lack of exploring interests outside of ballet, loss of identity, and loss of social support. Additionally, semi-elite amateur ballet dancers must cope with not attaining their dream, do not have career accomplishments upon which they can reflect, and must deal with others discounting their experiences. Finally, there are no specific supports in place to help these former ballet dancers transition to second careers. All of this can lead to a sense of hopelessness with no apparent viable future. Hope has been found to be facilitative in athletes' subjective well-being, rehabilitation beliefs, and rehabilitation behaviors. However, the role that hope plays in the career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers has yet to be examined. Four frameworks were addressed as a way to view hope in the career transitions of amateur ballet dancers. Taken together, they view hope as a developmental construct which is meaningful, dynamic, embedded in the social world of the individuals, and cannot be understood without understanding hopelessness. It was anticipated that hope would play a positive role in the career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers. Thus, the current study examined how former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers experienced hope as they transitioned to meaningful alternate careers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Qualitative methods are an effective approach for engaging in an exploratory analysis where the intention is to make sense of complex phenomena, to learn from participants, and to understand phenomena in detail and context (Creswell, 2012, 2013; Morse & Richards, 2002). The role of hope in career transitions of semi-elite female ballet dancers who had to give up their dream of a professional career and transition to another career has not been explored. The purpose of this study was to explore the in-depth experience of hope during semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers career transitions. Therefore, a qualitative approach was taken, as the goals of qualitative research support this study's purpose. The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework used to guide the current study. This chapter also includes a description of participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, research quality, and ethical considerations.

Theoretical Framework

According to Crotty (1998), a sociologist, researchers must be mindful, explicit, and justify the methods chosen for a research project. In order to achieve this, a qualitative researcher must examine the fitness of his or her views on the nature of knowledge in accordance with certain methodologies. Crotty (1998) developed a framework that enables the researcher to gain a sense of stability and direction in the building of research projects that matches with his or her worldviews. This framework is a scaffold approach, moving in a logical fashion, with each choice building upon the last. First, the researcher must examine his or her assumptions of the nature of knowledge (epistemology), which leads to a particular research paradigm (theoretical perspective), towards the choice of a methodology, and finally, to the specific methods of the research project. This chapter uses Crotty's (1998) framework as a guide to outline the

epistemological stance, theoretical perspectives, methodology, and specific methods of this study. It should be noted that in this document, the framework will be laid out differently from Crotty's (1998) description, as I will discuss the methodology before the theoretical perspectives.

Epistemology

Crotty (1998) defines epistemology as the theory of knowledge that defines what kind of knowledge is possible, adequate, and legitimate. Further, at this level, Crotty (1998) argued that the researcher must examine his or her assumptions about the nature of being (ontology), as choosing a theoretical perspective involves understanding both "what is" and "what it means to know" (p.10).

I have taken a social constructionist epistemological stance to this research study. According to Crotty (1998) the social constructionist views knowledge as "contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interactions between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). Further, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated, the social constructionist paradigm holds that there are multiple realties (relativist ontology), and that knowledge is co-created between individuals (subjectivist epistemology). Hence, there is no one truth, but rather many truths which are co-constructed between individuals embedded within a social context.

Research employing a social constructionist paradigm expands interpretation to include the cultural and historical context in which the study is embedded (McLeod, 2000). This paradigm holds that participants construct meaning of the same phenomena in different ways (Feast & Melles, 2010). Further, a social constructionist paradigm holds that the researcher is shaped by his or her own lived experience, and this lived experience will influence the knowledge he or she creates and the data that is created by the participant (Lincoln et al., 2018).

Thus, knowledge is not discovered, but rather constructed (Harre, 1993). The social constructionist paradigm seeks to understand how the participant and researcher, who are embedded within cultural traditions, co-construct the world (McLeod, 2000). It is important to note that the researcher will not understand the participant's meaning in its entirety, rather the researcher and participant will construct meaning that is mediated by both the researcher's and the participant's worlds (Creswell, 2013). This results in a rich understanding of the phenomena under study.

The social constructionist paradigm is appropriate for this study because I wanted to explore how semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers experience hope in the social context of early career transitions. Furthermore, it has been noted that hope itself is a socially constructed concept (Webb, 2007). Specifically, the form that hope takes at a specific time, and in specific groups or cultures, is influenced by social processes. Finally, just as participants had their own unique experiences of hope during their career transitions, I also entered into this research with my own personal experience of the phenomenon. Therefore, I wanted to create a co-constructed meaning of hope during this career transition.

Methodology

Crotty (1998) defines methodology as the research design that explains the strategy or plan of action of the research project, and informs and rationalizes the choice of specific methods. There are many different qualitative methodologies which attempt to understand how the world is constructed, each coming to an understanding from a slightly different way (McLeod, 2000). The current study used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) because of its focus on the lived experience of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009) as opposed to other methodologies which focus on stories of a phenomenon (i.e., narrative inquiry; Riessman, 2008),

developing a theory (i.e., grounded theory; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and producing knowledge to be used in applied settings (i.e., interpretive description; Thorne, 2008). IPA comes out of the field of psychology, and is rooted in the theoretical perspectives of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). It is also consistent with social constructionism as will be discussed.

In IPA, the researcher is concerned with "what happens when the everyday flow of lived experience takes on a particular significance for people" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). When important events happen in our lives, this approach takes the stance that individuals try and make sense of their experience (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher's role is to interpret the participants' experience. IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of an individual to learn what the experience was like and what sense he or she made of his or her experience. As a result of IPA's focus on depth rather than breath of individual cases, a small sample size, five to 10 participants, is used in order to allow for adequate analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004). This sample size still allows for similarities and differences across individual cases to be explored using this approach (Smith, 2004).

The developer of IPA, Jonathan Smith, has noted three characteristic features of IPA (Smith, 2004). First IPA is idiographic, and as such, is concerned with starting and completing a detailed examination of one case before moving on to the next case. Once a detailed analysis of each case has been completed, a cross analysis of themes from each case can be conducted. Secondly, IPA is inductive, meaning that the researcher does not verify or disprove hypotheses found in the existing literature. Rather, the researcher approaches his or her research from a flexible and open stance, which allows for the emergence of unanticipated themes and topics

based on the analysis of the data. Thirdly, IPA is interrogative, which involves discussing the results of the data analysis in light of the relevant literature.

Theoretical Perspective

According to Crotty (1998), a theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance that informs the methodology, providing a context for the process and the grounding of logic and criteria. The present research is grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. The following discussion includes a description of each of these theoretical perspectives, how each perspective informs IPA, and how IPA is relevant to this study.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach concerned with the study of experience (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009). It is thought that experience can only be truly understood within the context of our interactions with objects and individuals (McLeod, 2000). According to Creswell (2013), the goal of research studies that are grounded in phenomenology is to attempt to describe the common meaning that individuals have regarding a lived experience of a specific phenomenon. This is accomplished by reducing the experience of a phenomena to its seemingly essential qualities (McLeod, 2000). In other words, phenomenology provides a way for the researcher to examine and understand lived experience (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, phenomenology is thought to be foundational to qualitative research (McLeod, 2000). In discussing phenomenology, it is important to examine the contributions of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre to the development of this theoretical orientation (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenology was developed by Husserl with the intention of finding ultimate truth, disagreeing that such could be found using rationality and logic (McLeod, 2000). Husserl argued that ultimate truth could only be found by the intentional examination of everyday experiences in

order to truly understand one's emotions, actions, and perceptions of the world. In other words, one needs to self-consciously reflect upon his or her experience of the world to find ultimate truth (Smith et al., 2009). Husserl argued that one must acknowledge and set aside or "bracket" common taken-for-granted assumptions of the world in order to truly understand another's experience (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009).

Husserl's stance on finding "the ultimate truth" has been a contentious point for modern qualitative researchers (McLeod, 2000). Many now assert that experience is constructed or reflexively contextualized and, as a result, encompasses "a" truth rather than "the" truth. In other words, rather than just one population-level view of reality, individuals construct their own realities, thus resulting in many realities. Despite this, Husserl highlighted the importance of intentional reflection on every day experiences in order to find the essence of experience (Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenology was furthered by Husserl's student, Martin Heidegger, who introduced a hermeneutic and existential emphasis to the philosophy of phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009). Specifically, Heidegger questioned the existence of knowledge outside of an interpretative stance, grounding this stance in the world of things, people, relationships, and language. For Heidegger, meaning making was of utmost importance as it gives way to what is significant to human beings. Heidegger argued that as human beings, we live in a world of objects, relationships, and language. Further, being in this world is always perspectival, temporal, and in relation to something. Thus, according to Heidegger, in order to make sense of one's experience in this world, one must engage in meaning making and interpretation activities.

Merleau-Ponty placed emphasis on the embodied nature of our relationship to the world which leads to one having his or her own individual perspective of the world (Smith et al., 2009),

In other words, we see ourselves as different from everything else in the world; rather than being absorbed within the world, we are outside looking in. Thus, Merleau-Ponty brought to phenomenology the idea that experience is subjective, and although we can attempt to understand another's experience, we can never fully share in that experience. Jean-Paul Sartre also described the importance of personal and social relationships in the conception of our experience (Smith et al., 2009). According to Sartre, this allows one to understand his or her experience in relation to the presence and absence of relationships with others. Furthermore, Sartre brought to phenomenology the idea that human beings are always in a state of becoming themselves. Sartre argued that rather than being a pre-existing unit to be discovered, humans are a continuous project to be discovered. In other words, Sartre was not concerned with what we are, but rather what we will become. Sartre also highlighted the importance of understanding that what is absent is just as important as what is present in our journey of defining who we are.

Taken together, phenomenology is the study of lived experience which involves intentional reflection upon everyday experiences which are embedded in the social world and meaning making of these experiences to produce subjective perspectives.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Phenomenology. Like phenomenology, IPA examines one's subjective lived experience at a particular moment in time, or of great importance to the individual (Smith et al., 2009). IPA allows for the experience to be described using one's own words, rather than using predefined categories. Further, IPA places emphasis on the meaning that one ascribes to the lived experience.

The role that hope plays in the early career transitions of semi-elite amateur female dancers has yet to be explored. Further, this transition is a significant event in the lives of these women, one that elicits feelings of hopelessness and highlights a yearning for hope (Sandham,

2012). Therefore, IPA's focus on the study of experience (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009), allowed for the exploration of the experience of hope during this significant event.

Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009). It can be defined as "an act of interpretation which 'bring[s] to light an underlying coherence or sense' within the actions, behaviour or utterances of a person or group" (McLeod, 2000, p. 22). Hermeneutics involves interpretation of texts, and was first established to interpret biblical texts (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009). Since its development, hermeneutics has been used to interpret a wide range of texts including literature, history, and law. Further, like phenomenology, hermeneutics is foundational for qualitative research (McLeod, 2000). In discussing hermeneutics, it is important to highlight the contributions of three philosophers: Schleiermacher, Heidegger, and Gadamer (Smith et al., 2009).

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher was one of the first to write about hermeneutic inquiry (Smith et al., 2009). According to Schleiermacher, interpretation involves grammatical and psychological interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). Grammatical interpretation involves the exact and objective meaning of the text, while psychological interpretation is concerned with the individuality that the author or speaker brings to the text. In essence, Schleiermacher spoke to a holistic view of the interpretation process. He argued that the unique qualities of the writer's intentions and techniques brings meaning to the text, and this meaning is interpreted by the reader.

According to Smith et al. (2009), Schleiermacher stated that interpretation cannot be reduced to a set of defined procedures, rather it is an art which involves many skills including intuition. The intention is to develop an understanding of both the author and the text (Smith et al., 2009). Delving into a detailed and holistic analysis of the text leads the researcher to develop

a better understanding of the experience than the experiencer themselves. This is not to be taken to mean that the researcher's account is more "true" than the participant's, rather the researcher, through his or her analysis, can provide a different perspective to that of the experiencer.

In addition to furthering the understanding of phenomenology, Martin Heidegger was influential in the development of hermeneutics (McLeod, 2000; Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). Heidegger brought to hermeneutics the concept of fore-structure, which entails one's prior experiences, assumptions, and preconceptions about a phenomenon that he or she brings to the research (Smith et al., 2009). According to Husserl, one needs to set aside or "bracket" one's fore-structure in order to truly understand the experience of the other. Heidegger disagreed, stating that it is impossible to engage in an examination of the phenomenon without drawing on fore-structure. However, priority should be given to understanding the phenomenon. Heidegger argued that instead of using fore-structure to make sense of the phenomenon, one can understand his or her fore-structure in light of the phenomenon. Therefore, in this sense "bracketing" is a cyclical reflective practice, that is only ever partially achieved.

Hans-Georg Gadamer was also influential in the development of hermeneutics, and emphasized the importance of history and tradition on the interpretation process (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009). Gadamer agreed with Heidegger's argument that it is the phenomenon that informs one's fore-structure (Smith et al., 2009). Gadamer furthered this line of thinking by stating that the phenomenon influences interpretation, which informs one's fore-structure, which then informs interpretation, repeating in a cyclical manner. In addition, Gadamer argued that one can hold many conceptions and that these are compared, contrasted and modified during the interpretation process.

Gadamer made a distinction between understanding the meaning of the text and understanding the author, stating the priority is with understanding the text (Smith et al., 2009). He argued that one needs to first understand what was meant by the text, and then to understand the other's meaning of such. Furthermore, Gadamer felt the time difference between the past and the present impedes the researcher's ability to fully understand the intent of the author (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009). Rather than trying to relive the past, he argued that interpretation is a marriage between the past and the present. History, in light of the present, informs understanding of the phenomenon.

A key concept to hermeneutics is the hermeneutic circle, which involves a dynamic relationship between the whole and the part (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009). This part-whole and micro-macro relationship is important for interpretation (Ellis, 2006). "To understand the whole, one must understand the parts; to understand a part, one must understand its role in relationship to the other parts and to the whole" (Ellis, 2006, p. 116). In other words, to understand the participant's overarching story the researcher needs to understand the little stories he or she tells; to understand the little stories the researcher needs to understand how that story relates to the other little stories told and to the overarching story. The back and forth between the overarching story and the little stories is called the hermeneutic circle (Ellis, 2006). "The hermeneutic circle also invites the researcher to recognize the stories uncovered in their research as microcosms of larger macro stories" (Ellis, 2006, p. 116). "Without reading individual stories in the larger stories of which they are a part, researchers are not likely to interpret critically the conditions contributing to the individual stories they have uncovered" (Ellis, 2006, p. 116). In essence, one cannot interpret the small stories the participant tells without looking to the overarching story.

Taken together, hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation that involves the researcher immersing himself or herself fully in a text to obtain an understanding of the both the text and the meaning that the participant ascribes to the text. Further, the researcher's prior experience and assumptions about the phenomena under study play an important role in interpretation, and ultimately change throughout the interpretation process.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Hermeneutics. In alignment with hermeneutics, IPA's main focus during analysis is interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). IPA presumes that "there is a phenomenon ready to shine forth, but detective work is required by the researcher to facilitate the coming forth, and then to make sense of it once it has happened" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 35). Making sense of an account involves close interpretative engagement on the part of the researcher, and the researcher may not be aware of all his or her preconceptions prior to this process. IPA deals with the researcher's preconceptions using the hermeneutic circle model, with the researcher's ongoing biography as the "whole", and the "part" is the encounter with the participant. In doing so, IPA places focus on the researcher's interaction with the participant rather than trying to set aside or "bracket" his or her preconceptions. The goal is that this intense involvement with the participant will influence the researcher's preconceptions. Further, the IPA analysis process has been described as involving double hermeneutics or a dual interpretation process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). This process involves the researcher making sense of the participant's lived experience, while the participant is trying to make sense of his or her own lived experience.

I was concerned with how participants made sense of hope in their career transitions and the meaning they derived from this sense making. IPA's focus on reflections and interpretation (McLeod, 2000; Smith et al., 2009), allowed and encouraged participants to make sense of their

experience. I was provided space to interpret participants' sense making. In addition, I came to this research with my own experience of transitioning out of a semi-elite amateur ballet career, and my assumptions played an important role in the interpretation process.

Idiography. Idiography is concerned with the study of the particular (Smith et al., 2009). It involves an in-depth analysis of single cases, examining each participant's lived experience of the phenomenon from his or her own perspective and within his or her unique context (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Each case must be examined in-depth before providing general statements about the phenomenon under study. This differs from most of the empirical work conducted in psychology, which examines groups and populations (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Idiography. IPA is informed by idiography in two main ways (Smith et al., 2009). First, IPA focuses on the detailed and in-depth analysis of the particular, meaning the analysis must be thorough and systematic. Second, IPA involves understanding the lived experience of a particular phenomenon from the participant's perspective in a particular context. As such, IPA employs a small sample size which is purposively selected.

The goal of this research was to provide a space for former semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers to reflect upon and speak about their experiences of hope during their career transitions. Also, I wanted to provide a rich description of each participants' experience of the phenomenon. IPA's focus on the study of the particular (Smith et al., 2009), allowed for the detailed analysis of each participants' experience.

Methods

According to Crotty (1998), methods are the procedures used to gather and analyze data. The following section will include a detailed description of participant selection and recruitment, data collection, data analysis, approach to writing, assessment of quality, and ethical considerations as they relate to this study.

Participants. The following section will outline the study's inclusion criteria, recruitment strategies used, and final participant sample obtained.

Inclusion Criteria. IPA is concerned with exploring a particular experience, and as such, I employed purposeful sampling to select participants (Smith et al., 2009). Purposeful sampling is used to select research participants who have experience with the phenomena under study (Bogdan & Knopp Biklen, 2007). Since this study was a continuation of my master's research, I sought a similar population that encompassed females who wanted to become professional ballerinas, actively pursued this vocation, but were ultimately unsuccessful (Sandham, 2012). Specific criteria representative of the phenomena under study were developed to obtain a purposeful sample (Patton, 2002). The inclusion criteria for the current study were as follows: (a) *female*; (b) *18 years of age or older*; (c) *a former ballet dancer*; (d) *auditioned at least once for a professional ballet school*; (e) *wanted to dance professionally, but was unsuccessful*; (f) *struggled to navigate the transition to life after dance*; (g) *feels she is currently living a meaningful, satisfying life*; and (h) *is currently motivated to reflect upon this experience*.

The inclusion criteria for this study were identified after careful consideration in order to obtain the most relevant sample to answer the research question. I chose to study female ballet dancers for multiple reasons. Within the ballet world, males and females experience many differences that may impact career experiences. For instance, male dancers can start training later

in life than female dancers because of sex characteristics (Hamilton, 1998). There are a greater number of female professional dancers as compared to male dancers, (Hamilton, 1998; Hill, 2019), equating to higher competition among females (Wulff, 1998). Finally, because there are more replacements for female dancers as compared to males, unacceptable behaviour (i.e., missing rehearsals, being late for class) is often excused for males but not for females (Greben, 2002). Differences in career experiences among males and females are also illuminated in the non-dance world (Betz, 2005; Schultheiss, 2020). For instance, women tend to be employed in traditionally female occupations and are paid less than men (Betz, 2005; Schultheiss, 2020). Women also face occupational barriers such as gender stereotypes, family/work conflicts, issues with the education system (Betz, 2005; Schultheiss, 2020), and socialized beliefs about one's abilities (Betz, 2005). Taken together, it is believed that female experiences of ballet training and career transitions are different from males and should be looked at separately in the research. The criteria of *being a former ballet dancer, auditioned for a professional ballet school, and wanted to dance professionally* was chosen to select a participant who was serious about her intentions of becoming a professional ballerina. The criteria of *being unsuccessful in her dream to dance professionally and struggled to navigate her transition* highlights that the participant was not able to achieve the goal she was focused on attaining and went through a difficult time adjusting or finding a new path. Finally, the criteria of *being 18 years of age or older, feeling that she is currently living a meaningful life, and is currently motivated to reflect upon her experience*, are meant to help ensure that the participant was through the transition period, living a meaningful life, and able to reflect upon her experience with limited or no distress at the time of interviews.

Recruitment. Following ethics approval from the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board (REB), participants were recruited through the provincial dance association, a local post-

secondary institution, and Facebook. The recruitment locations were chosen to allow access to both participants who were still involved and those who were no longer involved in the dance world. I contacted staff at the provincial dance association and the director of the local post-secondary institution's dance performance group via email to ask permission to advertise through their associations (see Appendix A). In addition, I approached the local post-secondary institution's student services for both the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport & Recreation and Faculty of Education to ask permission to place posters advertising the study around their buildings. Once permission was granted, posters containing the study information and my contact information (see Appendix B) were placed in visible locations at the local post-secondary institution (e.g., entrances and poster boards in the physical education building, dance studio, and Education building). An advertisement was placed in the provincial dance association's monthly electronic newsletter sent out to their general list serve and, as well, posters were placed throughout their building, and an advertisement was posted on Facebook. All forms of advertising consisted of variations of the poster.

Prospective participants were invited to contact me by email, and a time was arranged for a phone conversation. During this initial conversation, prospective participants were given more information about the study (i.e., approximate length of interviews, number of interviews, privacy/confidentiality issues) and screened for inclusion based on the above criteria. They were also given an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns regarding participation in the study. For those who were deemed eligible to participate in the study, a date and time for the first interview was established. In addition, eligible participants were asked for their email address so that I could send them a demographics form (see Appendix C). The participants were asked to fill out the demographics form and either bring it to the first face-to-face interview or email it to

me before the first phone interview. The purpose of this form was to allow for collection of data that might not be elicited through the interview questions (i.e., age of participant, how old they were when they first started dancing, how participants started dancing).

In addition, I was prepared to utilize a snowball sampling strategy (Smith et al., 2009), which is commonly used in IPA research. In snowball sampling, participants refer others who they feel meet the inclusion criteria (Bogdan & Knopp Biklen, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). A handout containing information about the study and my contact information was developed to provide to participants (see Appendix D). The purpose of this handout was to provide the participants with information about the study so that they could give it to other women who might meet the study selection criteria. One participant inquired about referring a friend for the study and was given the handout to pass on. However, I found that advertising through the provincial dance association, local post-secondary institution, and Facebook provided me with enough interested individuals that I did not have to seek additional snowball sampling referrals. Therefore, the handout was not provided to participants unless they expressed interest in referring others.

Final Sample. As a result of IPA's focus on depth rather than breadth of individual cases, it is suggested that a small sample size, approximately five to 10 participants, be used in order to allow for adequate analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004). Initially, I planned to recruit eight participants to allow for an in-depth analysis of each case, however, after speaking to my supervisor about the relative ease and swiftness of recruitment, we decided to increase the sample to 10 participants and continue with recruitment. I applied to the REB with an amendment and requested permission to increase the sample size to 10 participants. A total of 10 participants from across the province and Canada participated in this study (i.e., eight from

Alberta, one from Ontario, and one from New Brunswick). The participants were selected in the order they responded to the advertisements until the desired sample size was achieved. One additional prospective participant was screened for participation; however, she did not meet the inclusion criteria. Furthermore, three individuals emailed me expressing interest in participating after the desired sample size had been obtained and were placed on a waiting list. I informed these individuals that I would email them if I needed more participants, such as in the case of increasing my sample size or if a participant withdrew from the study. Towards the end of the data collection process, when it was clear that I would not be needing additional participants, I emailed these individuals to let them know that I would not be requiring their participation and thanked them for their interest in my study. I did not ask participants specifically how they heard about the study, however, through informal discussions, it appeared that most participants were recruited through Facebook and posters placed around the post-secondary institution.

Data Collection. The following section outlines the procedures used for data collection, which included interviews and artistic representations of hope.

Interviews. The aim of IPA researchers is to facilitate a rich and detailed first person account of the participants' experiences with the phenomenon under study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004; Smith, et al., 2009). In order to accomplish this, IPA employs the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a source of data. In-depth, semi-structured interviews provide the space for participants to freely tell their stories, thoughts, and emotions regarding the phenomenon under study (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, in-depth, semi-structured interviews allow the participant and researcher to participate in a conversation where original questions can be altered considering the participants' responses, and interesting points can be investigated by further questioning on the part of the researcher (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004;

Smith, et al., 2009). As such, the study utilized three in-depth, semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data. I chose to conduct three interviews to allow for the collection of detailed and rich data, and to allow for the opportunity to address valuable insights highlighted in the first two interviews. It should be noted that two participants were unable to schedule third interviews due to time constraints. Since the participants did not withdraw from the study, their data was still included in the research project. There were, however, some lingering questions that I was not able to address for either participant. Therefore, three interviews were conducted with eight participants. The interviews lasted between approximately 30 to 90 minutes depending on the participant and interview (i.e., some participants were more succinct and some interviews entailed gathering more information). Throughout the entire course of the research process, I documented thoughts, ideas and observations in the form of notes, which acted as secondary sources of data (McLeod, 2000). Such information included my initial impressions of the participants, length and location of interviews, my thoughts and feelings about the interviews, how participants presented during the interviews, any wonderings I had, possible interview questions, possible and tentative themes and subthemes, questions to ask my supervisor, my personal reactions and thoughts, my personal assumptions that could impact findings, and anything else that stood out to me about the participants during the process.

The locations of the interviews varied by participant and participant location. For the five local participants, interviews were either face-to-face or over the phone, depending on the needs of the participants. For instance, all interviews for two of the participants were conducted at an office on the campus of the local university. Two other participants attended their first interviews at the on-campus office, while the second and third interviews were conducted over the phone for their convenience. Finally, for one participant, all three interviews were conducted at her

place of employment for her convenience. Telephone interviews were conducted for the five participants who lived elsewhere in the province and Canada. The timing of the interviews was at the convenience of the participant, with approximately 6 to 8 weeks in between each interview to allow for transcription and the initial noting stage of analysis of the previous interview to be completed (i.e., second stage of analysis which will be discussed in further detail).

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher for analysis. The participants were informed of this prior to the interview process. After each interview, the participants were emailed a copy of the full transcript. This was done to allow participants to review transcripts and provide feedback regarding any errors or misinterpretations. As well, participants were given an opportunity to state if there was any information that came out in the interview that they felt uncomfortable being used in the final document. I am aware that Sparkes (1998) warns against providing participants with the role of final arbiters when it comes to research data, as this assumes that in the context of multiple realities (i.e., participants and researcher), it is the participants that possess the truth. I chose to provide participants the opportunity to have information they felt uncomfortable with excluded from the final document because being a researcher in the field of counselling psychology, I have an obligation to respect the dignity of participants, which means upholding participant's autonomy in the research process (Canadian Psychological Association, 2017). None of the participants identified information that they wanted removed from the final document. However, one participant voiced concern during the first interview that she could be easily identified in the final document. To ease her fear, I also sent her a transcript with her identifying information removed to provide her with an example of how her quotes might be represented in the final document. In addition, two participants made minor edits to transcripts which included clarifying

words or phrases that had been mis-transcribed, correcting spelling of names and places, and correcting grammatical errors. None of the minor edits impacted the analysis of the data.

The first interview focused on participants' experiences of hope during their career transitions. In order to help guide this focus during the first interview, an interview schedule was developed (see Appendix E). An interview schedule acts as a guide to the interview, and includes key questions that the researcher would like to ask during the process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, et al., 2009). For seven participants, the first interview occurred within a week to two weeks after the initial phone conversation, while the first interview for three participants was the same day as the initial conversation, at their request. In addition, one participant asked for the interview schedule prior to the first interview, and after discussing this with my supervisor, a copy was emailed to the participant. During this participant's interview, she noted that she had written out her answers to my questions and read her notes during the interview. During the interviews, some participants required prompts such as, "Can you tell me a little more about that?" to facilitate elaboration on their points. In addition, I found some participants to have difficulty putting their experiences of hope into words (i.e., "It is hard to explain," and "I am not sure if I am explaining right"). During these times, I encouraged participants to try their best. At the end of the first interview, participants were given time to ask questions, and express what it was like to participate in the interview.

In the second interview, I asked participants follow-up questions regarding their experiences of hope during their career transitions. These questions were developed from my analysis of the first interview transcripts and discussions with my supervisor. Examples included elaboration (i.e., You mentioned that friends were hopeful for you during your career transition. Can you expand on this?) and clarification (i.e., It appears that you hold two different

perspectives: hope and no hope? What are your thoughts?) specific to each participant. In addition, questions were developed and asked to all participants regarding concepts that appeared to be pertinent to the interview process (i.e., What metaphor would you use to describe your experience of hope during your career transition?). Similar to the first interview, I found some participants required prompts to elaborate their ideas and encouragement to try their best when faced with difficulties verbally expressing their experiences of hope. At the end of the second interview, time was given for participants to ask questions, voice concerns, and express how it was to participate in this interview.

For the third interview, participants were asked follow-up questions about their experiences of hope during their career transitions that were developed from my analysis of the second interview transcripts and through discussions with my supervisor. Similar to the second interview, these questions incorporated both participant-specific elaboration and clarification questions as well as questions regarding concepts that appeared important to the interview process (i.e., What is the significance of the pseudonym that you chose?). In addition, participants who shared artistic representations with me were asked to talk about the items shared and how these items related to hope during their career transitions. A more detailed explanation of the artistic representations of hope will follow below. Although I prompted some participants to expand on their answers, I found that the artistic representations aided in participants expressing their experiences of hope and also provided a richness to the data (i.e., an artistic visual element). At the end of the third interview, participants were given time to ask questions, voice concerns, and discuss the experience of participating in this research project. As this was the last interview, participants were thanked for sharing their experiences with me and provided

contact information if they wished to obtain further information about the study or a copy of the final document (see Appendix F).

Artistic Representations of Hope. After the second interviews were completed, I met with my supervisor to discuss the concerns I had with some participants struggling to verbally express their experiences of hope. It was through this discussion that we decided to offer participants the option to provide an artistic representation of their hope during their career transitions. The purpose of this option was to allow participants the opportunity to communicate in an artistic based manner that was more aligned with the movement-based self-expression that they were accustomed to with dance (Ali et al., 2017; Quiroga Murcia et al., 2010). Previous research with semi-elite amateur ballet dancers has found the addition of an arts-based component facilitated a greater level of discussion with this population (Sandham, 2012). Furthermore, hope has been linked with creative processes (Lynch, 1965). I applied to the REB to make an amendment requesting permission to provide the option for participants to share with me an artistic representation of hope during their career transitions. Prior to the third interview, I emailed participants inviting the option of sharing with me artistic representations of hope during their career transitions. I stressed that this was an option, and if participants chose not to share, it would not impact their participation. I provided many examples of artistic representations including poems, pictures, music, publicly accessed YouTube clips, or choregraphing their own dance. In addition, I asked that the artistic representations of hope be emailed to me prior to the third interview. Five participants shared artistic representations of hope which included poems, a quote, videos of the participants dancing, videos of participant artwork, and a YouTube video of a ballet performance.

Data analysis. This study employed the data analysis process described by Smith et al. (2009) for conducting IPA research. The authors offer flexible (i.e., can be tailored to research objectives) suggestive guidelines used to analyze data that promotes reflection and engagement with participants' experience of the phenomenon under study (i.e., reading and re-reading, initial noting, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, moving to the next case, and looking for patterns across cases; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, et al., 2009). In addition to the guidelines being flexible, the analysis process is also iterative, non-linear, and inductive (Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2007). Smith et al. (2009) suggests completing the analysis process with one case (i.e., participant) before moving on to the next case in order to keep with IPA's idiographic nature. However, since I conducted three interviews and wanted to use each participant's interviews to inform their subsequent interviews, I completed the analysis of all participants' first interviews before moving on to analyze all second interviews and so forth. In order to be consistent with IPA's focus on the particular, I treated each transcript as a separate entity to allow for participants' uniqueness to emerge (Smith et al., 2009). To the best of my ability, I set aside what I learned from each transcript while working on subsequent transcripts (i.e., I set aside what I learned from each participant's first interviews while analyzing the subsequent first interviews from other participants), in order to not influence the analysis. This was accomplished by rigorously abiding by the steps suggested by Smith et al. (2009) for all interview transcripts for each participant as described in detail below. During the data analysis process, I also kept a research journal to note my process for data analysis as well as to document any insights that arose during this process.

First, I repeatedly immersed myself in the data through listening to the audio-recordings of the interviews and re-reading each participants' transcripts (i.e., reading and re-reading;

Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009) in order to get closely acquainted with each participants' account (Smith et al., 2009). I also noted next interview questions, and any observations, reflections, and thoughts concerning anything that appeared to have significance regarding the interview process (i.e., participants having difficulty putting words to their experiences of hope; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009).

Second, I began initial noting which entailed examining each transcript and noting anything that I found interesting related to language use and meaning (i.e., events/experiences of importance, ability to express self, word choice, use of quotes, use of metaphors, questions posed to self, key words, and main ideas; Smith et al., 2009). My aim was to start to develop an understanding of how each participant talked about, thought about, and understood their experiences of hope during their early career transitions.

Third, I started to develop emergent themes for each transcript (Smith et al., 2009). Each transcript was analyzed in a section by section manner, as I looked for relationships, connections and patterns between my notes. Themes emerged as I moved between the whole (i.e., transcript/overarching story) and part (i.e., quotes/little stories/my notes), continually checking the emerging themes against previous data within the same transcript to ensure I was capturing participants' experiences of hope during their career transitions and my understanding of these experiences. During this process, themes for each transcript were re-evaluated, changed and refined. Final themes consisted of concise statements that were aligned with the research question and sub-questions. After the analysis of each transcript was complete, I compiled a list of themes and respective participant quotes into a Microsoft Word document. When all interviews were analyzed for each participant, their respective lists of themes and quotes were

combined into one document (i.e., each participant had their own combined list representing themes and quotes from their interview transcripts).

Fourth, after initial themes were developed for each participant I began searching for connections and relationships within each participant's individual accounts (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). I typed up a list of themes for each participant's account, and visually inspected this list for themes that I could cluster, and then I developed a descriptive label for each cluster. This was done in a number of ways including: abstraction (i.e., putting similar emerging themes together and developing an overarching super-ordinate theme), subsumption (i.e., moving an emerging theme to super-ordinate theme status in order to bring together related themes), polarization (i.e., combining emerging opposite meaning themes and developing an overarching super-ordinate theme), and contextualization (i.e., emerging themes were grouped together to represent key moments or life events; Smith et al., 2009). The final list included super-ordinate themes and subthemes for each participant, which were checked against the relevant transcript for accuracy. I then create a Word document with super-ordinate and relevant subthemes along with supporting quotes for each participant. I also created a visual for each participants' super-ordinate themes and subthemes for easy reference.

The fifth stage of analysis entailed looking for patterns across participants (Smith et al., 2009). I laid out each participant's visual representation of super-ordinate themes and subthemes, and looked across the visuals for connections and patterns that were both similar and different. During this process, new themes arose, while other themes were reconfigured, relabeled and refined. In addition, I was continually referring to the original transcripts to check for accuracy. Upon completion, super-ordinate themes and subthemes that were common to most, if not all, participants were developed that reflected the experience of hope during their career transitions.

A Word document was developed that included the super-ordinate themes, subthemes, and corresponding participant quotes that I felt best captured the themes.

Approach to Writing. According to Smith et al. (2009), writing up the results of an IPA research study is a creative process that not only includes the participants' lived experiences, but also the voice of the researcher. Smith at al. (2009) also highlighted that there is no one correct way to accomplish this task, rather, the presentation of the results should be "comprehensive, systematic and persuasive to that reader who is coming to your study for the first time" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 109).

In order to help guide the process of writing up the results for this study, I looked to Richardson and St. Pierre's (2018) chapter on writing as a method of inquiry. Specifically, Richardson and St. Pierre (2018) noted the importance of the researcher's, "partial, local, and historical knowledge" (p. 820) of the phenomenon as a way of knowing, rather than having to claim to be all knowing. Further noting researchers,

> . . . do not have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge. They can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectively engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 820).

As such, my personal experience with the phenomenon under study, in combination with listening to participants' stories of their experiences of hope and working with the interview transcripts, is a form of knowing. This form of knowing facilitated my interpretation of participants' experiences, bringing my voice into this work as I wrote up the results.

Assessment of Quality. In line with the suggestions of Smith et al. (2009), I chose to use Yardley's (2000) criteria to assess the quality of the present study. According to Smith et al. (2009), Yardley's criteria are broad, general guidelines that offer a variety of ways to assess research quality and can be used with any qualitative study regardless of theoretical orientation. Yardley (2000) outlines four broad criteria for assessing quality (i.e., sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance).

The first criterion, *sensitivity to context,* addresses theoretical context, existing literature, data, sociocultural setting, perspectives of participants, and ethical concerns. In the current study, multiple efforts were made to ensure I was sensitive to context during the research process. I conducted a thorough literature review and provided a supporting rationale for my choice of methodology, sample, data collection, and data analysis procedures. I reflected upon how my assumptions and beliefs influenced the research process (i.e., data collection, data analysis, and writing up results) through meeting with my supervisor and supervisory committee, writing notes at every stage of the research process, and thinking about how I could have done things differently at the conclusion of the research study. During the interview process, I sought to make participants feel comfortable, heard, and understood. I was also aware of the power differential between the participants and myself, was mindful about language (both verbal and non-verbal) used while communicating with participants, provided participants with the opportunity to ask questions and voice any concerns they had about their interview transcripts, and was aware of ethical issues that could have arisen. While working with the data I sought out and examined data that conflicted with both the current literature, and my own assumptions on the topic. Finally, I was mindful about providing each participant an equal voice which was represented by direct quotes in the final document.

The second criterion, *commitment and rigour*, calls attention to the depth of engagement with the research topic, researcher's skills, and the data collection and analysis process (Yardley, 2000). In regard to the present study, I not only have personal experience with the phenomenon under study, but I also conducted my master's research on early career transitions with the population in question and have presented on this topic multiple times and published an article in this area. Correspondingly, I have continued to keep up to date on the relevant literature in this area of research. I strove to further refine my research skills learned while conducting my master's research by working closely with my supervisor to develop and execute this study. The methods I chose were carefully and thoughtfully selected throughout the research process. For instance, I selected a relatively homogeneous sample that was relevant to the research questions. In addition, I conducted multiple in-depth, semi-structured interviews with all participants in order to facilitate obtaining rich data. During the interview process, I did my best to ensure that participants were comfortable and felt heard, understood, and valued for their contributions. Data were analyzed in an interpretive manner, and I took special care to analyze each participant's account carefully to ensure that I captured their unique experiences along with their overarching shared experiences. Finally, in the final document each theme was supported with participant quotes, with some quotes having the additional support of participants' artistic representations of hope.

The third criterion is *transparency and coherence*, which addresses the clarity of the argument, methods and data presentation, fit between theory and methods, and the researcher's ability to reflect upon his or her motivations and decisions during the research process (Yardley, 2000). I undertook a number of steps to ensure that transparency and coherence were met within this study. I described my personal motivations for conducting research on this topic and, as

well, documented my feelings, thoughts and processes during all stages of this research project. I provided a supported argument for why this research should be conducted and described how the methods chosen fit with the underlying theoretical assumptions of IPA. I also attempted to clearly describe my rationale for the sample chosen, and the recruitment, data collection, and analysis procedures implemented in this study. I sought to present findings in a way that was both engaging to the reader and an accurate portrayal of participants' experiences which were grounded in the data. In addition, during the research process, I had guidance from multiple research advisors to ensure the fidelity of the research project. I worked closely with my research supervisor during study development, recruitment, data collection, data analysis and the writing process to ensure that an experienced qualitative researcher reviewed my work. For instance, my supervisor reviewed my interpretation of the data and emerging themes to ensure that the final themes were meaningful, clear, and grounded in the data. In addition, I received feedback from my supervisory committee which helped me produce a well thought out and logical study as well as facilitated research quality. Finally, in the early stages of the research process, I attended a monthly Hope Research Discussion Group where I discussed questions and concerns regarding my study with fellow hope researchers.

The fourth criterion is *impact and importance* which attends to the study's ability to enhance understanding of the topic, the practicality of the findings, and if the study leads to a change in how we as a society think and talk about the phenomenon under study (Yardley, 2000). The research on career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers is limited, and therefore my goal for this project was to further understanding of this experience and particularly the role that hope plays in facilitating the transition process. I sought to change how we as a society view and talk about young hopeful ballet dancers who spend their youth working towards

a professional ballet career, but are unsuccessful. Specifically, I wanted to highlight that the loss of ballet career is devastating to these dancers, and needs to be viewed by society as such. Along with providing insights into future research, I also provided practical recommendations for research, parents/caregivers, dance teachers and helping professionals working with this population in a therapeutic context based upon my interpretations of the research findings. Finally, I have and will continue to disseminate the results of the study, through conference presentations and future publications, with the hopes that it will help others experiencing the phenomenon under study.

In addition to the criteria laid out by Yardley (2000), Smith et al. (2009) suggest organizing all study materials in a way that an independent audit could be conducted in order to assess the quality of the study (Smith et al., 2009). An independent audit involves the researcher filing all information about the study and the data in a way that someone not involved in the research process could follow the chain of evidence that connects the beginning of the study to the end report. The goal of an independent audit is that someone not related to the research could check that the final report is a plausible or credible account in relation to the data collected and that there is a logical progression through the evidence. Thus, I ensured that my notes, interview schedules, electronic copies of the interviews, interview transcripts, artistic representations of hope, documents with themes and supporting quotes, visuals of themes, and the final report are organized in a way that another individual could check through the evidence trail and determine if the final report is credible, plausible, and logical based upon the data I collected.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the commencement of this study, ethics approval was obtained through the Research Ethics Board of the University of Alberta (REB) to ensure that this study met ethical

research standards and regulations. In addition, as a student researcher and a provisionally registered psychologist with the College of Alberta Psychologists, I was obligated to follow research ethical guidelines set forth by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans 3rd Ed. (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018), and the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, which includes ethical standards for conducting research with human participants (CPA, 2017). There are three main ethical areas that were addressed in this study: Respect for Dignity of Persons and People, Responsible Caring, and Integrity in Relationships (CIHR et al., 2018; CPA, 2017; Truscott & Crook, 2013). The following section will describe how I addressed these three areas in the present study, with specific attention to informed consent, confidentiality, the risks and benefits of participating in this study, and dual roles.

Respect for the Dignity of Persons and People

Respect for the dignity of persons and people is the belief that each participant should be treated as a human being, and not as an object or a means to an end (CIHR et al., 2018; CPA, 2017). In other words, the self-worth of the participant needs to be of the utmost importance to the researcher. This is done by protecting the autonomy of the participant by obtaining informed consent and respecting the confidentiality of the participant.

Informed Consent. Respect for the dignity of persons and people involves preserving the autonomy of the participant by letting him or her make a free and informed choice regarding participating in a research study (CIHR et al., 2018; CPA, 2017; Truscott & Crook, 2013). At the beginning of the first interviews, I discussed informed consent with the participants which provided information regarding the study, the benefits and risks of participating, outlined confidentiality issues, and highlighted the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the

study at any time without penalty (CIHR et al., 2018; Haverkamp, 2005; Richard & Morse, 2007; Shadish et al., 2002). Time was given for participants to ask any questions regarding informed consent and their participation in the study before signing the consent form (see Appendix G) (CIHR et al., 2018). For participants whose interviews were conducted over the phone, the informed consent form was emailed to them and they were asked to review the form, sign, and send it back to me before the first interview. Participants were told that if they had any questions or concerns about informed consent, they could email me. At the beginning of the first interviews, we reviewed the informed consent form together.

Consent is an ongoing process (CIHR et al., 2018; Haverkamp, 2005; Truscott & Crook, 2013), beginning with participants' initial contact with the researcher and ending when participants' involvement in the study is completed (CIHR et al., 2018; Haverkamp, 2005). As such, I was obligated to inform participants of changes to the research project that impacted their consent to participant (i.e., potential risks). During the research process I informed participants about two changes to the research project. First, prior to the third interview, participants were invited to share artistic representations of their experiences of hope during their career transitions. I informed participants that sharing was optional, and if they decided not to share it would not impact their participation in the study. Participants who agreed to share were asked to review and sign an artistic representation of hope informed consent form (see Appendix H). This form provided information about the purpose of sharing an artistic representation of hope, examples of possible artistic representations, and highlighted that all identifying information would be removed from the representations in the final document. This form also provided an option for participants to consent to having their artistic representations of hope included in the final document and future presentations of this research study, which gave me permission to use

the representations as it relates solely to disseminating the results of this study (Mitchell, 2011). I informed the participants that if they had any questions or concerns they could email me before signing the consent form.

Second, I was unable to remove identifying information from some of the shared artistic representations of hope that I obtained consent to use in the final document (i.e., links to participants' personal YouTube channel where a name is attached). I applied to the REB to make an amendment requesting permission to provide the option for participants to consent to the use of their artistic representations of hope with their identifying information attached in the final document and future research documents related to this study (i.e., journal articles, presentations). It should be noted, that although I obtained multiple artistic representations (i.e., YouTube videos) with identifying information attached, I was interested in including the artistic representation from one particular participant in the final document. After I gained approval from the REB, I contacted the respective participant through email and arranged a phone conversation. During this phone conversation, the participant was informed of my inability to remove her identifying information from her artistic representation. She was given the option of including the representation in the final and future documents with her identifying information attached. The participant was informed that this was voluntary, and if she did not consent it would not impact her participation. We also discussed the risks of including identifying information (i.e., her identity will no longer be protected and she would be identifiable by those who view the final document). Finally, the participant was informed that if she did not consent (which also was indicated by not returning the consent form), her artistic representation would not be included in the final document. At the end of the phone call, I gave the participant the opportunity to ask questions, voice any concerns, and noted that I would give her time to think about her decision.

After the phone call, I emailed the participant a copy of the original informed consent form and artistic representation of hope informed consent form to remind her of what she had previously consented to. In addition, I emailed the participant a disclosure of identifiable information consent form so that if she decided to have her artistic representation included with her identifying information, she could sign and email the form back to me (see Appendix I). The form included the information that was discussed during the phone conversation. It should be noted that the participant did agree to having her artistic representation included in the final document with her identifying information attached.

In addition to informing participants about the two changes to the study and obtaining the respective written consents, I continually checked in with participants throughout the research process by providing them with copies of their transcripts, opportunities to ask questions and voice concerns, and highlighted that they could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

Confidentiality. Another important aspect of respecting the dignity of persons and people is protecting the confidentiality of the participant (CPA, 2017). It is vital that the researcher protects participants' privacy by keeping all personal information confidential to the best of his or her ability, in order to reduce the potential for harm to the participant (CIHR et al., 2018; Truscott & Crook, 2013). I took this duty very seriously and many steps were taken to ensure participant confidentiality was protected at all stages of the research process. At the onset of the interview process, participants were given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym that was used to represent themselves during the research process (i.e., interview recording files, interview transcripts, data analysis documents). All hard copies of research documentation (e.g., hard copies of transcripts, artistic representations of hope and researcher's notes) were securely

kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office. All electronic copies of these documents, including the raw digital copy of the interviews, were securely kept on my encrypted and password protected computer. Access to the data was only made available to myself and my supervisor. In the final document, participants were identified using their previously chosen pseudonym and all potential identifying information (i.e., names, cities, ballet schools) was removed. In addition, all identifying information was removed from the artistic representations of hope that were included in the final document, with the exception of one participant who consented to including her representation with her identifying information attached. Finally, all research documents will be securely stored in my office (i.e., locked filing cabinet, and my encrypted and password protected computer) for five years from the completion of the study, at which time I will delete electronic copies and shred hard documents.

Responsible Caring

Another important area in regard to research with human participants is Responsible Caring (CPA, 2017). Responsible caring involves the researcher making note of the possible risks and benefits of participating in a research study, ensuring the perceived benefits outweigh the perceived risks, and providing solutions if participant harm results from participating (CPA, 2017; Truscott & Crook, 2013). The following section will include a discussion of this study's risks and benefits.

Risks. Though the risks from participating in the present study were low, there is always some possible, even unanticipated risk for participants who are involved in research (CIHR et al., 2018). There was a possibility that asking participants to recall memories of challenges to hope during their career transitions could have caused emotional distress. During interviews, I actively listened for any signs of discomfort or distress. Apart from one participant voicing surprise at

still feeling hurt years after experiencing not attaining her ballet career, no participants displayed any signs of emotional distress or discomfort during the interview process. In case such a situation arose, I was prepared to offer participants a break and I prepared a list of free or low-cost support resources to provide participants if/when appropriate. However, this list was not handed out to participants as no identified need came to light (see Appendix J).

Benefits. Participating in a research study can provide benefits to the participant (CIHR et al., 2018; Truscott & Crook, 2013). Further, there is ample evidence that research interviews about hope tend to be a positive experience for clients (Howell, Jacobson et al., 2015; Larsen et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2015; Larsen & Stege, 2012). Current participants described multiple therapeutic benefits to participating in this study. For instance, the research interviews provided a forum to talk about participants' experiences, something not previously done, with the added benefit of talking with someone who had gone through the phenomenon (i.e., shared understanding). Telling their stories provided participants with the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and how it shaped them as a person through making connections between the past and present. The interviews provided the opportunity to bring back fond memories of the past and relive them during our conversations. Participating in the study also helped participants further process their experiences, with some participants noting the development of a new relationship with ballet (i.e., learning to love ballet again). Finally, talking about hope facilitated a new awareness of hope and the role that hope currently plays in participants' lives.

Integrity in Relationships

A final area regarding the ethics in research with human participants that was addressed in this study is Integrity in Relationships (CPA, 2017). Integrity in relationships involves the researcher being aware of how his or her background, personal needs, and values influence

research. As well, the researcher needs to be open and honest about these influences, and proceed in an unbiased way in order to avoid a conflict of interest. The following section will discuss dual roles as it related to the current study.

Dual Role. Dual roles involve the researcher playing two roles in regard to a participant, the role of the researcher and another significant role (i.e., emotional, professional, or authoritarian; Truscott & Crook, 2013). Dual roles can create conflicts, power imbalances, undue pressure, and coercion that can affect the research relationship and the participant's autonomy (CIHR et al., 2018; Truscott & Crook, 2013). Since I have personal experience with the phenomenon under study and meet the inclusion criteria, there was a possibility that I may have had past contact with prospective participants (i.e., personal relationship). I was mindful about this possibility during recruitment and tried to mitigate dual roles to the best of my ability (Truscott & Crook, 2013). During the initial phone conversation with prospective participants, I disclosed my dance history in order to determine if there were commonalities in our pasts. In addition, I did not have any current associations with the dance community as I was not dancing at the time of recruitment. Despite these precautions, I was contacted by two prospective participants who I had previous relationships with through my earlier dance experience. Through discussions with my supervisor, we decided to inform the prospective participants of the risks of entering into a dual role and have them decide if they wished to participate if they met the inclusion criteria. I screened both prospective participants, and only one met all inclusion criteria. During my initial phone conversation with this prospective participant, we discussed the risks of dual roles (i.e., feeling pressured or coerced) and her comfort level participating in a study with me as the principle investigator. The prospective participant noted that she acknowledged the risks and was fully comfortable participating despite our previous relationship.

I also informed her that if at any point she felt uncomfortable continuing on with the study, she could withdraw from the study without penalty.

Summary

The current study sought to answer the question: how do former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers experience hope as they successfully transition to meaningful alternate careers? In order to accomplish this, an IPA study involving 10 participants was conducted. Data were collected through two or three in-depth, semi-structured interviews which ranged between 30 minutes to 90 minutes in length. Participants were also invited to share artistic representations of their experiences of hope during their career transitions, which were discussed in the third interviews. Data analysis followed the procedure set out by Smith et al. (2009) for conducting research using IPA. In order to establish quality of the research, I employed Yardley's (2000) criteria for assessing quality and all study material was organized in a manner that allowed for a possible independent audit to be conducted (Smith et al., 2009). Ethical considerations followed the standards set out by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans 3rd Ed. (CIHR et al., 2018), and the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (CPA, 2017).

Chapter 4: Findings

Research on semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers' experiences of hope as they transition to second careers appears to not exist. To explore how former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers experience hope as they successfully transition to meaningful alternative careers, a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 participants were conducted. This research also aimed to explore both the facilitators and threats to hope, as well as the environmental factors related to hope during this transition.

This chapter outlines the research study findings. I begin by briefly introducing the participants and providing a short description of an impression each made on me during our meetings. Please refer to Table 1 for participant demographics. My purpose is to provide the reader with a framework to facilitate understanding of participants' experiences of hope during their career transitions. It is interesting to note that during the interview process, I asked each participant the reasoning behind their chosen pseudonym, as it was apparent that these chosen names were of importance to participants. It was highlighted that the chosen pseudonyms were relational representations of hope for the participants, whether that be the name of an important loved one, the name of an influential fictional character, or a childhood nickname. The rest of this chapter will be allocated to describing the four superordinate themes representing the participants' lived experiences of hope during their career transitions. This includes a detailed explanation of each theme and relevant supporting quotes from the 10 participants to highlight their experiences of hope during their career transitions.

Introduction to the Participants

Delaine (Late Thirties)

Delaine began ballet classes at the age of 3 and danced for the next 22 years. Delaine realized that she wanted to become a professional ballet dancer at 10 years of age. It was around this age, and at the recommendation of her dance teachers, that she began dancing competitively and soon after, started auditioning for professional ballet schools. Delaine attended various professional ballet summer programs during her adolescence. During her time at the ballet schools she had opportunities to watch and take classes with professional ballet dancers, noting "That was amazing. I definitely looked up to them [professional ballet dancers] and thought that was something [ballet career] that I want to do." After graduating high school, she auditioned for various cruise ships and a University Dance Program, where she was accepted and completed 2 years.

Throughout the interviews, Delaine was short and to the point about her experiences, in a matter of fact manner. During the interviews we discussed vulnerable topics (i.e., eating disorders) which she spoke openly and honestly about. When Delaine was describing difficult experiences, she appeared composed, showing little emotion. While appearing to be in a comfortable place with not attaining a professional ballet career, she spoke of having not yet found her meaningful career path.

Rosalie (Late Forties)

Rosalie started taking ballet classes at age 4 and continued her ballet training for 17 years. Rosalie spoke of always loving ballet; however, it was not until she was 11 years old, and she discovered that ballet could be a profession, that she decided that she wanted to be a professional ballet dancer. "I was singularly focused after that. There was no question about 'oh

should I do this or that'. That's [professional ballet dancer] what I wanted to do." Rosalie attended two professional ballet schools over the span of 4 years during her late adolescence/early twenties. After leaving ballet school, she went on receive a diploma from a professional contemporary dance training program.

One of the aspects I found interesting about Rosalie was that she was forthright about her main intention behind participating, which was to grieve the loss of her ballet career. For instance, she asked for the first interview questions beforehand to use as prompts to journal and to facilitate processing her experience prior to the first interview. The work that Rosalie did journaling prior to the first interview seemed to have spilled over into our second interview, as she appeared to be equally as thoughtful and exhaustive in her answers to my questions.

Cordelia Anne (Early Forties)

Cordelia Anne was 7 years old when she began taking ballet classes and has continued dancing to this present day. Cordelia Anne spoke of not remembering the particular moment that she decided upon a professional ballet career, however, she remembers being influenced by the culture of ballet due to a chaotic family life. ". . . It [ballet] was all girls and all women and it was this very female centric space . . . [that] I had never experienced . . . ." Through her youth and at the recommendation of her ballet teacher, Cordelia Anne auditioned four times for various professional ballet schools, however, was never accepted into a program. During her first year of university, she was heavily invested in dance, which led her to transfer to a university with a dance program and obtain a degree in dance.

Throughout the interview process, I experienced Cordelia Anne as having an air of professionalism and she was articulate about her experience. She had an expansive vocabulary,

which led me to view her as a high achieving individual. I also learned that Cordelia Anne had processed her experience and found a way to have a meaningful career that included ballet.

Samantha (Early Thirties)

Samantha started taking ballet classes at 4 years of age and continued training for the next 12 years. Samantha spoke of loving ballet and realized that she wanted to seriously train for a ballet career when she was approximately 12 years of age. “Every year . . . I want[ed] to dance more . . . I want[ed] to do better. I was practicing all the time and asking my teachers for more corrections. I was super into it [ballet] . . . .” Samantha auditioned and attended various professional ballet summer schools through her youth. After graduating high school, she attended a professional contemporary training program for approximately 2 years.

I found that Samantha had a calming presence to her, which after each interview led me to reflect on how to find a similar calmness in my own life. She was also the only participant that, at the time of the first interview, was working as a professional dancer (i.e. contemporary, aerial). What further stood out to me about Samantha was that by the third interview, she was again faced with the loss of a performing career due to injury; however, unlike the loss of her ballet career, she faced this current loss from a place of hope and belief that things would be okay.

Twinkle Toes (Mid Fifties)

Twinkle Toes began taking ballet classes at age 6. It was also at this age that she attended her first ballet performance and decided that she wanted to strive for a ballet career. “I was just in heaven and I thought oh my gosh that’s what I want to be, I want to be a ballerina. I wanted to be one of the prima ballerinas, the best . . . .” As a youth, she attended a professional ballet school for 12 years and was accepted as an apprentice in the ballet company.

I was struck by how open and comfortable Twinkle Toes was with me right from our first phone conversation. There was no topic that seemed to be off the table and she provided information that went above and beyond my level of questioning. Despite Twinkle Toes' ballet experience being many years behind her, she was still, in a sense, struggling with not attaining a ballet career. I also noted how talking about her experience helped process her experience, and by the end of the interviews, she said that she had developed a new relationship with ballet. Specifically, during the first interview, Twinkle Toes spoke of "hating" ballet and, as a result, was not able to attend or watch ballet; however, by the second interview, her feelings around ballet had shifted and she spoke positively, noting that she had been watching ballet videos online and had attended a ballet performance. When I inquired further into this shift, she described enjoying the ballet performance as a catalyst to her shift. This positive view of ballet carried into the third interview as Twinkle Toes spoke of her excitement about teaching ballet again.

Haley O'Dell (Early Twenties)

Haley O'Dell began dancing at 2.5 years old. When she was 5 years old, she attended a dance camp where she formed a friendship with an older ballet student who she looked up to. ". . . after that that's when I told [my] mom that I wanted to do ballet and that's what I wanted to be [a professional ballet dancer]." Haley O'Dell continued with her ballet training for the next 13 years. During her youth, upon the request of her ballet teacher, she auditioned for two professional ballet schools, however, was placed on the waiting list for one school and was not accepted. After high school, she moved to the United States of America to see if a professional dance career would be a possibility for her.

I was intrigued by how upfront Haley O'Dell was about being guided by her thoughts rather than her emotions, and how goal-oriented she was. My interest was also piqued by how she agreed to participate in this study on hope despite not feeling a connection with the word hope. However, she was able to articulate her experience of hope as closely aligning with the goal components of hope definitions found in the literature. Unlike the rest of the women, Haley O'Dell appeared to be still in the midst of her career transition and still struggling with not attaining a dance career.

Cordelia Marie (Early Thirties)

Cordelia Marie started taking ballet classes at the age of 3 years and continued her training for 16 years. Cordelia Marie noted that she really liked ballet, but it was not until she was 8 years old, with the encouragement of her ballet teachers, that she decided she wanted to pursue a ballet career. "She [ballet teacher] was the one who suggested that I had really good technique and was really encouraging me to seek out further opportunities to improve that, and to study with different teachers . . . ." Being identified by her ballet teacher as having the potential for a ballet career led to her thinking ". . . oh maybe I can actually do this . . . ." Cordelia Marie auditioned for various professional ballet schools during her youth, however, was not accepted.

Cordelia Marie struck me as a positive individual, noted by her bubbly personality and consistent laughter during our meetings. She also came across as down to earth, characterized by the modest language she used to describe her experiences, and her friendly demeaner, which led me to feel very comfortable with her. Also, she appeared to have dealt with the loss of her ballet career and was on a meaningful career path.

Louise (Early Twenties)

Louise was 4 years old when she first started taking ballet and continued dancing for the next 14 years. Growing up, obtaining a ballet career was something that Louise had thought about, but not in a serious manner, noting that becoming a ballerina is what every young ballet dancer wants to be when they grow up. Despite this, she auditioned for various professional ballet schools approximately eight times over a 3-year period during her youth. Things changed when Louise was 15 years old and was accepted into a professional ballet summer school and then accepted into the school's full year program. "That's when I started thinking okay maybe this [ballet] is something that I want to pursue instead of something that . . . I do [for fun] . . . ." Louise attended the professional ballet school for 2 years where she graduated high school.

I was impressed with how far Louise went on her journey to achieve a ballet career, attending a professional ballet school year-round, as this was something that I was never able to accomplish. What stood out for me in regard to Louise was how happy she was during the interviews, highlighted by her giddy, excitable, and animated manner. Furthermore, despite her experience of not attaining a ballet career being relatively recent, she appeared to be content, noting great excitement for her future. Louise's positive attitude about not achieving a ballet career relatively soon after her loss was also something that left me in awe, as it took me years to come to terms with my own loss and to determine a new career path.

Judith (Early Twenties)

Judith began ballet classes when she was 4 years old and continued dancing for 15 years. Her realization that she wanted to pursue a ballet career came when she was 13 years old. "I really loved it [ballet] and initially I went I don't want to ever stop doing this. I thought the only way I could do that is by being a professional . . . ." During her adolescence, Judith auditioned

for various professional ballet schools approximately eight times over a 2- to 3-year period. She was never accepted.

Judith appeared to me as someone who was much older and wiser than her age. She had a very serious presentation during interviews. Her experience was also different than the rest of the women, as she gradually realized, over the course of 2 years, that a ballet career would not be possible. Judith expressed that this gradual realization was helpful as she was able to adjust to not becoming a ballerina over time, while still dancing, rather than having to process her loss all at once. Therefore, despite her experience being relatively recent, she appeared satisfied with her alternative career path of becoming a schoolteacher.

Marie (Late Forties)

Marie started taking dance classes when she was 7 years old, however, was not enrolled in ballet until she was 13 years old. She noted that she fell in love with ballet and continued taking ballet classes for the next 5 years. When she was 15 years old, she auditioned and was accepted into a professional ballet summer program. It was this experience that opened her eyes to ballet as a possible career option:

> . . . dancing with . . . kindred spirits . . . these people love ballet the way I like ballet. They're challenging me [and] I'm improving so much. That's when [I thought] this could be a passion for me . . . . That's when I started thinking I would love to do this [ballet] professionally.

Marie was considered for the professional ballet school's full year program, however, due to an injury, she was not able to attend.

Throughout the interviews, Marie presented as professional with a fun laid back side, leading our interviews to be natural and free flowing. Furthermore, despite being a high achiever,

noted by her multiple academic degrees and comments made throughout the interview, she came across as down to earth, highlighted by the words she used to describe her experience and friendly demeanor, which led me to feel very comfortable with her. What was interesting about Marie was her seeming ability to compartmentalize her ballet loss for many years, only to revisit this loss during the research project, ultimately facilitating a new relationship with ballet. Specifically, she described being able to enjoy attending ballet performances again after many years of distancing herself from the ballet world.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Other Dance Training	# of Years Since not Achieving Ballet Career	Current Career	Current Dance Activity
Delaine	Late Thirties	Tap, Jazz, Modern & Character	23 years	Mother, Educational Assistant, Dance Teacher & Dance Adjudicator	Not dancing
Rosalie	Late Forties	Jazz & Contemporary	26 years	Mother, Dance Teacher, & Student	Occasionally takes dance classes
Cordelia Anne	Early Forties	Jazz & Modern	23 years	Mother, Dance Teacher, Choreographer & School Teacher	Occasionally performs in the community
Samantha	Early Thirties	Tap, Jazz, Modern & Contemporary	16 years	Performer & Dance Teacher	Career in the dance field
Twinkle Toes	Mid-Fifties	Classical Spanish Dance & Flamenco	39 years	Mother & Dance Teacher	Regularly performs in the community
Haley O'Dell	Early Twenties	Tap, Jazz & Contemporary	9 years	Student	On a University competitive dance team
Cordelia Marie	Early Thirties	Contemporary, Jazz, Irish, Ukrainian & Modern	16 years	Student & Career Advisor	Not dancing
Louise	Early Twenties	Tap, Contemporary & Jazz	3 years	Student	Taking tap classes
Judith	Early Twenties	Jazz, Contemporary, Character & Ukrainian	6 years	Student & Dance Teacher	Not dancing
Marie	Late Forties	Step Dance, Tap, Jazz & Contemporary	29 years	Mother, Educator	Not dancing

Themes

Four overarching superordinate themes were co-constructed through this study which represented participants' experiences of hope during their career transitions. The superordinate themes and respective descriptions are as follows: (1) "Hope not achieved" describes participants' experiences of not attaining a ballet career, their hope, and included this loss of hope being tied to the body, injury, and experienced over time; (2) "Hope as a process" illuminates how participants' sense of hope was experienced through a series of experiences over time and encompassed feeling hopeless, hope budding out of hopelessness, hope evolving, exploring the meaning of hope, realizing that the experience of hope is not linear, being able to hope for a future, and hoping for others; (3) "Hope as internal to the self" portrays how the sense of hope was either fostered or threatened by personal factors such as mental health, identity, sense of direction and spirituality; and (4) "Hope as external to the self" spoke to how the participants' experiences of hope during their career transition was influenced by contextual factors such as relationships with others, professional supports, dance, and the culture of ballet. A summary of the superordinate themes and respective subordinate themes are found in Table 2.

Table 2

Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Hope Not Achieved	Loss of Hope Tied to the Body
	Loss of Hope Due to Injury
	Loss of Hope Over Time
Hope as a Process	Hopelessness
	Hope Budding Out of Hopelessness
	Hope Evolves
	Exploring the Meaning of Hope
	Hope is Not Linear
	Hope for the Future
	Hope for Others
Hope as Internal to the Self	Mental Health
	Identity
	Sense of Direction
	Spirituality
Hope as External to the Self	Relationships
	Professional Supports
	Dance
	Culture of Ballet

It is important to note my process for representing participants' quotes in this document. In order to maintain confidentiality and readability, participants' quotes were altered slightly. Words such as "like," "um," and "ah" were removed, as well as stutters and repeated words. Names and locations were altered or removed, and any other information that could be used to identity participants was removed. Finally, square brackets were used to indicate when words

were altered (e.g., tense) or added to facilitate readability. In addition, these brackets were also employed to signify questions posed by me to provide context for participants' quotes/responses.

Hope Not Achieved

Obtaining a professional ballet career was a hope for all participants; unfortunately, none of the participants went on to achieve this hope. For participants, this was devastating as all spent a lot of time, and physical and emotional energy working towards this vocation. Specifically, hope was goal dependent with the specific object of hope being a professional ballet career. When a ballet career was not achieved, this seemingly single focus of hope was lost and hope more broadly across life seemed lost. Participants experienced the loss of hope in a number of ways including: (1) loss of hope tied to the body; (2) loss of hope due to injury; and (3) loss of hope over time.

Loss of Hope Tied to the Body. One of the most vital aspects of a ballet career is having the ideal ballet body, developed through a combination of favorable genetics and intense ballet training. Unfortunately, no matter how skilled participants were in their craft, if they did not have the ideal ballet body, a professional ballet career was not possible. Furthermore, since genetics were involved, the ballet physique was largely out of the participants' control. Therefore, hope for a ballet career was lost, for most participants, because they lacked the ideal ballet body. The loss brought up feelings of hopelessness because participants had incomplete control over the shape of their bodies. There was nothing participants could do to attain the seemingly singular hope for a professional ballet career. Louise told of concerns with the structure of her back, hypermobility and hypomobility issues, during a meeting at the ballet school in the fall of her grade twelve year, which led her to not get accepted into the school's post-graduate program:

> . . . the way they explained it was that I worked really hard in classes but . . . the difficulties that I was having were things that really wouldn't get much better, no matter how much work I put into them. . . . That was difficult. . . . that's October/November. . . . That kind of discouraged me from it all together, [be]cause I ended [up] being really bitter about it because I had to stay for the entire rest of [the] year.

For Rosalie, concerns about her body were brought to her attention at the end of the second year of her 3-year professional ballet program, after months of feeling picked on by her ballet teachers:

> . . . finally one of my teachers . . . said to me that my height was an issue and that I'd have to be twice as good as anybody else to get accepted [into the ballet company] . . . . I probably could've gone to Europe and maybe tried there, but it just broke me. . . . So, at that point, I just decided myself to quit. . . It is always easier to do the breaking up, so I broke up with ballet.

Cordelia Marie spoke of being identified as having the ideal ballet body as a child, which changed when she went through puberty:

> . . . I was very petite, I was short, I was very tiny. So, I really had the build of a dancer. I also had perfect feet. I went on pointe early and I had great turn out. . . . Then I got way too curvaceous when I went through puberty, and that was really it. It's one of those things that you can't do anything about. It was something where this [ballet career] was the hope and now it's not the hope anymore. . . It's not like I can just train more, no, that has nothing to do with it.

Loss of Hope Due to Injury. Not only did participants need to have the ideal ballet physique, their body had to be in top working condition in order to execute the movements

required of them as ballet dancers. Injuries were highly problematic as it meant taking time to rehab and heal or stop training altogether, both of which contributed to the loss of hope for a ballet career. For instance, Cordelia Anne noted, ". . . I broke a tendon in my ankle when I was 17 and that was really the death knell of the whole thing [ballet career]." Delaine highlighted the interplay between not having the ideal ballet body and injuries:

> The second time I went [to ballet summer school] is when I ended up having hip [and knee] problems. I was pulled out of classes a few times to go to physio. . . . I think it was the forced turnout that we were meant to stand in . . . that's when I realized I can't do this [ballet as a profession]; I don't have the right body for this [ballet].

For Marie, dealing with an ankle injury was a difficult gradual process over approximately 1 year that included downplaying the extent of her injury and dancing through the pain. Her injury cost her a place in a professional ballet school full year program and ultimately, a ballet career:

> Going into grade 11, I was seeing a specialist. He [said] you either take 6 months off from dance and see [what] . . . [happens] or we . . . do surgery and then you're still going to have 3- to 4 months healing time. . . so at that point I'm like [the] chances of me ever having a professional career are [slim and] I just have to realize it's not going to happen. My reaction was to just completely cut dance out of my life.

Loss of Hope Over Time. The participants' loss of hope for a ballet career appeared to happen gradually over a period of many years as a result of not gaining acceptance into a professional ballet school, which is needed to attain a professional ballet career. Participants spoke of auditioning multiple times over multiple years for professional ballet schools. With every passing year and audition, participants held onto hope that this year/audition would be

different and they would be accepted. Although some participants spoke of gaining acceptance into professional ballet summer programs, they were not accepted into full-time programs. Over the course of many attempts to gain acceptance and not being successful, the sense of hope faded. Cordelia Anne spoke of not getting into a lower tiered ballet school during her final year of auditioning. “They [ballet schools] . . . were the tier below the National [professional ballet school] and so if they weren’t going to take you, you weren’t going to go [to ballet school].” In Haley O’Dell’s case, during her last audition another dancer’s mother pointed out that one needed to get accepted by high school in order to have a ballet career:

> At that . . . moment I realized my age [grade 7] was probably catching up with me and . . . that the window was closing [i.e., getting accepted into a ballet school]. That was the moment where I realized this [ballet career] probably wasn’t going to work out.

Slightly different, Samantha became aware that a ballet career would not be possible for her around the age of 14 years after not being invited to the professional ballet school full year program. However, she was not ready to give up hope for a ballet career and continued training hard for the next 2 years:

> I kept pursuing wanting that dream and career knowing that I wasn’t good enough . . . . when I was 16 . . . I had a terrible eating disorder and depression. I remember a moment I was at an extra practice class and being so angry with me, with the teacher, [and] with the other dancer. I [was] hating what I was doing. Soon after, [I] just quit, I just dropped ballet . . . . So that’s when the dream officially ended.

During the early years of working toward and hoping for a professional ballet career, hope was highly goal dependent with the seemingly single hoped-for object being a professional ballet career. When achieving a ballet career proved impossible, this seemingly single focus of

hope was lost as was hope across life more broadly. The seemingly singular hoped-for professional ballet career was lost as a result of not having the ideal ballet body, which was largely out of the participants' control. The loss was exacerbated by career-ending injuries. Finally, it appeared that this loss of hope for a ballet career was experienced gradually over time as a result of repeatedly not gaining acceptance into a professional ballet school's full year program. As a result, participants entered into early career transitions with a sense of feeling hopeless about the future.

Hope as a Process.

After participants lost their seemingly singular hoped-for ballet career alongside a more generalized sense of hope in life, they each entered into a transitional period as they let go of past hope for a ballet career. Each gradually reevaluated hope and sought a new meaningful career path. All participants spoke of their experiences of hope changing over the course of their career transitions. During their career transitions, participants' relationship with hope was experienced as follows: (1) hopelessness; (2) hope budding out of hopelessness; (3) hope evolves; (4) exploring the meaning of hope; (5) hope is not linear; (6) hope for the future; and (7) hope for others.

Hopelessness. All participants spoke of losing goal-focused hope for a ballet career as they came to the realization that a ballet career was not achievable. The loss of this goal-focused hope also appeared to lead to the loss of overall hope. Many participants entered into their early career transitions feeling a sense of hopelessness about the future. Participants spoke of feeling hopeless because achieving a ballet career felt out of their control, either due to genetics, injury or not being accepted to professional ballet schools. This loss of control and resulting sense of

hopelessness was pervasive and impacted all parts of life. In other words, the loss of hope in one area led to a sense of hopelessness elsewhere in life. Delaine highlighted this by stating,

> . . . having that obsession for wanting to be in control of it [weight] probably dashed my hopes a little bit. I definitely went through a depression where I wasn't seeing a whole lot of hope, not just in dance but in anything.

For Louise, she also had difficulties holding hope in other areas of her life:

> It made it very difficult for me to try hard in other things. It made it feel pointless like if I'm trying hard and it's still not working, what's the point? . . . So, it was hard to have hope at first because it was really out of my control. [There] was nothing really that I could do about it; it was just the fact.

Hope Budding Out of Hopelessness. In a very real sense, participants had put all their eggs-in-one-basket in regard to attaining a ballet career, solely identifying as a ballet dancer from an early age and putting all their dreams into attaining this one hope. For many participants, the sense of self was highly intertwined with attaining a ballet career. When this seemingly singular hope was not realized, all hope appeared to be lost. Participants were left feeling lost and unsure about their futures, leading to a sense of hopelessness. Many participants described that it was like a large part of who they were died after losing their seemingly singular hope. However, going through this seemingly necessary and inevitable process also appeared to allow participants to reinvent a sense of self out of the ashes – a sense of identity that was new, different, and positive, where hope-in-self emerged. Out of hopelessness came hope. Participants used metaphors and artistic representations of hope to elicit this powerful idea. For example, Rosalie described how her sense of hope developed out of hopelessness using a grain of wheat metaphor, in which the grain has to die before it can grow into something new and better. "I felt

like that was my process of dying in that one thing [ballet] and thinking it was the end, but then actually growing [in]to something else." Samantha shared a video of her performing an aerial piece that she had previously choreographed depicting the idea of death and rebirth. She explained that ". . . when everything basically gets burned down or when everything dies then you can recreate whatever you want from that, from the ground up." See Samantha's aerial dance for her description of this process, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_bQfTzWihE

Louise shared a poem she wrote reflecting on her journey of growing into a new self after the devastating loss of her ballet career. See Figure 1 for Louise's poem:

> . . . before I ever wrote [this poem] it felt like I had this overwhelming sense of I'm never going to be myself again. . . . I am this kid who had gotten kicked out of ballet school and that's what I'd identified [with] …. It was very hard for me [because]. . . I'd never done anything else. . . . So . . . [my] hope [was] I had found something else and I was moving on. . .

Figure 1

Louise's Poem

i have grown,
from a place
that had nothing left to give me.
i had no help,
except my own.
adapting to life,
without the things i once thought i needed.
i allowed myself to do all of these things
for myself.
now i am blossoming.
yes,
it was difficult.
but even the dessert has flowers grow in it
and life can begin in the most unexpected places.

- personal growth

Hope Evolves. Participants' descriptions of hope revealed that initially they held deeply invested hopes for a ballet career that started in childhood, and with this they developed their identities around being a ballerina. For some participants, sense of self appeared to be connected to a strong and seemingly singular hope of a professional ballet career. However, sense of self was not exclusively tied to their seemingly singular hope. Instead, participants began to express the ability to hold some sense of hope despite the loss of a future as a professional ballerina. Participants described the loss of their future professional ballet careers as difficult; however, they began to see that all hope was not lost. For participants, hope evolved over time by letting go of understandings of the self that were no longer relevant. As former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers, participants explored and integrated new understandings of self that appeared to lead to new hope. In this research study, it was common for participants to utilize both metaphors and artistic representations of hope to express how sense of hope evolved over time. For instance, Marie shared a video of the classical ballet, "Swan Lake" set to the song, "Sail" by Awolnation, as her artistic representation of her experience of hope during her career transition. Her video represented the remixing of the old/traditional and the new to form a new sense of hope. In essence, her old self was not so much shed as reworked into new understanding of the self:

> I think to remain hopeful in life you always have to be able to reinvent yourself . . . here's this traditional ballet piece that . . . they remixed so that you see that movement with the music . . . . It's so hopeful to me to see you can let go of elements like the classical music and embrace new elements and you create something new and better. So, it's not a death of a part of you, [rather] you get reborn in a different way. . .

Delaine described her experience of hope using the metaphor of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly as hope changing without losing sight of the origins of hope:

> . . . going from something that's maybe not as desirable or not what you wanted . . . it goes through some big changes and then some small changes but [hope is] always there . . . . So, I change but not who I am.

Exploring the Meaning of Hope. Through my time with participants and from my own experience as a former semi-elite ballet dancer, I learned that attaining a ballet career is a highly competitive endeavor and most semi-elite amateur ballet dancers who set out to achieve such a career are not successful. With this study, I learned that some participants realized during their career transition, that despite working hard and hoping for a ballet career, attaining a ballet career was not an achievable hoped-for object. Twinkle Toes noted, "I think maybe we hang on to something that was never really real, maybe the dream of being the ballerina . . . is nothing based in reality." The loss of this unachievable hope was devastating and shook participants' previously held views of hope. This disruption of participants' original understandings of hope led to reexamining how they viewed hope, which included letting go of previous so-called "unrealistic" views and adopting views that were grounded in the experience of loss – the loss of a deeply held hope of a ballet career. In essence, not attaining their hoped-for object and experiencing a loss of hope led participants to explore what hope meant to them and prompted them to develop new understandings of hope that they came to understand as more in line with their experiences of not achieving a ballet career. Rosalie described her original view of hope while training for a ballet career as happy, rosy, romantic, and always attaining success. The participant coined this as *false hope*:

> I became more of a realist. Maybe that seems like I have less hope because I don't always see the glass as half full. Maybe I'm more negative but . . . There's a lot of hardship in life . . . . for me hope is less happy but there's more weight to it. It's like sanding off

> what's not true about what hope is and seeing the crux of what it is. [To] see beauty even in difficult times . . . . [So] to me hope . . . doesn't equate with happiness . . . it's more of an inner thing, more like contentment even amidst chaos and amidst hardship.

Cordelia Anne shared that she gradually learned about her own limits and that this lesson informed her understanding of hope over time:

> I think in some ways it [hope] becomes a little more shaded with realism [and] you learn that maybe you've been a bit too idealistic or a bit too pie in the sky about things. . . . it doesn't mean that you don't have hope anymore . . . but you just become a little more realistic about what change is possible, and where to spend your energy to try and make that change. So, I wouldn't say that I'm less hopeful. I think it's more that my hope is a little less global and a little more focused.

Hope is Not Linear. Through the exploration of hope, participants expressed developing an understanding that the experience of hope was more complex than originally conceived. Participants described learning that rather than a singular hope, hope is multifaceted and can come from many areas of one's life. This new found understanding of hope was noted by participants as occurring through being open to new experiences outside of the ballet world. Additionally, participants described learning that just as one can have multiple hopes, one can have multiple selves or in other words, they can have more than one vocation. Participants often expressed this experience of hope using artistic or metaphorical means. Cordelia Marie used the metaphor of "stepping outside the box" to explain her realization that one can have more than one hope in life. After she stepped away from thinking about hope as solely focused on ballet, she opened up to potential possibilities:

> . . . stepping out into the world and understanding that there's [many] reason[s] to be hopeful. There's a lot out there in the world, and there's a lot of opportunity, and the one thing that was the singular hope doesn't need to be the only option.

Cordelia Anne described her experience of hope using the metaphor of a wishing tree, a tree with two trunks which provides space in between to sit, a forked tree. For her, over the course of her transition, she came to understand that she can hold more than one hope, and for her, these are ballet and being a teacher. Therefore, one can have more than one vocation simultaneously. The fork in the tree allows her to sit comfortably within these two hopes:

> . . . I have two trunks. . . . I have kept this dance [teaching] piece going in a lateral way but then I have the school teaching piece, working with teachers, and the pedagogical support piece as the other trunk, it bifurcates. . .

Hope for the Future. For most participants, the loss of their hoped-for ballet career brought about a sense of hopelessness. Despite experiencing hopelessness, some participants expressed having the ability to hold hope for the future. It seemed that hope and hopelessness coexisted at the same time. Hope was cultivated by looking to the potential for a brighter future. Participants described feeling a sense of hopelessness coupled with the belief that they would get through not attaining their sought-after ballet careers and find something positive on the other side of their career transitions. Artistic expressions of participants' experiences of hope helped elucidate this particular experience. For example, Samantha explained her experience with the metaphor *light at the end of the tunnel*. ". . . it did feel like I was going through a dark tunnel [be]cause [there] was nothing anymore. But there was light at the end [be]cause I knew there was something else [a life after ballet]." Louise also shared a metaphor: *good things come to those who wait*:

> . . . it just takes time to get that [hope] back after something happens, before you're ready to be there [hopeful] again . . . . It will get better, you will have that hope again, but it just takes time . . . [to] find something else [that] will give you the same feeling.

Hope for Others. Some participants spoke of holding hope for others, and this ability in itself fostered personal hope. The focus of participants' hope was their dance students and dance peers with whom participants had a personal connection. Magnanimously, participants were able to hope for the very thing for others that they did not achieve themselves, a dance career. Specifically, participants spoke of how holding hope for others to achieve professional dance careers, either by playing a direct teaching role or supporting from the audience, enhanced the participants' own experience of hope. For instance, Delaine noted that since she began teaching, she has had students attend various dance schools, and dance professionally in companies and on cruise ships. ". . . just seeing the hope in my students . . . So, that definitely makes me feel like at least my dancing career wasn't a failure [be]cause I'm helping someone else have a career." Twinkle Toes also experienced holding hope for her dance students. " . . . it feels hopeful because they [new ballet students] have a shot; now it's their turn. And I'm going to be a part of making that happen for them. . . ." Slightly different, Louise explained that over the course of her career transition she gained the ability to hold hope for her old ballet school classmates:

> [Interviewer: How do you feel your hope has changed from when you realized that a professional ballet career would not be attained until now?]. . . . Participant: I know how hard it is to get [ballet] company jobs and . . . having your career in the dance world is so difficult. So, when my friends are having success in that, it's really exciting for me [be]cause I'm like "oh my gosh you're making it."

In sum, participants experienced hope during their career transitions as a process over time. Specifically, participants entered into their transitions feeling a lack of hope as a result of not having control over the loss of their seemingly singular hope. For some participants, hope appeared to emerge out of these feelings of hopelessness, much like being reborn after a death. For other participants, hope was always present, ever so dim, and evolved over time to develop a new form of hope. Once participants were able to attend to hope, they set forth to explore what hope meant to them and developed a new understanding of hope that fit with their experiences of not attaining their seemingly singular hope. Participants further came to the understanding that hope was complex, was cultivated in many ways, and was future orientated. Finally, participants described holding hope for their dance students and dance peers to attain professional ballet careers.

Hope as Internal to the Self

All participants spoke of experiencing hope internally, within the self, during their career transitions. Specifically, participants' hope was influenced by aspects internal to the self during their career transitions, which either contributed to their sense of hopelessness and/or facilitated an enhanced sense of hope. These internal influences included: (1) mental health; (2) identity; (3) sense of direction; and (4) spirituality.

Mental Health. Many participants described struggling with mental health concerns as a challenge to hope during their career transitions. For most participants, concerns with mental health appeared to be closely tied to not attaining their hoped-for a ballet career. Samantha's words seemed to resonate with the experiences of participants in the study when she said, "Mental health was the most important thing for me to get back; that was the biggest barrier [to hope]." Specifically, mental health struggles contributed to participants' feelings of hopelessness

and stood in the way of participating in activities that supported hope during the career transitions. Participants felt stuck. There were various concerns mentioned by participants, including struggles with eating disorders, depression, shame, perfectionism, and loss of confidence. Feelings of depression, shame, and perfectionism were strikingly prevalent among participants. Delaine spoke of depression after having to come home from her university dance program due to her eating disorder. "I wasn't in the best place [be]cause I was still in a negative mindset about not making it as a dancer. . . . So, I don't know if there was necessarily a lot of hope there." Cordelia Marie highlighted an embodied sense of self-betrayal which was connected to feelings of failure:

> It's like a failure. If you've been told all your life "oh this is something you can do" . . . and then your body betrays you, and now all of a sudden, it's not an option. I think I resented that. . . . [That] definitely had an impact on my self-esteem and how I saw myself.

Perfectionism, the need to be perfect, was something that some participants spoke of being required of ballet dancers, however, outside of the ballet world perfection was not reasonable to expect of oneself. These participants spoke of how it was hard to be hopeful while fighting against ingrained thoughts instilled in them during their intense ballet training. Therefore, participants explained the need to be perfect stayed with them long after the loss of their ballet career, threatening the sense of hope during their career transitions. Rosalie painted a clear picture of the impacts that perfectionism has on former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers:

> . . . perfectionism. That was a real barrier for me because that became something so ingrained in me that I had to really fight against those thoughts. . . . I was taught that you had to be perfect and . . . to drive myself all the time. So [then] all of a sudden, I went into

> the real world [where it] wasn't like that as much. I still to this day fight against that. It's in me; it's my thought patterns.

Identity. All participants described solely identifying as a ballet dancer during their youth. Furthermore, participants spoke of never exploring other areas of interest in their youth due to not having time, energy, or interest to do so. Twinkle Toes illustrated, "I would eat, sleep, breath, live ballet." Specifically, participants explained that the sense of self was intertwined with a seemingly singular hope for a ballet career. The result seemed to be a foreclosed identity, and when participants did not achieve their ballet career, it was devastating, leading to a sense of very personal hopelessness as they each lost a sense of who they knew themselves to be. Samantha described how losing her identity threatened her hope during her career transition:

> Once I stopped dancing, I lost my identity all together [be]cause [I had] been a dancer my whole [life], what the hell am I now? . . . then once I lost that [ballet dancer identity] I didn't know who I was, so I lost hope in myself in general [be]cause I didn't have anything.

What was interesting was that despite the loss of identity resulting in feelings of hopelessness, many participants spoke of a hopeful side. Specifically, losing their ballet identity also seemed to afford participants the opportunity to reflect and ask questions such as, "Who am I if I'm not a ballet dancer?" (Rosalie), which allowed them to begin to redefine their identity and with that came a growing sense of hope. Participants spoke of the important role that exploring other areas of interest played in redefining their identity, apart from being a ballet dancer. Various interests were explored during participants' career transitions, including theatre, computers, cheerleading, music, fitness, yoga, volunteering, crafting, painting, drawing, and photography. Marie was explicit:

> As I reflect on it now, people thought [I] was crazy that all of sudden I'm not dancing anymore and now I'm the yearbook editor, and I'm taking pictures, and I'm developing film, and I'm in this computer programing club. It seemed like a shock and a change in my identity to people, but to me that's where I found the hope.

Sense of Direction. Participants describe putting many hours and a lot of energy into training for a professional ballet career during their youth. When participants realized that a professional ballet career would not be attainable, there appeared to be acceptance of this vocational path no longer being available to them and a desire to move forward. However, there was a real lack of understanding of how to move forward and what career direction to take next. Participants described how the lack of understanding of what to do next with their lives threatened their sense of hope during career transitions. Furthermore, participants identified skills learned through ballet training (i.e., teamwork, perseverance, discipline, structure, independence, creativity, drive, quick thinking, ingenuity, identifying patterns, self-reflection, and dealing with disappointment) but were unsure how to use these skills going forward. Cordelia Marie spoke of this as a confusing time in her life:

> [Interviewer: Tell me a story about when your hope was challenged during your career transition?] . . . Participant: that process of okay now what? Even if I've taken some good things away from this [ballet], I still don't know what direction to put it in. I think a lot of that is [the] typical young person [asking] what am I going to do with my life? I definitely felt that . . . [I did not] have. . . [a] purpose or direction. . .

Rosalie highlighted the difficulty of putting time and effort into something that did not work out and how this threatened her hope during her career transition:

> . . . starting over again was a real barrier. I put 17 years into training in ballet and [then] all of a sudden, I had to start back over again. That really shakes your hope because you put [time and effort] into this, and you're thinking it's going to go towards something and all of a sudden, here you are back at ground zero.

Despite how difficult it was for participants to lose their sense of direction, their sense of hope was fostered by exploring and deciding upon another career path. Some participants expressed stumbling upon a new career path, while others were more deliberate about their choice. Haley O'Dell described her new career path as a deliberate choice. "When I decided that ballet wasn't going to be an option for me, I decided that I was going to be a doctor instead. That's where my hope came [from], being a doctor." Judith spoke of feeling a shift in her sense of hope when she decided upon a teaching career:

> I think being raised by teachers had a big impact on me. Big surprise I'm doing that now [Education degree] . . . [being an] A type [personality, I] wanted to do really well [in school], especially through high school when I was transitioning out of that idea of wanting to be a ballet dancer. That's when a lot of that shift [in hope] happened for me.

Furthermore, some participants described realizing how valuable skills learned during ballet training were in their second careers, which enhanced hope. For instance, Marie spoke of how learning self-reflection skills (i.e., monitoring self and making improvements) has proven helpful outside of the ballet studio:

> I think that [being very self-reflective] has really helped me in my career moving forward. . . . no matter what I'm doing I always do an autopsy afterwards. Like what worked really well, what didn't, where are some opportunities for improvement. . .

Spirituality. Spiritualty, the belief in a higher power, was an experience that fostered hope during participants' career transitions by helping reframe their understanding of not achieving a ballet career and resulting in career transition. Turning to spirituality appeared to be especially helpful during moments of complete hopelessness. Some participants spoke of turning to their religious roots to facilitate hope, while others noted finding spiritualty during their career transitions helped enhance the sense of hope. Spirituality was described in various ways by participants including organized religion, nature, yoga, and mindfulness. For Samantha, hope was about establishing a connection with the self. "I remember finding yoga, and . . . that actually [gave] me hope. . . . one of the teachers . . . shared really soulful quotes or thoughts every class. That helped me get more connected to myself." Rosalie, spoke of faith facilitating hope by helping her develop a new identity:

> [Interviewer: What were some things that helped you find hope during your transition?] Participant: I wasn't just a ballet dancer. . . That's really where my faith has helped me because it has shown me ultimately that my identity is a child of God, and so this is who I am. All those other things [dancer, dance teacher, mother] are a part of me but . . . the real crux of who I am is rooted in that faith of being this child of God.

For Twinkle Toes, her strong faith in God provided guidance during one of her most hopeless moments, which enhanced hope:

> That day everything stopped . . . I was contemplating suicide. I knew if I do that, I'm jeopardizing my eternal soul [and] I may not go to heaven. . . no matter how black it really becomes . . . God is always there . . . maybe it's always been God that's the hope? Maybe He's always the one that says, "Keep going, keep trying," because you never know what tomorrow may bring?

Taken together, participants expressed many internal influences that played a role in their experiences of hope during their career transitions. For example, mental health concerns, such as depression, perfectionism, and shame, left participants feeling stuck in their hopelessness. The loss of the ballet dancer identity played a large role in participants' feelings of hopelessness; however, exploring and developing a new identity was seen to foster hope. Similarly, feelings of hopelessness resulted from the loss of a sense of career direction, and hope emerged when participants found an alternative career path. Finally, hope was fostered through the belief in a higher power.

Hope as External to the Self

For all participants, hope was experienced externally to themselves during their career transitions. Specifically, influences that were in participants' environments were described to either foster or challenge the experiences of hope during their career transitions. Such external influences included: (1) relationships; (2) professional supports; (3) dance; and (4) culture of ballet.

Relationships. One of the most robust findings that arose out of this research was the link between the experiences of hope and significant relationships in participants' lives. These relationships were described by participants as both threatening and enhancing the sense of hope during the career transitions, depending on the level of support the relationships provided participants during this difficult time. Hence, unsupportive relationships threatened the participants' hope and supportive relationships were found to facilitate hope. Types of relationships were vast and included relationships with peers, family, pets, and community. For example, many participants noted that when they left their ballet training, they also left behind dance friends, who were some of the only people who could relate to wanting and working

towards a ballet career. Losing these friendships challenged the sense of hope as a result of feeling a lack of social support. Louise expressed the loss of her ballet friends as a threat to her hope when she left the ballet school:

> . . . I felt really alone when I came home. . . . it was really hard [be]cause I didn't know anyone here. . . . I felt really disconnected from the friends I still had there [ballet school], [be]cause they were living this ballet life still. It was really hard to still be friends with them [be]cause when that's [ballet is] their entire life it's hard to put yourself around that [the ballet world].

Relationships with significant individuals that fostered participants' sense of hope were characterized by unconditional support and understanding. These important relationships were described as having constancy during participants' career transitions when they needed a place to escape to from their situation for a while, someone to talk with about not attaining a ballet career, someone to just "be" with, or someone who could provide a sense of understanding of the difficulty of not attaining a ballet career. Judith described the role that feeling understood by her father played in enhancing hope during her career transition:

> My dad was the hockey kid that wanted to make the NHL, so he understood . . . even though he was the one that actually didn't want me to push towards it [ballet career]. So, there was empathy there. . .

Relationships with pets were also a component of participants' experiences of hope during their career transitions. Delaine and Samantha both described the role that pets played in enhancing hope while they were struggling with eating disorders during their career transitions. Having to take care of their dogs pushed participants to take care of themselves, both physically

and mentally, which positively impacted hope during a time when they felt the most hopeless during their transitions. Delaine highlighted:

> . . . I had a dog . . . . I had a job at a coffee shop, so I would walk the dog before [work]. . . . I found when I wasn't eating, I had a really hard time taking care of the dog because I just didn't have the energy between classes and then working my job. . . . I found that I had to eat something in order to get through my day. . . . I think it [hope] came from. . . having my dog.

Professional Supports. Most participants spoke of feeling hopeless about not achieving a ballet career, and not knowing what they wanted to do with their lives. Some participants spoke of wanting to discuss this experience with a helping professional to help process and come to terms with this loss, and to help determine other career paths they could pursue. Participants found that either there were no available professional supports or, if supports were available, these supports were not adequate in dealing with participants' specific experiences of losing a deeply sought-after hope, which further challenged the sense of hope. A lack of professional supports was seen in both the public school and in ballet school systems. Cordelia Marie spoke of how the lack of supports in the public school system threatened her sense of hope during her career transition:

> I don't remember there ever being [a] conversation of let's talk about this. I feel in the movies you see kids sit down with their school counsellor and have a conversation about what they're going to do with their lives. That never happened. I don't know if I missed the boat somewhere, but there was never that conversation of what would you like to do with your life, if you could choose, and what are some of the things that you think are options for you based on your strengths? . . . That's a barrier.

For Rosalie, she described how not having supports at her professional ballet school challenged her sense of hope after not achieving a ballet career:

> Nothing was set up in the school for the transition. There was no guidance counsellor . . . I felt very much alone in this slogging through questions and doubts . . . . there was no way to process that and so that was . . . challenging.

In contrast, Marie did have professional supports available at her high school, however she found these supports to be unhelpful, which threatened her experience of hope:

> . . . [My] high school guidance counsellor had no clue [how to] support and talk to me. I did try to go a couple of times and it's hard [when] they see you performing well in so many other areas. Sure, I might be able to do that, but . . . I want to have the same level of passion for what I am choosing to do next as what I'm letting go of. . . . So, when I went in to talk to him about struggling with . . . just really what can I do with my life and . . . [wondering] did I do the right thing? Did I give up too quickly? . . . . the conversation [was] more about how strong I was academically. . . [That] conversation was not helpful at all in helping me process the letting go and having more confidence in the decision I made. . . . [and] not any help in dealing with that loss of identity. . . . that's a huge barrier.

Dance. Not only did participants speak of wanting a ballet career, they all expressed loving ballet. More specifically, ballet was a source of hope for participants and had been since childhood. Various hopeful aspects of ballet were discussed throughout the interviews such as ballet as a place of competence, a mode of communication, a coping mechanism and a creative outlet. After not achieving a professional ballet career most participants continued to dance in one form or another. Participants who chose to continue dancing, highlighted that continuing to dance fostered a sense of hope as, despite losing ballet, they were still able to have the aspects of

dance (i.e., place of competence, mode of communication, coping mechanism, and creative outlet) that had sustained them during the course of their intense ballet training. Participants described participating in multiple forms of dance such as contemporary, Ukrainian, tap, modern, flamenco and classical Spanish dancing. For instance, Twinkle stated:

> I think the other dance forms were my hope. For me, it was flamenco [and] classical Spanish dancing. . . . So, . . . my hope [was] that I could still put on costumes, I could still put the music on. . . . [it] wasn't ballet, but I could still dance.

For Samantha, hope was associated with being able to use dance as a language to share who she understood herself to be:

> The love of dance is so hopeful for me because it's how I express myself, it's how I understand my myself and the world. . . . [it] fills me with so much joy being able to move and express myself that way.

Finally, those participants who went on to become dance teachers spoke of how passing on the love of dance to the next generation of dancers enhanced the sense of hope. Teaching dance was highlighted by Delaine when she was asked to tell a story that reminded her of hope during her career transition. "I knew I could still teach, that I could still be involved with dance, and still have it within my life because it was something that I [have] loved forever."

Culture of Ballet. Participants highlighted the culture of ballet as a contextual factor that influenced the sense of hope during their career transitions. The culture of ballet was described by participants as being highly disciplined, competitive, cutthroat, perfectionistic, political, elitist, involving a hierarchy between students and teachers, and greatly focused on the body leading to disordered eating. Although, many participants noted that comradery between dancers was a positive component, the general consensus was that, as a result of the culture's focus on

having the ideal ballet body, the need to be perfect, cutthroat competitiveness, and unsupportive student/teacher relationships, the ballet culture was not a hopeful environment. For participants, ballet culture threatened the sense of hope as they transitioned out of working towards a ballet career. Some participants noted that the culture of ballet led to an environment where ballet dancers did not discuss what they were struggling with due to competition among peers and unsupportive teacher relationships. As a result, when some participants entered into their career transitions, they did not talk about their experiences of losing their ballet careers. Rather the participants struggled in silence, which threatened the sense of hope as they felt alone in their experiences. Rosalie highlighted:

> Dancers aren't very open about talking about insecurities. . . . especially ballet dancers . . . you are supposed to have this persona that you're confident [and] you have it all together. So, . . . because of that persona and that environment that's created [in ballet schools], it's not very conducive to being open and honest about things you're struggling with. So, that was a huge barrier.

In addition, the culture's focus on having the ideal body shape and unsupportive messages given by teachers left a lasting imprint on participants, which negatively impacted their self-worth, body image and for some led to years long struggles with eating disorders. This also was described by participants as a challenge to the sense of hope during their career transitions. For example, Delaine noted:

> [Interviewer: Tell me a story about when your hope was challenged during your career transition?]. . . Participant: I had three of my teachers sit with me and tell me that I would not get a job as a dancer because I was too heavy and that I needed to do something about it and needed to start eating off the salad bar. . .

In contrast, some participants shared very positive experiences with ballet teachers during their career transitions that facilitated the sense of hope. Such hope enhancing experiences included dance teachers expressing empathy and understanding regarding not achieving a ballet career, identifying strengths to be used in other areas such as teaching dance, and showing participants that there is a life outside of ballet. Cordelia Anne spoke very highly of the impact one of her ballet teachers had on her view of not attaining a ballet career and her experience of hope:

> [Interviewer: What are some things that helped you find hope during your transition?]. . . Participant: he's [ballet teacher] a fabulously engaging teacher. He could make you feel good about yourself on your worst day. . . . he was so validating . . . . and you just thought well . . . if I can't do it [ballet] for a living, [it] doesn't mean I can't still . . . continue dancing and still love ballet.

In sum, participants described many environmental considerations that influenced the experiences of hope during their career transitions. Similar to internal influences, these facets were described to both enhance or threatened the sense of hope during career transitions. Unsupportive relationships and the loss of important relationships challenged hope. The lack of effective professional supports available to help participants process their experiences and facilitate developing alternative career paths furthered feelings of hopelessness. Finally, overall the culture of ballet threatened the experiences of hope, as the negative messages cultivated by the competitive environment left participants feeling alone in their struggle of not attaining a ballet career and having a negative self-body image. Conversely, relationships that provided participants with support during their career transitions fostered a sense of hope. Dance played a role to foster hope when participants continued their involvement in other forms of dance and

teaching dance. Finally, positive experiences with supportive dance teachers strengthen the experiences of hope by providing empathy and showing that there can be life after ballet.

Summary of Findings

Four overarching themes were co-constructed through this study that represented how hope was experienced during the early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers: hope not achieved, hope as a process, hope as internal to the self, and hope as external to the self. Participants experienced a loss of their deeply held hope for a ballet career, which resulted in a generalized loss of hope that infiltrated many aspects of daily life during their career transitions. The loss of participants' hoped-for object, a ballet career, varied and included being due to not having the ideal ballet body and career ending injuries, with the loss of hope a gradual erosion over time. During the career transition, hope was experienced as a process, which began with participants feeling hopeless about the future. For some participants, hope emerged out of feelings of hopelessness. For other participants, hope evolved over time, through letting go of and incorporating new aspects of the self, to form new hope. Participants also spent time exploring what hope meant to them and developed new understandings of hope that were grounded in their experiences of losing a very singular hope focused on the goal of a ballet career. Participants came to understand that hope is complex and can be acquired from many facets in life. The participants' experiences of hope were enhanced and challenged by influences within the self, such as personal mental health, identity, sense of direction, and spirituality. Finally, contextual considerations such as relationships, professional supports, dance, and the culture of ballet held the potential to both threaten and strengthen the experiences of hope during participants' career transitions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research study is the first known work to explore the lived experiences of hope in the early career transitions of former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers. I employed a qualitative approach using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which focuses on the lived experience of a phenomenon and the meaning one makes of this lived experience. Data were collected using two or three in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 women. During interviews, participants were given the opportunity to share and discuss artistic representations of their experiences of hope as they transitioned to second careers. Four overarching themes representing the lived experiences of hope during the early career transitions of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers were co-constructed through this process: (1) hope not achieved; (2) hope as a process; (3) hope as internal to the self; and (4) hope as external to the self. Overall, findings suggest that experiences of hope played an important role during this transition. All participants appeared engaged in the research process and many voiced excitement about the opportunity to reflect upon their creative roots by producing artistic representations of their experiences of hope as part of data collection.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the key findings contextualized within the existing literature on this topic. The goal of this discussion is to provide a deeper understanding of semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers' experiences of hope during their career transitions as it relates to both the relevant literature on hope and more broadly, within psychology. I then address the limitations of the current study. Potential implications of the current study's findings for research, counselling psychology practice, ballet teachers, and parents and caregivers will be discussed. Finally, I address suggestions for future research on experiences of hope during early career transitions of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers.

Discussion of Key Findings

The following section will include a discussion of the study's key findings highlighting experiences of hope during early career transitions of semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers in light of existing theory and research. I will also discuss how current findings contribute new ideas to available literature on this phenomenon.

Hope Not Achieved

Participants described their hope for a professional ballet career as singularly goal-focused from a young age. While it is possible that there were other hopes which participants were not aware of or were less developed, all participants remembered their ballet career as a singular hope from very early in life. Due to several reasons, participants were unable to achieve professional ballet careers, which resulted in a loss of their seemingly singular goal-focused hope. One way to explain participants' loss of hope is using Snyder's (1995) theory of hope, which conceptualizes hope as synonymous with a goal focus. According to Snyder (1995), high hope is produced when an individual has both a plan to achieve a goal (pathway) and the motivation to follow through with the plan (agency). In regard to the present study, participants described training and auditioning for professional ballet schools (pathway) and being highly motivated and driven to attain professional ballet careers (agency), suggesting participants had high goal-focused hope for ballet careers.

Snyder (Rodriguez-Hanley & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1994; Snyder, 2002) also wrote of goal blockages that may impede attainment of desired goals which can impact an individual's level of hope regarding goal attainment. For participants, goal blockages included not having the ideal ballet body, career ending injuries, and consistently not gaining admission into professional ballet schools' full year programs. Encountering goal blockages negatively impacts both

pathways and agency that are needed for goal-focused hope (Snyder, 1994). Perceived goal blockages may produce negative emotions such as disappointment (Rodriguez-Hanley & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1994; Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1996), with negative emotions intensifying for blockages of highly important goals (i.e., a professional ballet career), goal blockages that are harder to overcome (i.e., not having the ideal ballet body and injuries), and when blockages continue to impede goal-pursuits long-term (i.e., continuously not gaining acceptance into ballet school) (Snyder, 1994). The loss of goal oriented hope is described by Snyder (Rodriguez-Hanley & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1994) as occurring in three stages: *rage* (one's important goals are initially blocked; however, action is still taken to meet the goal), *despair* (goals continue to be blocked, action towards the goal is still taken; however, the individual begins to get the sense the goal may not be attainable), and *apathy* (the individual realizes that the goal is not attainable and no further action is taken towards the goal). Despite facing goal blockages, all participants persevered and auditioned multiple times for different professional ballet schools. During this process, participants described feeling angry, frustrated, bitter, discouraged, helpless, powerless, and defeated. Over time, participants realized that acceptance into a professional ballet school would not be possible and stopped auditioning. The decision to stop auditioning led participants to experience the loss of their deeply hoped-for ballet careers and a general sense of hopelessness about the future. It appears the loss of hope participants experienced may have occurred over time as they repeatedly failed to meet important stepping-stones during their pursuit of a professional ballet career, leading to multiple and compounding disappointments.

Hope as a Process

Participants described their experiences of hope during their career transitions as a process that changed over time. Findings on hope as a process within psychotherapy are common

and reflect the importance of hope to major life transitions (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Jevne, 2005; Larsen et al., 2013; Larsen et al., 2014). Within the current study, this process involved: letting go of past goal-focused hope for a professional ballet career, experiencing hopelessness, re-evaluating the meaning of hope, and seeking out new hopes. This process resembles the findings of Harris and Larsen (2008) who explored experiences of hope among individuals who had been newly diagnosed with HIV. Harris and Larsen (2008) found that after receiving a diagnosis of HIV, participants struggled to find hope; however, slowly and over time their hope did resurface. Within the current study, participants' experiences of hope as a process during career transitions is outlined as beginning with: (1) hopelessness; (2) followed by hope budding out of hopelessness; (3) hope evolves, (4) exploring the meaning of hope; (5) hope is not linear; (6) hope for the future; and (7) hope for others.

Hopelessness. Participants spoke of feeling a sense of deep hopelessness after realizing their perceived singular goal-focused hoped-for professional ballet career would not be attained. This feeling of hopelessness also appeared to generalize to other aspects of participants' lives. Participants, believing that they were not as capable as they had previously believed they could be in ballet, also began to believe they would not be capable elsewhere in life. Beck's (1963, 1964) cognitive theory of depression is one way to explain how participants generalized the sense of hopelessness to aspects of life beyond ballet. Beck's cognitive theory of depression is based on the hypothesis that one's emotions, behaviours, and physiology are influenced by one's perception of life's events and situations (Beck, 2011). *Core beliefs* are developed in early childhood through interactions with the environment. These core beliefs can be both positive/realistic and negative/unrealistic in nature, and facilitate how one perceives life events. It appears that through intense ballet training, having limited interests outside of ballet, and high

praise for ballet skills in childhood, participants may have developed a negative core belief akin to “I am only capable in ballet” or “I am meant to do ballet.” According to Beck’s cognitive theory of depression, negative, internalized core beliefs are activated when a stressor or negative event is experienced (Beck, 2011), such as participants not achieving a highly sought-after professional ballet career. In addition, the activation of negative core beliefs can lead to *cognitive distortions*, systematic errors in thinking, that show a negative bias against oneself (Beck, 1963; Beck & Alford, 2009; Dozois & Beck, 2011), and are automatic, involuntary, plausible, and repetitive (Beck, 1963; Beck & Alford, 2009). The cognitive distortion seemingly most relevant to the present study is *overgeneralization*, which is described as drawing a general conclusion about one’s ability, worth, or performance based on a single circumstance (Beck, 1963; Beck & Alford, 2009; Dozois & Beck, 2011), such as not attaining a professional ballet career. When participants were faced with the loss of their ballet career, coupled with the realization that they were not as talented in ballet as they believed, their experiences can be interpreted as feelings of failure coupled with cognitive overgeneralizing. The belief that they were not capable in ballet may have generalized to a sense of failure with all aspects of life.

Hope Budding Out of Hopelessness. Some participants described their sense of self and hoped-for ballet career as being so highly intertwined, that once they lost or let go of this hope, they also lost a sense of identity. Participants explained that they developed a new sense of hope as they reconstructed new identities. In other words, both participants’ hope and identity seemed deconstructed, eventually allowing for the development of new hope and a new understanding of self.

Dabrowski’s (Dabrowski, 1964/2016; Mendaglio, 2008) theory of positive disintegration is one way to understand how participants experienced the deconstruction of both the sense of

self and hope after the loss of their ballet careers, ultimately facilitating the development of new identities and hopes. The theory of positive disintegration is a personality theory which refers to the process of replacing a lower-level personality structure with a higher-level personality structure as a result of experiencing internal and external environmental conflicts (Dabrowski, 1964/2016; Mendaglio, 2008).

Overall, the individual begins with a cohesive personality with no conflicts or self-reflection (Dabrowski, 1964/2016; Mendaglio, 2008). For current participants, it appears that during childhood they identified as ballet dancers and hope was centered around attaining professional ballet careers, which participants thought possible. As the individual begins to realize that there are multiple value systems, internal conflict first appears as he or she has yet to gain the ability to determine personal importance, and must rely on multiple competing views within the social environment to rank values (Dabrowski, 1964/2016; Mendaglio, 2008). Current participants described starting to become aware that a professional ballet career might not be possible based on information from the environment (i.e., not having the ideal ballet body, injuries, and not gaining acceptance into ballet schools); however, for a period of time, each remained strongly identified as ballet dancers and continued to hold hope for professional ballet careers. The conflict between the incoming information about the likelihood of obtaining a professional ballet career and participants' identities as ballet dancers, may have caused participants to start questioning their identities and sense of hope. If the individual experiences a significant event, which forces him or her to reflect upon and re-evaluate his or her internal and external world (Ackerman, 2009), he or she may become aware of what is important and realize a disconnect between reality and the ideal, resulting in internal and external conflicts (Dabrowski, 1964/2016; Mendaglio, 2008). When participants realized that a ballet career was

not likely or not possible, conflict may have occurred between identifying as a ballet dancer and hoping for a ballet career and the reality that they would never achieve professional status. The emotional impact of the disconnect between wanting a professional ballet career and not being able to achieve this goal seems to have led participants to deconstruct both their identity as a ballet dancer and the sense of a very tightly focused hope for ballet careers. Inner conflicts decrease as the individual becomes more authentic and the discrepancy between his or her ideals and behaviours decreases (Dabrowski, 1964/2016; Mendaglio, 2008). As current participants accepted the reality of an unachievable professional ballet career, they began exploring new ways of being and new hopes distinct from the ballet world. Tensions between wanting and achieving professional ballet careers decreased as participants began to embark on developing new ways of interacting with the outside world. Finally, the individual's personality ideal is achieved when there is no longer a discrepancy between the individual's ideals and his or her actions, causing conflict to dissipate (Dabrowski, 1964/2016; Mendaglio, 2008). Within the current study, participants spoke of achieving a new sense of self and new forms of hope, both distinct from the original goal of becoming professional ballerinas.

The current research adds a new awareness of how closely hope and identity seem to be linked. Dabrowski's (1964/2016) theory does not address hope; however, hope appears to be an essential aspect to the theory of positive disintegration processes. My research suggests that hope might be a very key aspect that could be added to Dabrowski's theory to elaborate the "mechanisms" that are part of identity development and refinement.

Hope Evolves. Some participants spoke of a strong connection between the sense of self and hoped-for ballet careers. However, following the painful realization that a ballet career was not achievable, participants discovered not all hope was lost. Rather, by letting go of no-longer

relevant past understandings of the self, hope evolved over time. Participants were able to incorporate new understandings to form a new sense of self and new hopes. One way to explain how participants' sense of self and hope evolved over time, is using the three-factor identity model, which is a dual-cycle model that extends Marcia's (1966) identity status paradigm to include the process of how identity develops in adolescence (Crocetti, 2018; Crocetti et al., 2008; Meeus, 2011). According to the three-factor identity model, identity development is a dynamic process in which identity is continuously formed and revised over time, involving *commitment* (i.e., identification with choices), *in-depth exploration* (i.e., monitoring commitments), and *reconsideration of commitment* (i.e., comparing alternative commitments).

The relationships between these three processes highlights a dual-cycle process involving the identity maintenance cycle and the identity formation *cycle* (Crocetti, 2018; Meeus, 2011). Specifically, the individual enters into adolescence with commitments developed from childhood identifications, such as present participants entering into adolescence with a high commitment to their hoped-for ballet careers leading to the development of a foreclosed ballet dancer vocational identity. The *identity maintenance cycle* involves an in-depth exploration of the adolescent's commitments in order to decide if the commitments remain a good fit with the adolescent's talents and potential (Crocetti, 2018; Meeus, 2011). In the case of the present study, when participants did not attain professional ballet careers, they may have reflected upon their ballet dancer identities and focused hopes for ballet careers, realizing the discrepancy with the reality of not attaining professional ballet careers. If the adolescent deems the current commitments are no longer a good fit, current commitments are reconsidered and replaced with new commitments that are a better fit with the adolescent's developing identity (i.e., the *identity formation cycle*; Crocetti, 2018; Meeus, 2011). Within the current study, this may be characterized through

participants' exploration of their ballet dancer identities and hopes for ballet careers, letting go of aspects that did not fit with their current and future conceptualization of the self and hope, and incorporating new aspects of both the self and hope apart from attaining professional ballet careers. These resulted in participants developing a new sense of self and hope that shared some elements with the pre-transition understandings of the self and hope.

Exploring the Meaning of Hope. Some participants noted that over time, their understandings of hope during youth became more informed as a result of not achieving professional ballet careers. Hope was originally described as "idealistic," "pie in the sky," "rosy," "romantic," and "always attaining success." After not attaining professional ballet careers, the resulting new understandings of hope were described as being grounded in the reality that life is difficult, and things do not always work out as planned. Although participants did not implicitly state a positive impact on hope, having to deal with the loss of their hoped-for ballet careers appeared to be a vital developmental event that impacted their understandings of hope in a positive manner.

How one's understanding of hope during youth changes over time is also addressed in the literature. Benzien et al. (2000) found that *hope related to being* (i.e., internal process of hope) is present in early childhood and matures as a result of life experiences. Others have noted a similar phenomenon. Snyder (2000) described encountering barriers to hope and learning to overcome such barriers as important for the development of hopeful thinking. Exploring experiences of hope in middle childhood, Iaboni (2017) found children described challenging setbacks as a positive force that allowed them to reflect and focus on what gave them hope. Finally, King (2014), who explored the experiences of hope in early adolescent females, found that, similar to the present study's participants, early adolescent females reflected back on understandings of

hope during childhood as being non-threatened, carefree, and likened to sunshine and rainbows. Participants in King's (2014) study described hope changing to a mature form as they entered adolescence having realized that life is difficult as a result of experiencing threats to hope. These experiences, despite being difficult, were important to inform understandings of hope. King's (2014) findings align with the current finding that experiencing challenges to hope during youth, although difficult, may be a positive developmental event that facilitates development of a deeper more mature understanding of hope.

Participants also brought to light the notions of reality and hope when they expressed that hoping for a professional ballet career may not have been realistic. According to Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) conceptualization of hope, "hope is reality-based from the perspective of the hoping person" (p. 384). In other words, the individual may perceive the hoped-for object as realistically probable or possible although uncertain in the present or future. Individuals look to both internal (i.e., personal resources) and external (i.e., environmental) factors in order to determine the reality of the hoped-for object. For current participants, during training they believed they were exceptionally talented at ballet and received confirming feedback from ballet teachers. This suggested professional ballet careers were uncertain but real possibilities, and a realistic hope to hold. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) noted that the individual maintains hope as realistically possible until he or she perceives that he or she can no longer justify the hope as based in reality, at which time the hoped-for object is either abandoned, modified, or substituted with a new hope. It appears, for current participants, when the hoped-for professional ballet careers were not attained, the hope was ultimately abandoned, and in retrospect, was often also coined an unrealistic hope to have held in the first place. Although one is not able to identify a hope as unrealistic until the hoped-for object is not realized (Eliott & Olver, 2002), this does

suggest that the hoped-for ballet career was not based in reality during training. This is an interesting phenomenon. Hindsight bias may explain why participants, looking back, felt hope for a ballet career was not realistic after not attaining professional status. *Hindsight bias* is "the belief that an event is more predictable after it becomes known than it was before it became known" (Roese & Vohs, 2012, p. 411). This bias involves the inability to recall the feeling of uncertainty that occurred prior to the event (Roese & Vohs, 2012). Theorists believe that one's need to make sense of a past situation is a cognitive contributor to the hindsight bias, which results in the individual believing that the outcome was inevitable. For current participants, it is possible that in order to make sense of not attaining a hoped-for ballet career, they attributed this hope to not being based in reality in the first place. Although after the fact, it may have felt that hoping for a ballet career was unrealistic, it may be more likely that the hoped-for ballet career was a realistic hope to hold during training; however, the hope proved unrealistic over time and was ultimately not achieved.

Hope is Not Linear. By being open to new experiences outside of ballet during their career transitions, participants spoke of learning that hope can come from many sources and that there are multiple ways of being. The new awareness that one can hold both multiple hopes and ways of being (i.e., identity) was described as positively impacting participants' overall sense of hope. This finding attests the importance of holding multiple hopes to both increase one's hope and develop a well-rounded identity. In the field of counselling psychology, there is increasing evidence of value to identifying holding multiple hopes (Eliott, 2005; Larsen & Stege, 2012; Larsen et al., 2014). Clients who are struggling often come to therapy with a strong reliance on a singular hoped-for outcome, to the exclusion of recognizing alternative hopes that they can draw from (Larsen et al., 2014). The client's perception of his or her own wellbeing may hinge on

achieving a singular focused hope. Not attaining this focused hope may be perceived as a personal failure resulting in feelings of unworthiness and a shaken sense of identity, as was seen among participants in this study. Counselling psychologist researchers emphasize the importance of diversifying a client's "hope portfolio" (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Larsen et al., 2014). Simply put, explicitly holding more hopes increases the likelihood that some of a client's hopes will be realized (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Larsen et al., 2014), which can help to soften disappointment when some hopes are not achieved (Harris & Larsen, 2008) and facilitate the development of a more robust sense of identity (Larsen et al., 2014). In the current study, participants eventually developed alternative hopes and a more well-rounded identity which did not solely encompass being a ballet dancer. These findings highlight the importance of encouraging semi-elite amateur ballet dancers to develop multiple hopes, interests, and curiosities, thereby facilitating alternate sources of hope when specific ballet hopes are not attained, which also allows for the diversification of identity by exploring and adopting multiple identity components.

Hope for the Future. Some participants spoke of experiencing a sense of hopelessness during their career transition as a result of not attaining a professional ballet career; however, were still able to hold a sense of hope for their futures. Thus, it appears that hope and hopelessness co-existed at the same time. The idea that hope and hopelessness can co-exist has been addressed across several prominent hope theories (e.g., Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1995). For example, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) noted that hope and hopelessness are not opposite ends of the spectrum nor is hopelessness the nonexistence of hope. Rather, hope and hopelessness can be elicited in the same situation depending upon the individual's response and interpretation. Farran et al. (1995) and O'Hara (2011, 2013) described hope and hopelessness as different experiences that have a supportive dialectical relationship in which one learns about

hope from hopelessness and vice versa. It is possible that participants developed an understanding that despite feeling hopeless after not achieving a professional ballet career, they would not always feel hopeless. Participants recognized with time, they would find new paths in life with the potential of bright futures which enhanced their sense of hope. In other words, there may have been a hopeful “lining” in this experience as participants learned in a profound way to live with loss and move on, much like a fundamental life skill. The current findings support that not only is there the co-existence of hope and hopelessness but that the experience and understanding of hopelessness may play an important role in enhancing one’s sense of hope.

Hope for Others. Some participants described hoping for professional ballet careers for others with whom they had a personal connection (i.e., dance students and dance friends). Hoping for others positively impacted participants’ own sense of hope during their career transitions. This finding suggests that others can be objects of hope and that hoping for others can facilitate hope within the hoping individual. Hoping for others is referred to in the hope literature as other-orientated hope and is described as involving connections to others and having relatively low controllability (Howell & Larsen, 2015).

Specifically, those participants who went on to become ballet teachers spoke of having hope for their ballet students to attain professional dance careers. It appears that other-orientated hope among dance teachers is a new finding; however, parallels can be drawn from literature on other-orientated hope among schoolteachers. For example, te Riele (2010) noted the importance of teachers holding hope for their students, specifically focusing on possibilities in students rather than difficulties. Duncan-Andrade (2009) spoke of teachers hope for their students based in caring and support in the face of pain and difficulties. Finally, Larsen (2009) found that university educators’ other-orientated hope was specific to hoping that the educators’ students

and colleagues would benefit from the educators' contributions. These findings suggest that other-oriented hope among ballet teachers appears to be focused on the possibility of their students attaining highly competitive professional ballet careers and the role that participants played in supporting and training these young dancers based on their own intimate knowledge of challenges associated with this endeavor.

The present study's findings also highlighted a general other-oriented hope in which participants held hopes for those close to them (i.e., professional dance career for dance friends). This finding aligns with previous research findings on the occurrence of general other-orientated hope among individuals (Howell & Larsen, 2015). For example, Bruininks and Malle (2005) found that 38% of their participants' hope stories involved altruistic hope (i.e., positive outcomes for others). Howell, Bailie et al. (2015) found that 67% of participants in their study of undergraduate students listed at least one other-oriented hope response when asked to list personal hopes. This figure increased to 85% when primed to consider others as the focus hope. More recently, De Pretto et al. (2020) found other-oriented hope accounted for 33% of the participants' hopes. Finally, King (2014) noted all participants in her study exploring experiences of hope in early adolescent females spoke of hoping for good outcomes for important others in their lives. Participants described hoping for both specific and general outcomes for others. King's (2014) findings align with the present study, highlighting that experiences of hope extend beyond the individual to involve hoping for good outcomes for others, including specific outcomes such as professional ballet careers.

Finally, hoping for professional ballet careers for ballet students and dance friends appeared to facilitate participants' own sense of hope. This notion that other-orientated hope can foster self-oriented hope has been discussed within hope literature. For instance, Howell and

Larsen (2015) noted "a 'virtuous cycle' of hope may be ignited when one's hope for others inspires those others, whose hope in turn gets directed back to regenerate hope for oneself" (p. 55). An example of this phenomenon was found within King's (2014) study, in which participants identified their own altruistic hopes and suggested that holding hope for others, including unknown individuals, increased their own hope (i.e., feeling good after giving away a toy to someone in need). It appears that for participants in the current study, hope for ballet students and ballet friends to attain professional ballet careers may have inspired hope among these important others, which ultimately circled back to positively enhance the participants' own hope (i.e., feeling good about supporting others as they work towards and/or succeed in attaining professional ballet careers).

Internal and External Sources and Threats to Hope

Within the process of re-engaging with hope, participants spoke of experiencing both internal and external sources and threats to hope over the course of their career transitions. Examples of sources and threats to ones' hope are well documented within the hope literature (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Herth, 1990; Herth, 1993; King, 2019; Li & Larsen, 2012; Murdoch & Larsen, 2018). The specific sources and threats to hope described in the present study included: (1) mental health; (2) identity; (3) sense of direction; (4) spirituality; (5) relationships; (6) professional supports; (7) dance; and (8) the culture of ballet.

Mental Health. Some participants described struggling with their mental health (i.e., depression, perfectionism, and feelings failure), which they described linking in part to not attaining professional ballet careers, which, in turn, challenged their sense of hope during career transitions. According to Lynch (1965), to hope is to see a future. However, when one struggles with mental health concerns, a vision of the future can become restricted. As mental health

concerns worsen, the future becomes more and more obscured (i.e., inability to see a future), leaving one to focus on the past. Feeling stuck in the past can contribute to a sense of hopelessness. Within the current study, mental health concerns may have left participants feeling stuck in the past of not achieving a professional ballet career and unable to see a future with which they could engage, and thereby, challenging hope.

Mental health concerns as threats to hope have also been documented in the literature. For instance, individuals with depression have been shown to experience lower levels of hope compared with individuals whose depression is in remission and individuals who have never experienced depression (Thimm et al., 2013). In regard to perfectionism and feelings of failure, Holleran (2008) explored the experiences of hope among underachieving gifted high school students and found the need to be perfect was prevalent among participants. The constant pressure of this need negatively impacted hope. Furthermore, when participants were not able to obtain perfection, they alluded to feelings of failure, which appeared to threaten hope. In combination, these findings provide evidence that for high achievers, an accurate descriptor for the participants of the current study, depression, perfectionism, and feelings of failure can threaten hope. Taken together, these findings bring to light the importance of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers seeking assistance to manage mental health concerns during career transitions to facilitate hope.

Identity. Participants stated that from a young age, they solely identified as ballet dancers. As such, when participants were unable to become professional ballerinas, they spoke of losing their identity. Participants' loss of the ballet dancer identity corresponded to a deep sense of hopelessness regarding their sense of self. Participants' accounts suggested they developed foreclosed vocational identities (i.e., that of a ballet dancer) during childhood, an outcome of

being highly committed to an occupation at an early age without exploring other possible occupations (Marcia, 1980, Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Although developing a vocational identity is a necessary developmental milestone of adolescence (Malanchuk et al., 2010; Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011), the present study underscores the devastating impacts a foreclosed vocational identity at an early age can have when a sought-after career is not achieved. Hope for one's self and one's future can be deeply compromised. This finding parallels research on early career transitions of elite amateur ballet dancers, research that clearly delineates how losing the ballet dancer identity after not achieving professional status poses a challenge during the career transition (Buckroyd, 2000; Sandham, 2012).

The available literature on hope and the self is limited; however, in the existing literature we see various descriptions highlighting an interconnectedness between hope and identity, notions supported by the findings of the current study. Specifically, Erikson (1968) and Eliott (2005) both described hope and one's sense of self as almost one entity. Indeed, in Eliott's powerful summary of hope research, she asserts that hope is a large part of who we understand ourselves to be (Eliott, 2005). Further, we are beginning to see research articulating an entwined relationship between hope and identify. For example, supportive identity development appears to enhance hope among counselling clients (Larsen & Stege, 2012), and the more self-differentiated one is (i.e., one's ability for autonomous thought and a clear sense of self) the higher hope one has (O'Hara, 2013). These findings align with current participants' experiences of enhanced hope as they developed a new broader sense of self through exploring alternative areas of interest beyond ballet. Taken together, these findings emphasize the importance of encouraging young hopeful ballerinas to explore other areas of interest during training in order to develop a broader sense of self, should their goal of becoming a professional ballerina not be achieved.

Sense of Direction. After the realization that a professional ballet career would not be achieved, participants described wanting to move on; however, they were at a loss as to how. Lacking career direction, participants' sense of hope was challenged during their career transitions. Similarly, in my master's research (Sandham, 2012), I found that after the loss of a ballet career, participants were unsure as to what to do next with their lives, which was described as a challenge during their career transitions. One way to explain this experience is using the person-environment-correspondence theory, which was developed out of the field of career counselling (Dawis, 2002; Zunker, 2002). The person-environment-correspondence theory highlights the importance of the fit between an individual's skills, interests, values, and needs and the requirements and reinforcers of his or her work environment, to promote job satisfaction. Current participants described learning and developing skills during ballet training that were specific to obtaining a professional ballet career (i.e., teamwork, perseverance, discipline, structure, independence, creativity, drive, quick thinking, ingenuity, identifying patterns, self-reflection, and dealing with disappointment). It appears ballet training groomed participants to develop a good fit between their ballet skills and the requirements of the vocational ballet environment. As such, once a professional ballet career was not realized, participants not only lost the work environment that they developed skills for, but, due to holding a foreclosed vocational identity, which results from a lack of occupational exploration (Marcia, 1980, Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011), participants were not able to envision another work environment that would be conducive to skills attained during training. If hope is focused on a future in which one wishes to participate (Jevne, 1994), it is suggested participants' inability to envision a future career compatible with their work skills challenged their sense of hope during their career transitions.

Current participants noted that hope was enhanced through exploring other possible career options and deciding upon an alternative career to work towards. Hope has been found to be an important resource in career management (Hirschi, 2014; Hirschi et al., 2015), including career exploration (Hirschi et al., 2015) and career decidedness (Hirschi, 2014). However, there is no evidence to support a temporal impact of hope on these two career aspects (i.e., does having hope enhance career exploration and career-decidedness or vice versa) (Hirschi, 2014; Hirschi et al., 2015). The current finding gives evidence for the positive link between hope and career exploration and career-decidedness, and further proposes a possible temporal link that hope is enhanced through exploring alternative careers and deciding upon a career to work towards. It may be that reflecting upon personally valued goals, collecting information on career goals and ways to attain these goals (Hirschi et al., 2015), and obtaining a clearer sense of self and career goals (Hirschi, 2014) foster hope in former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers.

Returning to the person-environment-correspondence theory (Dawis, 2002; Zunker, 2002), skills learned during ballet training have been described as being valuable and generalizable to other careers (Baumol et al., 2004; Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017; Jeffri, 2005; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006; Pickman, 1987; Roncaglia, 2006). Similarly, current participants identified skills learned during ballet training (i.e., self-reflection) that were valuable in their second careers. It appears hope was enhanced when current participants were able to explore alternative careers and decide on a new career environment that best fit with skills learned through ballet training (i.e., doctor and teacher). Also, it is possible that it was hopeful for participants to realize that all the effort put towards training for a ballet career was not wasted; rather, ballet skills could be utilized in other careers. Overall, findings underscore the importance of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers exploring other possible careers during training and

ultimately deciding upon alternative careers that capitalize on valuable skills learned through training in order to foster hope during early career transitions.

Another way to explain impacts of career direction on participants' hope is through the lens of social constructionism within the career counselling field. Amundson et al. (2010) explored career decision making from the perspective of the decider. The authors defined career as activities done over time, which encompassed both work and other life activities. Amundson et al. (2010) found that meaningful engagement, both within and outside of work, was an important aspect of career decision making. Meaningful activities were described as being purposeful (i.e., make a difference in the world) and personally fulfilling. Engagement in these meaningful activities were found to elicit many positive emotions such as happiness, excitement, peacefulness, and contentment. There is also an established link between meaning and hope (Stephenson, 1991). Specifically, hope has been associated with having meaning in one's life while lack of hope has been associated with a lack of meaning in one's life. In regard to the present study, participants eluded to the idea that working towards a ballet career was meaningful to them and provided a sense of purpose to their lives. As such, when participants described not attaining professional ballet careers, they also eluded to a loss of purpose which negatively impacted the sense of hope. However, it appears hope was fostered with deciding upon second careers which provided them once again with a meaningful purpose in life. Support for the link between meaningful purpose, hope, and career has been illuminated among helping professionals, as having a sense of purpose and meaning in work has been found to be a source of hope among this population (Flesaker & Larsen, 2012; Murdoch & Larsen, 2018). Taken together, these findings suggest the importance of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers exploring

and deciding upon alternative occupations that are meaningful and provide a sense a purpose as a way of fostering hope during early career transitions.

Spirituality. Some participants spoke of spirituality as a source of hope during their career transitions. Furthermore, hope and spirituality appeared to be inseparable. The link between spiritualty and hope has been documented among hope theorists (i.e., Farran et al., 1995; Scioli et al., 2011). For instance, Farran et al. (1995) asserted that hope and faith are inseparable from each other, in that faith cannot be sustained without hope and hope cannot be sustained without faith. Similarly, in their own cross-disciplinary theory of hope, Scioli et al. (2011) highlighted that having a personal faith system is a prerequisite for hopefulness. Taken together, these findings provide support that for some participants, spirituality was an important and possibly inseparable aspect of the experience of hope during their career transitions.

Specifically, a strong reliance on God for guidance during hopeless moments enhanced hope during participants' career transitions. The idea that God can be looked to for guidance during personal struggles in adolescence was also a finding by Hinds and Martin (1988) who studied hope among adolescents diagnosed with cancer. Hinds and Martin (1988) found that participants believed that God or a higher power would take care of them, placing the power in God's hands and easing worrying about their difficult situations. For Hind's and Martin's (1988) participants, believing God was watching over them seemed to provide a sense of security that, regardless of the outcome of their circumstances, they would be okay, thereby fostering hope. Hind's and Martin's (1988) findings, in combination with the present finding, bring to light the positive impacts on hope when one feels securely supported from a spiritual standpoint.

Spirituality was also seen to enhance hope through allowing participants a unique connection to the self and facilitating the development of a sense of self that extended beyond the

bounds of being a ballet dancer. The connection between spirituality, hope, and sense of self during personal difficulties was also seen in a study conducted by Redlich-Amirav et al. (2021) on identifying occupations that foster the experiences of hope among mothers of adult children with mental illness. Redlich-Amirav et al. (2021) found participating in meaningful, even if mundane, activities and occupations (i.e., preparing and drinking coffee and cooking) enhanced hope through connecting participants to a sacred sense of self. Within this study, having a strong faith in God appeared to help develop a broader sense of self which included faith-based aspects as a central component (i.e., child of God). Furthermore, participating in mindfulness activities (i.e., yoga) appeared to enhance hope by establishing a connection to the self through participants focusing on their inner worlds. In combination, these findings indicate that spirituality's role in the enhancement of hope during difficult early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers may be helpful in redefining and connecting to a broader sense of self. These findings also allude to the importance of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers developing a spiritual connection during their career transitions to foster hope.

Relationships. Participants highlighted that during their career transitions, relationships with important others both threatened and fostered their sense of hope. For instance, a departure from the world of ballet resulted in the loss of friendships which challenged hope, while supportive relationships with loved ones facilitated hope. It has been previously found that both the loss of dance friends as a result of leaving the dance world and unsupportive relationships with loved ones (i.e., lack of understanding of the difficulty of giving up a dream) were challenges during early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers (Sandham, 2012). Alternatively, supportive friends and family and making new non-dance friends were facilitators

that helped participants through their career transitions, demonstrating that social support can both hinder and facilitate early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers.

The link between hope and relationships has been widely elaborated by a number of hope theorists (i.e., Benzein et al., 2000; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1995; Scioli et al., 2011). Farran et al.'s (1995) theory of hope and hopelessness is a strong fit with the current participants' experiences of hope and relationships as the theory highlights the relational aspects of both hope and hopelessness. Farran et al. (1995) noted that hope can be influenced by others being present, communicating positive expectations, and providing support for the hoping individual's ability to overcome difficulties. Conversely, hopelessness results when there is a disruption in relationships, such as in the inability to trust others, difficulty imagining attaining support from others, or not having others around to provide support. It appears current participants' sense of hope was challenged during their career transition because of the loss of support and connection with dance friends when participants left the ballet world. In contrast, hope appeared to be fostered through loved ones being present and providing emotional support and empathy regarding the loss of one's aspirational career. Additional recent research offers similar findings related to the importance of hope and supportive relationships during stressful transitions. For example, Li and Larsen (2008) found emotional support from family back home, teachers, and new friends fostered hope among Chinese newcomer students transitioning to a new country for school, while King (2019) found supportive relationships enhanced hope among young adults transitioning out of government care. Taken together, these findings draw attention to the importance of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers having relationships with supportive others as a way to enhance hope during early career transitions.

The present study also described relationships with pets as a source of hope during difficult moments in participants' career transitions. Although there is limited literature in this area, Iaboni (2017) found pets were a source of hope for children, especially in times of fear and uncertainty. Specifically, pets offered children feelings of protection, calmness, comfort, and decreased stress. For current participants, pets appeared to foster hope by acting as a motivator, encouraging participants to mentally and physically take better care of themselves during their career transitions in order to provide adequate care to their pets. The limited research on hope and pets suggests that hope fostering relationships can extend beyond humans to pets, which can provide comfort and companionship along with acting as a motivator to take care of one-self during times of stress.

It is also important to note that not only are relationships an important influence on hope (Farran et al., 1995), relationships are also vital in career development (Blustein, 2010; Schultheiss, 2007). Therefore, it is also possible to use relational career theories as a lens to understand the importance of relationships in the current participants' lives during their early career transitions. The main principle of relational career theories is that relationships are central to human functioning (Young & Popadiuk, 2012). Specifically, career is constructed through relationships with others (e.g., caregivers, siblings, significant others). In the current study, participants found support from important others a source of hope as they faced the difficult transition to their second careers. Blustein (2011) and Schultheiss (2007), both prominent relational career theorists, highlight with the first tenet/proposition of their theories, the importance of social support from important others in career development. Specifically, social support from others provides a secure base from which one can effectively deal with stressful situations, explore occupations, and decide upon occupations. Thus, it may be that participants'

supportive relationships provided hope by allowing them to feel safe as they navigated their way through letting go of ballet careers and deciding upon new occupational directions. Using relational theories of career development as a lens to view the role of relationships in career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers further supports the notion of the importance of this population developing and utilizing supportive relationships during early career transitions.

Professional Supports. Some participants spoke of wanting to discuss the difficulty of this particular early career transition with helping professionals; however, they found supports were not available and when supports were, they were not helpful to address the specific needs (i.e., loss of identity, career loss, and needs for career exploration) of this population. The lack of adequate professional supports challenged participants' sense of hope during their career transitions. Evidence for the negative impacts of not having adequate professional supports in place during career transitions has also been found within the sporting literature. For instance, among college athletes transitioning out of sport, not having adequate career counselling in place within the school environment was found to be a challenge during the transition, as it left the former athletes feeling unprepared for life after sport (Stokowski et al., 2019). While there are specific supports in place for professional ballet dancers' transitioning to second careers (Dancer Transition Resource Center, 2017/2018), there are no known specific supports for semi-elite amateur ballet dancers unable to achieve professional careers (Griffith et al., 2019; Sandham, 2012; Sandham & Nicol, 2015). It is very likely professional supports were available which could have adequately addressed the specialized needs of this population; however, current participants' lack of awareness regarding supports may have rendered them unavailable. This may have contributed to feelings of hopelessness as hopelessness results when one feels that there is no available support from others (Farren et al., 1995), including helping professionals.

These findings underscore the notion that not having available or adequate professional supports to help semi-elite amateur ballet dancers transition to second careers, challenges hope and highlights the importance for future research to address the development of specific supports to aid in this transition.

Dance. Many of the participants noted that continuing to be involved with dance during their career transitions either through taking classes (i.e., Ukrainian, ballet, modern, contemporary, tap, Spanish dance, flamenco) and/or teaching dance enhanced hope during this difficult time. It appears that by maintaining elements of participants' ballet training (e.g., main mode of self-expression, place of competence, coping mechanisms, and a creative outlet), finding new ways to continue dancing fostered hope. According to Benzein et al. (2000), the experience of well-being was described as an outcome of hope related to doing (i.e., action orientated). Furthermore, having meaningful occupations was described as a component of the experience of well-being which fosters hope. It is proposed that ballet provided many elements that contributed to a positive wellbeing for the current participants including being their main mode of self-expression, place of competence, coping mechanism, and creative outlet. These positive impacts of dance on well-being are also supported in the dance literature (Ali et al., 2017; Quiroga Murcia et al., 2010). After not achieving professional ballet careers, most participants chose to continue to be involved in dance not only because they loved and had a natural aptitude for dance, but also because dance was a stress relief, a way of interacting with the world, and a creative outlet, fostering hope. This was especially helpful during their difficult career transitions. Continuing to dance has previously been found to be a facilitator during career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers, as it allowed these dancers to keep dancing for fun, which they loved, and aided in rebuilding the self-confidence lost with not achieving ballet

careers (Sandham, 2012). Collectively, these findings suggest that ballet was more than just a possible career for semi-elite amateur ballet dancers, as the act of dance offered many benefits for well-being, which enhanced hope. These findings also bring to light the importance of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers continuing to be involved in dance after not achieving professional ballet careers to allow dancers to utilize the beneficial aspects of dance during their early career transitions, fostering hope during this difficult time.

Another way to understand why continuing to dance was a source of hope for some participants in the current study, is using the social cognitive career theory, which stems from the field of career counselling and is based upon the social constructionist perspective (Lent et al., 2002). The social cognitive theory was developed as a framework to understand, among other career related objectives, how one develops career related interests. This theory incorporates self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals, which are seen to be the building blocks of career development. *Self-efficacy* is referred to as one's beliefs about his or her performance in a particular domain (e.g., I am a talented dancer). *Outcome expectations* refers to one's beliefs about the consequences of performing a particular behaviour (e.g., expecting to feel pride about landing a triple pirouette). Finally, *goals* are referred to as determining to engage in a particular activity (e.g., dance for fun). The social cognitive theory argues that there is an interplay between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals, such that self-efficacy and outcome expectations impacts the goals individuals set for themselves (Lent et al., 2002). In regard to the current study, it appears that despite not attaining professional ballet careers, participants still felt they had an affinity for dance for which they still expected that dancing would provide them with positive elements (e.g., coping mechanisms, creative outlet). Therefore, having high self-efficacy regarding dance and positive expectations of dance may have led participants to develop the goal

of continuing to dance for fun, which sustained their involvement in dance. According to Snyder's (1995) theory of hope, high hope is produced when an individual has both a plan to achieve a goal (pathway) and the motivation to follow through with the plan (agency). Therefore, it is possible that participants' hope was fostered through attaining their goal to dance for fun. Taken together, these findings provide added support for the positive benefits of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers continuing to dance during their early career transitions.

Culture of Ballet. Participants spoke of the ballet culture as both a threat and a source of hope during their career transitions. Specifically, the competitiveness among dancers and the focus on the ideal ballet body led participants to remain silent about the loss of their ballet careers and the struggle with body issues long into their career transitions, both of which challenged hope. Alternatively, for participants who were lucky enough to have ballet teachers who maintained a supportive dance environment, participants learned that one could dance for the love of dance, which fostered hope during career transitions. The importance of context in the experience of hope was described in Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) conceptualization of hope. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) noted that hope is brought to awareness and is experienced within the context of life as understood by the hoping person. The context serves multiple purposes such as providing the circumstance that elicits hope, the opportunity for the hoping process to be mobilized, and as a setting for hope to be tested. It appears that the ballet culture was influential in participants' experiences of hope through the implicit messages that the environment cultivated. For example, the culture's competitive nature, focus on body shape, and unsupportive ballet teachers appeared to cultivate the implicit messages of "do not talk about not achieving ballet careers" and "I need to be skinny" which were so ingrained in participants that these messages stayed with them and challenged their sense of hope during their career

transitions. While participants who had supportive ballet teachers that promoted an environment where the focus was on the love of ballet, obtained the implicitly hopeful message that despite not attaining a professional ballet career, one could still dance for the love of dance, which fostered hope during the career transitions. Examples of contextual threats and facilitators of hope have been discussed within the hope research. Holleran (2008) found that a highly competitive high school environment can put strain on peer relationships, challenging hope among students. While Murdoch and Larsen (2018) described a work culture which fostered hope among youth workers as involving supportive relationships, an openness to change, and a flexible and respectful atmosphere, competitive environments appear to risk challenging hope, while environments that focus on support and respect may foster hope. These findings highlight how influential ballet culture can be to the experience of hope, not only during the early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers but also during ballet training. These findings also provide evidence for the need of the ballet culture to evolve into a more supportive and respectful environment focused on the love of ballet with the goal of enhancing hope in young ballet dancers.

Summary of Discussion of Key Findings

Initially, participants described holding goal-focused hope for attaining a ballet career and when this goal was not achieved, hopelessness ensued. This aligns with Snyder's (1994, 1995) unidimensional conceptualization of hope which focuses on goal attainment. However, upon beginning career transitions, participants described multidimensional experiences of hope. This involved becoming reacquainted with hope as a process over time which comprised various challenges and sources of hope. These findings appear more consistent with the hope theories of Benzein et al. (2000), Dufault and Martocchio (1985), Farran et al. (1995) and Scioli et al.

(2011). All of these theories offer illustrations of the dynamic and complex nature of hope that demonstrate some alignment with the experiences of hope during career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers. The current findings also contributed new insights regarding the experiences of hope (i.e., the significant role that identity plays in the enhancement of hope, the generalization of hopelessness to all aspects of life, inadequate professional supports change hope, and dance fosters hope).

Study Limitations

This study possesses several limitations to take into consideration. First, this study was retrospective in nature, and therefore, how participants remembered past experiences of hope may have been different compared to how hope was actually experienced. When recalling specific information regarding an event or experience, information changes as the length of time between the event and recall of the event increases (Bradburn et al., 1987; Hassan, 2005; Tourangeau, 2000, 2014). In addition, every time the memory of an event or experience is recalled, new information is added, and the memory is re-stored, resulting in a changed understanding of the event or experience. Such recall biases have been noted as threats to retrospective studies (Hassan, 2005). Despite these concerns, Sandelowski (1999) argued that it is not possible to both experience an event and reflect upon the experience at the same time. Therefore, because qualitative researchers seek to understand the meaning one makes of an experience, interviewing retrospectively allows participants time to reflect upon and articulate their experiences, which may result in an increase in the richness of data. Furthermore, for ethical reasons, in using retrospective studies, participants are usually presumed not to be in the middle of the experience, which may minimize harm to participants when discussing experiences during interviews.

As a qualitative study, the sample size was limited to 10 participants. In conducting qualitative research, and IPA specifically, a smaller sample size meets the goal of an in-depth exploration of the lived experience of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Notably, a smaller sample size does not allow for the generalization of findings to the broader population of former female semi-elite amateur ballet dancers (Ochieng, 2009). Thus, it is important to keep in mind that these findings may not be representative of the experiences of hope during the career transitions of all semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers. Instead, the highly contextualized and depth of description provided in qualitative studies is designed to inform readers about the potential transferability of findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Morrow, 2005; Smith et al., 2009).

Finally, the majority of research interviews were conducted over the phone rather than face-to-face. Conducting phone interviews is common practice among qualitative researchers when face-to-face interviews are not logistically possible (Drabble et al., 2016; Jenner & Myers, 2019). There are many benefits of conducting interviews over the phone including an increased flexibility for scheduling interviews, perceived anonymity, increased privacy for interviewees, reduction in distractions, and reductions in feelings of self-consciousness (Drabble et al., 2016). However, phone interviews are prone to difficulties such as establishing rapport with participants (Drabble et al., 2015), the loss of contextual cues, and the lack of observable body language and non-verbal cues (Drabble et al., 2015; Jenner & Myers, 2019). Therefore, conducting phone interviews may have resulted in difficulties deepening relationships with participants and the loss of non-verbal cues that could have enriched the data. In future studies, where face-to-face interviews are not possible, I would consider conducting interviews through a video platform, which is more characteristic of face-to-face interviews.

Potential Implications

The present IPA study set out to answer the research question: "How do former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers experience hope as they successfully transition to meaningful alternate careers?" Related objectives included exploring: (1) personal experiences that fostered hope; (2) barriers to hope; and (3) environmental factors related to hope. This appears to be the first exploration of experiences of hope in the early career transitions of semi-elite amateur ballet dancers; hence, findings highlight new insights about the experiences of hope for this population and contribute to the existing literature on hope. Although results of this study are not generalizable, findings do provide important information that may be transferrable to other contexts and individuals affiliated with the dance world. The potential implications that will be addressed include: (1) research; (2) counselling psychology practice; (3) ballet teachers; and (4) parents and caregivers.

Implications for Research

The current study appears to be the first to explore the experiences of hope during the early career transitions of former semi-elite female ballet dancers, and the second empirical study to explore the topic of early career transitions among this population (Sandham, 2012). Therefore, this study not only adds to the literature on early career transitions among this population, but also informs future research in this area. Furthermore, current findings suggest ballet dancers have difficulties putting their experiences of hope into words because their main mode of expression is artistically based. As such, providing the opportunity for participants to use artistic representations of hope facilitated discussions of hope and enhanced the depth of data collection possible. Similarly, it has been found that incorporating meaningful/art-based objects facilitated the interview process and added in the richness of data when conducting research with

former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers (Sandham, 2012). Incorporating an arts-based component alongside interviews appears to be a useful tool with former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers to facilitate a deeper level of self-expression and should be considered for future research.

The current study's findings may also extend outside of the ballet world and inform research with other athletes' experiences of hope. The literature on hope and athletes is limited (Gustafsson et al., 2010; Gustafsson et al., 2018; Lundqvist & Gustafsson, 2018), and much of what is available has used Snyder's (1995) unidimensional goal-focused conceptualization of hope. Overall, hope has been found to be beneficial in many aspects of athletic careers (i.e., injuries, burnout, and athletic achievement); however, research on hope and athletic career transitions appears to be unexplored, with only a hypothetical connection documented in the literature (Gustafsson et al., 2018). The present study adds to the literature on athletic career transitions and hope. Furthermore, this study adds a multidimensional explanation of hope to the athletic literature, which appears to be missing to date.

Implications for Counselling Psychology Practice

To date, there are no known empirically supported hope-focused interventions for aiding former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers through early career transitions. Therefore, the present study's findings can inform future practice when working with former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers going through early career transitions from a hope-focused therapeutic approach. There are multiple areas of therapeutic focus highlighted within this research. For example, therapists can help former dancers work through the loss of the hoped-for ballet career as well as the accompanying loss of dancer identity. In addition, therapists can validate former dancers' feelings of hopelessness while helping them look to a positive future. Therapists can engage

former dancers to explore other areas of possible interests, including those that promote creativity, with the hope of developing a new and broader sense of identity. Similarly, therapists can help former dancers connect to a sense of spirituality in order to redefine identity and develop a connection to the self. Finally, therapists can facilitate former dancers to explore alternative careers that can utilize the skills mastered during ballet training (i.e., perseverance, dedication, teamwork, and working in competitive environments) with the goal of deciding on an equalling meaningful second career.

Furthermore, this research also provides multiple areas of focus for therapists working with semi-elite amateur ballet dancers from a social constructionist perspective. For instance, since relationships are the cornerstone of career development, therapists can focus on developing a strong supportive working relationship with former dancers to counter the losses experienced by not attaining ballet careers (Kenny et al., 2018). Therapists can also assist former ballet dancers in working on existing personal relationships and/or help former dancers expand their support systems to enhance their social support. Relationships in former dancers' lives can also be used as a source for exploring other possible occupations such as through role modeling and networking. In addition, therapists and former dancers can explore the link between not attaining professional status and the culture of ballet, with the hopes of former dancers gaining more understanding of the reasons for not achieving ballet careers while lessening self-blame. Finally, therapists can assist former dancers in exploring what provides them meaning and purpose in their lives with the hopes of finding a meaningful second career (Amundson et al., 2010).

Finally, findings from this current project highlight the usefulness of incorporating artistic forms of expression into the therapeutic context to aid former ballet dancers in self-expression. Such artistic forms may include dance/movement, writing poetry, music, videos, and

photography. These artistic forms may also serve to foster hope in this population as it provides an outlet for creative expression that was once filled by ballet

Implications for Ballet Teachers

Implicit messages cultivated within the ballet culture were found to influence experiences of hope among former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers in both positive (e.g., there is life outside of ballet) and negative (e.g., do not talk about not achieving ballet careers) ways during early career transitions. These findings allude to the important role that ballet teachers can play in fostering hope among their students. The findings suggest that providing an encouraging ballet environment with supportive ballet teachers who focus on the love of ballet rather than perfection, may help foster hope in young ballet dancers by cultivating positive messages about the self that carry into future career transitions. Ballet teachers are also in an ideal position to model that one can still love and participate in ballet without attaining a professional ballet career.

Implications for Parents and Caregivers

Findings support that parents and caregivers can play a pivotal role in fostering hope among former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers during career transitions. For instance, emotional support from parents entailing listening, offering understanding and providing support regarding the difficulties of not achieving professional ballet careers was seen as a source of hope during early career transitions. Findings also showed that having other interests fostered hope among these dancers by aiding in redefining identity during the career transitions. Thus, parents and caregivers can support young ballet dancers to explore interests outside of ballet starting from an early age, to facilitate the development of identities that encompass more than just being ballet dancers.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study appears to be the first to explore the experiences of hope among former semi-elite amateur female ballet dancers during their early career transitions. Accordingly, there are a number of future areas of research that should considered. It should be noted that the following discussion is not an exhaustive list; however, it does provide examples of potential future research areas.

First, identity was found to play a large role in the experiences of hope among former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers. Not only was identity both a source (i.e., developing a broader identity) and a threat (loss of foreclosed dancer identity) to hope, but identity development was also highly intertwined with the participants becoming reacquainted with hope after the loss of their hoped-for ballet careers. Therefore, future research should specifically focus on the connection between hope and identity in former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers' early career transitions.

Second, available empirical research conducted with former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers and their early career transitions have explored the experiences of females. Literature suggests that male dancers have different experiences than females. For instance, males can start training at an older age compared to females (Hamilton, 1998), there are fewer male dancers equating to less competition among males (Hill, 2019; Hamilton, 1998; Wulff, 1998), and behavior that is seen as unacceptable (i.e., being late for class, missing rehearsals) is often overlooked for males, because there are less replacements for male dancers (Greben, 2002). Furthermore, outside of the dance world, it has been suggested that males and females differ in their career experiences as a result of gender stereotypes, family/work conflicts, issues with the education system (Betz, 2005; Schultheiss, 2020), and socialized beliefs about one's abilities

(Betz, 2005). Hence, future research may consider exploring the unique male perspectives and experiences of hope regarding early career transitions of former semi-elite amateur dancers. In addition, future research may also explore the experiences of hope during the early career transitions of former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers who identity as gender-fluid or transgender as, to date, these populations appear left out of the literature on this topic.

Third, the present study's findings, in combination with the limited available literature on early career transitions of semi-elite former female ballet dancers, suggest a need for the development of professional supports that are specific to the challenges faced by this population (Sandham, 2012), and specifically use a hope-focused perspective. Hope-focused counselling interventions have been developed for use within health as well as in educational settings and studies examining the effectiveness of these interventions have shown an increase in well-being and hope (e.g., Howell, Jacobson et al., 2015; Murdoch et al., 2020). These studies show promise that hope-focused counselling interventions developed for specific populations are effective in fostering hope. Thus, a focus of future research could be on developing hope-focused counselling interventions specific to former semi-elite amateur ballet dancers to facilitate successful early career transitions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of hope during early career transitions of former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers. Furthermore, I sought to understand barriers and sources of hope that these young ballet dancers faced during their career transitions and to understand the influence of environmental factors on this experience. Ten participants were invited to participate in three in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Participants were also invited to share artistic representations of their experiences of hope during their career

transitions. Four overarching themes illuminating experiences of hope during participants early career transitions were co-constructed which included hope not achieved, hope as a process, hope as internal to the self, and hope as external to the self. Overall, the loss of a seemingly singular goal-focused hope for a professional ballet career resulted in a sense of hopelessness, which often generalized to many aspects of life. However, despite feeling hopeless about the future, over time, participants were able to develop new relationships with hope through letting go of their old singular hoped-for ballet career, exploring hope within the context of the loss of their professional ballet careers, and adopting a more multidimensional view of hope which included holding hope for themselves and for others. Through this process, there were multiple barriers to hope described including: experiencing mental health concerns, loss of foreclosed vocational identity, loss of career direction, loss of relationships, lack of professional supports, and negative implicit messages cultivated by the ballet culture. Conversely, hope was fostered through focusing on redefining the sense of self, finding a new sense of direction, leaning on spiritual beliefs, supportive relationships including dance teachers, and participation in dance. It is hoped that this research project will help illuminate the difficulty of having one's hopes profoundly dashed following the inability to attain the long-held hoped-for professional ballet career, and the associated challenge of finding a new career path. In addition, I hope this research project highlights the important role that hope plays during former semi-elite ballet dancers' career transitions and how ballet teachers and parents/caregivers can aid in fostering hope. Finally, I hope these findings ultimately lead to the development of hope-focused counselling interventions that are specific to this population's needs during their early career transitions.

Postscript

As I reflect upon an artistic representation of my own experiences of hope during my early career transition, I am drawn towards a quote by S.A. Sachs, an activist and former judge, which reads, “Hope rises like a phoenix from the ashes of shattered dreams.” Like my participants, I had a seemingly singular goal-focused hope of attaining a professional ballet career. When I realized this career would not be attained, my singular dream was shattered along with my hope. It took many years; however, eventually new hopes grew out of the ashes of what was once my dream of dancing professionally. Hence for me, hope budded out of hopelessness. One of my multiple new hopes is becoming a psychologist. Just as the participants’ experiences of hope changed over time, so did mine. Reflecting upon a current artistic representation of hope, I am drawn to the metaphor of a lighthouse. Many years ago, I received an email from a mother of two young female ballet dancers who were struggling after not attaining professional ballet careers. The mother explained that she was at a loss with how to help her daughters and began searching the internet for some guidance. She happened upon my master’s thesis exploring the early career transitions of former elite amateur female ballet dancers. The mother thanked me for doing research in this area, as working so hard to attain a professional ballet career only to have the dream not come to fruition, is a heartbreaking experience which often goes unspoken. My research appeared to be the lighthouse providing her guidance and hope as she struggled to navigate the rocky unknown waters of her daughters’ loss of hoped-for ballet careers. In addition, the mother’s kind words of gratitude and support gave me the hope that I needed to push this research project along. My hope was further sustained by participants in the present study as they echoed the mother’s words of appreciation and support for researching as well as highlighting this as a needed area of research. My hope going forward is that the dissemination

of these results will further help other aspiring semi-elite ballet dancers both navigate and foster hope during their transition to a life after dance.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Email Request to Advertise Study

Dear_________________,

My name is Tricia Sandham. I am a doctoral student at the University of Alberta completing my studies in Counselling Psychology. I am collecting data for my dissertation study on the lived experience of hope during the career transitions of elite amateur ballet dancers. I am writing today to ask for your permission to advertise at your organization. I would like to place posters at approved locations around your facility. Please find attached a sample copy of my poster containing information about the study and my contact information. If you have any questions please feel free to contact at XXXX.

Thank you for your time,

Tricia Sandham

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster

The Lived Experience of Hope in the Successful Early Career Transitions of Elite Amateur Ballet Dancers

Did you ever dream of becoming a professional ballerina but were unable to attain your dream?

Are you interested in sharing your story about transitioning to a life after dance?

I am a doctoral student in the Counselling Psychology program at the University of Alberta. I am conducting a study examining the lived experience of hope during the career transitions of elite amateur ballet dancers.

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must meet the following criteria:

(a) Female
(b) 18 years of age or older
(c) A former ballet dancer
(d) Auditioned at least once for a professional ballet school
(e) Wanted to dance professionally, but was unable to realize this dream
(f) Struggled to navigate the transition to life after dance
(g) Feel you are currently living a meaningful, satisfying life
(h) Are currently motivated to reflect upon this experience

If you would like more information about this study or are interested in participating, please contact Tricia Sandham by email: XXXX

This study has been approved by the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board

Appendix C: Demographics Form

Participant Information Form

Please fill out the following to the best of your ability. If you have any questions please email the researcher at XXXX or call XXXX.

Pseudonym: ____________________ Date: _________________________

Age: ______________________ Relationship Status: _______________________

Current Vocation: _____________________

Dance History:

Age of first dance class: _________________

Reason for Starting dance: Guardian ☐ Self ☐ Other: _________________________

How many years did you dance for? ____________________________

What types of dance did you do? Jazz ☐ Tap ☐ Contemporary ☐

Other: _____________________

Age of first ballet class: _____________________

How many years did you do ballet for? __________________

What Professional Ballet School did you audition for? ________________________

How many times did you audition for a professional ballet school? _______________

Did you attend a professional ballet school? ___________________-

If so, how long did you attend a professional ballet school? ____________________

Age when you realized that your dream of becoming a professional ballet dancers would not be attained: __________________

Why was your you are dream of becoming a professional ballerina not attained?

Injury ☐ Deselection ☐ Own choice ☐

Other: _________________________

Did you leave the dance world after realizing that you dream would not be attained?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Other: ________________________

Are you currently dancing? Yes ☐ No ☐

Other ___________________________

If so, what kind of dancing are you involved in? ___________________________

Appendix D: Snowball Sampling Form

The Lived Experience of Hope in the Successful Early Career Transitions of Elite Amateur Ballet Dancers

Did you ever dream of becoming a professional ballerina but were unable to attain your dream?

Are you interested in sharing your story about transitioning to a life after dance?

I am a doctoral student in the Counselling Psychology program at the University of Alberta. I am conducting a study examining the lived experience of hope during the career transitions of elite amateur ballet dancers.

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must meet the following criteria:

(i) Female
(j) 18 years of age or older
(k) A former ballet dancer
(l) Auditioned at least once for a professional ballet school
(m) Wanted to dance professionally, but was unable to realize this dream
(n) Struggled to navigate the transition to life after dance
(o) Feel you are currently living a meaningful, satisfying life
(p) Are currently motivated to reflect upon this experience

If you would like more information about this study or are interested in participating, please contact Tricia Sandham by phone: XXXX or email: XXXX

This study has been approved by the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

1. Can you tell me the story of when you first realized that you wanted to be a professional ballet dancer?
2. Can you tell me the story of realizing your dream of attaining a professional ballet career would not be attained?
3. Can you tell me a story that reminds you of hope during your career transition?
4. What are some things that helped you find hope during your transition?
5. Can you tell me some barriers or threats to hope you faced during your career transition?
6. Can you tell me about your environment (eg. Family, friends, job) during your career transition and how this might have related to hope during this time?
7. Tell me a story about when your hope was challenged during your career transition?
8. How has your hope changed from the time of your career transition to now?
9. Can you tell me where you found hope during your career transition?
10. Tell me what hope means from your perspective?
11. What has it been like to participate in this interview?

Appendix F: Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in "The Lived Experience of Hope in the successful early career transitions of elite amateur ballet dancers" research study. The purpose of this study was to explore the role that hope played during the career transitions of elite amateur ballet dancers. Your participation and cooperation was greatly appreciated.

If you would like more information about the study or like a copy of the results please contact:

Tricia Sandham
XXXX
XXXX

or

Dr. Denise Larsen
XXXX
XXXX

Appendix G: Inform Consent Form

Informed Consent

This consent form will outline pertinent information about the study regarding the purpose and procedures, potential risks and benefits, issues of confidentiality, data storage, your right to withdraw from the study, and ask all questions that you might have.

Name of Project: The Lived Experience of Hope in the Successful Early Career Transitions of Elite Amateur Ballet Dancers

Researchers Investigator:

Tricia J. Sandham MEd.
XXXX

Supervisor:

Denise Larsen, PhD, R. Psych
XXXX

Background: You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta. The results of this study will be used as part of my dissertation in the Department of Educational Psychology as a requirement for my doctorate in Counselling Psychology. The results will also be made available on an electronic database for theses and dissertations at the University of Alberta.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of hope in career transitions of elite amateur ballet dancers.

Procedure: You will be asked to participate in three one hour interviews. During the first interview the questions will focus on your experiences of hope during your career transition. The second and third interviews will entail questions developed from the analysis of the first interview transcript. The interviews will take place either at the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary. Phone interviews will be made available if you are unable to meet at the either interview locations. Further, interviews will be scheduled at a time most convenient for you. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes

Potential Risks: The risks to participating in this study are minimal. However, there is a possibility that participating may bring up negative feelings. If negative feelings surface you will be given the opportunity to end or continue with the interview. Your participation in this study is voluntary, you can refuse to answer any questions you wish and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, you have the right to request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point during the interview. Little to low cost community resources will be made available if you wish to talk to someone. I will tell you right away if I learn anything during this study that could affect your willingness to participate.

Potential Benefits: There is no direct benefit to participating in the study. However, it is hoped that by telling your story and reflecting upon the meaning you have placed on your experience

that you will gain a new found understanding of your career transition. Participating in this study may also help other ballet dancers with the transition phase, as well as inform adults involved in the world of elite dancing (e.g. parents, ballet instructors, school teachers and helping professionals). Participating in this study will be of no cost to you, and there will be no incentives offered for your participation.

Confidentiality: To ensure your confidentiality is protected all audiotapes and transcripts will be available only to myself and my supervisor. Throughout the process, and in the final document, your real name will be replaced with a pseudonym and identifying information will be minimized in order to protect your identity. Once the transcription phase is complete you will have the opportunity to read and make any changes you feel are necessary to protect your anonymity, or for accuracy.

Storage of Data: All data collected will be stored, by the student researcher, on a password protected and encrypted computer. Any hard copies of transcripts and personal information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet within a locked research space. At the completion of the study these materials will be stored for a minimum of five years. If you would like access to the final document please contact myself or Dr. Larsen at the provided contact information.

Right to Withdraw: Participating in the study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point you wish. You also have the right to not answer questions, and to request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point during the interview. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all data gathered during the process will be destroyed.

Questions: If you have any questions, you may contact Dr. Denise Larsen or myself at the contact information provided. This study has been approved by Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding Ethical issues, you can contact the Research Ethics Office at XXXX.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood all information provided in this handout. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. With the understanding that I can withdraw at any time, I consent to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Participant's Name:___________________

________________________ ___________________
(Signature of Participant) (Date)

Principal Researcher's Name: Tricia Sandham

______________________________ ____________________
(Signature of Principal Researcher) (Date)

Research Supervisor's Name: Denise Larsen

________________________________ ______________________
(Signature of Research Supervisor) (Date)

Appendix H: Artistic Representation of Hope Informed Consent Form

Artistic Representation of Hope Informed Consent Form

Name of Project: The Lived Experience of Hope in the Successful Early Career Transitions of Elite Amateur Ballet Dancers

Researchers Investigator:
Tricia J. Sandham MEd.
XXXX

Supervisor:
Denise Larsen, PhD, R. Psych
XXXX

Background: I have been finding that sometimes it is difficult to put hope into words. As dancers are more movement based, I invite the option of speaking about your experience of hope during your career transition in your own language, with the use of an artistic representation. Such artistic representations of hope may include but are not limited to poems, pictures, music, publicly accessed YouTube clips, or you can choregraph your own dance. In the final document all identifying information (e.g., faces) will be masked in order to protect your identity.

☐ As part of research interviews, I consent to share a/n artistic representation(s) of the experience of hope in the early career transitions of former semi-elite female amateur ballet dancers unable to obtain a professional ballet career.

☐ In addition, I consent to the researcher including this/these artistic representation(s) in the final research documents (e.g., dissertation, journal publications, presentations, web-based dissemination) prepared as part of this research study.

Participant's Name:____________________

________________________ ___________________

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

Principal Researcher's Name: Tricia Sandham

______________________________ ____________________

(Signature of Principal Researcher) (Date)

Research Supervisor's Name: Denise Larsen

________________________________ ______________________

(Signature of Research Supervisor) (Date)

Appendix I: Disclosure of Identifiable Information Consent Form

Disclosure of Identifiable Information Consent Form

Name of Project: The Lived Experience of Hope in the Successful Early Career Transitions of Elite Amateur Ballet Dancers

Researchers Investigator:
Tricia J. Sandham MEd.
XXXX

Supervisor:
Denise Larsen, PhD, R. Psych
XXXX

Background: As you will know, as a participant in the above study, you were offered an option to communicate about your experience of hope during your career transition in a variety of ways including with the use of an artistic representation. As a dancer and a researcher, I felt that this was an important option to offer because dancers are also skilled in communication based in movement.

The original consents provided at the outset of this research project, included the option to include your contributions of artistic representations to the final research documents (e.g., dissertation, journal publications, presentations, web-based dissemination). You will remember that all identifying information (e.g., faces) were assured to be masked in order to protect your identity.

I have found that I am not able to mask identifying information in some of the artistic representations you contributed (e.g. links to participants' personal YouTube channel where name is attached). In the case where it is not possible to mask identifying information the participant's identity cannot be protected and the participant may be easily identified by those who view the final research documents.

You have the option of consenting to have your artistic representation included in the final research document with your identifying information present. Alternatively, you may decide that you do not want your identity revealed in the final research documents and may choose not to consent to reveal identifying information. This may mean that some or all of your artistic representation(s) will be removed from the final research documents. Should you choose not to consent, it is important for you to know that the research project will not be negatively impacted if you decide not to consent. It should be noted that if you choose not to consent to the inclusion of your artistic representation in the final document, your artistic representation of hope will still be included as data in the data analysis. Finally, I will include only those artistic representations in the final document shared by participants who have consented through this disclosure document. In other words, your artistic representation of hope will not be included in the final document if you do not respond to this disclosure document.

☐ I consent to the researcher including my artistic representations(s) in the final research documents (e.g., dissertation, journal publications, presentations, web-based dissemination) prepared as part of this research study with my identifiable information present. I am aware that by consenting my identity will no longer be protected and I will be identifiable by those who view the final document.

Participant's Name:___________________

_______________________ __________________

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

Principal Researcher's Name: Tricia Sandham

____________________________ ___________________

(Signature of Principal Researcher) (Date)

Appendix J: Community Resources

Edmonton and Area Community Resources

Crisis Services

24-Hour Distress Line: (780) 482-HELP (4357)

Walk-In Counselling Society of Edmonton
(780) 757-0900

Counselling Services (low cost available)

Cornerstone Counselling Centre
(780) 423-4102

Catholic Social Services
(780) 420-1970

The Family Center
(780) 423-2831

City of Edmonton Counselling Services
(780) 496-4777

Jewish Family Services (Integrity Counselling Service)
(780) 454-1194

YWCA Counselling Center
(780) 423-9922 Ext. 222

The Red Road Healing Society
(780) 471-3220

Faculty of Education Clinical Services
(780) 492-3746

Calgary and Area Community Resources

Crisis Services:

Distress Centre – 24 Hour Crisis Line: (403) 266-HELP (4357)

Counselling Services (low cost available):

Distress Centre (ask for intake counselling)
(403) 266-4357

Calgary Counselling Centre
(403) 691-5991

Catholic Family Service
(403) 233-2360

Jewish Family Service Calgary
(403) 287-3510

Red Deer and Area Community Resources

Crisis Services:

Distress Centre – 24 Hour Crisis Line: (403) 266-HELP (4357)

Adult Community Services Walk in Single Session Counselling Services – Alberta Health Services
(403) 340-5466

Vantage Community Services – Walk in Clinic
(403) 340-8995

Counselling Services (low cost available):

Catholic Social Services
(403) 347-8848

Family Services of Central Alberta
(403) 309-8221

Shalom Counselling Centre
(403) 342-0339

Vantage Community Services
(403) 340-8995

Lethbridge and Area Community Resources

Crisis Services:

Distress Centre – 24 Hour Crisis Line: (403) 266-HELP (4357)

Canadian Mental Health Association Distress Line – 24 Hours: (403) 327-7905

Counselling Services (low cost available):

Family Centre
(403) 320-4234 Ext. 240

Lethbridge Family Services
(403) 327-5724

Lethbridge Counselling Services
(403) 942-0452

Crossroads Healing Centre
(403) 327-7078