

What success means to professional dancers

Thesis

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Janet Nixon: Student ID: 300125861

Supervisor: Liz Melchior

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Abstract

Being successful as a dance professional does not generally happen by accident. Occasionally all the components of success fall into place serendipitously, but success is usually achieved by people who know what success means for themselves, people who have developed the vision and personal qualities required to achieve this. Success is a mental attitude, a mind-set, and the quality of this mental attitude allows people to make the most of their other training and skills.

As with many graduates of the arts, students completing tertiary performing arts dance degrees do not have a clearly defined career path mapped out for them, in the way that say lawyers and engineers have. Compounding this situation is that there are many more dance graduates than existing professional dance opportunities. These graduates have to create their own professional futures if they are to succeed in a challenging and highly competitive environment, the dance industry.

This research was directed by the questions: what is success for established professional contemporary and cultural dancers in New Zealand; how do they perceive success; and what personal qualities do successful dance professionals possess, apart from talent, that contribute to them being successful?

Nine dance professionals, with extensive industry experience, participated in this phenomenological study. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using themes emerging from the data. A clear picture emerged of how these dance professionals view success, and the important role that strong self-awareness plays in achieving this. The study revealed a common set of personal qualities that appear to contribute to being successful. The dance professionals interviewed for this study know who they are, what they want, and where they want to go. They are very focused people, not compromising in their vision and drive. They are principled and connected to their beliefs and values. Their success is supported by the multiple facets of discipline they have developed - they had worked hard to get to where they are now.

By understanding the qualities successful dance professionals possess, dance professional practice courses can be informed and illustrated by the findings of this

study, and an approach can be developed that acknowledges the importance of the awareness of success in educative processes, and in the student's professional development path.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction and background to study

1.1 New Zealand dance industry

Ninety thousand young people learn dance across New Zealand, some of them going on to study in the 65 courses offered at our tertiary institutions. Yet according to the New Zealand Dance Strategy (2008) there are only 42 dance companies and performing arts groups offering employment opportunities. The professional world of dance is highly competitive. In 2009 only 138 people listed their main occupation as being a dancer (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2009). Clearly very few of the graduates of our tertiary institutions go on to have full-time dance careers (personal communication, Gaylene Sciascia, 2009).

1.2 Aims of the research

This study was initially triggered by my interest in understanding why some talented arts students left tertiary study and went on to be ‘successful’ arts professionals, and why some of them did not appear to succeed. My interest was heightened upon realising how few dancers achieve professional success in New Zealand. The research question in this study is: what is success for established professional contemporary and cultural dancers in New Zealand; how do they perceive success; and what personal qualities do they possess, apart from talent, that contribute to them being successful.

I set out to generate data on success, and by analysing the data to reach conclusions about it. I wanted to satisfy my curiosity about what success is, and learn how to teach students the knowledge and skills required to be successful. Hanstein describes the research process as “To expand the realm of human knowing and understanding” (p. 23). I sought to find a connection between attitudes and qualities, and success. I wanted to identify and make explicit the dancers’ attitudes and professional skills and qualities that they consider to contribute to their professional success, identifying the common characteristics in all of this.

1.3 Dance students

Dance students at the tertiary institution where I teach are debatably going into a more uncertain future than those studying other art-forms. In the six years I have teaching these particular kind of students I have noticed that they do not appear to prioritise the theoretical and written side of study, and struggle in academic/theoretical papers like business and professional practice studies. They are young and commercially naive students who have come to tertiary study to learn to dance. They have little regard to future employment until late in their final year of study - too late in my view.

I need to find further ways of engaging them in the development of their professional practice. I have taken a special interest in these performing arts students as an academic advisor, along with my role as a lecturer, and am very interested in what it is that they need to succeed as dance professionals, and how this could best be delivered.

1.4 Personal qualities

In this research process I wanted to separate personal qualities from the dancers' technical skills and talent, their ability to perform. I knew from teaching hundreds of photographers at other tertiary institutions, over a period of nine years, that there were highly talented photographers who never really achieved 'professional success', yet observed that many not particularly talented or highly technically proficient photographers became very successful despite this. I knew there was more to success than talent but needed to objectively clarify what these factors were. I also wanted to see if financial accomplishment and other external measures of success motivated participants, and to uncover the intrinsic measures I suspected they used.

1.5 Thinking about success

Hanstein (1999) observes that we are not usually aware of our thoughts and behaviour, saying "Usually the capacity to live through events or respond to different situations greatly exceeds the capacity to know exactly what we do or why we do it" (p. 24). As part of the research process I wanted to stimulate discussion around the concept of success, to have people dig deeper to explore and understand what it means to them. I wanted to

make them conscious of their success, and to have them reflect deeply on it; to interact with them on their ideas about their attitudes and qualities (Hanstein, 1999). I wanted to focus their critical analysis towards what goes on in their heads, not just with their bodies, in the professional dance context.

I want to understand success to see if teaching the qualities associated with it can make a difference in student outcomes. I checked to see what research, if anything, had been done on this topic, and if not to address a void in dance research in New Zealand, and to contribute to the general body of knowledge about dance professionals.

1.6 The dancers

In this study I interviewed six individual established successful professional contemporary and cultural dancers from Wellington, who were defined as successful by their peers and dance education professionals. These interviews were complemented by a focus group with three dance tutors from a New Zealand performing arts centre. A dance professional is defined here as someone who makes a more or less full-time career of dance, not someone with a day-job who dances for pleasure and may or may not get paid for it.

1.7 Significance of the research

In order to describe and understand the phenomenon of success, I asked participants how they defined success for themselves and what personal qualities they attributed their success to. For the purposes of this study I use the Canadian Oxford Dictionary's (1998) definition of quality - "3. a distinctive, usu [sic] good, attribute or characteristic" (p.1180). The participants were asked to comment on some commonly held measures of success including financial criteria, goal setting, achievement, and recognition (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Ferguson, 2003; Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991). Their answers gave me an insight into what, aside from talent, helped them achieve success in their world. These findings helped build a picture of the professional attitudes and qualities that dancers need in order to be successful in the current professional dance environment in New Zealand.

The intended outcome of this study is that the findings will contribute to the dance research base and help form a more comprehensive tertiary dance professional practice

education. The findings may heighten awareness of the importance of the acquisition of these non-physical skills or technical based factors. The information gained is informing my teaching practice as an arts business educator and will form an holistic theoretical base for a course I teach to arts students at a New Zealand tertiary institution. Ideally this will contribute to graduates having a smoother transition from an education environment to becoming established professionals and increasing their likelihood of success.

1.8 Background to study

1.8.1 Researcher background

Being self-employed and creating one's own future has been a focus of mine since my early 20's. In the 1980's, as a trained chef, I started a successful film catering business, which opened up a world of variety, choice, travel, and financial rewards. It gave me control over my work environment, flexibility, and enormous job satisfaction. Later I was involved, with my husband, in a successful commercial photography business for 20 years. During that time I began teaching business to photographers, then to designers at Wellington tertiary institutions. From these experiences I learned that it takes some special qualities to sustain oneself in business - aside from talent and business knowledge.

My experience teaching arts business and professional practice spans 17 years at two polytechnics and a university. In 2005 I developed business papers for a new arts degree which started in 2006. The business course is delivered across five majors: Performing Arts; Music; Visual Arts and Design; Stage and Screen; and Creative Writing. It is delivered over three years as opposed to the one semester that is currently taught at many other tertiary institutes in New Zealand. This longer time period created an opportunity for me to introduce subjects other than pure business skills, including professional attitudes and qualities for professional development. This research investigates ideas for further course development.

1.9 Deciding on research topic

When I first decided to carry out research for my masters' degree I thought about investigating the business knowledge of relatively recent graduates who were actively

involved in dance careers. But then I began to get curious about the concept of a ‘successful professional’ and a fire was lit.

In earlier short professional practice courses I taught at other tertiary institutions I only had time to introduce the basics of being in business, but have always wanted to explore the attitudinal side of being successfully self-employed as an artist. I wanted to move beyond the nuts and bolts of business – cashbooks, tax obligations, copyright, and contracts. In 2009 I set a group of third year students an assignment to investigate success. They identified and interviewed two arts professionals whom they saw as being successful. They were instructed to find out how the artist defined success for themselves, and what they attributed their success to. The students then defined what success meant for themselves, supported it with literature, and lastly made formal recommendations on how they might achieve success. The results were outstanding. The students engaged in a highly reflective way with this assignment and showed evidence of transformational thinking. They wrote that they questioned their own definitions of success, refined or redefined them, and then thought deeply and constructively about how they might achieve success. This resulted in some of them radically changing their original career direction. Two of them even gave up drinking alcohol, joined AA and vastly improved the quality of the art work they were submitting in order to meet their own new standards of success.

The concept of exploration of success grabbed the students’ attention much more than continuing with marketing, budgets and standard business material. They said this exploration of success inspired them. They were delving deeply into why they were doing their art, what they wanted from it, and how they wanted it to shape their lives. Attendance was high at the lectures from guest lecturers who talked about success, beliefs, and dealing with challenges, and at the tutorials which involved debates about what success meant.

1.10 Assumptions

In this research my key assumption has been that if dance graduates understand the qualities of successful dancers, and set out to acquire these, it will increase the likelihood

of them achieving success in their industry. Kirk Torrence, an actor in a well known New Zealand drama, in a recent Sunday newspaper article asserts “It’s not the most talented that get to the top, it’s those with the most tenacity” (Sunday Star Times, Nov 15, 2009). So tenacity, for example, might be one of the qualities that could be encouraged.

1.11 Structure

The following chapter reviews the research literature on success. The methodology outlines the process used to select and interview dance professionals and provides details about ethical procedures followed, and the data analysis process. The findings chapter describes the results of the analysis of the data from the interviews and focus group. In the discussion the threads of the research are pulled together. The implications of the findings are discussed in the conclusion.

1.12 Chapter summary

In this study my aim is to understand success in the context of a dance professional. I’m curious about what constitutes success and want to offer something beyond the basics of business to dance professional practice that is underpinned by evidence in context. Including the overall findings of this study in dance education, and having students understand how dance professionals define and achieve success, the likelihood of success for dance graduates could be increased. I believe the results will be able to be generalised to other arts disciplines.

CHAPTER TWO

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Is success a state of mind, or is it more extrinsic, defined by wealth, influence and material measures? How do people define success for themselves? How is it perceived in our society? What are the qualities that successful people possess? Can we all have these, and thereby achieve success in our lives? This chapter examines what is already documented about success.

2.1.1 Previous studies

According to Dr Tanya Kopytko, executive director of Dance Aotearoa New Zealand (DANZ), the national association for dance in New Zealand (personal communication, March 2009), and Gaylene Sciascia, former programme manager of a New Zealand performing arts institution, little or no research of this nature has been undertaken with dancers in New Zealand (personal communication, February 2009). Dancers emerge from existing dance training in New Zealand with physical skills and some business training but not necessarily a clear idea of what it actually takes to be successful. Because there are few studies about what makes a dancer successful in the literature, this phenomenological study is devoted to understanding dancers lived experiences as successful professionals. There is however a body of more general research that provides a theoretical framework for analysis.

2.1.2 Scope of the review

After searching libraries and databases nationally and internationally, there appeared to be a body of research carried out on dance development and training, some work on dance education, but little or no literature specifically on the characteristics that make successful dance professionals. More, Carroll and Foss (2009), also noted this in their study of dance development in Australia. The search was broadened to the arts in general, but still yielded little. A generic search for studies on success was more fruitful, especially in the area of career success. I have focused on research carried out since the year 2000, but

have included some older studies with solid longitudinal data to add depth to the findings. The majority of studies were conducted in North America, with only one Australian and one New Zealand based study.

Literature was reviewed concurrently with the data gathering and analysis process, and throughout the study, as new themes emerged from the interviews. To compensate for a lack of specific dance-related success definitions, I have identified areas of literature that provide generic descriptions and qualities of success determined by a broad population that can be generalised to a dance context. This is not an exhaustive study of all the literature available, but a selection of studies and writing to get a general idea of what is known about success. In interrogating the literature there seems to be a unified approach to the subject and I was not able to find any studies that contradicted the general findings on success.

Because my enquiry is concerned with dance ‘professionals’, factors or qualities which people determine specifically as ‘career’ success are also examined. Studies in this area further refined success definitions and qualities into work and professional contexts (Bridgstock 2008; Carpenter, 2010; Derr 1986, Gardner, 2006; More, Carroll & Foss, 2009).

To broaden my understanding of why the people in these studies were successful, I looked to literature that identifies the personal qualities these people shared. I found a number of works by psychologists and researchers that identified common characteristics, behaviours, attitudes and attributes of these people. They included having a vision, or a set of particular goals, holding clearly defined personal values, possessing the attributes of discipline and self-awareness (Carpenter, 2010; Covey, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Dweck, 2000; Ferguson, 2003; Hill, 2001; Tischler, Biberman & McKeage, 2002).

Some of these qualities were grouped into types of ‘intelligences’ including emotional, spiritual, intrapersonal and successful intelligences. Understanding these intelligences helped me draw links between the characteristics of successful people in the literature,

and the characteristics that dancers in this study identified (Gardiner, 1997, 1999; Goleman, 1995; Sternberg & Griorgorenko, 2007; Sternberg, 2004; Tischler et al, 2002).

2.2 The success research

This section briefly introduces the individual key studies examined in this review to create a context, before later integrating them under specific themes.

Three of the studies looked at successful North American men and women (Heath, 1991; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Ashar & Lane-Mahar, 2004) and one specifically at women (Northcutt, 1991). All the participants were well educated successful professionals. The Australian study (Bridgstock, 2008) investigated creative workers' perceptions of success, and the New Zealand one (Gardner, 2006) focused on younger people. Two informal studies on successful New Zealanders (Ferguson, 2003; Green & Campbell, 2004) have been included to help gain a New Zealand perspective.

Heath's (1991) study was a 30 year longitudinal study of more than a hundred people. He identified the keys to a fulfilling life, the factors that determine whether a child will grow up to be a successful adult and explored the personality traits that contribute to success in all the roles men and women play in their lives. The keys included self-fulfillment, good health, good relationships and contribution to society.

Dyke and Murphy (2006) conducted a study with 40 successful Canadian men and women, to see how they defined success associated with employment, how those definitions differed between genders, and how these definitions affected their career progress. Both male and female respondents ascribed value to the importance of work-life balance. Female respondents valued the importance "professional autonomy" whereas male respondents attributed more importance to financial criteria.

In her study of 49 successful American career women, Northcutt (1991) defined how women see success. At that time researchers were largely using a male model of success. She was specifically looking for characteristics to create a female model of success finding

that women defined the success around the achievement of goals, enjoying their work and being able to contribute to society.

Ashar & Lane-Mahar, (2004) focused their study on spirituality, looking at how participants defined success in terms that included being connected, and experiencing balance and wholeness. Contrary to the researchers' expectations that the participants would define success in materialistic terms – money, positional power, and status symbol - they found the participants linked the concept of success to spirituality.

Bridgstock (2008), in a large study of creative workers, looked at the boundarylessness nature of careers in the creative sector in Australia, and the motivators which help them achieve competence and success. 'Boundaryless' refers to the undefined nature of being self employed as opposed to working on set tasks, in a specific place for a specified period of time. She found only a third of the professional artists' and arts graduates' definitions of career success were categorised as relating to financial recognition. The findings indicated that many of the artists aspired only to a regular subsistence level of arts income (although a small number of the arts graduates did aspire to fame and fortune).

Gardner (2006) carried out a study of 866 young New Zealanders' perceptions of career success and he too found that career drivers like advancement, income and status were not as important as achieving competence, balance, being of service and other intrinsic motivators.

While not conducted as formal academic studies, Ferguson (2003) and Green and Campbell (2004) each interviewed 23 successful New Zealanders about success examining motivation, creativity, confidence and resilience, using similar questions to my own. They identified a unique mindset that successful New Zealanders have which included having clear goals, a willingness to step outside their comfort zones, knowing themselves, and having strategies to deal with doubt and failure.

2.3 Defining success

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998) describes success as “1. The accomplishment of an aim: a favourable outcome, and as “2. The attainment of wealth, fame or position” (p. 1448). However what success means to people is a highly individual phenomenon. In all the studies reviewed here the researchers asked their participants to define what success meant to them personally.

Sternberg (2004) notes that:

Success can be defined only in terms of a socio-cultural milieu. It does not occur in the abstract; it occurs with respect to some set of standards or expectations, whether of oneself or of others (p. 6).

Definitions of success drawn from literature reviewed included values such as happiness, sense of purpose, freedom, independence, meaningfulness and connection, having a balanced life, quality of relationships and contribution to society. Extrinsic success indicators included wealth, influence, recognition and fame, status, and general material accomplishment. Overall researchers found that people report placing a higher value on the intrinsic factors than the extrinsic ones commonly assumed to be people’s main criteria for judging success. Ashar and Lane-Maher (2004) categorised extrinsic and intrinsic factors as immanent (inherent) and transcendent. “Immanent refers to status, income, sense of security and accomplishment. Transcendent meaning, on the other hand refers to motivations, principles, and work related interests that transcend beyond the self” (p. 6).

2.3.1 Happiness

“More than anything else man and woman seek happiness”. Aristotle.

Not surprisingly, feeling happy was frequently used as a measure of success in the studies reviewed (Ferguson, 2003; Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991). Participants reported feeling specific happiness related emotions including joy, enjoyment, flow (Being totally in the moment), and fun. However, according to Covey (2004), happiness comes as a result of doing something meaningful for the individual, as opposed to gaining pleasure, which may come from an extrinsic source. And happiness doesn’t just happen in a vacuum,

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) emphasises that happiness is not “good fortune or random chance, it can’t be bought, doesn’t depend on what happens to people, but how they interpret or respond to them”. He adds that “happiness must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person” (p. 2).

2.3.2 Meaningfulness

A feeling of success tends to come from the achievement of goals that have meaning and purpose (Covey, 2004; Ferguson, 2003; Tischler et al, 2002). Ashar and Lane-Mahar (2004) found success was defined by people as having meaningfulness and connection in their lives, which they defined as spiritual values. The term spirituality here is not used in a religious way but more to encompass values based aspirations. The study suggested the notion that success and spirituality are connected. Northcutt (1991) and Ferguson’s (2003) participants also regarded these values of meaning and purpose as important aspects of being successful.

2.3.3 Balance, contribution, independence, freedom and relationships

Having balance in life, making a contribution to society, having freedom and independence, and good quality relationships, were strong indicators of being or feeling successful for participants in several of the studies.

A balanced life, which included family and relationships, was a significant measure of success (Northcutt (1991). Gardner (2006) found balance was the second-most preferred subgroup in his sample of young people saying “Balance indicates a preference for maintaining lifestyle and work-life balance as the primary determinant of career success” (p. 22). Derr, a researcher in the field of career motivation, includes the concept of ‘Getting Balanced’ in his model of career orientations (cited in Bridgstock, 2008, pp. 2-3). Getting balanced, he defines as achieving a meaningful balance between work, relationships and self development. Dyke and Murphy (2006) found that women highlight the importance of balance and relationships while men focus more on material success.

Contribution to the community, or nation, being of service to others, or being ‘other centered’, was frequently used as a measure of success in all the aforementioned studies. Respondents in Northcutt (1991) and Dyke and Murphy’s (2006) studies added that a measure of success was the personal satisfaction gained from making a contribution at work.

Many people define success as having a sense of freedom and independence in their lives (Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991). This is consistent with Derr’s (1986) ‘Getting Free’ – “autonomy achieving freedom, individual control over work processes and environments” (cited in Bridgestock, 2008, p. 3). Twenty percent of the men in Dyke and Murphy’s (2006) study used freedom in their definition of success. These men said they struggled between valuing more extrinsic factors such as income and acquisition of possessions, and intrinsic ones like freedom. Creative workers rate freedom and independence highly (Bridgestock, 2008).

Participants placed a high value on family, fulfilling intimate and personal relationships, satisfying sexual relationships, and having a close friend of the same gender (Northcutt, 1991; Heath, 1991). Dyke and Murphy (2006) found in their study that women, in particular, put a lot of importance on relationships, with 45% of their female participants saying that having good relationships was part of being successful. Only a third of the men in the study used relationships as definition of success.

2.3.4 Material accomplishment

As noted earlier, one dictionary definition of success is the attainment of material things. While this was used as a measure of success it was not highly rated among study participants (Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991), and in Dyke and Murphy’s (2006) study. Only three out of the 20 women interviewed mentioned money as an indicator of success.

Dyke and Murphy (2006) found that 45% of the men in their study placed more importance on material success than women, but they noted the influence of social pressure for valuing this material success from family and society. These men expressed a

wish to live without financial pressures, and the potential repercussions of these, for example failing marriages. In their literature review, Dyke and Murphy (2006) cited Deutshendorf (1996) and Doyle (1983) saying that the way men and women defined success was consistent with masculine socialisation. Dyke and Murphy (2006) suggest that even men who consciously reject material definitions of success may be haunted by not measuring up to the provider ideal.

Bridgstock found that motivations of creative workers went beyond the traditionally acknowledged ones of achieving financial security and having job security. However the value placed on material measures of success can to a certain degree depend where a person is in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow's model suggests that people need to meet basic needs of food, water and shelter, then of safety and security, before they can aspire to meeting needs for personal esteem and accomplishment (Cherry, n.d.). Bridgstock (2008) notes that if a creative worker is struggling to just make a living, their orientation for career success is around becoming secure, more focused perhaps on the material acquisition of money to live on, as opposed to the more transcendent value based measures.

Finally Csikszentmihalyi (1997) states that we are healthier, more affluent, own more goods and assets than ever before, yet people don't feel any more happy or successful. He says that over time huge amounts of things have changed but notes that "in this most important issue [happiness], little has changed in the intervening centuries, yet we have made very little progress understanding it" (p. 1).

2.3.5 Recognition

Recognition was highly valued and defined as receiving public and personal recognition, respect, reward, acceptance, promotion and gaining approval from others (Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991; Carpenter, 2010). It is interesting to note that the women rated career advancement lower in their measures of success than being recognised for what they accomplished at work (Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

Blotnick (1985, cited in Northcutt, 1991, p. 5) states that "Social beings that humans are, they want their labours to be recognised and rewarded by others." On the other hand,

Michaels (2001) points out that one of the problems of using acceptance or recognition as a measure of success is what happens when rejection is encountered. He says this can neutralise or negate success.

Derr (1986) describes this measure of success as 'Getting Ahead' – "recognition, progression, making it to the top of the hierarchy" (cited in Bridgstock, 2008, p. 3). Bridgstock (2008) found that workers in the creative industries wanted recognition from peers and gate-keepers, as opposed to recognition in the form of position or promotion within an organisation.

2.3.6 Career success

The meaning of 'professional' according to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998), is "engaged in a specified activity as one's main paid occupation" (p. 1154), and of 'career' is "one's advancement through life, esp. in a profession" (p. 214). Here I relate the definitions of success in this chapter to specific 'career success' definitions. I was unable to find any literature specifically on 'professional' success but believe career success encompasses this, and there has been a great deal of research done on this topic.

Participants in various studies defined career success as achieving competence in a satisfying vocation, enjoying work, challenge, stimulation, doing a good job, being an authority in your own competency, and promotion (Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991). These relate to Derr's (1986) 'Getting High' career orientation - "interest obtaining interest, excitement, challenge, inspiration from work, development opportunities" (cited in Bridgstock, 2008, p. 3).

In one study a high level of technical competence was a measure of success for young people (Gardner, 2006). Although when referring to Derr's (1986) 'Getting Ahead', career orientation, he found that career advancement was not a high priority. Gardner felt that this is not considered in career preparation, saying, "Traditionally, an assumption that people perceive career success from a 'Getting Ahead', orientation, underlies career development facilitation and interventions" (p. 5).

When Goleman (1998) asked 700 successful professionals to define career success, he found that they gained a sense of achievement from particular aspects of their jobs, saying that the most rewarding thing for them was the creative challenge and stimulation of the job itself, and the chance to keep learning. Caves (2000, cited in Bridgstock, 2008) argues that creative workers also prefer interest and challenge to their work, rather than security and recognition or progression.

How women and men define success affected their personal and professional lives in different ways. Dyke and Murphy (2006) found that women in their study reported that 'career success' was not important, and they observed that "Our definitions of success can affect our educational choices, choices of employer, work involvement, career attainment, financial resources, relationships, family commitment and life satisfaction" (p. 357). Gardner (2006) states that "The significant finding here is that for 80 percent of this sample of younger people, it is not accurate to assume that advancement, income, status and other traditional 'getting ahead' measures are primary drivers" (p. 23).

2.3.7 Frequency groupings

Northcutt (1991) found the most frequent definitions of success were those of achieving goals, receiving recognition from others, and enjoying one's work, and contribution to the welfare of friends or personal acquaintances and society. Heath (1991) placed success values into three groupings, fulfilling intimate and personal relationships, vocational including achieving wealth, and other centered including contribution to community and ranked them by frequency as follows:

1. Self fulfillment; happiness
2. Psychological maturity
3. Physical health
4. Happy marital relationship
5. Religious-ethical ideals
6. Competence in a satisfying vocation
7. Being a contributing citizen to the community/nation
8. Fulfilling sexual relationship
9. Having a close friend of the same sex

10. Leadership/power
11. High income (p. 9)

Northcutt (1991) found that successful career women in her study had a higher than average level of self-esteem. Ferguson (2003) suggests that success is “about feeling good about where you are and what you are doing” (p. 71).

On balance, intrinsic or immanent value based measures of success appear to be more prevalent in these studies, than more transcendent or extrinsic aspirations. What people define as success would seem to reflect the values they hold in their lives.

2.4 Personal qualities found in successful professionals

*“Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual
and of nations alike.” Theodore Roosevelt*

Close examination of the literature on success, suggests that successful people possess a set of certain personal qualities. The term ‘qualities’ encompasses characteristics, behaviours, attitudes and attributes. I have sorted them into general themes for consideration.

- Goals vision and values
- Discipline encompassing terms to do with achieving things, e.g. determination, tenacity, adaptability and passion
- Awareness of self, and strengths and weaknesses
- The role of formal education in success.

These qualities can be grouped into ‘intelligences’ as discussed later in this chapter.

2.4.1 Goals, vision and values

Remembering the dictionary definition of success as the achievement of an aim, it is not surprising that most of the studies I have referred to have included the term ‘goals’ in some way, in describing the notion of attaining success (Carpenter, 2010; Covey 2004; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Dweck, 2006; Ferguson, 2003; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Heath,

1991; Hill, 2001; Jackson, 2000; Northcutt, 1991; Sternberg & Griogorenko, 2007; Sternberg, 2004).

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) talks about the importance of having goals bigger than the self, and these goals giving one a sense of purpose. These types of goals directly reflect the intrinsic values identified in the previous section on defining success. These goals could conversely shape our values, and who we are. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) suggests that “It is the goals that we pursue that will shape and determine the self we are to become” (p. 23). Often vision creates the setting in which goals can occur. Vision is larger than a goal, it is an imagined overall picture of how one would like the future to be. It is designed to be meaningful, and to inspire. Vision sets the scene for goals to occur within, and shapes the values which underpin the goals. These values may include a sense of contribution, meaning, purpose, family, community and a balanced lifestyle (Carpenter, 2010; Covey, 2004). These goals generate motivating behaviours or disciplines that cause the goals to be achieved and success to be experienced (Covey, 2004; Carpenter, 2010; and Hill, 2001).

Ferguson’s (2003) participants express similar sentiments, they talk about measuring success against their own aims and values, not by someone else’s, so they can stay firm and not be easily swayed. Green and Campbell (2004) suggest that “Values are those things that are important to you in relation to your life or your business” (p. 63).

2.4.2 Goals and Success

There is a strong link between achieving goals and experiencing success. Sternberg (2004) suggests that “successful intelligence is the ability to succeed in life, according to one’s own conception of success, within one’s environmental context. Thus success is defined in terms of personal goals” (p. 189). Hill (2001) similarly commenting in a sports context, notes that “A player is received as successful if her self-determined aspirations are met during play, regardless of the final score” (p. 121).

Relating this to professional or career success, Carpenter (2010), describes personal success as the goal of career success. She says the 21st century ‘protean or self-managing

career' is based on an individual's goals, what is personally meaningful to them. Also for business or professional success, Stoke (1987) states "The most important personal attribute [for success] is the ability to clarify and define realistic and worthwhile goals or objectives" (p. 280).

Achieving goals leads to positive feelings and a feeling of success. Hill (2001) explains "Positive affect follows from personal appraisal of the successful attainment of a goal" (p. 80). Dweck (2006), a researcher in fields of personality, social psychology and developmental psychology, observes that positive self-esteem is attained through achieving something, saying "It is a positive way of experiencing yourself when you are fully engaged and are using your abilities to the utmost in pursuit of something you value" (p. 4).

Victor Frankl expresses a cautionary point of view, advising:

Don't aim at success - the more you aim at it, the more you are going to miss it. For success like happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue....as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a course greater than oneself (Cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 2).

2.4.3 Goals and motivation

Passion and motivation are two personal qualities frequently mentioned by successful people. These are generated by having exciting goals set at the right level of challenge for an individual (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). The level of challenge is discussed in the next section. Csikszentmihalyi points out that the normal state of the mind is one of "informational disorder" (p. 26) and that goals help concentrate the mind and become a motivating force. He says without a goal it is difficult to focus and one may get distracted more easily.

Drawing from goal setting in sport, Hill (2001) says goals allow one to devote full attention to achieving one's intentions, reducing the need to think about decisions about what needs to be done, allowing a clear focus, they induce action. Referring to Expectancy Theory she suggests "that behaviour is 'pulled' along by the person's expectations of desirable outcomes" (p. 89), and that these outcomes can be anything valued by the person. Goleman (1998) observes that the most powerful motivators are

internal not external, and Csikszentmihalyi (1997) observes in fact “just doing something in line with one’s goals improves the state of mind” (p. 137). Finding the right balance between one’s challenges and skills is integral to succeeding in goal setting. If the skill level and goal, or challenge, are too close, boredom may occur and the goal may not be attained, but if they are too far apart anxiety may occur and this may contribute to the goal not being achieved (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1998, cited in Jackson, 2000).

Carpenter (2010) says that ‘psychological capital’ underpins our ability to achieve goals and be successful. Based on material from Luthans and Youssef (2004), she describes psychological capital as encompassing hope, optimism, self-efficacy, self belief and resiliency. These are specific qualities that Carpenter (2010) claims “gives you the will power to attain your goals” (p.75).

2.4.4 Discipline

For the purposes of the paper the term ‘Discipline’ sums up personal qualities that contribute to achieving goals and getting things done (Covey, 2004). They include hardiness, perseverance, determination, setting, facing and overcoming challenges, conscientiousness, adaptability, resilience, absence of self-doubt, taking risks, passion, optimism, and being proactive. There are a large number of studies with similar findings in this area (Carpenter, 2010; Dweck, 2006; Ferguson, 2003; Hill, 2001; Sarni, 1999).

Investigating how people cope with failure, failure being the antithesis of success, reveals personal qualities that contribute to success (Dweck, 2006). Dweck was interested in how beliefs or mind-sets change what people strive for and what they see as success. She defined success as facing challenges and overcoming them, as stretching yourself. Dweck says successful people thrive on change, adding that if they don’t have a challenge they lose interest. Dweck cited National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) as a practical application of these observations “When selecting applicants for astronauts, they rejected people with pure histories of success, instead selected people who had had significant failures and bounced back from them” (p. 29).

A British dance choreographer, Anthony Cranwell, was recently interviewed in a New Zealand dance magazine, about working in the dance profession (Kopytko, DANZ Quarterly, 2011). When asked what qualities make a dancer successful, he said, that along with being aware of the dance business, and having a diverse range of dance skills, they need to be “realistic, positive, self-aware and passionate”. He mentions the challenges of auditions and says to “always keep in mind that for every ten auditions you attend you may only be successful in one” (p. 17) alluding to the qualities of perseverance, resilience and determination.

Adaptability is a favourable quality for achieving success. Goleman (1998) states “If there is any competence these times call for, it is adaptability. It is a precursor of innovation” (p. 98). Bridgstock (2008) expresses a similar view saying creative people with boundaryless careers need to be able to reinvent themselves on a regular basis, and one certainly needs to be adaptable and innovative to succeed in the world of dance.

Passion is a driving force in goal achievement. Covey (2004) insists “Passion is the fire, the desire, the strength of conviction and the drive that sustains the discipline to achieve the vision” (p. 66) and adds “Passion comes from the heart and is manifest as optimism, emotional connection, determination. It fires unrelenting drive” (p. 75). Rob Hamil, international rower, talks about the value of passion. He says, that by developing exciting goals and plans, you develop passion; the bigger the goal the more passionate you become. He claims it helps you keep getting back up after knock-backs, to deal with failures, and to keep your eyes open to new opportunities (Ferguson, 2003).

Optimism, where one is inclined to take a positive view on life, while not strictly an attribute of discipline, was a further quality of successful people (Ferguson, 2003). Dr Barbara Fredrikson is one of the pioneers of a positive psychology movement. In a recent study she set out to examine the causes of happiness and to broaden the theory of positive emotions. She uses the term ‘flourishing’ for having positive mental health, and ‘languishing’ for negative mental health. In her research she found that people need to aim for a ratio of 3:1 – three positive emotions for every negative one, to achieve happiness and fulfillment – one of the key measures of success defined earlier here (Boniface, The Listener, March 26-April 1, 2011).

2.5 Self-awareness

Another quality successful people share is various forms of self-awareness or identity-awareness (Carpenter, 2010; Covey 2004; Northcutt, 1991). Self-awareness is the ability to reflect on one's own life and grow in self-knowledge, then to use that knowledge to improve one's self (Covey, 2004). Humanistic theory says we seek to "Raise the self to the highest levels of personal attainment and accomplishment" (Hill 2001, p. 108) and the force that drives this is referred to as self-actualisation. Hindle (2010), talking about taking an holistic approach to Maori arts education, emphasises the importance of knowing who we are, being able to transform who we are, and learning for knowing and coming to self-realisation as fundamental capacities.

Socrates said 'Know thyself' and some 2000 years later researchers continue to emphasise that knowing one's strengths and weaknesses is integral to being successful (Carpenter, 2011; Ferguson, 2003; Gardiner 1999; Northcutt, 1991). Sternberg (2004) suggests that "People succeed by identifying their strengths and capitalising on them, and by identifying their weaknesses and either correcting them or compensating for them (pp. 189-190). Carpenter (2010) suggests that knowing one's strengths and weaknesses is like developing an inner compass. This kind of advice has been around for a long time with Greek philosopher Socrates famously declaring "Know thyself". Dweck (2006) states "The view you adopt for yourself [regardless of IQ, aptitude and temperament], profoundly affects the way you lead your life (p. 6). Hill (2001) sums this up as self-efficacy being "the person's belief that she has the personal resources to succeed in attaining specific goals" (p. 90).

Staying inspired and staying resilient are key qualities for success says Carpenter (2010), and she uses Inkson and Arthur's (2001) model of 'Career Capital' to support this, which consists of "knowing how – one's skills, ability and knowledge; knowing why – having a sense of purpose, or connection to values and goals, and knowing whom – ones networks, community etc" (p. 26).

A commonly held definition of success is to feel confident and Goleman (1998) found a strong link between self-knowledge and self-confidence. Confidence is the level of belief

a person has in themselves and what they are doing. It is the degree of certainty they have and is a key ingredient of persistence. It shapes how they perform. Becoming conscious of success increases self-awareness and confidence, and enables people to see that they are developing a track record of success. It is self-perpetuating (Green & Campbell, 2004).

2.6 The importance of education

“Imagination is more important than knowledge” Albert Einstein.

And indeed the research seems to support this assertion. Many of the studies mentioned promoted continuous learning, without necessarily defining whether this includes or is limited to formal learning (Bridgstock, 2008; Carpenter, 2010; Ferguson, 2003; Goleman, 1998; Heath, 1991). Heath (1991) and Goleman (1998) argue against the value of formal education in being advantageous for achieving success, and Goleman says that IQ and accumulation of knowledge is of less value than EQ (emotional quotient). He suggests emotional intelligence matters most for excellence, not technical expertise or book learning. Heath found that:

Scholastic aptitude (as in test scores) does not predict adult success. Intelligence, when more broadly defined than just scholastic aptitude contributes to success, but less than many characteristic strengths do. Failure to do well at school does not limit future success if people have developed the character strengths necessary to succeed” (p. 291).

Sternberg and Griorgorenko (2007) observe that “People need all their skills to be in very good order to be successful in life. Yet many education programmes seem to develop people’s education in only one area – analytical evidence – giving minimal or no attention to two other areas of intelligence – creative and practical intelligence – that are just as vital to living successfully” (p. x1).

2.7 Forms of intelligences

In this section I examine how some of these ‘intelligences’ are defined. Sternberg and Griorgenko (2007), Goleman (1998), and Gardiner (1999) have studied and identified a

number of “intelligences” that encompass many of the success qualities discussed so far. These include successful, emotional, and intrapersonal intelligences.

Successful intelligence is described by Sternberg and Griorgenko (2007) as the type “of intelligences needed to attain success in life, however an individual defines it, within that individual’s social-cultural context” (p. 4), and go on to say “Successful entrepreneurship requires a blend of analytical, creative and practical aspects of intelligence, which in combination, constitute successful intelligence” (p. 189). And entrepreneurship, while not included within the parameters of the current study, is certainly a quality dancers need to succeed in their field.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is critical to success, and Covey (2004) describes this as “one’s self knowledge, self awareness, empathy and ability to communicate successfully with others. It is a sense of timing and social appropriateness, and having the courage to acknowledge weakness and express and respect differences” (p. 51). Goleman (1998) defines it as “the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (p. 317). This aligns with Gardiner’s (1998) interpersonal intelligence being “a person’s capacity to understand intentions, motivations and desires of other people” (p. 43).

After carrying out a two year enquiry into EI, and conducting an exhaustive review of the literature and several scientific analyses of data from hundreds of companies Goleman (1998) found that 25 years of empirical studies tell us just how much EI matters for success. He says “for star performance in all jobs, in every field, emotional competence is twice as important as purely cognitive abilities” (p. 4). He adds “With the idea of ‘job security’ being redundant, where the very concept of a ‘job’ is rapidly being replaced by ‘portable skills’, these [EI skills] are the prime qualities that make and keep us employable” (p. 4). He claims that “people are emotional illiterates, oblivious to a realm of reality that is crucial for success in life as a whole, let alone work” (p. 56).

Tischler et al (2002) concur that emotional intelligence has more impact on success than IQ and moreover that it is not genetically fixed like IQ but can be learned. They (2002) report that “Those with higher EI seem to have healthier, happier more productive lives

and seem to do better at work” (p. 2). Sarni (1999) looks at the role of emotional competence in the professional success of dancers, citing ‘resilience and self-efficacy’ as essential qualities (p. 2).

It is worth mentioning “spiritual intelligence” here as part of EI, as Tischler et al’s (2002) study shows the benefit of this on workplace success. She suggests that it is:

used similarly to emotional, [intelligences] or to particular behaviours or attitudes of an individual. For example, being spiritual has been equated with being open, giving, compassionate, or what we might imagine as “holy” in one’s behavior, and usually with being more unflappable and buoyant than others (p. 3).

Spiritual intelligence guides the other intelligences. It guides our search for meaning and purpose, those very qualities that successful people have. When people achieve goals in alignment with their ‘spiritual’ values they deem themselves to be successful (Covey, 2004; Tischler et al, 2002). Gardiner (1999) explained that he is exploring spiritual intelligence but is not conclusive about it yet. He defines it in a more existential way than Tischler et al do.

Another way of grouping qualities into an intelligence, is Gardiner’s (1999) intrapersonal intelligence. This “involves the capacity to understand oneself,...including one’s own desires, fears and capacities – and to use this information effectively in regulating one’s life” (p. 43). This involves the qualities discussed in the theme of self-awareness. More et al (2009) talk about the importance of these intelligences when dancers are looking at transferable skills needed to continue their careers beyond dance itself.

2.8 Summary

It is clear from the literature that success is defined similarly across different populations. It shows that success does not appear to be just a matter of luck, but is determined by what we deliberately set out to do, and what qualities we bring to bear on the things we want to achieve. Fishman (2009) asked what would shape the lives of a group of dancers? She summarised having the resources including an incredible desire to dance, passion, perseverance and hard work. She cites Csikszentmihalyi (2001) on qualities needed for

success as “setting goals, having general life skills (as well as dance skills), being ‘different’, motivated by the intrinsic pleasure gained from dance, having an avid willingness to accept challenges and overcome problems” (p. 249).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research design is a matter of “Balancing the systematic and the serendipitous”
(Hanstein, 1999, p. 22).

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Qualitative research

I was curious about concept of success and wanted to define it, and then to understand it in the real world of professional dance. Accordingly I opted for a qualitative approach and the use of constructivist theory for a phenomenological study. Denzin and Lincoln (1995) describe qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (cited in Davies, 2007, p.3). This supported the idea of interacting with a group of people to find out what they think of a certain topic. Choosing a qualitative design allowed my presence in the process and deepened my understanding of the lives of the participants in this study.

While a quantitative survey could have generated more ‘hard’ analytical and statistical data, the qualitative design elicited more ‘soft’ descriptive data, including expressive narrative. This elicited the type of information needed for a “thick” or texturally rich description (Geertz, 1973; Cresswell, 2007). A personal qualitative approach obtained more depth of data as opposed to the breadth that would have come from a quantitative survey, and as Davies (2007) describes, adding a “reflective or explanatory depth to the subject” (p. 152).

Walliman (2001) says qualitative research is used to “construe the attitudes, beliefs and motivations within a subject” (p. 203). This fits with the idea of exploring attitudes and attributes within a specific context. Denzin and Lincoln (1995) suggest that this approach “consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). Using a qualitative framework I attempted to make some of the intrinsic attitudes and

attributes of the dancers 'visible', to make them more tangible to teach in a professional studies paper. A qualitative approach helped gain a higher level of response from participants by enabling me to ask clarifying questions to gain further information, and it allowed me to be present in the research (Giorgi, 2008). Qualitative research has the advantage of being "flexible, evolving and emergent" says Merriam (2001, p. 9), which allowed the findings to progressively influence the direction of the research. Cresswell (2007) concurs in his statement "The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' view of the situation" (p. 20). Lastly Hanstein, (1999), likens research to choreography in that it is "purposeful, creative, interpretive and intuitive. It is often circuitous and improvisational" (p. 24).

3.1.1 Phenomenology

I selected phenomenology as a mode of enquiry, to guide me into a certain way of seeing and making sense of my topic. Cresswell (2007) says phenomenology "reduces individual experience with a phenomenon to a clear description of universal essence" (p. 58), which is what happened with this phenomenon of success. This mode framed my understanding of the dancers' reality and shaped how I constructed meaning from my research findings. A phenomenological approach enabled me to examine a number of individuals' common or shared experiences of success as arts professionals. It also guided the development of my questions and allowed a semi-structured approach to the interview process (Cresswell, 2007; Hanstein, 1999).

Osborn and Smith (2008), describe how a phenomenological paradigm is suited to exploring the effects of attitude on perceptions and behavior;

Phenomenological analysis has a theoretical commitment to the person as a cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being, and assumes a chain of connection between people's talk, and their thinking and emotional state (p. 53).

This paradigm allowed me to learn from the dancers' 'lived' experiences which Morse and Richards (2002) describe as "learn[ing] from the participants in a setting or process, the way they experience it, the meaning they put on it, and how they interpret what they experience" (p. 28). With this approach I developed knowledge from the ground up.

In this study the interviews yielded a range of different ways of defining success, and identified a wide array of relevant attitudes and attributes or personal qualities, which necessitated a sorting and coalescing process. Using a phenomenological approach allowed concepts to be developed from the data that emerged (Cresswell, 2007). The process allowed me to deconstruct success, reducing the phenomenon to a convenient number of identifiable variables (Giorgio, 2008).

3.1.2 Constructivism

In constructivism findings are created from the co-constructed realities of and between the participants, which suited this investigation of success. The constructivist paradigm allows one to make assumptions, assemble and reconstruct data, and form new understandings of the world we live in. Our world is made up of multiple, socially constructed realities which are assembled so people can make sense of their experiences. There are many variations to the truth. Success is a socially constructed reality. So participants were asked questions about how they constructed their own concept of success (Cresswell, 2007; Davies, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1995; Dixon & Pickard, 2004; Gibbs, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2003; Hill, 2001).

The study is inductive, in that it uses an accumulation of data from particular, but similar, circumstances (Gibbs, 2007), to justify the circumstance of success. While objectivity is sought the findings are influenced by the researcher's interpretation of them, shaped by their experiences and background (Cresswell, 2007).

3.2 Participants

In order to examine what makes a professional 'successful' and exemplify the phenomenon, participants for this study needed to be established contemporary and cultural dance professionals. They needed to have been performers, choreographers, producers or teachers, successful either by their own definition or by that of another professional. The participants needed to have been professional performers for at least four or five years to be seen as 'established', this time-frame being determined in consultation with the researcher's dance colleagues. The interviews in this study didn't involve any graduates from my institution but included people who work in cultural and contemporary dance, the dance form many of these students will enter as professionals.

Potential participants were suggested by two dance leading education professionals with extensive careers in producing, directing, performing and teaching in New Zealand.

3.2.1 Size of sample

To assure findings can be generalised the sample needed to be large enough to be representative of the larger dance population, but small enough to achieve an in depth analysis within the time available. Two criteria used for deciding the numbers of participants selected were sufficiency and saturation of information. I needed to have enough people to reflect a range of dancers from the industry, and enough so I could see a point where would I stop learning anything new. The size of the research sample was further constrained by people's willingness to participate (Davies, 2007; Gibbs, 2007; Kvale, 2007; Merriam, 2001; Morse & Richards, 2002; Osborn & Smith, 2008; Seidman, 1998).

For the individual interviews I started with nine dancers' names. However two had moved away to another city and one failed to attend the interview. Despite this amongst the remaining six there was a strong level of interest in being involved.

The three focus group participants are discussed later in a section on focus groups.

3.2.2 Contact process

The six individual interviewees were contacted initially by phone, followed by an email describing the research process (See Appendix 1). The email included a consent form (See Appendix 2), and the interview questions (See Appendix 3). A background questionnaire (See Appendix 4) was attached, and consisted of questions designed to gain information about participant demographics, experience, training, qualifications, level of professional development training, and how long the dancer had been active in the dance profession. The email confirmed interview times, dates, and location of the venue. The interviews were held at a Wellington dance centre as all the dancers knew where this was and it was a neutral venue. Participants could feel safe and undisturbed there.

3.2.3 Demographics

This section of the methodology includes information relating to the demographic and work characteristics of the participants. This includes gender, age, qualifications and career characteristics. There were two groups of participants, six who were interviewed individually and three who were part of a focus group. There were four men and five women. Four of the participants were in their late 20's, one in their 30's, three in their 50's and one in their 60's. Employment statistics for the cultural sector in 2009 show the median age of a dancer is 24 years, and are predominantly female (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2009).

The older dancers, all except one still performing, brought a wealth of knowledge about the industry to bear on their responses to the interview questions, and contributed richness from their experience to the data. There were five pakeha (New Zealand European) and four Maori participants. The participants all worked full-time in the dance industry, for periods ranging from 10 to 40 years. Their roles included performing, directing, producing, reviewing, teaching, choreographing, and managing dance projects. Most were involved in a number of these roles simultaneously. All of them are based in Wellington where this study took place, although most of them tour and work in other centres from time to time. They have all performed in top New Zealand dance contemporary dance companies during their careers.

3.3 Researcher role

In order to reduce the risk of contaminating recording of participants' input, a deliberate process was undertaken to make explicit the my assumptions and biases about the concept of success so I could focus on the participants' experience. However much I think I am detached, what I bring is intrinsic to the research process. Here I describe my own experience with the phenomena, making it conscious, so I can bracket out my views before writing about the experiences of others (Hanstein, 1999; Cresswell, 2007).

While I set out to be objective, I had some awareness of the lens I interpreted the data through. Interpretivists Denzin and Lincoln (2005), argue that all research is "guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" and that "all knowledge is relative to the person arguing it" (cited in Davies, 2007, p. 238).

I am a tertiary-educated, European New Zealand female, born of English immigrants, from a middle socio-economic demographic, and have always regarded myself as successful. I am an arts business educator, but I am not a dancer or an artist, nor do I have any training in psychology. The lack of this kind of experience helps me not impose my views of dance and success psychology, reducing the risk of preconceptions interfering with analysis of the participants' responses (Davies, 2007, p. 157). In the manner suggested by Fraleigh (1999) I wanted to "involve my beginner's mind" (p. 19). I understood my own position in relation to the research design, my motives, and why I was taking this approach.

Seidman (1998) recommends that before the interviews I explored my potential relationship to the participants as part of understanding how to develop rapport with them, in order to develop useful interviewer-participant relationships. This rapport needs to be controlled, he says, as too much or too little can distract from the relationship and affect the responses. Presenting in a neutral fashion, to have no mental or emotional barrier between us, was important so the participants could as much as possible be themselves. I had not met four out of nine of the participants before the interviews, four participants were colleagues, however I had only worked closely with one of those and the remaining five were industry professionals. I managed to remain professional and objective in my manner throughout the interview process. Seidman (1998) recommended to "Err on the side of formality rather than familiarity" (p. 97). I found myself conscious of this during the interviews some of which threatened to become informal very quickly. My role was to facilitate and record the interviews. I allowed them to run their natural course as much as possible within a 30-60 minute time-frame. I aimed to avoid being too prescriptive or controlling. The conversations were comfortable and rapport was easily and rapidly developed. I applied Seidman's (1998) suggestion that the interviewer should "maintain a good balance between respecting what the participant is saying and taking advantage of opportunities to ask difficult questions, to go more deeply into controversial subjects" (p. 97).

I used some of own my story to provide social intercourse, as suggested by Davies (2007). I ensured that the key questions were covered and that the people were comfortable. The questions were just a guide as I wanted to engage in a natural conversation with the participants, and to stimulate them to talk at length.

Seidman (1998) suggested observing how the interviewer/participant relationship developed during the interviews, then to note whether the relationships shifted dramatically at the end. They did. The process of listening deeply and quietly to people talking about something that they are deeply passionate about seemed to accelerate the level of rapport that we developed in a very short period of time. Often during the interviews issues were raised about dance teaching, tertiary institution politics, and common personal values, but I these were set aside as they were not relevant to the study.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Development of interview questions

“Research questions set in motion a process of discovery that pursues meaning, cause, relationship, interpretation or significance” (Hanstein, 1999, p. 27).

In the process of developing the interview questions for this study, and in an attempt to bracket out my own views, I examined how I defined success, and, as part of the literature review, how a range of other writers defined it. Careful thought was put into the development of the questions and consideration was given to the main purpose of the study, to what would elicit the types of responses to yield appropriate data given the length of the 30 to 60 minute interviews.

The questions were broad, general, non-directional and open-ended, designed to result in texturally rich data, but at the same time they were brief and simple. This semi-structured approach was aimed at achieving defined answers to defined questions while leaving time for further development of those answers, and then including more open ended questions as the interviews progressed (Kvale, 2007; Osborn & Smith, 2008; Walliman,

2001). Open ended questions, say Morse and Richards (2002), invite “detailed, complex answers” (p. 94).

I allowed the answers to each question to lead to the next one, sometimes added new ones, and used prompting to elicit deeper levels of responses where necessary (Osborn & Smith, 2008). The aim as described by Davies (2007) was to “emerge with feelings, ideas, described experiences, opinions, views, attitudes and perspectives that have a breadth and depth to them” (p. 152).

Generally the interviews commenced with general questions and moved to the more specific ones (Osborn & Smith, 2008). Cresswell (2007) recommended two broad general questions: “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?”, and “What contexts or situations have influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?”(p. 61). In the context of this study, these ideas were translated these ideas into “How do you interpret success for yourself?” and “What are the personal qualities you have that enable you to achieve success?” This provided insights into the attitudes and attributes the participants ascribed their success to. As the interviews progressed, participants continued to redefine their definitions of success, having an emic emphasis or inner perspective on it. Kvale (2007) sums this up as “A semi-structured life-world interview attempts to understand the themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perspectives” (p. 10).

The questions were sent to participants in advance but weren’t always strictly adhered to, the order often being altered in the course of the interview. Depending on responses the questions were sometimes slightly modified for the following interview (Osborn & Smith, 2008).

3.4.2 Pilot study

A pilot study, as suggested by Davies (2007), was carried out to practice the interviewing process, assist with development and modification of questions, and to ensure appropriate data resulted. An interview was arranged with a colleague who is a successful dancer and choreographer, and an initial set of questions was drawn up. The colleague

was taken through the consent process, which highlighted a minor omission in the consent form. This first interview showed how much data could be gathered in a short period of time and prepared me for allowing more data to emerge in subsequent interviews.

While I had a list of prepared questions, I allowed them to unfold organically, to follow the course of the flow of information emerging (Davies, 2007). This allowed me to modify the order of them before the first formal interview, and add in more specific questions as required. Following the pilot interview and transcription I attempted an initial coding process. It was illuminating to have a set of initial themes to reflect on before the rest of the interviews began. The findings largely fitted with the reading I had done at that point.

Reading the transcript of the pilot interview showed that the language I used, aside from the actual questions, was vague and overly casual at times. I was able to amend this in later interviews. Lastly I experienced how a participant responded to the transcript when it was sent to them. He confirmed what he said was transcribed correctly.

3.4.3 Individual interviewees

The six individual interviews were held over a six week period. I set out originally to interview everyone in a shorter period of time but as I explored the literature around data collection I became convinced of the value of taking a more organic approach by interviewing one person then reflecting on whether the data was what I wanted, and on the relationship between the questions and the data that emerged before conducting the next one.

With the participants' permission interviews were digitally recorded for transcription. These transcripts were sent to participants for verification. This contributed to validation. Interviewees were given a *koha* (gift) in the form of music vouchers, and food and drink was provided at the interviews. They were not paid for their time.

3.4.4 Focus Group

“The point of doing a focus group interview is to bring a number of different perspectives into contact” (Morgan, 1997, p. 46). He suggested using a focus group as a follow up to interviews, as it allows the researcher to follow up issues that come up only after the analysis of the interview data. He explained that “Preliminary individual interviews can help generate focus group discussion guides by giving a feel for how people think and talk about the topic the group will discuss” (p. 22).

Morgan (1997) suggests focus groups promote synergy, that they stimulate a range of views, and allow one to see how the participants’ views interact. He states “The comparisons participants make among each other’s experiences and opinion are a valuable source of insights into complex behaviours and motivations” (p. 15). Focus groups create a more natural environment, closer to everyday informal conversation and the participants are more responsible for generating and sustaining their own discussion. Use of these groups fits into a social constructivist framework (Barbour, 2007; Morgan, 1997; Litoselliti, 2003; Wilkinson, 2008).

Comments made in focus groups are highly dependent on other group members’ contributions so I wasn’t looking for independent views I was looking for how each participant’s comments caused other group member to open up in areas they may not have done in an individual interview. Barbour (2007) says “They excel at uncovering why participants think as they do” (p. 32).

A focus group was held in Wellington following the individual interviews and the analysis of resulting data. This was intended to move the conversation on success to a discussion forum, to generate a discussion about teaching success factors with dance tutors, to fill in holes in data, and gain further depth of understanding.

I wanted sufficient people to stimulate discussion, get a range of responses and opinions. There needed to be enough to represent a range of professionals, but few enough so they all got an opportunity to contribute, and to have a group size that was easy to manage.

Factors considered in the selection of group members were age, gender, role and occupation in the dance community, level of success, and attitude.

I had originally planned to use some of the participants from the individual interviews. I discussed my topic with my colleagues, dance educators, and decided instead to formally interview them to get their views using largely the same questions as I used for the individual interviews. I wanted to start to interweave their views with those of my original interviewees. It gave me an opportunity to find out how some of the qualities I discovered in my original interviews were in fact already being taught (Davies, 2007).

Participants in the group consisted of three teaching staff from one particular dance school, five were booked to attend but only three arrived. The biggest issue, given that I had plenty of interested participants, was finding a date that suited enough of them. The group consisted of two males, one female, two were of Maori and Pacific descent, and they had a wide range of experience in dance and teaching.

Questions from the individual interviews were adapted for the focus group and edited with the benefit of what I'd learned from conducting the individual interviews and analysing the resulting data. The design incorporated questions to be answered in a round, and questions that were prompts to stimulate discussion by the whole group (See Appendix 6).

3.5 Data Analysis

Data collected in this study were the transcripts and notes from six individual interviews and a focus group. The interviews were audio-taped, then transcribed by an independent transcriber. (See Appendix 5) The transcripts were returned to participants for verification and their feedback, if any is incorporated.

The process of fitting the data into a range of categories enabled various patterns to be seen. I liked Hanstein's (1999) description of the idea of analysis "being in dialogue with the data" (p. 25).

Data emerging on success is not new material per se, but is being located specifically in a professional dance paradigm. Topics such as specific attitudes, and personal qualities, including decision making, motivation, discipline, self-awareness, self confidence, optimism, hunger for success, drive, making contacts, identifying and taking advantage of opportunities, business and career skills, emerging from the transcripts were coded and themes identified (Cresswell, 2007; Gibbs, 2007; Morse & Richards, 2002). The larger themes identified were definition of success, self-awareness and personal qualities. From there useful quotes were identified and other material summarised and paraphrased.

The analysis of data involved reading and rereading the transcripts to identify key ideas. It was read through several times to obtain an overall feeling about it. Significant phrases or sentences that related directly to success were identified. Meanings were derived from these and the responses were clustered into themes common to all transcripts. Patterns in coding were found and formed into compact and more meaningful groupings. Hanstein (1999) describes a process of “seeking relationships and making connections between often seemingly unrelated pieces of information” (p. 23), and this was the case with this analysis.

3.5.1 Ethical considerations

Walliman (2001) describes ethical issues in research as being “concerned with the values of honesty, frankness and personal integrity, and those of responsibilities to the subjects of the research, such as privacy, confidentiality and courtesy” (p. 213).

Participants in this study were provided with written information which explained the research, its purpose, benefits and perceived risks, and contact details, including those of an independent contact person with whom they could raise any concerns. This enabled them to give informed consent. Opportunities to ask questions were provided before the interviews and, where required, during the project. Processes to ensure confidentiality were fully explained (Seidman, 1998; Kvale, 2007). Confidentiality was supported by erasure of identifying information relating to individual participants’ personal details from the transcripts and from the final written report. Participants were assigned a pseudonym for the purposes of the project (Cresswell, 2007).

Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw without prejudice until September 2009. Following that date, all data was integrated and individual participants' data was not able to be removed. No one withdrew. Care was taken not to include details that were commercially sensitive such as references to specific dance companies or tertiary institutions.

All other contributors to the research have been acknowledged in this document.

3.5.2 Reliability or trustworthiness

It was important to ensure that the findings were valid, reliable, trustworthy and useful. Guba and Lincoln (2003) talk about the term validity being replaced by trustworthiness and authenticity. The criteria they use for trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

To achieve authenticity, the participants have been quoted in the text. In analysing the data a conscious effort has been made to maintain fidelity with the participants original input. The transferability of the data is critical to using the results in teaching across the arts. Conformability was achieved by the coding process and by comparing the data to the results described in earlier literature.

The coding was checked by an independent researcher, who verified the coding and selection of categories by reading one or two transcripts and coding them. We then compared our coding and added to, modified and confirmed themes. This process highlighted clarifications or modifications of codes needed. It identified the key themes that had been captured.

According to Hammersley (1992) reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which data are assigned to the same category by different observers or the same observer on different occasions (cited in Silverman, 1993, p.263). Reliability, or consistency and truthfulness, was checked by respondent verification and validation of the data. I asked the participants to comment on the analysis of their responses as I wanted data to

represent their experience. The research was triangulated by the combination of individual interviews and being familiar with existing literature (Barbour, 2007; Gibbs, 2007; Kvale, 2007; Morse & Richards, 2002; Yardley, 2008).

The ability to generalise results is not necessarily required in a qualitative research project (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001) but in my view this research could be replicated for any tertiary arts programmes where graduates go on to be arts professionals.

Yardley (2008) comments that “The validity of research corresponds to the degree to which it is accepted as sound, legitimate and authoritative by those with an interest in the research findings” (p. 235). He goes on to say that validity looks at sensitivity to content, commitment to rigor, coherence and transparency, impact and importance. It seeks to minimise sources of error and obtain as far as possible an accurate, unbiased observation of the data, but without withdrawing the influence of the researcher which lends insightful analysis.

Credibility was enhanced by the quality and experience of the dance professionals selected, the quality of the questions asked, my experience as a lecturer in arts business and my own experience of success.

Lastly I wanted to know that the end results of my analysis were the “accurate representation of the psycho-social reality” that I set out to achieve (Davies, 2007, p. 243).

3.5.3 Limitations of data interpretation

There is a risk that participants may have said what they thought would sound good or what they thought I may like to hear as opposed to what they really thought. However as accomplished professionals they appeared to be people of high integrity and confidence which I feel reduced the chance of this happening. The analysis was dependent on my subjectivity. I attempted to bracket out my own experience but this, as Giorgio said, “does not account for unconscious dimensions” (2008, p. 49).

3.6 Summary

Whenever we ask “What is this?” we enter into an enquiring frame of mind. When we research something we formalise this intuitive process to establish a definition for qualitative discourse (Hanstein, 1999, p. 3).

Research is a way of methodically examining the perceived realities of a group of people. Phenomenology was an appropriate methodology for this due to its ability to draw together the threads of the data and to create a very specific picture of a particular phenomenon. This chapter has examined the process of selecting the participants for this study, how the data was collected, and set out the ethical approval process and the issues around trustworthiness. It described the process of coding the data and establishing the themes used to sort the data.

Chapter 4

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings are presented thematically. Initially the coding was guided by themes that emerged from the literature review but eventually they took their own shape, molded by the perspectives of the nine dance professionals interviewed. The themes are grouped into three main categories:

1. How participants defined success for themselves
2. Personal qualities they attributed their success to
3. Self-knowledge.

Cresswell (2007) describes qualitative data analysis as an organised process of examining and organising data which results in the revealing of its meanings. This process began directly after the first interview, a truly naïve one, involving a first time interviewer and a first time interviewee. The analysis of the data was a many layered process and I continued to find meanings within meanings on each subsequent examination. Initially I was almost overwhelmed at the richness of the information captured, and it took several readings of the transcripts to decipher what lay within. As I conducted each subsequent interview I started to learn what to listen for, and how to encourage the participants to open up more, to reach greater depths. As I listened to each interviewee I started to see similarities in their responses, and became excited as I recognised common threads emerging.

4.1.1 The interview questions

To lend context and structure to the findings I summarise the interview questions here. Firstly participants were asked to define how they perceived success for themselves. Because achieving goals featured so prominently in the literature I asked participants specifically if goal-setting played a role in the achievement of their success. I asked them if recognition mattered to them, then got them to describe what personal qualities they

attributed their success to. Lastly they were asked to describe how they dealt with self-doubt in order to uncover other relevant qualities.

4.2 Defining success

“To understand the mind and character necessary to succeed we must evaluate success, not just society’s but also on each individual’s terms” (Heath, 1991, p.6).

A key objective of this study was to understand how participants defined success for themselves. In the interviews they responded with a variety of descriptions of how they perceived success. External measures of success included financial reward, wealth, recognition, fame, material possessions, and having good work come to the dancer, as opposed to having to go out and chase it. However a far greater number of internal or intrinsic measures were reported, which included being happy, contented, achieving goals, feeling fulfilled, having an internal locus of control, constantly learning and growing, achieving life balance, continually doing what you are passionate about, knowing oneself, having inner strength, feeling in control of life, having a sense of purpose, feeling passionate, and being able to go with the flow. I start by reporting on the more prevalent intrinsic measures.

4.2.1 Achieving goals

Achieving goals is addressed in two ways in the analysis of the findings, firstly in participants’ descriptions of success, and secondly in relation to setting goals. This aspect is addressed later in this chapter in a section on personal qualities of successful people.

Most participants talked about their ‘dream’, the significant things they wanted to achieve in dance. They spoke of doing something they’ve always wanted to do, as one participant said “Success for me is setting out my own personal goals and dreams and eventually reaching those”. Another contributed

... the ideas that you come up with, visions, dreams, whatever word you call for them, putting yourself in a situation so you can actually make them happen, and finding the will and the tenacity to make these things come to life. You make your creations, your new babies come to life. That’s a big part of me.

4.2.2 Life balance

Having balance in life was mentioned by most participants as part of being successful. It was explained by a participant as feeling aligned and being in line with a deeper purpose saying

There are these moments when it feels like everything is in balance and I am functioning optimally, and that's more important to me than a really good review, or being externally acknowledged.

Two of participants talked of the importance of having a need to have a life beyond dance, and to looking after themselves.

4.2.3 Contribution

Another measure of success was making a contribution in some way, to the arts, society, the broader community, to dance, and specifically to the dance community. For some it was passing on their knowledge in a formal way such as teaching, or in a dance situation helping others prepare for a performance, or mentoring others. Being able to make contact with people who are not always easily reachable, (for example troubled youth), or helping someone identify their passion, or just making a difference in someone's life with their art contributed to feeling successful. For one it was providing an opportunity to offer dance to others so they could go on a similar kind of journey to their own.

Many participants spoke of the joy that comes from being able to share their skills and knowledge. A participant who was a dance teacher and performer said a success moment for her is when "someone just gets it". Another participant spoke of trying to create experiences that people would not forget, of wanting to really ingrain those experiences in people's minds because they may have had their own similar experiences, and thus making a connection with them.

4.2.4 Achieving recognition

Participants were asked what recognition meant to them as a measure of success. This was ostensibly to find out whether the extrinsic measure of fame was aspired to. There were a variety of responses but surprisingly none specifically about fame. The participants wanted recognition of the value their work as opposed to having their egos stroked. One of them explained that she wanted recognition from her peers and from the industry and

having the public follow and respect her work. It was important that people identified the work as that of the dancer or choreographer, a participant saying

that people respect and acknowledge where it came from, just like I respect and acknowledge where an action song or a haka comes from - like I guess I expect the same.

Another participant said recognition was having people remember their work. For one participant recognition was more important than getting paid. Recognition was an important component of building reputation as a participant explained “Part of my strategy is to try and get some more professional recognition in order to solidify my profile. That’s all very strategic branding stuff.”

4.2.5 Positive emotions

Participants described experiencing a wide variety of positive emotions when they were feeling successful. These included happiness, passion, exhilaration, pride, ultimate bliss, feeling confident, being fulfilled, and a sense of reward.

They described the feeling of happiness and satisfaction they got from creating their work, from performing it, and from having people respond to it. Participants described feelings of being satisfied and fulfilled, saying they get:

- “that sense of satisfaction that you’ve tried to do the best job possible and done the best that you could do”
- “knowing you’ve done the best job you can”
- “being able to tell your story in the way that you want”.

One described success as experiencing a positive sense of anticipation from “looking forward to work rather than dreading it”.

Participants said that feeling passionate about their work was “awesome” and felt like a “huge personal success”, “Passion is what makes my heart sing, having moments of passion, moments of absolute being”. Another participant described success as a sense of exhilaration

I remember the exhilaration when I finally got a role and it was exhilaration, extreme exhilaration for such hard work had paid off, you know, six

months of training and trying to get into shows and finally breaking through and getting that contract for my dream, dream job, that was just unbelievable exhilaration.

Several participants reported feelings of contentedness, being content in themselves, content in the moment and being proud of what they are doing. Another participant talked about feeling privileged “it’s a privilege to be able to follow one’s creativity in one’s artistic skill and talent and interest.” One participant described happiness as doing what they wanted to do and success is being happy with what they get, and success as “knowing that this is what I want to do”. Another participant described success as a feeling of knowing you are on top of something, saying

I think there’s an air of confidence when you know that you’re totally on top of something people looking up to you knowing that you know what you’re on about... when you’re successful you have this kind of inner sense of knowing that you’re on your right path and it just feels right. It’s quite a subtle feeling.

4.2.6 Material success

Accumulation of money and material possessions did not feature strongly in the participants’ definitions of success. Getting paid was only a measure of success in that it meant they did not have to support themselves by non-dance related means. As one participant said there are “only a minority have jobs [in dance] where they are regularly paid like Black Grace”¹. A participant said

I wouldn’t say getting rich or getting paid well, [was important] but getting paid so you can live and live okay, that’s what I define as financial success in the arts, especially in contemporary dance...If you’re a dancer success has got nothing to do with money, that’s as far as I know, I don’t know any rich wealthy dancers.

While not a key determinant of success, they did identify financial goals. These included wanting to purchase a house, to be able pay off a mortgage; one participant wanting to be paid what they are worth; getting paid to dance; and being sustainable in the industry. One participant found he had become more financially focused since having a family. Another participant declared “I would like to be financially secure but is it my success? Absolutely not!”

Reflecting on success a participant said:

This is a very recent thing for me [reflecting on success], ...the realisation that success is so fickle ... and if it's tied to external markers then there is always going to be that kind of flip flop between ...whether you're successful or not, and so yes that's always going to happen especially if part of your practice is reliant on funding from external sources or acknowledgement from external sources.

Two of the nine participants said they often did not acknowledge their success "It's very easy to not even see your own success, even when it's right there in front of you"; adding that you don't have to be performing all the time to be successful.

Another participant said how important it was to believe in success "you've got to believe in success, ...for you to have any chance of [success]. If you don't believe that you have any chance or any right to it, then it will never happen". Commenting on the dance industry as a whole one participant stated "I think we have a very narrow frame for success i.e. if you get funding or perform in a certain place, or which company you dance for". Another participant said "We need to broaden our thinking about success and celebrate different models of success".

4.3 Qualities of success

This section examines characteristics, attitudes and attributes of the participants. These include being a goal-setter; variations on the theme of discipline including tenaciousness, determination, passion and adaptability; knowing clearly who you are and what your values are; and being motivated and feeling confident. Goleman (1995) sums up these characteristics as having emotional intelligence.

How the participants responded when they experienced self-doubt and responses around career, opportunities and business skills are also examined.

4.3.1 Goal setting

Participants in this study were asked whether they thought goal setting played a significant part in achieving success for themselves. Seven out of nine participants were emphatic about the value of having goals.

The participants provided a wide range of examples of their goals (see Appendix 7.) They included wanting to be the best, to go to the top in this country; to be really versatile in terms of what they can offer as a performer; to remain visible as mature dancers; to make a part-time company full time; to be a cultural or haka advisor; to educate people to enjoy contemporary dance (in the early days of contemporary dance in New Zealand), to have dance accepted in our communities as music and the visual arts are, to be the most prestigious group in New Zealand, and to do a Masters degree in dance.

For some participants goal setting was informal or intuitive and for others it was a formal process. One participant saw herself as more relaxed about setting goals

I am not completely formal about goal setting, I have a really clear idea of my goals and I have from quite, probably a young age and they're always there and always really strong. I come back and sometimes you formally look at that but a lot of the time they're quite inherent.

Formal examples included writing goals down, and one participant owned a dance company with a manifesto articulated their goals. One participant explained how she deliberately set goals

I really want to do a week overseas, which was actually ironic. This year I wrote on my wall, ... that I wanted to take a work overseas this year and I said that's not very practical, this year's already started, but I just thought I just feel like writing that so I wrote that. And then a week after that I got offered an opportunity in [place in Asia].

Participants said that imagining things they wanted before they take place improved the likelihood of achievement "the more you kind of open up the possibility yourself it's so much more likely to happen."

One participant had a different view "I never had a long term plan, I just go where I am at, give it my fullest attention, day to day, and then that will take me to the next place, that's how I've gotten through my career".

Although one participant found the need to set goals diminished with time she said "probably early in my life I had much stronger goals and was very goals and list orientated and worked very hard to achieve them all. Now I'm a bit more relaxed." She

went on to say they (her dance group) weren't achieving as much now and that is probably why, adding "You really do need a goal and know what you're heading towards to go through and do it... you need not only goals, you need to set a deadline if you want to finish something."

4.3.2 Discipline

All the participants referred to having some form of mental discipline as a quality essential to achieve success as a dance professional. Discipline was described variously as being passionate, having a willingness to do what needs to be done, being single-minded, following through with what they set out to do, and having a strong hunger or thirst for achieving something. They described it as being keen, determined, tenacious, focused, dogged, stubborn, fearless, and having perseverance.

One participant talked about having staying power, drive, "stickability", pushing deeper when needed, being prepared to take risks saying "The discipline is phenomenal – of turning up, leaving all your stuff at the studio door, getting in there and working." Another participant described it as being able to take the knocks like injuries, being able to cope with "the rigours of doing the work" and to "keep sustaining, being aware of what your goal is and not being distracted from it no matter what comes your way". She continued saying

What you have is someone with Sisu [staying power] ... it's some belief in themselves or what they believe they need to do that it's possible that those knocks doesn't deter from that belief.

It was generally agreed that a significant component of discipline is accepting and facing up to challenges, and knowing the artist's life is not easy:

- "Those who can't take the discipline fall by the wayside"
- "Sometimes you have to wait for things to happen and sometimes you have to hustle"
- "Working hard and working your networks, going to everybody"
- "Right people, right time, right place, luck of the moment".

The word 'passion' was frequently and emphatically used by all the participants and I have included it in this section as it is often a motivating force in discipline. A dance employer talked of how dancers she employed had gone on to be successful in achieving something because they had wanted it really badly and had a huge passion for it. Being optimistic and positive were further qualities of discipline mentioned "to be inspirable and to be an inspiration, to be able to get people to get off their backsides and do something".

The participants also identified adaptability as a form of discipline. Adaptability was described as the ability to collaborate and to work with different people. They used words like being nimble, fluid, flexible, having give and take, being versatile, and having an ability to evolve in situations. One participant said it was "Not just being the dancer but being leader, manager, organiser, promoter, having people skills" and emphasised the value of having good time-management skills. Another participant said of adaptability "Good to have other skills like teaching, massage, photography, choreography".

One participant summed discipline up "Overnight successes usually come after 15 years hard yakka" and another said "Discipline is really, really key for any long term success, very few things I think are overnight successes". He later added "the harder I work the luckier I get".

4.4 Self-awareness

Knowing yourself, and the qualities associated with this was a significant theme in the participant responses. The participants talked of knowing their strengths and weaknesses, what their values were, and the confidence that came from this knowing. They said you need to know your values and one spoke of having a deep sense of purpose and being connected to it. Their comments included having self-honesty, self-responsibility, being who you are and being really open-minded, having an ability to recognise yourself, especially when things get tough. Knowing when to get help was also seen as valuable. It is "an ego thing where if you think you can do it all yourself ... so you've just got to get that right mix of people around you." One of them described self-awareness as

Knowing your strengths and your weaknesses. So you know either to improve them or to bring other people in, which we needed to with [show] case, people who were stronger in the contemporary dance field than we

were. Knowing whether you are on the right track or not: Knowing yourself – constantly question yourself, who are you, what’s important to you. Why are we here unless we keep questioning ourselves? We will lose who we are.

One of the dance teachers in the focus group said that dancers need a strong belief in themselves to succeed. She emphasised the importance of having qualities that come with knowing oneself, those of openness and integrity, taking responsibility for self, being able to look realistically at self. A participant talked being very clear about her identity. Several participants talked about integrity and values as being very important to them one saying “Doing my utmost best to have integrity with all manners and dealings and not only with people but the material that you’re working with, I think is really crucial”.

Having an inner sense of knowing you are on the right path was important to one participant, she spoke of this knowing as tuning in to yourself

Sometimes you have to be quite quiet to listen to that kind of voice or that kind of feeling inside but it’s your instinct that generally is pretty honest about where you’re at. So I think it’s being trying to tune into that is really important and something that’s not always easy to do.

One participant said it is a matter of faith having

A trust and a faith thing in the people you’re working with and your ancestral support that is behind you. They’re going to be the ideas that and coming through are the right ideas for you.

4.4.1 Self doubt

Self doubt was recognised as a barrier to success.

A lot of non-greatness comes in doubting abilities, doubting their skill level, having lower self esteem, and lower self awareness ... In my earlier years I think I self sabotaged, I was afraid of being successful, it took me a while to learn that one. You know these are words that only came afterwards but I could see, I would go so far and then I just wouldn’t go that extra bit. I was actually afraid of being successful, afraid of having my neck up there exposed, sticking up.

Participants were asked how they deal with self-doubt, lack of faith or confidence in their own abilities. Some participants had known or deliberate strategies to deal with self-doubt and used these proactively. They described a range of ways to deal with self-doubt, one saying

Say you're producing a season and something goes wrong, someone pulls out or injures themselves or something falls through. I tend to actually skip straight to going "how can we solve this?" I believe once something has happened it's just happened.

However, more recently she said she realised it was more useful for her to really take a moment to acknowledge that she was experiencing self-doubt over something and get upset about it because she believed that would enable her to move on more quickly.

When self-doubt was in response to a creative issue a participant said she would "reconnect with creative side, go back to the intention, back to the drawing board". Another participant said he stood back and looked at the bigger picture and then tried to "strategise the best way to make it work".

Not being scared to fail was identified as a really important factor, as well as acknowledging oneself when things are hard. A participant described how her sense of purpose helped her get over self-doubt

I do have massive periods of self doubt where I think come on just retrain, do something else and I don't shy away from that, I look down the barrel of that. I feel like I've just got a new tool for dealing with that which is to come back to you know what [my purpose]. I believe that I am actually in this for a purpose.

One used an old fashioned word - ponder, to ponder -just idly thinking about the problem with no pressure

I definitely take time to experience what [I] feel like and think it through, I think pondering is incredibly undervalued activity, one must have time to ponder and in this ever-increasing world of speed and technology, and what we fit into it, we're in major danger of losing the art of pondering.

Another spoke of letting go

I get on with the day, one day at a time. You have to have the ability to live in the present. If you spend too much time thinking about the past or the future there is no control, and really we have no control, I mean that's the number one thing, that's the philosophical side of me. If you're trying to control something forget it, that's a very important thing to understand I think, you've got to let it go. Things will come that are meant to unfold and if you put the control things up you're blocking it.

A participant felt that it was can be a matter of perspective and a participant shared her philosophy on it

When you are in jail looking out through the bars do you see the stars or the bars? By looking out do I see the bars that are holding me back or do I see the stars that I can go on with. It's a frame of mind.

Other strategies for dealing with self-doubt included:

- Going back and finding something they were good at
- Talking to other people about problems
- Knowing that everyone else experiences it
- Surrounding yourself with confident people
- Changing one's mind-set; to stop criticising them self
- Focusing on dance.

Or just being fatalistic "I do believe whatever's meant to happen will happen and I don't worry."

4.5 Career and opportunities

Two participants deliberately set out to never do work that wasn't dance or arts related. One said this forced her into teaching dance which she eventually found she loved. She has seen many dancers graduate and get "sucked into life and other jobs" and not continue their dance careers. Another said "it's a hard industry, only 5% of people [graduates]...come out with [dance related] work".

Common themes here were opportunities, variety of work and creating one's own future. One participant saw his career progression as a series of phases in his journey: moving from performing to teaching; having opportunities to work with young people and passing on knowledge; and doing research. Another participant had the opportunity to take his skills to youth in trouble, where it is a form of therapy, helping youth connect with their roots and through dance, discovering their own natural style.

One participant had 13 different projects on the go. She and other participants noticed opportunities in theatre, film and TV. "There are people at work in dancing. There are endless opportunities, but they may not look like you dreamed they would"; "You need

to know the different avenues and streams and options and opportunities out there to help make success happen”; “We’re either making our own work or finding ways of where it’s going”; looking at “How can I approach this, what angle do I hit it at?”; “Be prepared to create your own opportunities. If you wait for other people to make you happy or successful you are setting yourself up for a lot of hurt”.

Opportunities for work suggested by participants included: dance companies; residencies; reviewing dance; being a self employed contractor or consultant; and teaching. Another participant said dancers need the ability to be able to perceive where the gap in the market is and what is needed to fill it. Having a career in dance does not happen easily and one participant spoke of the work being hard

It’s definitely a lot more hours than is reasonable to work at times but I don’t know I think you go through it and you find a point where you accept it. It changes and fluctuates a little bit, but I think I went through something where I really looked with my eyes open and went “ok this is the reality of what it is that you’ve decided to do”.

4.5.1 Business skills

Although this study did not look specifically at the role of business skills most participants commented on needing them to succeed professionally. Having them was seen as becoming more important as they progressed in the industry

It’s not always an easy road financially. No one is going to give you a break. You’re going to have to make it yourself. I figured that out and so had to change my own attitudes and thinking in terms of running myself as a business, rather than waiting for the big call from Steven Spielberg.

They stressed the value of having business skills saying

[It is]...very important, very very important, it’s the difference between someone who is going to be successful, whatever that success might mean for you, and someone who is not. If I could go back another eight years I would have locked down the business side of things first.

I will always now more than ever press how important it is to be a business rather than working from contract to contract, which might be six months apart, or not working at all, going to school, getting a dance degree and then working at McDonalds or in a café.

Being able to do a range of business related activities was important

I've had to get really good at running the website, doing press releases, doing Photoshop, doing excel budgets, putting clips on You-Tube, figuring out the production management stuff.

One participant spoke of the success of some older well established successful dancers “the ones that really look after themselves and really know how to manage and market themselves as a product, as an artist, as a business” and continued “Only over the last year have I been able to manage myself as a business and that’s all because of the different mindset I’ve picked from other dancers in the industry”.

4.6 Other factors

This last section includes some general advice the participants gave that did not fit easily into the themes identified so far.

One participant recommended that dancers “Really appreciate your own craft and your teachings, and the people who taught you” and advised on the value of having mentors and role models. The participants emphasised developing people skills and having respect. “You don’t have to get on with them [people] but you do have to respect them”, and recognising the privilege of one’s position. They spoke of the necessity of continual learning “Learning stuff, it’s exciting, it makes me push myself”, and “Constantly learning from the situation that you are in”.

4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter the findings from the research data were examined and organised into themes to reveal their meanings and gain understanding of the concept of success. It was a many layered process. As the data was analysed commonalities appeared enabling the data to be categorised into three key areas. There was a distinct emphasis on intrinsic values in the participants responses about defining success, as opposed to external or materialistic based measures. Their answers showed a range of specific personal qualities they possessed which contributed to them being successful, these being underpinned by a strong sense of self-awareness. These themes were reflected when their responses were viewed in a career or professional context.

Footnote

1. Black Grace (describe and use a reference) and say about how it is used as a bit of a benchmark

Chapter 5

5 Discussion

*“Research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with purpose.”
(Zora Neale Hurston, 1942)*

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine links between my findings and the wider literature to determine the extent to which the findings concur, and identify where they differ. The participants in this study clearly defined success for themselves, were well aware of the qualities that helped them achieve it and had a strong sense of self-awareness, which corresponded well with findings in the general success literature.

5.2 Definition of success

One participant in this study captured success in an intensely personal way “For me dancing’s like breathing, it’s just who I am, that is who I am, I would not do anything else”.

Although the participants in this study all had their own unique way of defining success, based on their individual lives and dance career experiences, some common measures emerged. Their definitions largely reflected those that emerged from the literature. These were happiness, meaningfulness, quality of relationships, having a balanced lifestyle, a sense of contribution, and elements of material success. As with previous research, (Ashar & Lane-Maher, 2004; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Ferguson, 2003; Heath, 1991; Hill, 2001; Northcutt 1991) participants commonly acknowledged that there was a higher value placed on intrinsic or inner values than on material based ones.

Contrary to my expectation that the participants in this study would focus their definitions of success on achievement of recognition as a performer (fame), and getting work as a dancer (which they did to a certain degree), these constituted a relatively small component of their overall measures. Participants had a strong sense of self-awareness, and they spoke of success coming from recognising and knowing oneself, and being

aware of one's beliefs, values and principles. Their success definitions included achieving goals; experiencing positive emotions including happiness; having balance in life; making a contribution; and gaining professional recognition. They also included some material success factors. One of the participants described her way of defining success

I've really have been identifying this map, and it's quite a new way of thinking about things. In a sense it's about me defining my own sense of success rather than anything else defining it.

5.2.1 Sense of purpose

One of the interesting aspects that emerged from the research was that the goals participants set had values underpinning them that went well beyond self-interest. Their definitions of success frequently involved something meaningful and purposeful to do with their art-form and their communities. Participants talked in different ways about having a strong sense of purpose. They placed high value on achieving goals that had meaning and purpose. It appeared that the things the participants used to measure their success were achievements aligned with their values. As one of the participants said, "If my artistic work is connected to my deep purpose, that's successful". This fits with the conclusions of several studies discussed in the literature review, which found a correlation between experiencing a feeling of success and meaningfulness and purpose (Ashar & Lane-Maher, 2004; Covey, 2004; Ferguson, 2003; Tischler, 2002).

5.2.2 Recognition

Researchers in the studies reviewed found that recognition was an important factor in people's sense of being successful (Carpenter, 2010; Derr, 1986; Dyke & Murphy, 2006, Northcutt, 1991). Their participants had a strong need to be recognised for their labour or contributions to society in some way. Sometimes they liked recognition in the form of a reward, or a promotion, but often they just wanted recognition to help measure their progress towards a goal as it helped them to define whether they were good at something or not. The participants in the arts related studies (Bridgstock, 2008; Micheals, 2001) valued recognition for its importance in opening doors for them to progress their careers (Blotnick, 1985; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991).

The participants in this study valued recognition in other ways. It gave them acknowledgement of the value of their work and creativity, and was an affirmation of their performance skills. They wanted to be remembered for their work, and recognition helped them to measure this. One participant rated recognition as being more important than being paid. The focus on this kind of recognition of their talent and work, could show how much an artist's esteem depends on people's response to their work. Michaels (2001) explains

What artists define as rejection and success are usually borrowed from other people's opinions, values and priorities. Artists who measure success and rejection in terms of what society thinks have the most difficult time coping with both phenomena (p. 219).

I suspect that while many of the recognition success factors identified in the literature were not mentioned in this study, they matter to these participants too.

5.2.3 Contribution

Hall (2002) defines contribution as "the extent to which they see their work serving the wider community in the world" (cited in Gunz & Heslin, 2005, p.108). Contribution to work, community or nation was a key measure of success in several studies reviewed (Northcutt, 1991; Derr, 1986). The participants in my study emphasised contribution as an important factor for them too. One described it as a feeling of success "To pass on or share the knowledge, when you see someone get an idea and run with it, and transform".

5.2.4 Material success

The second dictionary definition of success I used in Chapter 2, was "The attainment of wealth, fame or position" (Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998, p. 1448) relates to material success. The priority placed on material success may be influenced by the degree to which a person's basic needs are being met according to Bridgestock (2008), Maslow (1970), and Derr (1986). If a creative worker is struggling to survive, their career orientation is more on 'getting secure' as opposed to 'getting recognised' or 'getting ahead' (Derr, 1986). While participants in this study were by no means well-off financially they were not struggling to survive. As predicted by the literature cited above, they weren't particularly focused on material success.

When material goals were identified, the motivation to achieve these was not about the attainment and accumulation of wealth. For example being paid to dance was valued as recognition of their skill, and as a means to further developing their career. To them it meant covering their living expenses without having to resort to work other than dance related occupations. For one participant being able to pay off a mortgage was not primarily a materialistic goal, he just wanted security for his family while he pursued his career.

These responses may have been influenced by the social desirability of not wanting to be seen as too materialistically focused as artists, however if the participants' values were materialistic it is unlikely they would have pursued a career in dance in New Zealand where very few professional dancers achieve a high level of financial success.

5.2.5 Career

Probably due to these participants being 'creative' workers, they did not identify many of the traditional success markers or determinants as defined by Derr (1986), Dyke and Murphy, (2006) and Gardiner (2006). These researchers' measures included achieving a higher position, being an authority in one's field, increases in salary or even getting what is perceived as a 'good' job. The participants in this study saw their work in a very different paradigm. The definitions they gave of career success are covered later in this chapter in the section on qualities.

5.2.6 Relationships, balance and freedom

Relationships, balance and freedom were success factors identified in the literature (Heath 1991; Northcutt, 1991) but they didn't feature significantly in my findings. Maybe the questions asked did not invite those kind of responses, given that the focus was on 'professional' success. Balance was mentioned by three participants, talking about how it was more important than recognition, and how they valued a balance between getting income and being creative.

Bridgestock (2008) found creative workers rated freedom highly but only one participant in this study mentioned freedom. Theoretically being a freelance dance professional

affords one a degree of freedom, as opposed to someone with a 40 hour a week job, but this doesn't appear to be a significant motivating factor.

5.3 Knowing one's self

5.3.1 Self-awareness

Knowing one's self was a strong prerequisite for success for these participants. To locate the aspects of this in theory I refer back to the 'intelligences' discussed in the literature review. These included Sternberg's successful intelligence (2004), Goleman's work on emotional intelligence (1995), and Gardiner's theory on interpersonal intelligence (1999). These thinking systems are a mix of analytical, creative and practical aspects of intelligence. They form a useful tool to capture the essence of the personal qualities that were identified in the literature, and emerged from interview data in this study. These intelligences encompass the capacity to understand one's self, managing emotions, knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses, having a sense of purpose, and doing what is meaningful for one's self (Carpenter, 2010; Covey, 2004; Goleman, 1995; Sternberg & Griogorenko, 2007).

The more I examined the literature alongside the data from the participants in this study, the more I came to an understanding of the role that well developed self-awareness plays in achieving success in people's lives. As I continued to analyse my findings I became more convinced of its value. Part of having strong self-awareness is being well connected to one's values.

Robyn Malcolm, a prominent New Zealand actor well known for her role in a popular local television programme, *Outrageous Fortune*, summed up the importance of values in a recent New Zealand Sunday newspaper article:

You can make all the money you like, you can have the greatest social network you like, you can do this, you can do that, whatever....But if the core of your life is not sitting truthfully and you're not living to your own set of values and your own set of beliefs, then there's no point in any of it (Malcolm, Sunday Star Times Magazine, Jan 23, 2011, p. 21).

It was clearly apparent that the participants in this study had a strong sense of who they were, what they were doing, where they were going, and were largely satisfied with this.

They were aware of their strengths and weaknesses and consciously worked to these, and they had a sense of purpose in their lives. They spoke of being honest with themselves, responsible for themselves, being true and having integrity, and knowing the values they live their lives by. They identified the value of being able to present all their best attributes, not just talent and technique, and the importance of understanding the importance of this. One advised

Stay true to your principles, this relates back to knowing yourself so you know what your beliefs, principles and values are. There is a lot of temptation not to be true to those things. And I feel very strongly and that's one of the things I try to instill in students and people I work with. For long term life in this industry you need to stay true to your principles and things that are true for yourself.

Being very clear about one's identity was seen as essential and as a participant said crucial for maintaining a sense of self within the demands of the profession.

Awareness of success, of what success means for a particular individual has a powerful influence on how confident people feel. Green and Campbell (2004) note that "Confidence comes more from noticing success and viewing yourself as successful rather than actually being successful" (p.106). Increased confidence, in turn, engenders success.

5.3.2 Self-doubt

Observations on self-awareness linked well with my findings about how participants dealt with self-doubt. Self-doubt can be seen as the antithesis of self-awareness as it occurs in the absence of confidence. Ways of dealing with self-doubt raised by participants suggested qualities of strong self-awareness. This is consistent with previous research which found that knowing the self, being self-aware, knowing strengths and weaknesses, knowing one's resources, and they linked this with strong self-belief and self-confidence, were personal traits that enable people to deal with self-doubt. When dealing with self-doubt participants spoke of reconnecting with values and purpose as a sort of inner compass (Carpenter, 2011), and found that when people were connected with their values this allowed them to know where their 'North' or their true direction, was.

When I asked the participants in my study about how they dealt with self-doubt I thought I would get responses in line with the qualities of discipline, such as determination and

tenacity. They tended, however, to be more philosophical in their responses, reflecting a strong sense of self-awareness. Strategies they identified included being conscious of what they were experiencing when encountering self-doubt, being aware of how that kind of experience usually transpired for them, and most of them had known or conscious strategies for dealing with it. One participant spoke of deliberately taking a break when she experienced self-doubt

I think everyone goes through it [self doubt]. I guess sometimes you need to step out of your situation and just take a break and try something else. Try something different. Keeping in mind you haven't left performing arts, or your passion - you're just developing yourself in a different way.

Green and Campbell (2004) note that resilience “allows you to get the best out of yourself on a consistent basis, even when the ‘odds seem to be stacked against you” (p.54). Participants in my study exhibited a high degree of resilience.

The process of reaching this state of being effectively self-aware is self-realisation, the development or fulfilment of one's capabilities and potential (Hindle, 2010). The awakening of the self may happen by itself, but can be accelerated by consciously setting out to achieve this state (Covey, 2004; Green & Campbell, 2004; Hindle, 2010). This realisation of who we are, where we are, what our values are, and what we want to do with our lives, is a development that can be facilitated through education. Hindle (2010) discusses the value of self awareness for students

Self-realisation brings awareness to a situation and can be described as an awakening of our spirituality.....When people realise that their present way of being is based on a past experience they then have the awareness and therefore the ability to do something about their situation or circumstance. This realisation can allow us to move into other ways of being that do serve us and are fulfilling (p. 2).

One of the dance tutors in the focus group observed how limiting and harmful self doubt could be for dance students. “Self-belief is the key thing. If they don't have that they'll opt out. Once they start to believe in themselves they start to take risks, to move out of their comfort zones”. Self-belief underlies the qualities of determination, persistence, tenacity, and stamina – the discipline qualities.

Green and Campbell (2004) successful New Zealanders found that they experienced self-doubt but observed that they tended to doubt themselves less often and for shorter periods of time. Instead they spent more time thinking and acting in ways that allowed them to “create and maintain high levels of confidence” (p. 98). This was true also among the participants in my study.

5.4 Qualities

As I analysed the data, and the themes and patterns that emerged, I discovered that while each participant had a unique set of attitudes and attributes, they appeared to have a common set of personal qualities. These largely echoed the qualities associated with successful people identified elsewhere in the research literature (Dweck, 2006; Fergusson, 2003; Green & Campbell; Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991).

The personal qualities associated with success that emerged from the literature included having a vision, being confident, knowing one's values, being goal focused, and various forms of discipline (Carpenter, 2010; Covey, 2004; Dweck, 2006; Ferguson, 2003; Hill, 2001; Sarni, 1999) similar qualities were identified among the participants in my study. The participants all had some sort of goals or vision about what they wanted to achieve and possessed many of the qualities of ‘discipline’ required to achieve them. One participant described the role of discipline in dance

I have never accepted that I would do anything else and I think that sort of stubbornness you know really helps with the determination. Because I mean I wouldn't say naturally I am like the ideal dancer by a long way, which I think you often find in dance, you find people often who have 100% facility technically [but] are actually less determined.

The participants demonstrated well developed emotional and interpersonal intelligence, which encompasses the qualities discussed in this section. Goleman (2005) asserts that emotional intelligence is very likely to be more important than intellectual intelligence for success in living. This seems born out among my participants who appeared to be mentally tough, focused, courageous and proactive in setting their goals. Participants had a clear idea of where they were going, did what needed to be done to achieve their goals, and were resilient when not all went according to plan. They were very independent and expected to create their own futures. They appeared to me to be people who took risks to

achieve their goals and to regularly push themselves out of their comfort zones in pursuit of them.

These participants were committed; committed to dance, and committed to their role in it. They were highly motivated, and motivation drives other attributes. Motivation is the strength of one's drive. Green and Campbell (2004) say it "refers to the things inside you that energise you to make things happen" (p. 62). In my arts business class, when discussing success qualities, students frequently ask "Isn't this all about motivation?". Yes, fundamentally it is. It is my belief that motivation is an essential quality of success. The importance of valuing these qualities lies in what Ashar and Lane-Maher (2004) define as the new business paradigm. They argue that there has been a shift from planning, control and obedience in the business world (for employees) to valuing commitment, responsibility, creativity and energy.

5.4.1 Experiencing success

Green and Campbell (2004) describe passion this way "Sustained motivation comes from combining values, vision and daily activity in such a way it provides a compelling reason for taking focused action" (p.50). As part of finding out about how the participants defined success I asked them how it felt for them. The dominating emotion for all of them was a feeling of passion. Passion to me is an essential part of the raft of qualities that makes up discipline. It is a key driver in motivation, that then activates the qualities of discipline (Fergusson, 2003). But where does it come from? If one wakes up and says "I'm going to feel passionate today", the resolve would probably melt at the first roadblock encountered. One of Ferguson's participants identified that passion comes from the quality of the goals one sets.

5.4.2 Goals and vision

"All men dream but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their mind wake in the day to find it was a vanity; but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes to make it possible" (T.E. Lawrence).

Returning to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998) definition of success given in Chapter 2, as "1. The accomplishment of an aim: a favourable outcome (p. 1448). My

findings support this. A significant point that has stood out for me from these interviews is that most of the participants had a vision and or clear goals. As patterns emerged from the data I found the underlying concept of “achieving of an aim” was a driving force and could understand the important role this plays in a dancer’s success.

Dweck (2000) talks about people feeling successful when they achieve something difficult. The participants in this study had set exciting challenging goals for themselves. They had goals for themselves and for dance, underpinned by a sense of purpose, and they gained immense satisfaction from achieving these (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). They wanted to achieve something, often something bigger than themselves.

The clarity with which participants held their dreams, their vision of what they wanted to achieve in dance, was striking. This was a key component of their ability to be successful. Green and Campbell (2004) describe vision as “the image you hold in your mind, of the kind of future you would like to create” (p.65) and continue “Your vision is important because it reflects who you are, what you want to become and what you want to create” (pp. 65-66). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) sums vision up as “The optimal experience is the one we make happen” (p.5).

One participant described the value of goals in his success

They’re a huge factor. I have to set myself deadlines and create challenges for myself otherwise nothing would happen, so there is me setting challenges and goals and then there is me being responsive to stuff that comes in. So it’s that self employed contractor thing again - some of the work I am creating myself so it’s self-generated creative projects.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (2001), all goals people value, such as money, health and career, are valued because they bring us happiness.

5.4.3 Career and business skills

“Success is most felt,” argues Hall (2002), “when the career is calling. Work that a person perceives as his or her purpose in life” (cited in Gunz & Heslin, 2005, p.108). Definitions of career success in the literature include notions of competence; promotion; being an authority in your area of expertise; doing interesting and exciting work; being challenged;

having a sense of achievement; feeling secure; having a sense of identity; and getting recognition for what you do (Bridgestock, 2008; Derr 1986; Gardiner, 2006; Goleman, 1998; Heath, 1991; Northcutt, 1991).

Several of the participants in this study defined career success as working solely in the dance industry and not having to support themselves with non-dance related work. They talked about the diversity of their careers, encompassing not only dance performance but teaching, choreographing, attending residencies, reviewing dance shows, consultancies, and the pleasure of the autonomy of creating one's own future. Apart from two of the participants who were teaching full-time, they all had a range of dance related occupational activities, with one having 13 projects on the go at the time of the interview. This shows a high level of 'successful intelligence' as defined by Sternberg and Griorenko (2007), showing analytical ability, creativity, practicality, innovation, organisational and time-management skills.

According to Goleman (1998) there is a minimum level of competence needed to enter an industry but from there it is emotional intelligence, and who you know, that assist progress. He found that in hundreds of studies done around the world, expertise does not make the difference, it is only a threshold requirement.

Several participants, amongst them employers and teachers, concurred with Goleman (1998) noting that the most technically competent dance students were not always the most successful ones. They asserted that technique was only part of the mix for achieving success as a dancer. Although they said one still had to do the 'hard yards'. They observed that "Technique frees you to dance, but a lot of people see technique as an end in itself". They said dancers need a level of competency, but the things they were really looking for are beyond that. These are the qualities described in this chapter. These qualities are transferable skills too. This is important because, as we see from the descriptions of the occupations of the participants, dance is but a portion of the dance 'career'. The other roles of educator, creator and director, need the qualities of this successful and emotional intelligence. There is little job security in the dance industry, even in the few 40 hour a

week waged jobs available, so dancers need these portable skills, that make up emotional intelligence, for long term sustainability.

Green and Campbell (2004) emphasise the value of an attitudinal approach to career success

Strategy, marketing, planning, financial controls and customer service are all important skills, but they are not the most important. What makes the difference is in the space between your ears. It is the mental skills that successful business people bring to the application of their 'technical' skills that makes them so successful (p. 32).

5.4.4 Qualities dance employers seek

When I asked two of the participants, who had their own dance companies, about what qualities they seek when employing dancers, they outlined the following qualities. This next section shows how these relate to the qualities identified in this study. From the dancer they wanted commitment, concentration and confidence, the ability to be a team player, and to demonstrate a love of what they are doing. The dancer needs to respect the people, the space, dance, the art-form, and the creative process. As one participant noted

Their reasons for dancing are beyond themselves. It is their personal relationship with dance and wanting to be a performer and on stage and physical and engaging with it all but also they have a broader belief in the importance of dance - and specifically contemporary dance.

Assuming the level of technical skills is similar in a group of dancers auditioning, personal qualities are an important factor in increasing the likelihood of them being employed. One company owner recommended “Don’t take yourself too seriously, get over yourself, get over the status thing” and continued “Being able to let go of your ego, leave it at the door - but you also need ego to be successful – it’s a paradox”. She added that the dancer needs to be on top of their game, to hone their skills, have good communication techniques, and to be humble.

Sometimes participants encountered a dancer whose technique was good but they weren’t present emotionally. They recommended “dancing from your heart, from your intention”. They spoke of “watching dancers and noting this technique or that”, but what they want to see is a dancer “giving life to the space between you and them” noting that they need to know themselves to do this.

The employers wanted passion in their dancers. One said “You sense it, you smell it, what lights their fire, what ignites them and gets that spark flaming.” One employer said in jobs that are related to dance people can teach you skills, such as administration and event management, but not the attitude - this needs to be in the raw material. Lastly they wanted authenticity. One remarked that they don’t see it very often one said but “When you see it you recognise it”.

5.5 Chapter summary

The discussion in this chapter shows how the findings from my study fit with the general studies of success reviewed earlier. Dance professionals too value more intrinsic measures of success over extrinsic ones. They had high levels of self-awareness and were able to articulate this and the value of it for themselves. The personal qualities they possessed were strongly representative of those of successful people in general. They were highly motivated, passionate determined people with high levels of self-discipline. They generally had a sense of purpose, had a vision of what they wanted to achieve and set goals around this.

Chapter 6

6 Conclusion

“Scholarly research is a visionary process and is guided by the researcher’s ability to see and think about ideas in new ways” (Hanstein, 1999, p. 28).

6.1 Introduction

This research arose out of my curiosity about success in our society, specifically in the arts. There seems to be an innate need for us to be successful and there appears to be wide agreement that achieving success is significant in our Western life (Gunz and Heslin, 2005). I started with the idea that success is a social construct, but what this and other studies show is that investigating this success in a purposeful way reveals more intrinsic, individually derived meanings. Asher and Maher (2004) discovered that while management trainees explicitly worried about the work itself and how it would be done, it emerged that the deeper issue for them was their own sense of success about it.

In order to answer my question and what success is for dance professionals I set out to gain an in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of a group of successful dancers; using a phenomenological methodology to locate, as Gunz and Heslin (2005) describe it, “something that is at the heart of lives as they are lived” (p.109). My aims were to deconstruct the phenomenon of success for these people to gain and articulate insights into it, and to render the implicit explicit (Osborne & Smith, 2008). This study has challenged me as an educator to dig deeply into a topic I have been curious about for some time; the way we think about success - a concept that I wanted to include in my teaching practice.

Although these findings were not ground-breaking, as they do not reveal anything startlingly unusual or new, they have made a significant contribution to my own understanding of what equips dancers to succeed. They do however confirm applicability of research in other areas to dance. This suggests a degree of reliability in my observations. As a result of this my ability to teach dance students the principles of

success in the future has been enhanced. It is my hope that the findings will be of value to other dance educators' practice.

In the arts industry there are some commonly held opinions that it is hard to make a living as an artist, and that existing professional practice and business education prepare students to 'survive', rather than succeed in the dance industry. However, this study shows that success is achievable in dance and how it can be achieved. Education that facilitates awareness of specific qualities and mind-sets, prepares graduates for 'success' in the industry.

In this closing chapter I consider the implications of these findings for teachers and students in arts education. I also discuss the limitations of the study, future research possibilities, and reflect on the research process.

6.2 Implications for teachers and teaching practice

In this section I discuss the implications of delivering success education to arts students and briefly suggest a few potentially useful teaching strategies. Teaching what success is, involves a process of developing students' consciousness in terms of how they define success, then facilitating awareness and development of personal qualities that successful people share, in the hope of supporting the growth of these students' self-awareness as successful beings.

What seemed to me a series of unconnected ideas has now coalesced allowing me to believe that these are principles and that they form a theoretical body of knowledge. Courses, like the one I teach, can be informed by and illustrated with examples from the findings of this research, so that teachers can present success concepts to students with more authority. I want to see an approach that acknowledges the importance of the awareness of success embedded in educative processes and in the student's professional development. I propose that the overt learning about the construct of success, as developed in this research, is not separate from the teaching of business skills or career development. The interconnectedness of teaching it as part of business skills, and perhaps indeed part of all other dance or arts training, will allow for the development of a deeper

knowing of things (Hindle, 2010). Hindle describes the value of deliberately developing an awareness of a concept, saying

Shifting something that we don't know we don't know, into the realm of what we know we can change the course or direction of an aspect of our lives that does not work for us. Bringing those aspects of our lives into our conscious realm allows for transformation. We could refer to this phenomenon as 'a breakthrough' or 'an insight' (p. 3).

As coordinator of arts business papers at a New Zealand polytechnic, it is my task to determine how to facilitate, for dance students, the process of emerging into the dance profession equipped for success. The existing framework of the programme provides freedom to take a creative approach to teaching 'business', allowing me to incorporate success concepts. I have been developing course material for teaching success for some time but the only knowledge I had was derived from popular psychology sources. I did not know how trustworthy this knowledge was, though its widespread application in western society shows it appears to be widely accepted. I needed to comprehend the underlying psychological principles of success and understand how to contextualise them for students of dance.

It was not until late in the research process, after gaining insights from reading Hindle (2010) that I realised that what I was looking for was an holistic approach to teaching business. The students learn dance, they learn business, but I'm now developing this more intangible area of 'attitude' to use as a defined teaching strategy. Hindle suggests that learning to become a professional involves teaching not only what we know and can do but also about who we are. Professional development educators not only need business and professional practice competencies but a means to develop student awareness in ways of transforming the self.

Tutors in the focus group in this study talked about the tacit influence of teachers in facilitating the development of self-awareness and personal qualities in students. The tutors emphasised the value of teachers who encouraged them as people, who pushed them and kept them going. They said teachers have a huge influence on the motivation and the development of discipline type qualities of students, and that this can determine

whether or not a student gets motivated and completes their studies. For students, having a teacher believe in them can help them develop stronger self-belief and experience all the benefits which accompany this.

6.3 Implications for students

The goal of being a dance professional is often, unknown to them, of secondary importance for the students I work with. Their primary focus for success can be just completing their studies and acquiring a strong sense of self and the personal qualities they develop along the way. This alone should be celebrated. Many students have reported having negative experiences with education at secondary school, and for them the growth that happens for them in one, two or three years of tertiary education is a significant success for them.

I have seen many talented students drop out before completing their studies due to lack of these qualities of self-awareness and self-belief. Many lacked the desire or motivation to develop the strengths of discipline. They need to understand their strengths and weaknesses and consciously work with these. They also need to be aware of what happens when they encounter self-doubt, and use known or deliberate strategies to deal with it.

Completing their degrees means a number of things for students: it deepens their thinking; enhances their ability to purposefully reflect on what they are doing; develops their capacity to weigh things up; and they acquire organisational skills. But most importantly, it is the development of the personal qualities they need to compete successfully in the dance world, or any other career path they follow. By completing their degree they have achieved a huge goal, and developed the tenacity and determination needed to get them through further challenges.

Most of my students have not really thought about the concept of success as it relates to them until we embark on a specific exercise around success, and this process promotes critical reflection. These students come in to tertiary education motivated by desire to play guitar or paint or dance, but I strongly believe that it is our responsibility to help

them to place this skill into a context, to give them a wider perspective on it in their lives. By studying success and identifying what their values are, they are better prepared for the world, and they can operate from a values-based vision about their future.

Once they have defined success for themselves and strive towards it, they can consciously recognise it in themselves when it occurs. This regular acknowledgement increases self-awareness and builds self-belief (Green & Campbell, 2004). I cannot teach students directly how to be “successful” per se, but with the support of this research I can facilitate their awareness of the qualities that successful people have; qualities that are associated with or lead to strong self-awareness, and I can help them determine how they might acquire and develop these qualities within themselves.

6.4 Teaching success

In order to implement the findings of this study into teaching practice, I’ve been exploring ways of teaching the concept of success in a tertiary setting using conventional tutorial sessions and assignments. One assignment I have been developing requires students to:

- define success
- identify two successful people and interview them
- incorporate measures of success into their projected professional path
- identify their values
- form a vision
- set goals
- make recommendations to achieve these things.

This study has made me aware of what a powerful role self-awareness plays in the achievement of success. To incorporate this into professional practice education I suggest introducing the concepts of Sternberg’s (2004) successful intelligence, and Goleman’s (1995) emotional intelligence which encompass the qualities of success awareness. This can lead on to discussions about what success is, and in the process students will use strategic and critical thinking, reflection, and analysis. This will equip them to start to develop their own unique definition of success. This exploration of success will be

supported by input from guest lecturers who are successful in their field. Classes can incorporate reflective exercises, processes of acknowledging, recognising, and rewarding success, including setting up success networks, support groups for students, and use of mentors.

A significant key to success is the process of goal setting. A values based goal or vision, set at the right level of challenge, generates energy that helps students develop the qualities, motivation, passion, and discipline that enable them to traverse the tough times of education, then in going on to becoming professionals (Covey, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi, 2001; Ferguson, 2003; Hill, 2001). Goal setting is already widely taught in tertiary study.

Goleman (1998) suggests that people undertake critical self-assessment of themselves and their ideas to develop emotional intelligence. A simple but powerful reflective self-awareness exercise I've been using with students is a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) - a strategic planning tool developed by Albert Humphries at Harvard University in the 1960's (Koo & Koo, 2007). I intend to evolve this into an analysis of the attributes of self-awareness and other qualities related to success. Green and Campbell (2004) say this process is not just a matter of jotting down what you are good at, it is the start of a process of "thinking about yourself in ways that strengthen your sense of confidence and less time thinking about yourself in ways that weaken it" (p. 106).

One of the tutors in the focus group concurs with this, saying,

You need to be realistic, realistically look at yourself, to really appreciate your skills and abilities. It's about having a realistic view and still having dreams to work towards. Knowing what your strengths are, knowing what your weaknesses are and working with people that complement that. That can unlock something in you.

Making the concept of success overt is already having an impact on my students. I am noticing transformational reflections in their assignments which show how they have engaged with the idea of success. While some initially struggled with defining success and articulating why they want to achieve it, they were often able to re-evaluate their original career goals, sometimes changing their entire career direction as a result.

Hindle (2010) comments on this process

Transforming an aspect of ourselves does not always have to come from delving back into the past. By recognising that we think, feel or react in a particular way in a particular aspect of our lives can allow us to transform those thoughts or behaviours (p. 2).

A tutor in the focus group noted “I look at students over the years - it’s the ones who are tenacious and who are grounded and willing to learn those things, they’re the ones that are still there in the industry”.

By defining success in this study I can now articulate it, examine it, and thus facilitate the process of my students being able to articulate it for themselves. In this process we could come to grips with each individual’s measure of success and help facilitate that journey. I’m drawn to Green and Campbell’s (2004) comments on successful New Zealanders - “They spend more time thinking about how they will be successful, how they are succeeding and how they have succeeded” (p.108).

6.5 Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the small number of participants involved. This possibly limits the ability to generalise the findings to the larger population of dance professionals. However the phenomenological approach allowed me to glean rich material from the small group and having more participants, while increasing reliability, would not necessarily have generated significantly more information. There was very little literature available on success in dance, or even in an arts context, more of this would have allowed me to compare my findings more closely to those of other researchers. Lastly, assigning pseudonyms to the participants may have aided my data-analysis process and perhaps given more rigour and life to the findings chapter. Pseudonyms were not assigned as I felt they could have compromised anonymity.

6.6 Future research

This study has brought to light several possibilities for future research. One possibility is a longitudinal study of a group of dancers who participate in a programme that overtly teaches the concept of success, and following them for a period to see if it has a

noticeable outcome in their attitude, and how it affects, or not, their careers when they enter the dance industry.

A further area of research could be to observe how students grow within themselves while studying dance, and explore what influences this. A study similar to this one, success in dance professionals, could be conducted in another facet of the arts to see if there are any differences between disciplines.

The antithesis of success is another interesting area to look at, asking questions such as: what happens to graduates who don't succeed as dance professionals and why; what attributes lead to them not sustaining their careers; how much does a lack of business knowledge and understanding of professional practice issues or training, contribute to their decision not to be dance professional.

6.7 Summary

As a result of this study I now have a much greater understanding of success and the intricacies of the seemingly simple concept of success. As described earlier, according to one dictionary definition, success is the achievement of an aim. This looks simple enough but in fact the quality of this aim or goal has huge implications on how much of a sense of success is experienced. The more aligned the goal is with one's values, the more likely that it is that success will be experienced. In order to experience sustained success one must have a high level of self-awareness. This self-awareness comes from getting to know oneself, one's strengths and weaknesses and one's values. There appears to be an interconnectedness between talent, business skills, having exciting goals, and developing or a specific set of personal qualities that successful people share.

My observation is that the dance professionals I interviewed for this study know who they are, what they want and where they want to go. They are very focused people, not compromising in their vision. They are principled, connected to their beliefs and values backed by the multiple facets of discipline. They have worked hard to get to where they are now. Now more than ever I am convinced that the attributes that they share are

qualities that can, and should be taught as an integral part of dance training at all tertiary institutions.

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Appendix

8 Appendix

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



COMMUNITY POLYTECHNIC
Te Kura Matatini o Whitireia

Appendix 1: Email/Information Sheet for Participants

An investigation into how dance professionals perceive success and what attitudes and attributes contribute to their success

Dear.....

Date.....

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project for a masters' thesis. Please read the information below before deciding whether or not you are willing to participate

Who is doing the research?

Janet Nixon, lecturer in Creative Enterprise in the Faculty of Arts and Communication at Whitireia Community Polytechnic. Supervisor Liz Melchior, dance lecturer at Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim of the research project is to interview established dance professionals about what attitudes and attributes, apart from dance talent, have contributed to their success.

What will participation involve?

You will be asked to:

- Fill in short background questionnaire
- Participate in a 30-60 minute interview

- Participate in a focus group of dance professionals (optional)

Can you change your mind and withdraw from the project?

Participation is entirely voluntary. You have the choice to withdraw without being disadvantaged in any way. You will be given a copy of your interview transcription to check for accuracy. If you withdraw at any time up to this point the data will not be used in the project. Once your data is incorporated in the finished paper it will not be able to be withdrawn.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?

The individual and focus group interviews will be audio-taped. Information from these will be transcribed and collated, and analysed by the researcher.

The information you provide during this research project will be strictly confidential and you will not be identified in any way. To protect your identity, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym to use when the research findings are written up as a masters' thesis and as possible papers to be presented at future conferences, and / or published. The data will be kept for five years then destroyed.

The research project has been reviewed and approved by the Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any questions either now or in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor (see contact details below).

Kind regards

Janet Nixon

Janet Nixon, Researcher

04 237 3103, extension 3825

janet.nixon@whitireia.ac.nz

Supervisor

Liz Melchior

Victoria University of Wellington

04 4721000

liz.melchior@vuw.ac.nz

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
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COMMUNITY POLYTECHNIC
Te Kura Matatini o Whitireia

Appendix 2: Consent form

PROJECT TITLE: Success factors for Performing Arts (Dance) Professionals

An investigation into how dance professionals perceive success and what attitudes and attributes contribute to their success

Please read the following and place a tick in each box if you agree with it:

- ☐ I understand that the research is confidential and every effort will be made to ensure anonymity of participants.
- ☐ I understand that participation is entirely voluntary
- ☐ I understand that the data obtained may be used for a thesis, conference papers and publication
- ☐ I understand there is no remuneration or compensation for participation
- ☐ I understand that the digital audio files will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project and the transcripts and written material will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.
- ☐ I would like to see my transcript and get a summary of the research findings
- ☐ I consent to taking part in this research, which will involve:
 - filling out a questionnaire
 - attending an interview
 - possibly attending a focus group

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3: Interview questions

- ☐ How do you define success for yourself?
- ☐ What does it feel like to be successful?
- ☐ How did you become successful?
- ☐ What attitudes and attributes (or characteristics) do you have that you think contributed to this success?
- ☐ How did you acquire these? (this will be asked of each factor they respond with)
- ☐ Do you have times of self-doubt? If so, how do you deal with these?
- ☐ What part do goals play in your success?
- ☐ What does professional recognition mean to you?
- ☐ What does financial success mean to you? It is important or not?

Appendix 4: Background information and filter questions *(written questionnaire)*

Success factors for Performing Arts (Dance) Professionals

1. What is your age?
2. 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐
3. What is your ethnicity?
4. When did you train?
5. Where did you study/train?
6. What academic qualification(s) did you gain?
7. Did your course provide business or professional practice for dancers?
8. How much of your time do you spend as a dance professional?

Appendix 5: Transcriber's declaration of confidentiality

Success factors for Performing Arts (Dance) Professionals

The information revealed to me in my role as transcriber for this research project will be maintained as confidential material.

I will discuss the interviews only with the researcher. I will not discuss the content with other people and neither will I reveal to anybody the identity of the individuals who are participants.

Signed.....Transcriber

Date.....

Signed.....Researcher

Date.....



Appendix 6: Focus group

Participants will receive an information sheet similar to the one used for the individual interviews. At the beginning of the focus group I will go through the key information again with them.

It will include:

- “I would like to invite you to participate in a conversation about your experiences of success as professional dancers. It will take around 45-60 minutes”.
- I will be asking a series of questions which I would like your responses to. There are no right or wrong answers. I will go around the group and ask for a response from each person. You may pass if you don’t want to answer a particular question. Sometimes we may end up having a group discussion.
- The conversation will be recorded, but if you wish to say something that you don’t want recorded you can request that the recorder be turned off.
- The tape will be written up without your names. You will not be identified from your comments
- Does anyone have any questions at this point?”

The questions may be grouped into several sections and I will give an overview of these.

Appendix 7: Examples of participants' goals

Quotes

- I just wanted more, when you stand in a group full of 40 people you want to be about that one that shines above everyone else and that's the kind of competitive edge that competitive haka brings to you and so if I want to be the best I can't just have a haka under my belt, I need to have something else and something else and something else, something that sets me apart from everybody else. And not just be good at haka but be good at the dance and be good at the acting and across the board be really versatile in terms of what you can offer as a performer.
- The first one [goal] of that is to remain visible as mature dancers, but there's a whole lot of them, they're great goals.
- Like with [company] wanting to make it, wanting to make it full time, wanting to make it financially sustainable. For me I guess one of the big aims once [company] had started was for it to be a company not just a project thing with sort of cohesive programs across a whole range of things.
- To be a cultural or haka advisor to the [name of group].
- To educate people to enjoy contemporary dance (when it was new to New Zealand).
- For the audience to enjoy at least 50% of the programme (when contemporary dance was new to New Zealand).
- To have dance as accepted in our communities as music and the visual arts are.
- To go to the top that I could in this country.
- Wanted to establish a full time contemporary dance company in New Zealand (before there were any).
- One of my dreams was to, three dreams, to make [name of group] to me is the most prestigious group in New Zealand.... And so it took me 10 years,... So to me that's success, even though it took that long it was never about how long it was going to take it was about being able to do it every year and getting better at it and better and better until we finally achieved our ultimate goal.
- Another personal dream of mine was to work with in Maori theatre and take a Kapa Haka and Maori performing arts to places that people have never seen before.

- To do a masters in dance.
- To always continue to be honest with myself, and if it's not working walk away, that's always a goal of mine.
- I want to bring contemporary themes to traditional movements.



<http://www.timwoods.org/2009/06/21/the-talent-myth-essential-insights-on-deliberate-practice/success-sign-2/>