

Exploring the Role of Sports Dance in Expressing and Shaping Contemporary Social Values: the Perspective of Cultural Thought

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Abstract: Sports dance emerged in Western nations, and its early forms reflect those cultural influence. Dance and sport are rooted in our prehistoric past and transcend mere physical activity. Our qualitative study explored how contemporary social values are reflected and potentially shaped by sports dance in China. Employing a cultural thought framework centered on social hierarchy and power dynamics, the research examined data collected through ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Our findings suggested that findings revealed a strong connection between gender roles and dance styles. Observations in training sessions and interviews with dancers highlighted how training reinforces traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. Coaches emphasized the importance of instilling discipline, teamwork, and cultural expression within young participants. Observations at competitions further suggested a link between social class and success. Dancers from well-funded studios with expensive attire received preferential treatment, highlighting the potential influence of financial resources in the competitive scene. Our study suggests that sports dance in China serves as a microcosm of broader social dynamics, reflecting and potentially reinforcing existing social structures while also offering opportunities for artistic expression and cultural critique.

Keywords: Cultural Values, Social Values, Sports Dance, Qualitative and Dancers

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports dance emerged in Western nations, and its early forms reflect those cultural influences. However, the art form continues to evolve as it spreads globally. Integration of diverse cultural elements in costumes, music, movements, and choreography is essential in dance sport (Yu et al., 2018). China's dance sport scene is flourishing, encompassing competition, social aspects, artistry, and performance. Organizations like the "China Dance Sport Association" and "China Dance Sport Union" play a role in this development (Yu et al., 2018). Hence, by learning from established

Western styles and incorporating high-level technical elements, China's dance sport competitiveness has grown significantly. This integration of national culture is seen as a crucial innovation driver for China's dance sport scene, enhancing competitive performance and artistic expression (Yu et al., 2018). Dance and sport are rooted in our prehistoric past and transcend mere physical activity (Murray & Murray, 2017). Cultural scholars recognize them as expressions of a society's values and beliefs embodied in the way individuals move. In our increasingly globalized world, where cultural exchange occurs at an unprecedented pace, studying these activities offers a window into diverse traditions. Just as Pierre de Coubertin envisioned the Olympic Games fostering understanding through sport, the sharing of cultural dances and sports might bridge divides and encourage harmony between communities with vastly different backgrounds. Dance exists as both a visual and dynamic art form and transcends its aesthetic value to serve as a cornerstone of cultural heritage and a potent medium for cultural dissemination. It acts as a mirror reflecting the evolution of societies, historical trajectories, and individual corporeality. Simultaneously, dance offers a powerful tool for cultural exchange, fostering interconnectedness across communities. Analysis into the historical development of dance creation and its cross-cultural influences enhances our capacity to appreciate and interpret dances from diverse backgrounds. Also, understand, the fascinating evolution of corporeal language into its current expressive form (Grayson et al., 2022; Rivera et al., 2022). The Olympic Games such as Dance Sports stand as the pinnacle of international sporting events. In 2016, the Rio de Janeiro Games witnessed over 11,000 athletes from 207 nations competing (Rocha, 2017). Beyond the athletic competition, a core objective of the Games lies in fostering international relations and promoting cultural awareness (Murray & Murray, 2017). This is enshrined in the very essence of Olympism, a philosophy that elevates a holistic approach to human well-being, emphasizing a balance between physical prowess, mental fortitude, and willpower.

Furthermore, Olympism advocates for the integration of sport with culture and education, aiming to cultivate a way of life centered on the intrinsic value of effort, the power of positive role models, and respect for universal ethical principles. China's journey in the world of dance sport has been marked by steady growth and increasing ambition. The establishment of key institutions like the "China Ballroom Dance Federation" (later renamed "China Ballroom Dance Society") in 1989 and the "China Sport Dance Sport Association" in 1991 laid the groundwork for this

development. China's commitment was further demonstrated by the establishment of a dedicated training centre in 1987 and the hosting of the "First National International Ballroom Dance Competition" (Yu et al., 2018). The consolidation of the "China Ballroom Dance Society" and the "China Dance Sport Association" into the "China Dance Sport Federation" in 2002 further solidified China's commitment to the sport. Furthermore, China actively fosters international collaboration through "dancing diplomacy" initiatives with other dance-loving nations. By participating in international platforms and adopting a development model that emphasizes learning, adaptation, and innovation, China has steadily improved its competitive edge in dance sport. Aloff postulated that dance serves as a powerful medium for depicting social hierarchies and the role of the community leader (Aloff, 2022). For instance, "walking dances" such as the Polish polonaise often feature the most prominent individuals leading the procession, highlighting their social standing. Similarly, pageant dances with dancers entering one after another reflect a structured order within a community. Conversely, circular formations in dance represent a sense of egalitarianism, where each participant occupies an equal position within the group. Dance also offers insights into the relationship between the individual and the collective. Solo performances in ballet, where a single dancer takes centre stage for an extended period, exemplify an emphasis on individuality. In contrast, synchronized group dances with hundreds of participants, common in certain cultures (e.g., China or North Korea), showcase the concept of collectivism, where individual identity is subsumed within the larger group. Butoh emerged in the late 1950s as a unique dance form pioneered by Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo (Baird & Candelario, 2018). It arose partly from their personal experiences and served as a form of artistic expression. In its original form, known as *ankoku butoh*, the body became the central focus and a tool for rebellion against both external societal structures and internalized norms (Baird & Candelario, 2018). Dance during the medieval period assumed a multifaceted role, reflecting both religious devotion and social etiquette. Religious dances held a prominent place, serving as a tool to express piety and reinforce religious doctrine (Elisha, 2018; Pusparini et al., 2021). Sacred dances performed within churches often incorporated formalized steps that mirrored the structure of religious ceremonies, evoking emotions of faith and reverence.

1.1 Rationale and Objective

Sports dance is a dynamic and expressive art form which offers a unique

window into contemporary social values. Thus, by examining the themes, movements, and cultural contexts of sports dance, we understand the evolution of social and cultural values based on sports dance. Our study explores how sports dance serves as a medium for expressing and shaping contemporary social values. Through a cultural thought perspective, we will analyse how sports dance reflects and potentially influences the values, beliefs, and attitudes of our society.

2. METHODS

2.1 Participants

Our study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how sports dance reflects and shapes contemporary social values. We randomly recruited 38 participants from the DanceSport Association of Hong Kong, China Limited including dancers, choreographers, and coaches, representing a diverse range of dance styles and experience levels within the competitive sports dance scene. All participants provided informed consent after receiving a detailed explanation of the study's purpose, data collection methods, and potential risks and benefits. Their anonymity was assured throughout the research process. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point.

2.2 Cultural Thought Framework

Our study adopted a cultural thought framework centered on social hierarchy and power dynamics within Chinese society. The framework consisted of gender roles (this component examined how sports dance portrays masculinity and femininity through movement vocabulary, costume design, and partnering styles within competitive dances. Do these portrayals reinforce traditional gender norms, or do they challenge them in any way?), socioeconomic status (this component explored the potential link between sports dance participation and social class in China. Does involvement in competitive sports dance require significant financial resources, potentially limiting participation to those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds?), competition and individualism (this component investigated how the very structure of competitive sports dance, with its emphasis on individual achievement and rankings, might connect to broader cultural values in China. Does it mirror a societal focus on meritocracy and upward mobility, or are there aspects that challenge these notions?). The framework served as a theoretical lens through which

we analysed the collected data. It directed our exploration towards how sports dance in China reflects and potentially reinforces existing social structures. Specifically, the framework guided us to examine the portrayal of gender roles through movement, costume choices, and partnering styles within competitive sports dance. Additionally, we investigated how competition structures and the emphasis on individual achievement might connect to broader cultural values regarding social class and upward mobility in China.

2.3 Data Collection

We conducted an ethnographical observation for a period of 3 months, by immersing ourselves in the world of sports dance in China. The ethnography involved observing practices, competitions, and interacting with dancers from the DanceSport Association of Hong Kong. Through firsthand observations, we aimed to understand the cultural context surrounding sports dance and the implicit values reflected in the dance form itself. The duration of the ethnographic observation period was 3 months determined by reaching data saturation, the point where no new significant information emerged from further observations. We conducted in-depth interviews with a total of 10 participants. These participants included dancers, choreographers, judges, and even audience members. The interviews delved into their interpretations of the social messages conveyed through sports dance. Interviews allowed us to understand perspectives and experiences of participants fostering a nuanced understanding of the relationship between sports dance and social values. Each interview typically lasted between 20 to 25 minutes depending on the flow of the conversation and the clarity of the provided information. Over a period of two months, we conducted a comprehensive document analysis. Document analysis involved analysing various documents related to sports dance in China, including competition rules, choreography notes, costume choices, and critical reviews of sports dance performances. The analysis of these documents was aimed at revealing how social values are codified and presented within the dance itself.

2.4 Data Analysis

After data collection, we employed thematic analysis techniques to identify recurring themes and patterns within the interview transcripts, ethnographic observations, and document analysis. The thematic analysis allowed us to explore how the data connected to the cultural thought framework and our research objective of understanding how sports dance reflects and shapes contemporary social values in China.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Baseline Information on Participants

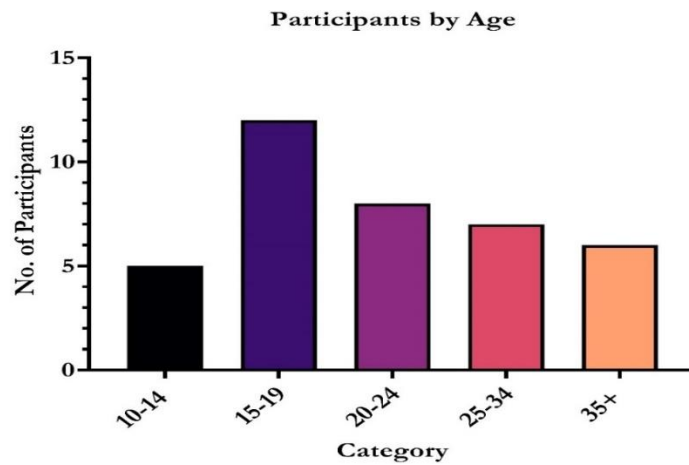


Figure 1: The Distribution of Participants based on Age Categories (10 Years to More Than 35 Years).

The study recruited a total of 38 participants, with a nearly even gender split (18 males, 47% and 20 females, 53%). The age range distribution showed the largest group between 15-19 years old (12 participants, 32%), followed by 20–24-year-olds (8 participants, 21%) (see Figure 1 and 2).

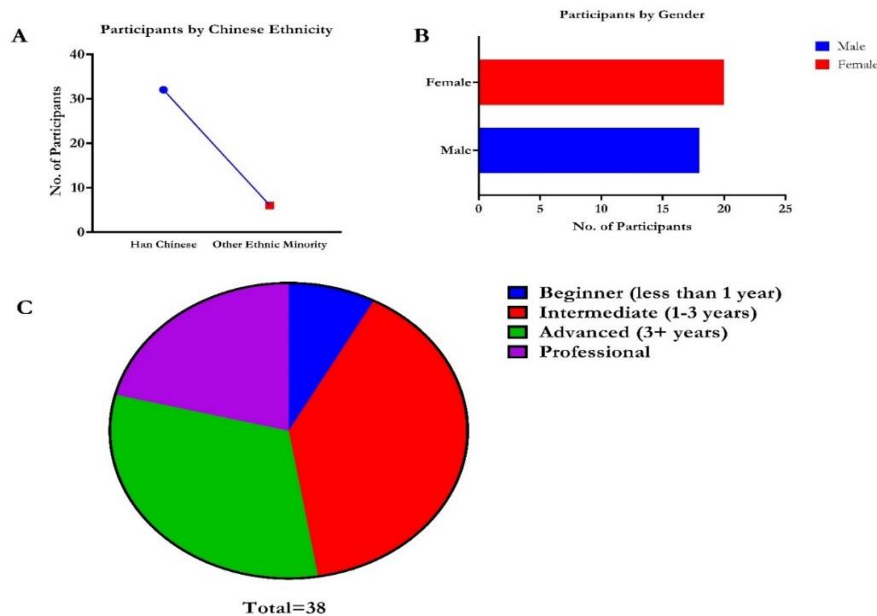


Figure 2: Visualisation of Participant Demographics Based on Line Charts (A) of Chinese Ethnicity, Bar Charts (B) of Gender and a Pie Chart (C) of the Level of Dancing Sport Experience.

In terms of experience, the majority fell under the intermediate category (15 participants, 39%), with a significant portion having 3+ years of experience (12 participants, 32%). The vast majority of participants

identified as Han Chinese (32 participants, 84%) (see Figure 2).

Table 1: Ethnographic Observations - Gender Roles in Sports Dance

Observation	Theme	Description	Connection to Social Hierarchy
Observed Primarily Female Dancers in Training Sessions for Latin Styles (Cha Cha Cha, Rumba, Samba).	Gendered Styles	Focus on female dancers in "feminine" Latin styles suggests an association between these styles and traditional gender roles.	Reinforces traditional gender norms where women are expected to embody grace and sensuality.
Observed Male Dancers Primarily Focused on Technical Aspects of Lifts and Throws in Ballroom Styles (Waltz, Foxtrot, Tango).	Technical Focus for Males	Emphasis on male strength and technical proficiency in ballroom styles reinforces notions of masculinity as dominance and control.	Reinforces traditional gender norms where men are expected to be strong and lead.
Witnessed Elaborate Costumes for Female Dancers in Latin Styles, Emphasizing Body Contours and Revealing Outfits.	Costuming and Femininity	Focus on revealing costumes for female dancers reinforces the connection between femininity and physical appearance in sports dance.	Reinforces traditional gender norms where women's value is associated with physical attractiveness.

In Table 1 and Figure 3, ethnographic observations revealed gendered patterns in sports dance. Female dancers dominated "feminine" Latin styles with revealing costumes, while males focused on technical aspects in ballroom styles. This reinforces traditional gender norms of female sensuality and male dominance

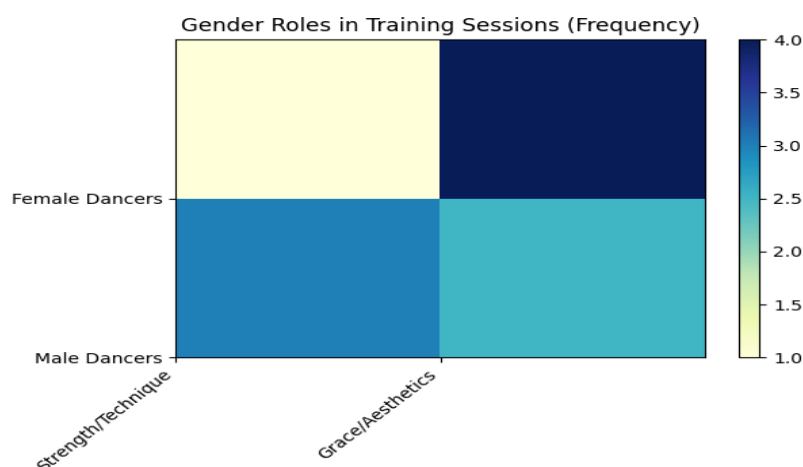


Figure 3: A Heatmap Plot of the Emerging Focus based on Gender Roles During Dance Sport Training Sessions.

In Table 2, observations at competitions highlighted a potential link between social class and success. Dancers from well-funded studios with expensive attire received preferential treatment (prime slots, judge interaction) and audience support. This suggests that financial resources and cultural capital of families play a significant role in the competitive sports dance scene

Table 2: Social Hierarchy in Competition Setting

Observation	Theme	Description
Observed Logistical Arrangements at Competitions.	Financial resources and social class	- Dancers from more prominent studios with expensive costumes and professional coaches occupied prime performance slots. - Dancers from less established studios with more modest attire often competed later in the day. - Judges and organizers interacted more frequently with dancers from well-known studios.
Observed Audience Demographics and Reactions	Social class and cultural capital	- The audience primarily consisted of parents and families of participating dancers. - Audience members from higher socioeconomic backgrounds often displayed greater knowledge of technical aspects of dance. - Audience applause and cheers seemed more enthusiastic for dancers from well-known studios.

In Table 3, Interviews with dancers revealed themes around gender roles, competition, and aspirations. Dancers discussed feeling pressure to embody traditional femininity or masculinity in their styles (e.g., "be graceful"). The competitive environment had both positive aspects (improved technique) and challenges (overemphasis on winning) (see Figure 4). Ultimately, many dancers aspired for professional success, acknowledging the demanding nature of the competitive dance world

Table 3(A): Emerging Themes from Interviews with Dancers

Theme	Description	Quotes
Internalization of Gender Roles	Dancers discussed how training reinforces traditional notions of masculinity and femininity in dance styles.	"As a female dancer, I feel pressure to be graceful and elegant, even if it means sacrificing power in my movements." (Female Dancer, 18 years old)
Competition and Individualism	Dancers expressed both the positive and negative aspects of the competitive environment.	"Competing pushes, me to improve my technique, but sometimes it feels like there's too much emphasis on winning." (Male Dancer, 22 years old)

Table 3(B): Emerging Themes from Interviews with Dancers

Theme	Description	Quotes
Aspirations and Upward Mobility	Dancers discussed their hopes of achieving success in the competitive dance world.	"I dream of becoming a professional dancer, but I know it takes a lot of talent and financial resources." (Female Dancer, 15 years old)

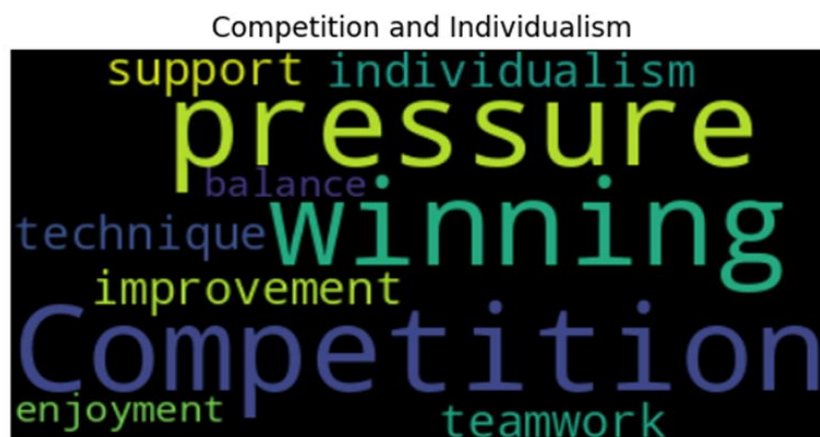


Figure 4: A Word Cloud of Frequently Occurring Words or Emerging Words from the Theme of Competition and Individualism

In Table 4, coaches acknowledged the need to adapt their teaching styles for male and female dancers within different styles (e.g., emphasizing confidence for all). They expressed concern about the intense competition potentially leading to injuries and a diminished focus on the intrinsic joy of dance. Despite these challenges, coaches valued sports dance's ability to instil discipline, teamwork, and cultural expression in young participants

Table 4: Emerging Themes from Interviews with Coaches

Theme	Description	Quotes
Coaching Strategies and Gender	Coaches discussed their approaches to teaching male and female dancers.	"I try to instil confidence and technical mastery in both my male and female students, but I do emphasize different aspects depending on the dance style." (Coach, 35 years old)
Pressures of the Competitive Scene	Coaches expressed concerns about the intense competition and potential for injuries.	"It's important to focus on the joy of dance, but sometimes the pressure to win can be overwhelming for young dancers." (Coach, 42 years old)
The Role of Sports Dance in Society	Coaches shared their perspectives on the cultural significance of sports dance.	"Sports dance teaches discipline, teamwork, and the importance of cultural expression." (Coach, 28 years old)

In Table 5, critical reviews of dance performances focused on individual dancers' technical prowess and artistry ("Dancer X displayed exceptional

power..."). However, some reviews went beyond technical aspects, delving into the social commentary embedded within the choreography. For example, a review might highlight how a specific dance "critiques traditional gender roles"

Table 5: Emerging Themes from Critical Reviews of Dance Performances

Theme	Description	Quote
Focus on Individual Achievement	Reviews often highlight the technical skills and artistry of individual dancers.	"Dancer X displayed exceptional power and agility in her solo performance." (Excerpt from Critical Review)
Underlying Social Values	Some reviews delve into the cultural messages and social commentary potentially conveyed through specific dance routines.	"The choreography of this piece critiques traditional gender roles and challenges societal expectations." (Excerpt from Critical Review)

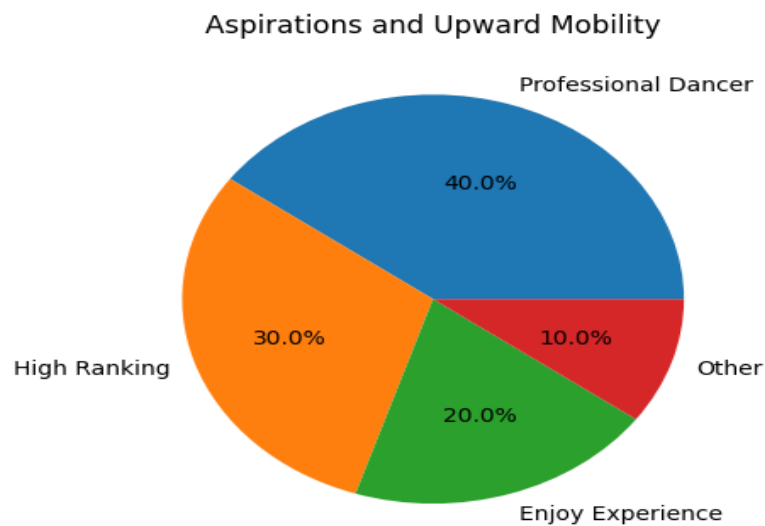


Figure 5: Participant Aspirations and Upward Mobility in the DanceSport Career.

In Figure 5, aspirations among dancers in the study revealed a range of goals. The largest group (40%) aspired to become professional dancers, followed by those aiming for high rankings within competitions (30%). A significant portion (20%) valued the enjoyment of the competitive experience itself, while 10% had other aspirations not specified in the study.

4. DISCUSSION

We found that the competitive environment within sports dance presented a complex picture. While dancers acknowledged the positive

aspects of competition, such as improved technique, they also expressed concerns about the pressure to win and potential injuries. Observations at competitions further suggested a link between social class and success. Dancers from well-funded studios with expensive attire received preferential treatment, highlighting the potential influence of financial resources in the competitive scene. Sociologists highlight the profound link between dance culture and the broader cultural and philosophical landscape of a society (Alexander, 2020). Every element of a dance, from body posture and rhythm to costumes and specific steps, reflects the realities and values of the community where it originated. The very purpose of a dance – be it magical, ritualistic, religious, or purely for entertainment – offers insights into the community's belief systems and the mindsets of its members (O'Cadiz, 2021). In many traditional societies, dance plays a crucial role in maintaining social order, particularly regarding gender roles. Furthermore, the unwritten rules governing dance etiquette – inviting partners, appropriate behaviour during the dance – hold equal importance to mastering the steps themselves, contributing to the mastery of a particular dance style (Crow & Tlhpe, 2020). Specific dance styles, for instance, ballet with its emphasis on lightness and grace, can exemplify the values cherished by a particular culture. Ballet, with its emphasis on weightless movement patterns and elevated forms, aspires to create the illusion of dancers defying gravity. This aesthetic choice can be interpreted within the context of the Christian religion, which dominated in France and Russia, where ballet flourished. The focus on elevation might symbolize a yearning for the divine, associated with the heavens in Christian beliefs. In stark contrast, some traditional African folk dances present a distinct movement vocabulary that also reflects a central image of divinity. Here, the emphasis is on "delving deep," as life and wisdom are believed to originate from Mother Earth. This reverence for the earth is embodied in the dance movements – bent knees representing a connection to the ground, punctuated by powerful jumps symbolizing the desire for a deeper connection with this source of life.

Participation in dance classes can contribute to a faster maturation process in young people, fostering a sense of responsibility that may exceed that of their peers (Harlow et al., 2020). Adolescent dancers navigating a period of rapid physical and emotional growth learn to adapt to a fast-paced environment. The value of time becomes paramount, as punctuality ensures they don't miss crucial training minutes that could hinder their progress compared to classmates. This shared pursuit of excellence fosters a sense of camaraderie, where individual achievement relies on

collaboration within the group. Each dancer becomes an integral component, contributing to the collective success of the group. Time management becomes a valuable skill, as young dancers learn to make the most of their training opportunities. Furthermore, dance cultivates independence in young people due to the demands of attending competitions, training sessions, and camps. These experiences instill a strong work ethic, demonstrating the dedication and exertion required to achieve goals. Successes, such as advancing to a higher dance level, winning competitions, or delivering a polished performance, contribute to a positive self-image. Even mastering new steps or receiving praise from instructors fosters self-esteem. Through dance, young people learn valuable life lessons about perseverance, overcoming setbacks, and embracing both success and failure. Dance serves as a powerful tool for social development, fostering essential character traits beyond mere physical movement. The collaborative nature of dance instruction instills valuable skills in communication, cooperation, and respect for authority figures. While dance can cultivate a sense of joy and accomplishment, it also introduces participants to healthy competition within a supportive environment. For example, ballroom dance requires couples to work in sync for success. However, this partnership doesn't negate a competitive spirit. During competitions, dancers from the same club might compete against each other as individuals. Yet, when representing their club at events like opening ceremonies or joint coach-organized tournaments, they transition seamlessly into a cohesive team. This adaptability demonstrates the importance of group unity, where success hinges on collective effort rather than just individual talent (Hoogsteen, 2020). Similarly, soloists in contemporary and modern dance navigate the balance between individual excellence and fostering a sense of community. The desire to excel is natural, but a focus solely on surpassing peers can be detrimental. Competitions and graduations to higher dance levels serve not only as personal achievements but can also contribute to a sense of belonging within a larger dance community. Our findings revealed a strong connection between gender roles and dance styles. Observations in training sessions and interviews with dancers highlighted how training reinforces traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. Female dancers often focused on grace and aesthetics, while males prioritized technical aspects like strength and power in their respective styles. This reinforces the association between femininity and physical appearance, and masculinity with dominance and control. A clear distinction between masculine and feminine roles has historically been a prevalent characteristic in many dance

genres (Wong, 2024), however, contemporary dance forms present a more nuanced picture. Exceptions like contact improvisation and butoh challenge traditional gender norms, showcasing a broader spectrum of expression. Within more traditional styles, however, prescribed roles are often assigned to dancers, differentiating movement vocabulary, body carriage, and even permissible facial expressions and attire for each sex. Furthermore, partnering configurations can offer insights into societal views on gender relations – some cultures encourage close physical interaction between male and female dancers (e.g., Latin dances), while others maintain a physical distance or separate performances based on gender (e.g., Polish polonaise, Turkish zeybeck).

From a cultural perspective the dancer's body becomes a tool utilized within the specific language of a dance genre (Calonje & Pérez, 2018). During a performance, the act of dancing allows individuals to transcend the everyday use of their bodies. Dancers create an alternative reality – the dance itself – distinct from ordinary experience. It's important to acknowledge that each dance performance is situated within a specific context, shaped by interpretation from the creators, collaborators, and audience. Dance serves as a repository of cultural norms, conveying the desired social order through nonverbal communication. By observing dance styles and practices within a society, one can glean valuable insights into its social fabric (e.g., gender roles, hierarchy, individual vs. collective identity). The intricate relationship between dance and the human body further illuminates how cultures construct and express themselves through physical movement. We propose that despite these challenges, coaches and critical reviews underscored the positive contributions of sports dance. Coaches emphasized the importance of instilling discipline, teamwork, and cultural expression within young participants. Critical reviews, while sometimes focusing on individual technical prowess, also acknowledged the potential for dance routines to challenge societal norms and offer social commentary. According to Peng dance transcends the realm of mere physical activity. It pulsates with a deeper essence, serving as an artistic language that embodies emotions, cultural heritage, and individual physicality (Peng, 2024). Throughout history, dance has undergone a remarkable evolution, shaped by diverse cultures and historical periods. This dynamic journey has given rise to a vibrant tapestry of unique dance traditions, each reflecting the essence of its origins (Banks, 2012; Caldwell & Johnson, 2019; Du, 2023). Physical practices like the Māori haka and the Brazilian capoeira blur the lines between dance and sport, offering captivating examples of cultural expression through movement (Murray &

Murray, 2017). These activities, often performed in tandem, showcase the vibrant tapestry of a culture woven into physical activity. The haka, a traditional group dance originating with the Māori people of New Zealand, exemplifies this concept. Characterized by powerful postures, stomping feet, rhythmic chants, and expressive gestures, the haka served as a war dance, a display of strength and intimidation by warriors before battle. Though traditionally performed by men, the haka has evolved, with some variations now including women and children. Today, the haka transcends its martial roots, performed to welcome dignitaries, celebrate achievements, or honour the departed. In the realm of sport, the haka has transcended its origins to become a globally recognized symbol. Many New Zealand sporting teams, most notably the All-Blacks national rugby union team, incorporate the haka into their pre-game routines. These performances resonate deeply, serving as a powerful display of national pride and a captivating fusion of sport and dance that embodies cultural expression at its finest (Murray & Murray, 2017). Variations of the haka exist across Polynesia, each with its own unique characteristics. For instance, a 2015 rugby match between Tonga and New Zealand showcased the distinct styles of these two nations' haka traditions. Previous study by Murray and Murray found that Capoeira, a captivating blend of martial arts, dance, and acrobatics, holds a cherished place in Brazilian culture (Murray & Murray, 2017). Designated as "intangible cultural heritage" by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), capoeira is described as "an Afro-Brazilian cultural practice" that embodies elements of tradition, sport, and even art. Its origins trace back to the period of the Brazilian slave trade, where it emerged as a unique fusion of various African cultural expressions encompassing dance, food, and rituals, passed down through generations through oral traditions. Once a practice deemed illegal, capoeira has transformed into a celebrated national sport and a symbol of "physical and spiritual empowerment".

Participation in dance cultivates a range of positive personality traits. Patience, persistence, and courage are developed as dancers overcome physical challenges and fatigue. This dedication translates into valuable social skills like cooperation, self-acceptance, and the ability to accept others. Working in a group fosters a sense of community and teaches individuals to navigate various interpersonal roles. Communication skills flourish as dancers learn to follow instructions and collaborate effectively. Dance also builds confidence by helping individuals overcome shyness and trust in their own abilities. Partner dance offers additional benefits. It hones skills like active listening and clear communication, essential for exchanging

information and reaching compromises. Partners learn to share tasks, solve problems constructively, and prioritize each other's comfort (Wong, 2024). While conflicts may arise due to differing interpretations or discomfort with specific movements, even these disagreements provide valuable lessons in negotiation and compromise. Furthermore, conflicts can also arise regarding logistical aspects like choosing coaches, training schedules, trips to camps or competitions, and financing individual classes. Dancers understand that cooperation is the key to achieving their goals, whether performing solo or in a group. Regardless of a group's skill level, the atmosphere is typically positive and engaging. Dancers can sense when they're working well together and identify what hinders progress. This fosters a culture of honest critique, as members know open communication benefits the entire group. With a shared goal in mind, dancers actively listen to one another, analysing each comment. Disagreements are inevitable, but the group must find compromises and acknowledge each other's needs to move forward. As Nieminen suggests, "the attitudes of other group members as well as group norms play a significant role in modifying attitudes," which applies to dance groups as well (Nieminen, 1998). Modern dance with its moderate rhythms and soothing melodies offers opportunities for cultivating grace, posture, and physical well-being, making it a popular choice for individuals of all ages especially those seeking gentle exercise. In contrast, Latin dance pulsates with energy and passion allowing participants to unleash their inner fire and de-stress, making it particularly appealing to younger generations and office workers. Both dance styles, however, share the ability to engage various muscle groups and contribute to overall physical fitness. Ultimately, dance sport not only adapts to the evolving social landscape but also generates significant social value and promotes physical and mental well-being while enriching social life, and enhancing interpersonal skills.

5. CONCLUSION

Our findings revealed a complex interplay between dance styles, gender roles, competition, and social class. Training and performance practices reinforced traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, while the competitive environment presented both benefits (improved technique) and challenges (pressure to win, potential injuries). Observations further suggested a potential link between social class and success within the competitive sphere. The study acknowledges some limitations; the focus

on a single dance association in Hong Kong may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader Chinese sports dance scene. Additionally, the self-reported nature of interview data may introduce potential biases. Future research could benefit from a larger, geographically diverse sample, incorporating quantitative methods alongside qualitative approaches to explore the relationship between social class and competitive success. Investigating the perspectives of judges and dance studio owners could provide further insight into the power dynamics within the competitive scene. Overall, the study suggests that sports dance in China serves as a microcosm of broader social dynamics, reflecting and potentially reinforcing existing social structures while also offering opportunities for artistic expression and cultural critique.

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