

BA (Hons) Commercial Dance

Assessment Cover Page

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Assessment: Viva Voce

How does being a lesbian affect an individual's experience in the dance industry?

Dissertation by Isobel Martin

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Key Literature

- Mozingo (2005)
- Rich (1980)
- Bailey, J.M, Oberschneider, M. (1997)
- Fusco (1992)
- Forsyth and Kolenda (2016)
- Psychology Today (2021)
- Interviews – Katy Pyle (The Guardian, 2021), Alyah Baker (New York Times, 2023)

Key Findings

- Major lack of specific literature available, and when available they have extreme limitations
- The lesbian identity exists in the intersection of many challenges – the minority within the minority

Methodology

- Mixed methods – quantitative and qualitative
- Goal was to achieve a well-rounded understanding of the topic
- Survey split into six sections
- Ethical considerations – sensitive topics covered
- Limitations – random sampling, not genre specific, subjective responses, lacking intersectionality.

Results

- Majority cis-women respondents
- 25% non-binary respondents
- 50% feminine presenting
- 20% in-between feminine and androgynous
- 20% androgynous
- Solid mix between students, teachers, and practicing professionals

Results

- 92.9% felt pressured to conform to cisheteronormative standards of presentation
- 73.8% have modified the way they present in order to conform
- 81% feel their identity affects their ability to connect with others
- 34% have experienced lesbophobia within the industry
- 52% said their identity negatively impacted their mental health
- 95.2% said body image has been an issue for them
- 51.2% have had an eating disorder, an extra 12.2% said they had but not formally diagnosed

Results

- 87% were either very unsatisfied or unsatisfied with lesbian representation
- Many respondents were unable to provide examples
- When examples were given, they were all the same
- A few people left responses saying their thanks for the existence of the survey

Conclusion

- Being a lesbian has a negative effect on one's experience in the dance industry
- Key areas:
 - Isolation
 - Stigma consciousness
 - Restrictions of gender expression
- Points of weakness:
 - Potentially not reflective of dance community as a whole – dance community too broad?
 - Needs a more intersectional approach – disability, race, etc.

Areas for Future Study

- How professional dance environments could adopt the inclusivity exhibited in recreational environments
- How binge-eating and fatphobia within the dance community come together to make ED symptoms worse
- Stigma consciousness as a major negative factor impacting lesbians in the dance industry
- How capitalism benefits by silencing marginalised voices
- Distribution of gender-expression across the lesbian community
- How being less feminine presenting can bar access to certain styles

Thank you for your time!