

# Narratives on the Lives of Professional Dancers in a Nonprofit Dance Company

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Abstract

## I. Introduction

There have been many studies on the support system and development plan to inform the difficulties of professional dancers. However, there were not many narrative studies on professional dancers who belonged to nonprofit organizations. There were studies on the diversity of professional dancers in the life process and job transitions after retirement. (Hong Hye Jeon 2009; Park, Youngjung 2008; Im, Young Sook 2007; Jegal, Sook Young 2014; Kim, Su-Jin 2014; Jung, You-Jin 2010;) Other studies analyzed the process and problems of the life of dance majors and re-interpreted their culture. (Bae, Cheyeon 2015; Kim, Ji-Hee 2013; Park, Ji Suk 2008; Lee, Ro Sa 2014; Park, Ji Suk 2009; Park, Hee-youn 2013) Other than Lee (2016), studies on narrative inquiry on professional dancers who belong to nonprofit organizations are hard to find. In spite of the fact that research and active interest and efforts on arts organizations and professional dancers have been abundant, the reason why this paper re-focus on the nonprofit organizations and professional dancers is that there is not enough social awareness of the situation professional dancers are in. Through the more candid story of professional dancers, we want to understand the value inherent in their experience in the social context. The purpose of this study is to understand the life of professional dancers belonging to nonprofit organizations through the narrative inquiry of professional dancers who are active in nonprofit organizations.

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In the field of dance, the methodology of phenomenology, dynamics, and narrative inquiry have been suggested as a way of finding answers to new questions. Among these, narrative research has been regarded as the most appropriate expository qualitative research for understanding individual experience complementing the empirical studies which may lack the depth of understanding human behavior. Various methods to find the sources for a comprehensive narrative research have been suggested such as an observational journal, a record of informal conversations, a personal journal, open interviews, a variety of formal and informal documents, pictures, autobiographical writings, and letters among other things. In this study, we try to illuminate the life of professional contemporary dancer in Korea today using narrative inquiry method in order to expand our understanding of a professional dancer as an artist and a human being.

In the trend of diversification and fragmentation, the demand of the age and 'professionalism' is one of the outstanding conditions. However, it is difficult to demonstrate the highest level of expertise over a long period of time in a particular professional field. In the field of culture and arts, there are professional dancers who have highly specialized skills and own creative talent as an artist. However, not many of them can get paid and can make living by dancing alone. Hence, they engage in dance-related activities in addition to their professional dance performances. In other words, professional dancers also engage in 'business' to make living. They usually belong to a dance company which is usually a nonprofit organization. Art groups, dancers and dance companies are dispersed through out mostly in big cities.

In this study, the professional dancers of nonprofit organizations directly affiliated with researchers were selected as research participants. This nonprofit dance company is an organization that has been active for about 16 years with supports from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Art Council Korea, the Cultural Foundation, and others. This dance company has eighteen professional dancers. This study was conducted using the method of 1: 1 in - depth interview and supplementary narrative inquiries with the above mentioned participants. The narrative inquiry is a qualitative research method, and it is based on the contents of the research participants before and after their participation in the nonprofit organization through the in-depth interviews of the research participants. Secondary data such as newspaper articles, performance pictures, and videos of the participants were also gathered and analyzed but due to the limitation of space, they are not shown in this paper. Thus mutual comparative analysis based on various information with rich qualitative data about them could be done. In the following section, I discuss research methodology. In Section III, I present the result of narratives with some classifications. In the last section, I present conclusions and some implications of this study.

## II. Research Methodology

### 1. Selection of Research Participants

This study was conducted according to the procedure of narrative inquiry. Because the researcher is also a professional dancer who belongs to a nonprofit dance company, it would be helpful to deal with research and analysis in dealing with the questions in the context of the field experience of this researcher.<sup>1)</sup> In addition, it can be understood from the personal experience of the researcher and the researcher will be able to collect various data by widening the activity range as a participant observer. I contacted eight professional dancers who have at least two years' experience in nonprofit organizations, and explained the purpose and necessity of this research. Among them, only 5 dancers responded and were finally selected as shown in <Table 1>.

<Table 1> Information on Participants

Name(acronym)	Age	Gender	Major	Education	Career
KSJ	33	Woman	modern dance	Ph.D. program	Experience 10-years
JJA	31	Woman	modern dance	master's program	Experience 8 years
KYH	27	man	modern dance	master's program	Experience 4 years
LKS	27	man	modern dance	master's program	Experience 4 years
YSH	26	man	modern dance	master's program	Experience 3 years

The research participants selected are five professional dancers who have at least two years of experience in the group. All the participants were graduates of the Department of Dance at the same local National University and majored in contemporary dance. The selected research participants have performed on stage more than 10 times per year and engaged in some creative artistic activities. I divided the participants into two groups of three male dancers and two female dancers from mid-20s to mid-30s who have been in the group for more than two years. The reason for selecting them as research participants is that the relationship between the researcher and the research participants is an important part of the narrative inquiry. The main reason for the selecting modern dancers is that the modern dance group is the most familiar group for the researcher to analyze.

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1) The researcher has been active for more than ten years as a contemporary dancer with a nonprofit dance company and won the award of the leading next generation artist (Artistar) in the area of dance given by Daejeon Culture Foundation in 2016. She has performed many times and was invited to Hanover, Germany to perform her award winning work in a dance festival in 2009. She has completed Ph.D. course work (ADB) at a leading national university.

## 2. Data Collection and Analysis

### 1) Collection of Data

The data collection period in this study was from January 2017 to April 2017. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with the selected dancers. The collected data includes transcripts and field notes written after the recording. Interviews were conducted twice with each individual. The duration of an interview was usually two to four hours. Before the interview, the researcher recorded the transcript with sufficient consent from the research participant and interviews took place where they could talk comfortably rather than formally. The researcher asked questions that she would like to hear more concretely and recorded the overall demeanors such as gesticulations and specific bodily movements during the interview. The feedback of this researcher at that time was also recorded in the field notes. The notes were double-checked with the participants for accuracy. The collection of data and analysis is shown in <Table 2> below.

<Table 2> Data Collection

Process	Method of collection
Data collection	Academic literature home and abroad, participant observation, in-depth interviews, voice recorded records, data review
Expert consultation	Expert advice
Data analysis	Field text, story writing, story re-writing, the main points and topics

### 2) Analysis

The collected data of narrative inquiry were analyzed using the ‘taxonomic analysis’ method as suggested by J. Spradley and K. Baker (1980). Taxonomic analysis is used to analyze the role of an individual as they necessarily change into other roles. For example, one can be a daughter and a mother and an artist at the same time. The structure of narrative of the same individual can be different in different roles. All the comments were listed and then they were grouped together again in accordance with the role or grouped into a specific role. By analyzing the meanings contained therein, the group was restructured to describe their story and to create a story of an independent narrative. Eventually this process of taxonomic analysis of the narratives leads to a conclusion. To this end, I have repeatedly listened to, wrote and read narratives about the experiences of professional dancers. I analyzed and figured out the main points and topics of the stories in them. I organized them into research texts. This was repeated for each narrative and analyzed. I sorted out the stories that corresponded to the research problem and continued to group the stories of the same context that appear in one pattern. Then I look for the main words that best express the contents of the storyline. The texts were written describing their lives and experiences.

### III. Results of Research

This study, through narrative methods, tries to illuminate the personal experiences and experience as professional dancers belonging to a nonprofit dance company. Participants narrate their opinion and feelings thereby revealing the views on being a professional dancer in relation to the environment of a nonprofit organization. The research problems presented below represent an interactive relationship, not a sequential or independent relationship.

The fundamental question I ask is, “What is the life of a professional dancer working in an unstable nonprofit dance company?” The relationship between nonprofit organizations and professional dancers was analyzed through the narratives of individual experiences. In addition, I want to find out the implications in the social context of Korean society today. This analysis of professional dancers in a nonprofit organization may make sense to us and provide new understanding. The questions asked for the narratives are as follows:

Research Questions 1. How were the preparatory years for becoming a professional dancer?

Research Questions 2. What kind of ideas of professionalism do the professional dancers have?

Research Questions 3. What kind of feeling do they have for being a member of a nonprofit dance company?

#### 1. On Preparatory Years of a Professional Dancer

The events that lead a child to become a dancer is different for a different person. The participants talked about their early experiences and motivations. They reminisce about how they had started dancing until they became more and more addicted to dancing. Many of the participants began to dance since childhood by a decision by the parents who encouraged them. A few of them wanted to dance even though they did not know what was so strongly attracting them to dancing. They chose to go to schools and academies to continue dancing. After that, they talked about memories of the first events that lead to the experience of dancing. They talked about the memories of dancing and the interests and aptitudes that they found themselves to have. Their various experience of exercise courses and training, showed early talent that is characteristic of gift in dancing. Some of them could achieve the technical expertise of professional dancers without much efforts. Most of them have learned how to move their bodies through dance. Many had to do a lot of practice and exerted efforts at the beginning of their career to become comfortable with basic ways of expressing oneself with body movements and basic dancing skills. One dancer said that he believed that his present shape was the result of his past training. <Table 3> shows some of the narratives of the participants on their preparatory years.

LKS told me about his memory that started the dance. He tells me that dance is a technique and

some movements are technically necessary. Dance is not a sport. So it has been shown to train the technique and to have a long practice time and the need for expression. Their practice time and effort to enhance their professionalism as a professional dancer is an important part of their lives. It is an indispensable part of their lives. It is hard work to endure suffering through many exercises. I thought KYH's mowing stones was an appropriate analogy. It is not simply fun to be a professional dancer talking about exercises, basics, and so on. It requires technical expertise and expressive ability to become a professional. It requires a lot of practice time and effort.

<Table 3> Narratives of Professional Dancers in Nonprofit Organizations (1)

Narrative: the preparatory years of professional dancers	Name (pseudonym)
I had lots of basic training and a lot of jogging in the field in between classes. I did stretching and holding pointed toes as an every day routine. After a while you get the feel of it and just know how to do it well.	Narrative of KYH
My routine was while listening to the same music, I do bar practice.	Narrative of YSH
Teachers demanded a lot of me. So, due to coercion, I did all the hard work. After so many years are spent like that, I could do nothing else but dancing.	Narrative of JJA
I did the fundamentals much too much. I can show my abs to prove it. I did a lot of stretching too. All these were very hard. So, sometimes I did something very different from what I was asked to do.	Narrative of KSJ
I think one of the reasons for me to dance for long hours is that dancing was not comfortable without a technical expertise. I had to practise every thing and that was rather difficult.	Narrative of LKS
Basic training was really hard almost like shattering my bones or grinding a stone. Since it was important I accepted pain to mow around this rock (my body). Dance is a matter of how much longer and how much more people can endure the painful changes in the body. How many people can remain dancing with this kind of pain is important for the dancing world.	Additional Narrative of KYH

## 2. On Professionalism

Professional dancers, who are research participants, have been working in a nonprofit dance company and have taken similar past career paths. Life experience as a professional dancer in a nonprofit organization was mostly consistent. On the other hand, there were some obvious differences. The professionalism of professional dancers refers to the process of professional dancers' growth since the introduction to dance in the childhood till the experience of university dance courses and beyond the academics to the path of a career dancer. Professional dancers are told that a lot of performances and full commitment to dance give them indescribable joy. In order to acquire and equip professional dancers with such professionalism, a lot of practice time and efforts are required to perform basic exercises, stretching, investing time in themselves, as well as being able to master the difficult movements. One must be reborn as a professional dancer. It became clear that one must be both an artist and an engineer with both expressive heart and impeccable skill. Professionalism in

dance is a story about the experience of the movement and the choreography and creative activities to express art, humanism, and philosophy as a professional dancer.

<Table 4> Narratives of Professional Dancers in Nonprofit Organizations (2)

Narrative : professional dancers in the field	Name (pseudonym)
I recall this one moment particularly vividly. I am on a stage and the stage lights fall on to me for five minutes. And it was too warm. I thought, “Oh, I have to continue dancing.” I think that like this. When I get the lights on the stage, I think I like this so much that I cannot live without this feeling of getting lights. Oh, I like this is so much, how can I live without this? I have never thought of any job other than professional dancing. I do not want to have other job. I’ll be very happy if I can make money dancing and live as a dancer. I continue to dance,	Narrative of KYH
I cannot do without dancing. It is like stop breathing if I cannot dance. I feel like coming into a new world on the stage when I dance. I feel like I need to listen to my feeling on stage.	Narrative of YSH
Something I do not think I can express my feelings with any words. I mean I felt a thrill dancing. I never felt anything. I existed just at that moment. I was just dancing and those people get to see me in the darkness. I have a real communication with audience.	Narrative of JJA
I like to dance on stage more than in the practice room now. On stage, I see nothing in front of me. I see no eyes. So I can concentrate on my dance. I think I just feel more force on stage. I can express emotions and different characters freely. I show the kind of expression that I could not show in daily life. Things seem like new to me.	Narrative of KSJ
When I danced my first choreographed work on stage, it was like speaking my mind aloud. I was so moved, I cried. I was happy to be able to express my emotions in the best way to express by dancing. Then, I decided that I was to be a professional dancer for the rest of my life.	Narrative of LKS

Professional dancers knew that work is more important than your body. The dancers are constantly preparing their body for the highest level of performance. They must possess a strong mental power and ready to take the burden of self-management. Narratives of dancers about the moment of realization of themselves as the professional are shown in <Table 4>. Arduous training and injury, frustration, and lack of proper financial compensation are all too common and familiar to professional contemporary dancers. When I started to dance for the first time, I also found that it was hard for me to cope with this amount of practice and training. However, I was aware of the fact I need to acquire technical skills through practice. In addition, there is growing interest in experts who are recognized for their top-notch achievements in the area of increasingly fragmented specializations. It is interesting to note that there are similar knowledge, experience and problem-solving abilities in the top professionals in the same field of art. It is often the case that there is a clear distinction, in terms of their potential for further growth, between achievements of the rising stars and the experts who have already acquired a certain level of expertise over a long period of time. There is a small number of experts who demonstrate the highest level of expertise, while the average professionals show a phenomenon in which growth stops or rather slows down after certain level of achievement is

reached.<sup>2)</sup>

In some cases, there was a tendency for a dancer to equate his life and dance. This kind of mentality has a profound impact on their dance ideas. Some had the idea of innovation and venture into fusion and integration with other genres in dance works. By trying to expand the horizon of a professional dancer, the importance of studying various interrelated fields of arts became important. I could sense that such activities together with collective experience of performances mingled with the lifestyle of a nonprofit dance company are leading toward a creation of new dance art.

It is every dancer's dream to have one's own choreographed work to dance because that is more fulfilling creative experience. As young professional dancers mature themselves to be competent choreographers, their words on the reason why they grew to be good choreographers were rather moving. After joining the nonprofit organization, it became possible to have a stability in working and living to express themselves. The organization has permanent member dancers who are not temporarily assembled and then dispersed after one stage. Dancers who work freelance are hard to adjust schedules to devote to creative work of their own. Creative activities and educational projects of nonprofit organizations and stage experience are what they need in their maturation and growth. They get inspirations from other genres of art (music, art, movies, etc.) as well.

<Table 5> Narratives of Professional Dancers in Nonprofit Organizations (3)

Narrative : The situation of professional dancers	Name (pseudonym)
For me, choreographing provides me with the kind of mind or mentality which I need to have when I dance.	Narrative of KYH
Commitment to concentration must be maintained for me to go forward in dancing.	Narrative of YSH
I want to try lots of different things. Dance feels like too formal in bodily expression. I want to leave more permanent art work that last generation after generation. I hope to dance for a long time.	Narrative of JJA
As I am growing older, I want to meet some art director who can make me realize my potential. I want to create with my full ability before I have to stop dancing.	Narrative of KSJ
I have to be a real good choreographer. I really want to make good artistic work. I want to direct a good dance work. I like to see dancers move as I direct. They will express what I tell them to.	Narrative of LKS

### 3. On Being a Member of a Dance Organization

Participants of the study were educated by receiving systematic and professional dance education at the same institution, such as the Department of Dance of a University. Every college graduate has

2) Hong, Ae-Ryung, Seok, Ji-Hye, Im, Joung-Shin, Oh, Hun-Seok(2011), A Study of the Main Characteristics and Developmental Process of the Expertise of Dancer, *The Korean Research Journal of Dance Documentation* 23, p.177.

achieved his or her goal. After graduating from college, as a professional dancer, you may not be satisfied with various factors and choose a different job or switch jobs to dance related subjects. What was found through the story of the group participation of the professional dancers belonging to the nonprofit group showed the relation with the self-satisfaction that can work with professional capacity, the possibility of social growth, and the structural relation of group. Professional dancers from nonprofit organizations who are breathing together on stage for a long time, who always meet in the same room at the same time in the same room, greet each other and share everyday conversations, As shown in <Table 6>, in their stories, there appeared to be a ‘sense of belonging’ related to the nonprofit dance company where they can go back.

<Table 6> Narratives of Professional Dancers in Nonprofit Organizations (4)

Narrative: profession of professional dancers	Name (pseudonym)
When I was in the fourth grade, I did not understand the situation at all. That might be what some dancers went through just naturally. What is important is that I’m dancing.	Narrative of KYH
I think I had no idea of what to do after graduation. I should earn money if I do not enter a dance company. Somehow, I think I got into the mind of dancing more.	Narrative of YSH
There was nowhere else to go and the people I love were here. Wherever you are, you do not have to think too seriously. I can just dance and dance. I can play music with confidence. I am safe to do whatever I want.	Narrative of JJA
This is where I can go back. Even if the other dancers go other municipalities, we are in the same group. It is so stable here.	Narrative of KSJ
I saw someone perform and I thought it was very important that a person belongs to some society. I belong to somewhere and that is important to me. I just graduated from school, so I had to get a membership.	Narrative of LKS

According to B. Soh and S. Choi (2017)’s research on coevolution of university dance departments and outside dance company, professional-level of arts and community involvement are the most important factors that determine the success and survival of private dance organizations.<sup>3)</sup> However, in the narratives, we can detect that the sense of belonging or where the dancers can go back, seems to be the glue that holds the professional dancers together and perhaps the success factor of this organization. It was recognized that they had a feeling of belonging by interacting in group life. However, there were cases where they were engaged in performance during the preparation of performances and recognized the interaction through mutual sympathy. In addition to singing dances solo or solo, the duet or trio, when you dance, you touch your body and breathe together. For this reason, it was found that the majority of the research participants who had more than two years of

3) Byung Hee Soh and Sung Ok Choi(2017), Co-Evolution of a University Department and a Dance Company: Creation of Value of Art in a Community, *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 47(2), p.145.

experience had formed their own social ties, and that collective power, cohesion, and sense of belonging were also important. On the other hand, for the professional dancers, the group appeared to have a specific word of ‘belonging sense’, ‘safe place’, ‘solution place’, and ‘place to go back’. Before joining the group, they were troubled by their career choices, did not know what to do, and did not know where to go. At that time, it was a nonprofit organization where they came, and for those who like dancing, it is evident that dance is a space where dancing can continue and dance is like an ‘azit’ where people can gather.

After joining the nonprofit organization, they have a fundamental question for each of the dance work. With the experience as a professional dancer, they try to answer questions like if you are in training to polish dance movement and techniques or expressive skills of a professional dancer, what is the proper way of doing them? Dancers talk about experience in the context of the group. They talk about differences of individual experience and attitudes. Their common values have a sense of belonging to a collective organization. I could find the relationship between narratives.

#### **IV. Conclusions and Implications**

In our lives, we experience events while living with other people and interacting with them. Whereas such experience becomes an event in our lives through dialogues, if not conversed they are apt to be embedded in the daily routines and forgotten. In other words, the experience that was not told, becomes meaningless. We create a story in the process of finding a means to overcome such nonsense and chaos. Our educational culture so far emphasizes the acquisition of scientific knowledge with written presentation with empirical backup. On the other hand, narrative method can discuss and question ‘what do you need to know’ or how to live’ a life of certain profession. What is important is the concern for and interest in life. The traditional scientific thinking may not clearly explain a way of life that can not be fully understood because of contradictions, accidents, unusual patterns to deal with, and complexity which are hard to be explained by scientific concepts alone. Dilemma of the human world and the meaning of life can best be understood collectively as a series of verbal, symbolic and spiritual activities. The human world can not always be described in a logical structure like a mathematical formula. This understanding of the meaning in the complexity and specificity and correlation of symptoms are important for gaining total understanding of the human world. Narratives provide analytical lenses to understand the pluralism and complexity of the human world by addressing the meaning inherent in life itself.<sup>4)</sup>

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4) Park, Minjeong(2006), A theoretical investigation on the concept of narrative: Storytelling, meaning-making, and communication, *Asian Journal of Education*, 7(4), p.42.

Even if one is not a dancer, it is interesting and useful to understand the life of a professional dancer in an organization. In order to explore the meaning of life of a professional dancer, a form of individualized study, namely, a narrative inquiry seems appropriate. “Expertise of a professional dancer” is the process of growing into a professional and getting a job. It may show personal differences. Stories about their apprentice, tutoring, and specialized institutes, all indicate the principal role of the Academy of Dance. The growth process of a dancer through competitions and performances (individual and group) and the joining of an organization may differ individually. For example, the age of entry was found to be very different for each artist in this study.

According to Park(2009), defining the range of professional artists as ‘performing arts personnel and creative arts personnel is in accordance with the “Culture and Arts Promotion Act.” There are 12 predetermined range of art for those persons who are performing music, theater, and dance.<sup>5)</sup> The narratives on “preparatory years” reveal that training starts earlier than most of ordinary people. It continues to appropriate field of education at the college or graduate school. All of them received a formal education to become a professional. The narratives on “professionalism” shows that the process of building capacity as an expert depends mostly on individual efforts. The narratives on “being a member of an organization” confirms that dancers solved most of the professional dance problems by joining a professional dance company or an art organization. It worked as a platform for activity which a professional dancer absolutely needed. After joining the nonprofit organizations, they strive to establish and refine their professional name and artistic identity.<sup>6)</sup>

Professional dancers who joined the nonprofit dance company in their professional career tell the stories of life lessons as unique in culture and in circumstances of their experience. Through their narratives of different events and different perspectives the listeners experience all these in the same space transcending time. Their collective activity as members of an organization showed their efforts as a colleague and a member of a team. The turning point in their episode of becoming a professional dancers revealed a story of unique experience. Each of the participants was a unique subject with a different story of life and style. This study tried to capture the crucial moments and motivations of each dancer by analyzing their narratives.

The process of beginning the first dancing was not alike. As a dancer with a sense of belonging and practice and training, he or she can have independence and self-management which require mental toughness. The participants’ age was between mid 20s and mid 30s. Even though they are of different ages, they were going through similar process of training, exercising, building inner awareness, and

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5) Park, Youngjung(2009), *Professional artists range setting methods Study* (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism), p.17.

6) “For the dance genre(contemporary dance, Korea dance, ballet, others, criticism, theory), professionally active average duration since the debut was 14 years. They debut through competition(29%), group presentations (27.5%), joining an organization (18%), personal presentation (9%), employment (2.5 percent), and others (14%).” Ibid., p.74.

strong mind to be a professional dancer. Only small numbers of students chose the path of a professional dancer after graduating from college with dance major. They were not up to the demands for the exercise and training over a long period of time of a professional dancer. Also it is not easy to take lightly of the technical expertise and learning courses that are required to be a professional.

Results show that the decisive reason for choosing to join the nonprofit organization was dancer's own satisfaction and a sense of belonging in the social interaction, self-satisfaction, collective strength, professional growth, and unity. Since then, even today they have the mind of the art world of their own. They have a fundamental question to explore for being a dancer. They ponder upon 'Dance' as art to express their emotions and ideas. As they experience more dance on stage, they get infatuated with dancing even if they sometimes get frustrated. They try and hope over time that their dance routine will come to them naturally. In other words, they have the challenge and experiment to explore the spirit of dance.

Some dancers had also experienced a moment of commitment and joy. The group eventually became close knit cronies. They were friends and teachers who gave a lot of time teaching each other and brought a sense of belonging to the organization. This is easy to do when you dance with your teacher. Professional dancers and nonprofit organizations are knit together with a passion and love for dance. Member dancers revealed both joy of being on stage and working together in groups. They had pride and sense of belonging in interrelationship with each other and for the organization. Gratitude and appreciation for the people who work together in a dance work is a characteristic of a nonprofit organization. A steady group life develops due to long hours of practice and training of professional dancers in the organization which shows that the loyalty and love will grow as trusting team members.

This study aims to understand the life of a professional dancer by interpreting and analyzing the meaning and values that appear through the narratives of shared experience of professional dance artists in a nonprofit dance company. The dancers specialize in the art to have a variety of experience. A nonprofit organization that does not seek profit with activities of the dancers may adversely affect the lives of individual members due to the lack of financial rewards. In this respect, social support for most of the professional dancers are no better than the support given to temporary laborers. Dancers need to be guaranteed to have sufficient income to maintain professionalism, autonomy, stability, and substantially. All these are far from satisfactory in today's environment in Korea.

The reality is that most of the dance department graduates choose jobs unrelated to their major. The entry for a successful dance-related occupations in a situation where job creation capacity is not high is not easy. In addition, the fact that the largest structural contradictions facing their dance professionals should parallel the monetary financing required for performing activities and livelihoods. The decision to join a nonprofit organization that does not seek to profit from this point is not easy. But there still is a possibility to continue to pursue a future in the area of his or her own

personal interest and profession with a sense of belonging and self-satisfaction of creative activity by joining a nonprofit art organization.

So it is necessary to understand what the experience is left with any value through the life and experience of any group as a professional dancer. “Someone’s direct experience can soon become someone else’s indirect experience,” which will give a very important implications for current dance majors and pre-professional dancers. Experiencing the life of a professional dancer through their narratives will give the variety of indirect experience and activities at the same time to a graduate students at a university dance department. Also it gives an opportunity to grow as a professional dancer and help to form professional relationships in the society. That is why it is necessary to understand deeply the experience of different individuals and organizations. One looks into the narratives of the professional dancers in order to find an answer as to whether to live a life with no memorable professional experience or a life that can produce memories of professional experience to tell as narrative afterwards.

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## Narratives on the Lives of Professional Dancers in a Nonprofit Dance Company

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This study of narratives explores the lives of professional dancers in a nonprofit dance company. The participants selected have had two or more years of experience as a professional dancer belonging to a nonprofit dance company. Male and female professional dancers are interviewed on the subject of 'professionalism of a professional dancer,' 'additional occupation if any,' 'situation of being in a nonprofit organization,' and 'own field experience.' Data gathering period is from January to April 2017. The method used for collecting narratives is an 1:1 in-depth interview. The results are analyzed and discussed. Through a narrative inquiry method, this study tries to illuminate particular and individual moments of achievement and difficulties of five professional contemporary dancers in the social context of the working environment of a nonprofit dance company thereby enhancing an understanding of what it is to be a contemporary dancer in current Korean society today.

**Keywords:** Narrative inquiry(내러티브 탐구), Professional dancer(전문 무용수), Nonprofit dance company(비영리무용단체), Performance(공연), In-depth interview(심층인터뷰)