

Artistic Comparisons of Art Forms Through *The Nutcracker*: Legitimizing Hip Hop

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ABSTRACT

Hip Hop is an art form that has spanned the past few decades, imbued with rich culture, history, and movement. Yet, the art form is not as appreciated in society and in academia as art forms such as ballet. The aim of this study is to evaluate the qualitative and artistic aspects of Hip Hop and ballet to determine the success of both art forms and thereby argue for the legitimacy of Hip Hop as an art form. The comparison was analyzed through a content analysis of different versions of *The Nutcracker*, a highly esteemed dance production. The first phase of this study examined the development of Hip Hop and ballet, current research touching on the legitimacy of both art forms, and the development of *The Nutcracker* and past practices used to evaluate movement. The second phase involved the development of a rubric based on past performance evaluations to analyze a Hip Hop version and a traditional ballet version of *The Nutcracker*. Both versions were assessed through an online format because of the reachability of such a medium. The rubric was separated into three categories: dynamics, expressiveness, and technique, and findings showed that both dances received an overall score of 2.72 out of 3 points, with both dances falling short on different criteria in the rubric. It was concluded that the content analysis could help to advance the legitimacy of Hip Hop to match that of ballet due to the equivalent artistic successes of both art forms.

Literature Review

Hip Hop has only been around for 50 years, but its culture has been instrumental to many lives (Ma 2015). As a dancer growing up, I have trained in the many art forms that are associated with Hip Hop, and I've followed the trends of dance communities through internet sites, live competitions, and dance classes. Yet, I've seen that the art form isn't perceived as respectfully as other art forms. Many teams practice in parking lots instead of air-conditioned dance studios. Competitions are held outdoors or at high school theaters instead of prestigious performing arts centers. Due to the media, the public perceives dance forms such as popping and locking as a single art form when they are each their own art form with rich history and foundations (Glowacki 2019). As such, it's important to advance a more esteemed image of Hip Hop to accurately match the culture, traditions, and history that are behind the various moves of the art form. The present work aims to contribute to this by comparing the legitimacy of Hip Hop to a more esteemed art form, ballet. Such a comparison is achieved through analyzing different versions of *The Nutcracker*, a dance that is esteemed and prestigious in itself.

History of Hip Hop

Hip Hop as an art form originated through gang violence in the Bronx during the 1970s. On August 11th, 1973, Clive Campbell, famously known as DJ Kool Herc, held a "Back to School Jam," where he manipulated the music to focus on breaks of the song. Dancers at the party resonated with the beat, and the art form of breaking was born (Chang 2005). Hip Hop culture consists of four elements: MCing, breaking, graffiti, and DJing, but breaking, the dance aspect of this culture, is the focus. For the purposes of this study, Hip Hop is defined as an umbrella term to encompass a range of art forms that are associated with Hip Hop, including but not limited to popping, locking, house, vogue, and krump. "Hip Hop" is capitalized to adhere to how current pioneers and experts refer to the art form to further respect its culture (Calvario 2023). "Art forms" is used instead of "dance styles" or "dance forms" to describe these dances in order to more accurately encompass both the dance and cultural aspects shaping the dances themselves. As these art forms entered the mainstream of commercials, music videos, and movies, they were not accurately represented. In fact, in low budget films, Hip Hop was showcased by modern dancers who included only one to two breaking moves (Williams 2015). It's important to touch on this development to note the relatively underprivileged start of Hip Hop.

In recent years, Hip Hop communities have sprouted across the country, where dancers can train with each other. One such community is in Southern California (SoCal), where internationally renowned teams such as the

Kinjaz and GRV are located. Communities have also grown in Northern California, Chicago, Georgia, and New York (Calvario 2023).

History of Ballet in America

In contrast to Hip Hop's underground origins, other art forms have been more popularized in America. One such form is ballet. For the purposes of this study, ballet will be used to represent the more popularized art forms, including contemporary and modern dance, due to its high prestige in various regions, ages, and social classes (Lee 1999). Ballet has been celebrated internationally for centuries. In 1933, the arrival of the touring company, Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, to the United States (US) initiated an interest in ballet and engendered the start of two American companies, the New York City Ballet (NYCB) and the American Ballet Theatre (ABT). In 1954, George Balanchine, the artistic director of NYCB, revived *The Nutcracker*, establishing it as a Christmas tradition nationwide (Lee 1999). As NYCB and ABT continued to prosper, other companies sprouted in the US in areas such as Pennsylvania, Chicago, and San Francisco. Such history is significant as it displays the international recognition that ballet enjoyed from the start in comparison to its Hip Hop counterpart — even in its inception in America, ballet already gained popularity at the higher echelons of education.

Legitimacy of Hip Hop

Although Hip Hop has continued to gain recognition in recent years, legitimizing it as an art form comparable to an art form like ballet is still a work in progress. According to ProPublica, an online organization news source, in 2020, the New York City Ballet's total revenue was approximately 67 million (ProPublica 2022). On the other hand, according to the tax report of Culture Shock International, a Hip Hop nonprofit dance organization renowned for its community service and dance education, the organization only had a total revenue of approximately 81 thousand in 2020 (Candid 2022). Although this may be due to Culture Shock's status as a nonprofit, such a point is even more important to emphasize as there exists no esteemed Hip Hop professional company that matches both the prestige of Culture Shock and the revenue of NYCB. Another discrepancy is the rehearsal space that precedes shows. Culture Shock traditionally held an annual performance known as *A Culture Shock Nutcracker*, a Hip Hop theatrical performance that took a Hip Hop spin on the traditional *Nutcracker*. During its rehearsal process, dancers, which numbered close to a hundred, mostly practiced in a single large room in a dance studio. In order to bring the project to fruition, the organization was forced to hold a kickstarter campaign, where they publicly asked for donations from the community to help pay for lighting, props, costumes, and sound design expenses (WhatFitsYou 2013). On the other hand, American Ballet Theater's school in Orange County is located in Segerstrom Center for the Arts, a performing arts complex that has hosted world-celebrated artists from a variety of art forms. For ABT's annual *Nutcracker* show, students of the school rehearse in the dance rooms of Segerstrom, and parents pay thousands for tuition, helping to cover the expenses of the shows (Segerstrom 2022). As such the discrepancies point to the lack of legitimacy that is perceived of Hip Hop as opposed to ballet.

Hip Hop Research

In spite of the obstacles Hip Hop faces in its communities, it's important to note that the art form has gained recognition over the years. In the 1980s, large-scale competitions like the International Battle of the Year in Germany began (Williams 2015). Most notably, breaking will be featured as a sport for the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024, joining universally known sports in this century-long multi-sport event (Olympics 2022).

Yet, there is still progress to be made. While there is vast research regarding the history, technique, and art of art forms such as ballet and modern dance, Hip Hop, relatively, has not garnered the same attention (Williams 2015). In fact, in 2009, in the world's only peer-reviewed global journal of Hip Hop culture, *The Global Journal of Hip Hop Culture*, Dr. James G. White expressed how the corporate rap music industry glorified violence, drug dealing, and exploitation of women in the lyrics and videos of Hip Hop artists. With a large majority of Hip Hop dancers choreographing and dancing to rap music, the link between these two aspects of Hip Hop culture have been negatively perceived by the media and associated with stereotypes that invalidate the culture's history and identity (White 2009).

Thus, past research has advocated for Hip Hop by focusing on the purposes it has served from a cultural perspective (Schloss et al. 2009). This is substantially seen in video documentaries. One such documentary is *The*

Freshest Kids: A History of the B-boy, a documentary made in 2002 with video footage tracing the history of the art of breaking (Israel 2002). Another documentary, *The Elements of Hip Hop*, features world-famous b-boys and choreographers who emphasize the freedom of expression of Hip Hop through dance battles (Carson 2005). With most of this history documented through video, the culture of this dance becomes more unique in its method of record-keeping.

With regards to the written work on Hip Hop, much of it focuses specifically on the art form of breaking. Sally Banes, an influential dance historian, contributed to the early legitimization of breaking as a dance form. In her 1981 article, “To the Beat Y’all: Breaking is Hard to do,” she defines breaking as a “competitive display of physical and imaginative virtuosity” and argues for its identity as a respected performing art (Banes 1981). However, the body of knowledge has failed to shed light on the community aspect of Hip Hop, such as the SoCal dance community. Blogs by local dance studios make up the majority of information on the history of Hip Hop in these communities (Ma 2015). Additionally, there is little to no research on other art forms under the umbrella of Hip Hop such as lifesteep, krumping, and locking. Such research is necessary to develop the technique, culture, and creativity of Hip Hop dance.

Ballet Research

Conversely, numerous books and articles have extensively touched on the histories of ballet companies such as American Ballet Theater (Lee 1999; Kasow 2008). Ballet has continued to receive international widespread acclaim for its choreographers, most notably George Balanchine and his work as a leading pioneer of ballet worldwide (Walczak et al. 2008).

Spanning numerous decades since the 1970s, research has not only focused on the growth of ballet but has also focused on the institutional, ideological, and philosophical structures that have developed ballet historically to affect the present (Novack 1993). Multiple studies have also touched on injury, fitness, and technique of the dance form (Khan et al. 1995; Noh et al. 2011; Hamilton et al. 2016). Contrary to the lack of research on budding Hip Hop communities, the body of knowledge for ballet sheds light on the growing communities that foster the next generation of ballet dancers. Research has touched on ballet classes for first-time dancers, ballet as an outlet for adolescents in various communities, and ballet’s perceptions throughout foreign regions (Moller et al. 2011).

Ballet continues to garner similar respect in the media. Articles from esteemed newspapers such as the New York Times and the Atlantic describe the art form in reverent diction, lauding the beauty of the technique that is built through ballet rehearsals (Kourlas 2023; Robb 2023).

Although ballet has existed for several centuries longer than Hip Hop, allowing it more time to garner popularity, it had already gained widespread acclaim during its first few decades in the US while Hip Hop still hasn’t reached a high level of recognition within its first few decades of its establishment.

As a result, noting Hip Hop’s relative novelty, this study aims to bridge the gap between the legitimacy of Hip Hop as an art form compared to renowned art forms such as ballet. It aims to frame Hip Hop through a more encompassing artistic lens that includes its culture and associated dance forms instead of the single art form of breaking.

The Nutcracker

Beyond the culture of art forms, past dances have also garnered widespread attention for its artistic prestige. One dance is *The Nutcracker*. In the 20th century, following the Russian Revolution in 1917, *The Nutcracker* spread overseas. In 1954, when George Balanchine staged the ballet for his New York City Ballet, he established its permanence in America (Lee 1999).

Plot

It’s important to touch on the storyline of this esteemed dance to better understand its prestige and various adaptations. There are many renditions of *The Nutcracker*, but a prominent one follows a young girl, Clara Silberhaus, as her family holds a gathering at their home to celebrate Christmas. During the event, Herr Drosselmeyer, Clara’s uncle, arrives with gifts for Clara, her brother Fritz, and the other children. Clara loves her gift, a Nutcracker, and cradles it to sleep. As she awakes, the Nutcracker becomes life-sized, battling an army of mice and defeating the Mice King. For the rest of the ballet, Clara adventures with the Nutcracker as they journey through dancing snowflakes and visit the Kingdom of Sweets, where the Sugar Plum Fairy showcases an array of

international dances and ends with a duet with the Cavalier. The production ends with Clara waking up from this dream with the toy Nutcracker cradled in her arms (Boston Ballet 2023).

As *The Nutcracker* became an annual Christmas tradition in ballet companies around the country, many versions of the ballet have been created. Yet, all productions contain some instances of the original plot. Such an extended history of this ballet has resulted in yearly productions of *The Nutcracker* in virtually every ballet company and studio across the nation, with many relying on the annual productions as financial support (Begley et al. 2014).

Laban Movement Analysis

With such a popularity in productions, evaluations of movement have developed. One comprehensive way to analyze movement is Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), “a theoretical and experiential system for the observation, description, prescription, performance, and interpretation of human movement,” as defined by Robin Konie, a certified Laban Movement Analyst. Developed by Rudolf Laban, LMA is divided into four categories: body, effort, shape, and space. The most crucial category is effort, which is “the dynamics, qualitative use of energy, texture, color, emotions, inner attitude, etc.” (Konie 2011). In the category of effort, dynamics refers to how the movement was performed in a general, interpersonal, or personal space (Moore 2012).

Many studies have investigated comparisons between different art forms using the dynamics aspect of LMA (Krasnow 2009). Yet, although there has been extensive research regarding physical or motor components of dance activity, there has been no work combining both the artistic and qualitative comparisons of dance forms (Koutedakis 2009). Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of dance have been explored and compared; yet, they focus on different stages of dance training in the individual dancer than comparisons between two movement pieces (White 2004; Wyon et al. 2011). Additionally, although past studies have argued for the legitimacy of Hip Hop, they either only focus on the non-dance aspects of the culture, such as DJing, or they focus on the disruption of gender norms with regards to the art form (Miyakawa 2007; Prickett 2011). Little to no research has been done on Hip Hop dance and its relation to other art forms, and no work has drawn from LMA and other movement analyses to artistically compare Hip Hop dance to other art forms (Koutedakis 2009). With a variety of past studies and movement analyses geared towards non-artistic aspects of dance, a gap opens in the research regarding comparisons of dance from an artistic lens as well as the artistic focus on more undervalued art forms such as Hip Hop. Within the body of knowledge of dance forms, Hip Hop’s value in bettering the understanding of artistic movement has been grossly underestimated and under-researched. Thus, artistic and holistic research on underappreciated art forms such as Hip Hop is crucial to advocate for studies on such art forms.

Current Study

To address this gap in the body of knowledge, the current study compares and contrasts ballet and Hip Hop artistically in order to hone in on the legitimacy of Hip Hop and analyze for artistic similarities and differences. The following research question is the foundation of this study: based on artistic comparisons between Disney Plus’ *The Hip Hop Nutcracker* and New York City Ballet’s *The Nutcracker*, how does such a comparison help to legitimize the art form of Hip Hop?

Methods

In this paper, I performed a content analysis of the renowned New York City Ballet’s *The Nutcracker* on Youtube and Disney’s *The Hip Hop Nutcracker* on Disney Plus with the purpose of legitimizing the art form of Hip Hop. I chose to analyze *The Nutcracker* because of its significance in the development of ballet in the US and because of its popularity and household recognition today (Lee 1999). Because numerous variations of the ballet have been developed, this historic production allowed me to thoroughly analyze both art forms of ballet and Hip Hop through a similar medium. Content analysis is defined as “a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text)” (Columbia 2023). Because this research focuses on the artistic aspects of art forms instead of psychological or physiological aspects of past research, a qualitative comparative content analysis with quantitative scoring was best suited for me (Chatfield 2009). With the objective to conduct a comparison, using a comparative content analysis allowed the research to determine if Hip Hop was able to produce a dance routine that was as artistically successful as a ballet routine, which receives relatively more funding, recognition, and legitimacy. Using this method, a three-prong content analysis was established: an analysis

of the dynamic shifts between movements, an analysis of the expressiveness portrayed through the movement, and an analysis of the technique behind the movement.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for the evaluated dances was mainstream accessibility, reliability, and popularity in the professional and public realms. Mainstream accessibility and popularity to the public were selected in order to determine productions that would have the most exposure and would thus be most commonly perceived by the general public. Reliability and popularity to professionals was selected in order to determine productions that aligned with the current perceptions of the art forms as validated by experts in the field. Such variables best determined artistic legitimacy as productions were chosen that would best represent art forms in their current standing in society, in accordance with dance experts and the general public.

Disney’s *The Hip Hop Nutcracker* version of the famous ballet was chosen because it consists of celebrated Hip Hop dancers, most notably KidaTheGreat, Du-Shant “Fik-shun” Stegall, and the JabbaWockeez. Additionally, the production stars Joseph “Rev Run” Simmons of Run-DMC, the Hip Hop group from the 1980s instrumental in popularizing Hip Hop music (Disney Plus 2022). This particular production gains an immense amount of attention -- as of 2023, Disney Plus has 161.8 million subscribers worldwide (Statista 2023). Thus, I analyzed this mainstream version to more accurately argue for the legitimacy of Hip Hop as a result of its current standing in society — represented both by the gamut of Hip Hop professionals in the production as well as the gamut of attention by the public. This allowed the art form to better match the prestige of New York City Ballet.

The New York City Ballet’s *The Nutcracker* was chosen because of the magnitude the New York City Ballet has had on the development of ballet in America, where the company is commonly revered by both dance experts and the general public (Hernández 2023). In 2019, the company raised more than \$15.3 million in ticket sales for the production, which is usually performed 47 times each holiday season (Jacobs 2020). With its productions running in New York City, the most visited city in the US, and a complete 100-minute production of *The Nutcracker* on Youtube, NYCB’s *The Nutcracker* was a reliable and accessible choice (Cinch 2022). Such a popularly performed production details the authority the company has in representing the historical *Nutcracker* ballet for this research.

Creation of Rubric

To analyze these pieces, I established a rubric incorporating an artistic perspective to the comparisons in tables 1, 2, and 3. I developed this rubric by analyzing how existing studies have compared art forms to analyze movement. As mentioned in my literature review, Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) was a prominent method in guiding dance evaluations. Besides the aforementioned category of effort, the categories of body and space of LMA have also been instrumental in evaluating dance. The category of body focuses on how body connectivity encourages personal expression while the category of space focuses on how dancers create different movement pathways (Konie 2011). These categories have best been used in movement evaluations of the Performance Competence Evaluation Measure, developed by Donna Krasnow, professor emeritus in choreography in York University, and the Aesthetic Competence Evaluation, developed by Steven J Chatfield, associate professor in dance at the University of Oregon (Krasnow 2009; Chatfield 2009). Although both prior works did not hone in on the artistic aspect of dance and were not originally used for interdisciplinary comparison, their credibility in their disciplines as well as their use of LMA provided direction for the criteria of my own rubric. By intertwining these criteria with the artistic and interdisciplinary comparisons of my criteria, I created a rubric consisting of the categories of dynamics, expressiveness, and technique similarly mirroring the effort, body, and space categories of LMA in tables 1, 2, and 3. To adhere to the qualitative component of my method, although I quantitatively analyzed my rubric, I also provided justification and written analysis for each of the three categories of the rubric. This was imperative to my data collection as I was not able to fully explain and analyze the pieces through mere numerical analysis and comparison.

Table 1. Dynamics category broken down into three levels of expertise.

Dynamics

	Space	Time	Energy
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Level 1	Lack of dynamic formation changes through the general, interpersonal, or personal space	Little to no shifts in speed; lack of dynamics in speed changes	Failure in shifting through varying levels of power and energy; failure in exploring both the light and heavy ends of the energy spectrum
Level 2	Some use of formation changes, but not through all three spaces, resulting in a lack of adequate dynamic shifts	Some shifts in speed; yet, still sluggish in shifting between the spectrum of fast and slow rates of movement	Occasional shifting in power to generate varying levels of texture without drastic changes to show more dynamic shifts of energy
Level 3	Formation changes through all three spaces creatively complement the movement to create a dynamic piece	Speed changes dynamically complement the movement to enhance the quality and texture of the movement	Light and heavy textures are explored sufficiently to complement the movement quality

Table 2. Expressiveness category broken down into three levels of expertise.

Expressiveness

	Facials	Costumes	Presence
Level 1	Lack in use of facial expressions that accurately convey the intention of the piece and music	Inaccurate portrayal of connection between the costume's theme and the intention with the piece and music	Lack of confidence with stage presence and ease of movement execution
Level 2	Occasional use of facial expressions that may or may not accurately embody the intention of the piece and music	Some creative connection between the costume and music to accurately portray the motivation behind the movement	Some success in confident execution of stage presence the accurately portray feeling and intention behind movement and music
Level 3	Adequate use of facial expressions to accurately portray intention behind movement and piece, eliciting the desired feeling from the audience	Creative use of costumes to complement the movement and piece to elicit intended feeling from the audience	Confident execution of stage presence to portray intention behind movement and elicit intended feeling from the audience

Table 3. Technique category broken down into three levels of expertise.

Technique

	Clarity	Precision	Musicality
Level 1	Lack of a wide range of motion to convey a clarity of movement intention	Difficulty with changes between multi-focused and focused points of	Incorrectly attempting to convey the different sounds and rhythms of the

	and bodily action	precision and direction, difficulty in balance and control of movement	music through movement
Level 2	Occasional but inconsistent execution of clarity in movement to articulate the dynamic textures of the movement	Occasional but inconsistent control of coordination and steps to transition between movement	Some connection between movement and music to portray different textures of sounds and steps
Level 3	Clear execution of movement and shifts in range of motion to accurately move through pathways and steps	Masterful bodily control to precisely execute shifts in dynamics, textures, and balance of movement	Accurate articulation of rhythm and interpretation of music through execution of movement and steps

Subcategories

For the category of dynamics in table 1, I focused on the space, time, and energy of the movement. For the category of expressiveness in table 2, I focused on the facials, costumes, and presence of the pieces. For the category of technique in table 3, I focused on the clarity, precision, and musicality of the movement. Such subcategories were used in order to dissect the broader topics of dynamics, expressiveness, and technique and look for commonalities and differences between the artistic aspects of both productions. In addition to LMA and past performance measures, I utilized heavily cited research about the different analyses of movement by professors Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin to guide my analysis of the subcategories (Blom et al. 1982). I attributed a score for the rubrics of both dances through two steps. First, because ballet and Hip Hop are foundationally different art forms, I analyzed the productions individually to provide a basis for comparison. Second, I compared my scoring of both productions with each other in order to find similarities and differences in the content matter. Through both the numerical scoring of the productions as well as the written analysis for the three categories of the rubric, the comparisons I drew were strengthened to provide a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the artistic components in this methodology.

Results

To simplify the process of recording the analysis of each piece, a score sheet shown in Figures 1 and 2 was designed that quantifies the scoring from the rubric by proficiency levels of 1, 2, and 3, with 3 being the highest score. Scoring was determined using the criteria in the rubric, and each score was given based on a comparison between the two art forms' artistry. In addition to rating the dances in subcategories, both pieces were given a scoring in each category that was averaged from the subcategories. An additional overall scoring was averaged from the three categories to present a comprehensive score for both dances. The findings presented by the score sheet are as follows:

Ballet:

Overall Scoring:

2.73

Dynamics:

2.6

Evaluation of:

Space

1 2 3

Time

1 2 3

Energy

1 2 3

Expressiveness:

3

Evaluation of:

Facials

1 2 3

Costumes

1 2 3

Presence

1 2 3

Technique:

2.6

Evaluation of:

Clarity

1 2 3

Precision

1 2 3

Musicality

1 2 3

Figure 1. Scoring for the ballet version of *The Nutcracker*.

Through an artistic perspective, NYCB’s *The Nutcracker* was given an overall comprehensive score of 2.73, as seen in Figure 1. According to LMA, the body category aims to execute a connection between inner emotions and outer portrayal of such emotions (Konie 2011). With such a category inspiring my category for expressiveness, I observed that towards the beginning of the ballet, the interactions of the adults and children did exactly that, portraying an atmosphere of a reunion, and the facial expressions of excitement were outwardly displayed by the dancers (3:46-7:18). The dynamics fell short on the category of “Energy” because throughout the ballet, although the strength, precision, and grace was prominent, the leaps and combinations of the choreography were unvaried. The technique fell short on the category of “Musicality” because throughout the ballet, the similarity in the choreography lacked variety in hitting different parts of the music compared to the slows and stops of *The Hip Hop Nutcracker*. Yet, overall, ballet received a near-perfect score of 2.73 due to the virtuosity of the dancers and the entire show. This paragon of ballet provided an enjoyable experience for the audience, clearly exemplified by the laughs heard throughout the video.

Hip Hop:

Overall Scoring:	2.73
Dynamics:	2.6
Evaluation of:	
Space	1 <u>2</u> 3
Time	1 2 <u>3</u>
Energy	1 2 <u>3</u>
Expressiveness:	2.6
Evaluation of:	
Facials	1 <u>2</u> 3
Costumes	1 2 <u>3</u>
Presence	1 2 <u>3</u>
Technique:	3
Evaluation of:	
Clarity	1 2 <u>3</u>
Precision	1 2 <u>3</u>
Musicality	1 2 <u>3</u>

Figure 2. Scoring for *The Hip Hop Nutcracker*.

This Hip Hop version of *The Nutcracker* received an overall comprehensive score of 2.73, as seen in Figure 2. The production followed a different storyline from the original *Nutcracker*, focusing on Maria-Clara as the protagonist as she works with the Nutcracker to fix her parents’ failing marriage. Throughout the production, like the original ballet, Maria-Clara and the Nutcracker fight the Mouse King, visit the Land of Snow, and end at the Land of Sweets. During these scenes, various Hip Hop art forms are showcased such as popping, house, and turf dancing. There is no dialogue in this production, but Joseph Simmons, or DJ Run, raps different songs to narrate the plotline. The technique in this production is masterful, displaying various layers of the music, especially during the “Arrival of Drosselmeyer” (8:06-11:15). Framing my observations with the topic of space from LMA, I looked for movement with clear shape that connected to the motivations behind the dancer (Laban 2011). In comparison to NYCB’s *The Nutcracker*, the dynamics of this production fell short on the category of “Space” due to less creative use of formation changes. The expressiveness of the production fell short on the category of “Facials” due to relatively less use of facial expressions to tell the story without dialogue. Overall, *The Hip Hop Nutcracker* also received an average score of 2.73 due to the creative use of costumes and technique to tell a new version of *The Nutcracker*. Famous Hip Hop dancers were in this production, and their movement accurately displayed the intricacies tied to Hip Hop.

In addition to my overall analysis, analysis has been organized by the three categories: dynamics, expressiveness, and technique. Within each category, a dance within the piece was chosen to compare the Hip Hop and ballet renditions of that dance. I chose such scenes through their focus on the specific subcategory that was analyzed, allowing me to utilize one scene to each represent the dynamics, expressiveness, and technique to explain my analysis. In each scene, I discussed the criteria for the specific subcategory, my reasoning for the scores in each subcategory, and my analysis of that subcategory for the production overall. To view the six scenes in their entirety, please view Appendices A, B, and C.

Discussion

The question this research sought to answer was the following: based on artistic comparisons between Disney Plus' *The Hip Hop Nutcracker* and New York City Ballet's *The Nutcracker*, how does such a comparison help to legitimize the art form of Hip Hop? My research found that my comparisons provided evidence that could legitimize Hip Hop as an art form through its artistic successes in dynamics, expressiveness, and technique. The most glaring similarities between the art forms was the relatively lower score in dynamics as well as the same overall score for both art forms based on my written qualitative analysis, seen in Figures 1 and 2. The fact that both dances received the same overall score supports the significance of Hip Hop as an art form in relation to ballet. With ballet remaining strong in expressiveness and Hip Hop remaining strong in technique, such scoring provides new insight into the different strengths of both art forms. Given what the current body of knowledge presents, the technique of ballet has been widely researched (Hamilton et al. 2016). As stated in my literature review, with so many ballet companies and arts complexes investing in ballet and annually running shows of *The Nutcracker*, the choreography of talents such as George Balanchine continue to be lauded. Yet, in this comparison, Hip Hop took the lead in technique, an insight that provides a new perspective to the traditional look of grooves and loose foundations for the art form. With current documentaries and literature focusing on the raw talents of breaking and Hip Hop culture, this new insight contributes to further recognition in other talents under the Hip Hop umbrella, including the various art forms seen in *The Hip Hop Nutcracker* (Ma 2015). While the data cannot definitively support that Hip Hop is as artistically successful as ballet, this presents clear evidence that such an art form does and should be regarded as having high quality in creativity and movement.

The comparison drawn between *The Nutcracker* productions of Hip Hop and ballet suggests that there is legitimacy and artistic expertise that is worth researching further. This method of content analysis of Hip Hop as a means of comparing its various aspects to other, more recognized arts forms is another facet of new understanding that could be drawn from the research at hand. The potential implications and consequences of this conclusion will be further explored in the following section.

Limitations

This section aims to discuss the limitations of this research. Limitations to my method are that because art is prominently defined by its qualitative expressions, my analysis is subjective and based on my discretion. Thus, although I based my interpretations on past research and rubrics, there still exists a lack of objectivity in my findings. Additionally, I did not have the adequate funding to see these pieces in-person at their respective theaters. Not being physically present to absorb the artistic works live may have hindered my analysis through the subjective lens of the camera. Likewise, the rubric I created was not tested for validity and should be to validate the data I collected.

To address limitations to my question, it would most likely be beneficial to have a larger pool of works to analyze, as art forms cannot be wholly represented by just one production. Future research should expand on this topic of inquiry by analyzing a variety of productions between the two art forms.

There also exists certain limitations to *The Hip Hop Nutcracker's* applicability to the greater scope of Hip Hop. As established in my data analysis, various Hip Hop forms were showcased in this production, including popping, house, breaking, and turf dancing. With such a variety in the production, not all of them could be directly compared to the ballet in every subcategory, resulting in a comparison between ballet and the overall umbrella of Hip Hop dance. Despite such a variety, there were still various dance forms under the Hip Hop umbrella not as thoroughly explored in the production, including krumping, clowning, and locking. Additional research would be necessary to generate findings for the respective art forms.

Future Research

There are more ways this study can be built upon for future research. Further research on live productions can be conducted to provide a new perspective to the expressiveness category of my rubric. Additionally, evaluating the legitimacy of Hip Hop in foreign regions will help to evaluate the varying perceptions of these art forms on a global scale.

Potential implications of my study include its significance in furthering the legitimacy of Hip Hop as an art form. With the current body of knowledge establishing the merits of ballet and more popularized art forms, this research supports the merits of Hip Hop as a similarly successful art form and details the impact it has had in order to be shown on such a prestigious platform as Disney Plus. Likewise, the rubric I created can serve as a template for future comparisons between art forms in order to better evaluate the legitimacy of more under-researched art forms. Such research can promote more study on other aspects of Hip Hop besides the art form of breaking that has been presently researched in the body of knowledge.

Conclusion

As stated throughout my paper, this research was geared to help overcome the gap in legitimizing Hip Hop as an art form. With its rich history, traditions, and culture, such an art form has sprouted in numerous regions in the US, sparking physical and online communities of dancers of different backgrounds. However, the research surrounding this art form has historically been less than other more popular commercial art forms.

There are currently considerably more measurement tools available for evaluating quantitative aspects of dance performance than for qualitative aspects (Meng et al. 2019). Yet, while dancers are virtuosic in their physical prowess, dance is ultimately an art form, and the qualitative expressions of performances must be included as well (Krasnow 2009). With numerous research comparing and surrounding popular commercial art forms, this research method and rubric can enable future research to expand on qualitative comparisons of other art forms. Tinikling, capoeira, and various cultural dances deserve to receive the same legitimacy as ballet. Dance represents the varying expressions of humanity, and limiting such expressions to a small number of highly legitimized art forms fails to appreciate the depth that is felt from myriad movements and artistry.

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