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Black Swans: Black Female Ballet Dancers and the Management of Emotional and
Aesthetic Labor

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Sociology

by

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ABSTRACT

Black Swans:

Black Female Ballet Dancers and the Management of Emotional and Aesthetic Labor

by

Sekani L. Robinson

Ballet is an elite profession that remains predominantly white. Black dancers have been historically excluded and remain severely underrepresented in this industry through controlling images, discrimination, marginalization and rejection. Ballet demands intensive emotional and aesthetic (embodied) labor as an occupation. This thesis draws upon a mixed methods analysis of quantitative and qualitative analyses of 12 interviews, 34 surveys, and archival research to understand the experiences of Black women in ballet in context. While all ballet dancers perform both emotional and aesthetic labor through the largely unwritten and implicit emotional and aesthetic requirements of this labor, Black women have separate sets of racialized requirements and concerns they navigate alongside the emotional and aesthetic labor all ballet dancers endure. Black women in ballet negotiate colorism, racial hierarchies and a definition of femininity that marginalizes Black women, whose bodies may not conform to an Anglo-American standard of beauty. These findings build on and challenge conceptualization of emotional and aesthetic labor and discrete social practices. Rather, I show how the theories positioning emotional and aesthetic labor as distinct miss the interconnections between these two kinds of labor—interconnections that are put in stark relief in Black ballet dancers’ workplace experiences navigating overlapping systems of

inequality. Using these data, I argue that emotional and aesthetic labor need to be theorized as co-constitutive.

Introduction

Christmas is commercialized with visions of Santa Clause, presents, Christmas trees, hot chocolate and, for many, The Nutcracker. The iconic ballet *The Nutcracker* was adopted from Ernst Theodor Hoffman's book, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*. One year later in December of 1982, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky collaborated with choreographers Marcus Petipa and then Lev Ivanov to create *The Nutcracker* ballet. It premiered in St. Petersburg, Russia, at the Mariinsky Theatre, (Wiley 1985). *The Nutcracker* is performed in thousands of theatres around the globe during Christmas time and has become a Christmas tradition. It even premiered as a Disney movie in November 2018 and featured a Black ballerina. The performance of *The Nutcracker* became a Christmas tradition in the United States in the 1950s (Hoffman and Dumas 2007). As with many traditions, *The Nutcracker* holds many gendered and racialized roles that marginalize Black women.

The Nutcracker focuses upon Clara, typically portrayed as a young white girl who is hosting a holiday party with her family. Clara's godfather Drosselmeyer appears late and brings her brother Fritz toy soldiers and Clara a handsome wooden nutcracker. Clara falls asleep, with her nutcracker, and suddenly sees an army of giant mice begin to fill the room and the nutcracker then grows into a life-size boy and battles the mice. After the nutcracker defeats the king, he transforms into a prince and takes Clara to a place called the Land of the Sweets. The Land of the Sweets is where they encounter new friends, including the Sugar Plum Fairy, who leads them through the Land of the Sweets. The other characters entertain them with sweets from around the world: chocolate from Spain (Spanish dancers), coffee from Arabia (Arabian dancers), tea from China (Chinese dancers), candy canes from Russia (Russian dancers), and Danish shepherdesses, Mother Ginger and her children, and flowers for the Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier waltz and that is the end of *The Nutcracker*.

The Nutcracker is significant, in part, because a racialized and skin color-bar remains in ballet that casts Black women in a restricted set of roles that perpetuate “controlling images” and racial stereotypes. These patterns in casting normalize the invisibility and exclusion of Black women from the most celebrated and visible roles in ballet. For example, Black women are routinely cast as non-Europeans and in particularly exotic roles such as the “Arabian dancer.” Sixty percent of the Black dancers interviewed in this study reported that they were assigned the role of the “Arabian dancer” in *The Nutcracker*. The Arabian dancer is portrayed as exotic and erotic wearing a bralette and baring midriff (which no other costume displays), and moving her body in sensual ways around the male dancer.

In *The Managed Heart*, Arlie Hochschild (1983) coined the term “emotional labor” to examine the often implicit requirements for workers to manage his or her own feelings to produce desired states of mind for potential or current clients or customers. Since Hochschild’s book was published, scholars have reinterpreted the concept of emotional labor. For example, in a study of workers in New York City nail salons Miliann Kang (2010) argues that emotional labor subtly requires an added burden for salon employees by demanding certain emotional performances aimed at producing specific types and levels of comforts to satisfy clients and customers often causing them to ignore their personal emotions. Others argue that emotional labor offers some benefits to workers as well. For instance, Alexandra Murphy (2003) found that strippers engage in emotional labor because it gives them a sense of satisfaction when they are pleasing their clients or customers. Consistent with Hochschild’s intent, however, a great deal of scholarship finds that workers endure emotional labor because they feel compelled to perform this work. For example, Ashley Mears and William Finlay (2005) argue that fashion models employ emotional labor to defend themselves and to deflect the humiliation of constant rejection and judgement they encounter in their occupation Throughout my paper, I will address how

Black women in ballet utilize all of these views while performing emotional labor within their occupation.

Like models, ballet dancers also perform aesthetic labor. Following Hochschild's emotional labor, Chris Warhurst and Dennis Nickson (2001) theorized a related type of labor characterizing many jobs in service economies, what they call "aesthetic labor." Theorized as distinct from emotional labor, *aesthetic labor* focuses on the performance of bodies and embodiment. Warhurst and Nickson coined aesthetic labor to specifically call attention to the body and body presentation requirements in workers' appearances, tastes, demeanors, and senses of confidence to produce a desired state of mind for potential or current clients or customers (Warhurst and Nickson 2001).

Aesthetic labor is theorized alongside Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction (1986, 1998), which explains how an individual's *habitus* comprises their social distinction (Williams and Connell 2010; Dahl 2013). Engaging with Bourdieu's theory within the workplace, aesthetic labor helps to identify some of the ways that employees mobilize these embodiments of class and "practical sense" of distinction for commercial and capital purposes (Dahl 2013)—though scholars of aesthetic labor have focused on much more than class-related embodiments. Other scholars using aesthetic labor as a framework have implemented that a particular appearance is expected within the retail industry (e.g., Gruys 2012, Misra and Walters 2016, Walters 2016). In this thesis, I address how Black women in ballet negotiate and navigate specific embodied requirements as forms of aesthetic labor within their occupation.

Throughout this thesis, I address the discrimination and marginalization that takes place in the ballet industry. I provide a case study of Black women employed in an elite segment of the arts and entertainment industry to examine how Black women navigate and rely on racialized emotional and aesthetic labor to navigate the racial and gender inequalities that shape the minimal opportunities available to these dancers.

This thesis is organized around the following questions related to Black women's experiences in ballet: How do Black ballet dancers negotiate dominant ideologies surrounding beauty, femininity, and racialized representations? More specifically, what burdens do all women dancers in the ballet industry endure, and what kinds of emotional and aesthetic labor are further fetishized and racialized for Black women in ballet? What distinguishes Black dancers' experiences in ballet from those who are non-Black dancers, white or white passing? Beyond these dancers alone, however, the data presented in this thesis offer a larger theoretical question surrounding the use and theorization of emotional and aesthetic labor in sociological research on work and workplaces: Are emotional labor and aesthetic labor actually as distinct as sociological research on workplaces has presented them to be? My data show that Black ballet dancers are ideally positioned to question this larger conversation in intersectional sociological research on work and workplaces.

Emotional and aesthetic labor are both situated through a sociological lens of work and occupation and more classic scholarship on emotional and aesthetic labor has focused primarily on work and gender (Hochschild 1983, Pierce 1993, Paules 1996, Maguire 2001, Warhurst and Nickson 2001, Gruys 2012, Mears 2014). More recently, Black feminist scholars have used an intersectional analytical lens to build upon this earlier body of work (e.g., Wingfield 2010, Walters 2018). In her study of Black professionals, Adia Wingfield Harvey (2010) found that Black professionals experience racialized feeling rules within the workplace that differ from the normative feeling rules associated with their white colleagues working in the same environment. Similarly, in Walters' (2018) study of retail companies, she discovered what she referred to as a set of "tri-racial" aesthetic labor processes to show how retail companies favor white dominant beauty standards and exoticize certain phenotypes of racial differences amongst non-white employees. A growing body of literature on race, gender and work has illuminated the ways that racial status shapes the ways that emotional and aesthetic labor are performed (e.g., Wissinger

2012; Gruys 2012). The current study builds upon these twin bodies of scholarship by integrating the concerns of Black feminist scholars, critical race scholars and earlier research by white scholars who established some of the foundations of the sociology of emotion and sociology of the body without addressing the role of race, colorism and class markers in their analyses of emotional and aesthetic labor.

I draw upon interviews with Black ballet dancers representing three generations in the United States. I analyze the ways that race, gender, and colorism structure the experiences of Black ballet dancers. This study is motivated by the following questions: “How does racism, colorism and body shape hierarchies structure the experiences of Black women in ballet? A second question is “How do Black women negotiate dominant ideologies in an industry and a nation that embraces Eurocentric ideologies about beauty, femininity, and ballet?” In addition to the forms of discipline endured by all female ballet dancers in the industry, I show how Black women simultaneously negotiate racialized forms of gendered labor in navigating their position in an industry that fetishes, racializes and marginalizes Black classical dancers in ways different from non-Black dancers.

First, I define emotional and aesthetic (embodied) labor separately. I then address why ballet is an ideal occupation to examine issues of emotional and aesthetic labor. Second, I discuss how Black women have faced discrimination and marginalization in ballet historically and contemporarily through controlling images. Third, I use my findings relative to Black women’s experiences with emotional and aesthetic labor demands in ballet to argue that emotional and aesthetic labor are better seen as co-constructing one another and should be combined as one theory. My findings show how aesthetic labor is intrinsically connected with emotional labor as well as how emotional labor often involves aesthetic labor within ballet. I argue that this relationship between emotional and aesthetic labor is likely not unique to ballet,

but that ballet offers an ideal location to highlight the ways these two separate implicit workplaces demand reproduced forms of intersecting social inequalities are intimately connected with one another.

The Significance of Black Women in Ballet

Ballet is an important site to analyze the aesthetic labor performed by Black female dancers. Like modeling and acting, ballet is an occupation that demands embodied performance. First, ballet is a racialized and gendered occupation that has excluded and rejected generations of talented Black women due to systemic racism. Although ballet dancers wear costumes, like women who model, their bodies are observed, evaluated, criticized, touched, and manipulated. Analysis of ballet dancers' work *as work*, therefore, offers an important site to explore issues that have been raised in research on sex workers: contemporary definitions of beauty and desirability, the objectification of the body and the racialized hyper-sexualization of Black women's bodies (e.g., Montemurro 2001; Murphy 2003; Brooks 2010).

Second, ballet dancers must learn how to monitor, regulate and manage their bodies, since it is a form of bodily capital within their occupation. The discipline of professionalism that ballet dancers are required to perform reflects Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis of social life. Dramaturgy is a structure of social interactions, i.e., roles that people play while interacting with one another (Goffman 1959). Ballet dancers are performing roles through their emotional and aesthetic practices in order to satisfy clients, i.e., directors, ballet masters, and audience members.

Max Weber (1958) and Chris Shilling (1991) explain how physical capital refers to the embodiment of cultural capital and the ideology of the body being utilized as a form of capital, for ballet dancers the "capital" is in the roles they perform. While physical capital can comprise

physical attributes, some scholars wanted a more specific understanding of capital recognizing the physical body, i.e., “bodily capital.” Feminist scholars such as Sandra Bartky (1998) and Debra Gimlin (2002) examine how women discipline and alter their bodies to conform to a patriarchal ideal of beauty. This notion can also be applied to ballet dancers who conform to a standard of beauty requiring them to control their weight, body shape and hair to attempt to embody a particular “look.” Mears’ (2011) study of professional models identifies a similar type of labor in which part of the “work” of being a professional model is attempting to embody particular “looks” and to embody them *authentically* in ways that will lead to work opportunities.

In a memoir of the first Black woman lead in American Ballet Theatre, *Life in Motion* (2014),¹ Misty Copeland writes, “the ABT staff called me in to tell me that I needed to lose weight, though those were not the words they used...the more polite word, ubiquitous in ballet, was *lengthening*...I was deeply hurt and lost” (Copeland 2018). When she was told to lose weight for the first time, Copeland writes about not knowing what to do or how to lose weight and how it affected her mentally and emotionally. Misty Copeland’s experiences are not unique. Ballet dancers are under a lot of pressure to mold their bodies to conform to a pre-pubescent aesthetic that has been idealized in the industry. Ballet dancers who are not (or do not appear) young and who do not possess bodies that conform to an idealized standard— “long,” “lean,” with long legs, a short torso and a small head (Mitchell 1987, Gottschild 1996)—encounter obstacles to employment. Ballet dancers are required to discipline their bodies and control their weight. This labor is an occupational burden.

A third reason to study ballet dancers is to illuminate dimensions of emotional and aesthetic labor, which are theorized by two distinct forms of labor, as I addressed previously. In the sociological literature on the body, the emotional labor performed by dancers has been

understudied and undertheorized. Early work on emotional labor suggests that the cost of emotional labor alienates workers from their feelings (Hochschild 1983). Initial work on aesthetic labor has focused on the embodied presence of the employee (and the often-implicit demands placed on employees focusing explicitly on issues of embodiment), suggesting that workers should embody their brand by maintaining a specific bodily and social capacity—made visible by their appearance, demeanor and overall “style” (Warhurst and Nickson 2001). In the years that followed scholarship on both emotional and aesthetic labor greatly expanded. Scholars of emotional labor debated whether emotional labor was alienating or satisfying for the workers (Hochschild 1983; Abiala 1999; Wharton 1993). Similarly, scholars studying aesthetic labor questioned if and how these workplace demands associated with embodiment might qualify as a form of appearance-based discrimination along the lines of race, sex, disability, sexuality, and more (Warhurst and Nickson 2001; Rhode 2011; Mears 2014; Walter 2018).

The vast majority of scholars who rely on emotional and aesthetic labor utilize them as two separate theories. Indeed, in their seminal statement identifying “aesthetic labor” as a topic worthy of further study, Warhurst and Nickson (2001) explicitly theorize aesthetic labor as separate and distinct from emotional labor. This divide is evident in scholars’ deployment of these theoretical tools as well. For example, Mears and Finlay (2005) found that models use emotional labor, specifically, as a coping mechanism for the humiliation and criticism they receive, from employers, about their weight and image (embodied issues, to be sure). Kristen Barber (2016) utilizes aesthetic labor to explain how hair salons promote embodiments of gendered and sexual identities for stylists to retain and maintain customers. But certainly, this aesthetic labor comes with attendant emotional costs. Both Mears and Finlay (2005) and Barber (2016) emphasize *only* emotional labor *or* aesthetic labor while briefly mentioning issues related to the other but not explicitly connecting with that body of theory and scholarship, neglecting to combine them or address the relationship between these discrete forms of labor.

Ballet dancers are unable to separate their job of providing emotional labor (to make the customer feel good and to appear effortless while doing so) from the physical appearance demands they simultaneously navigate associated with the aesthetic labor of the job. Through my thesis, I show how emotional and aesthetic labor are mutually constitutive. The symbiotic relationship between these twin forms of invisible labor has heightened visibility when examining Black women in ballet because the intersectionality of race, class and gender put these forms of labor into dramatic relief. Thus, while addressing emotional labor and aesthetic labor in regard to Black women in ballet, I theorize what I refer to as “emosthetic labor” to address how Black women in ballet perform racialized and gendered forms of emotional and aesthetic labor that are impossible to separate from one another and fully appreciate.

Ballet dancers do not work with “customers” (audiences) directly. They do, however, meet and attempt to impress directors and choreographers who hire them and cast them in roles. But, in comparison to strippers or flight attendants, for instance, ballet dancers do not interact with clients directly. Instead, they are professional objects—or as stated in Mears and Finlay’s (2005) article addressing the models as “paper dolls”—beautiful, but inanimate faces and bodies dressed up to dance and put on display for the entertainment of others.

The response of ballet dancers to being objectified is to insist that when they are dancing, they are in fact “acting”: they are hiding their true feelings from others as well as their bodily injuries to create an illusion for others. This is similar to Erving Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical analysis of social life, in which “interaction is viewed as a ‘performance’ that is shaped by environment and audience, constructed to provide others with ‘impressions’ that are constant with desired goals of the actors” (Goffman, 1959:17). In these ways, ballet can be understood as involving the performance of *emosthetic labor*—a labor the women I studied understand as an occupational hazard. They transform themselves into the characters whose role they are performing.² Additionally, through the successful management of this labor, they maintain the

ideology that associates ballet as unattainable and projecting a level of elegance, grace, purity, and beauty that has come to be expected when attending a ballet. Yet, this process places additional demands on Black women in ballet. Similarly, Adia Harvey Wingfield (2007, 2010) explores how Black professionals experience racism, discrimination, and marginalization through controlling images in a workplace. Wingfield shows how racism is gendered and how racism impacts minorities in the workplace. Similar to this, I argue here that *emosthetic labor*, for Black ballet dancers, highlights how their negotiation and navigation of sexism, racism, and racist sexism that shapes their experiences with discrimination and marginalization within an occupation already full of emotionally and aesthetically taxing work.

Ballet Dancers at Work

In this section, I discuss what ballet dancers do and how the labor market for ballet dancers operates. My focus is on Black women in ballet. Although women and men practice their own emotional and aesthetic labor, Black women have additional emotional and aesthetic labors that focus on the unique forms of marginalization and discrimination that they face, because of their race and gender as extreme minorities within ballet (see Table 1).

As is visible on Table 1, less than 5% of ballet dancers, in major companies throughout the United States are Black women. In some companies, they are entirely absent, and in more than half of the companies shown here, Black women occupy fewer than one in fifty dancers. Additionally, the figures in Table 1 represent what are considered to be the highest frequencies and proportions of Black women in ballet since ballet first started in the late 14th early 15th century. This is significant because it is reflective of the lack of Black women within ballet and similar to C. Wright Mills (2000), my data is a reflection on the population of Black women in ballet.

Table 1. Frequency and Proportion of Black Women Dancers in Classical Ballet Companies, 2017-2018

	Number of Black Women Dancers	Proportion of Black Women Dancers
American Ballet Theatre	3	3%
Ballet West	2	4.8%
Boston Ballet	1	2%
Dallas Ballet	0	0%
Houston Ballet	0	0%
Joffrey Ballet	1	2%
Los Angeles Ballet	1	3%
Miami Ballet	1	2%
New York City Ballet	2	2%
Pacific Northwest Ballet	1	2%
San Diego Ballet	0	0%
San Francisco Ballet	2	3%
Washington Ballet	1	4%

Note: These data only consider Corps de ballet, Soloist and Principal dancers. Apprentice and retired dancers are not included in these figures.

Studying Ballet Dancers

I have organized this thesis consistent with the grounded theoretical method. I reviewed the literature of Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (1967), who are the originators of grounded theory, and Kathy Charmaz (2014) in which they all state that grounded theory is a “study of what is happening in the setting and make a conceptual rendering [finding a theory] of these actions” (Charmaz, 2014:38). In this study, I collected several forms of data, including: 1) surveys, 2) interviews, 3) websites, 4) archival documents, 5) documentary films and 6) published biographies. As a former dancer, and a former employee at *Brown Girls Do Ballet*, I gained access to networks of Black ballet dancers in the United States. Similar to scholars like Victor Rios (2011), my positionality—being a Black woman who has practiced ballet—afforded me a particular connection with the participants and trust that allowed me great insight into their experiences. The commonalities we shared transformed the hierarchy of interviewer and interviewee and created more of a conversation between two Black women who have

participated in ballet.

Sociologists typically use pseudonyms in order to protect the participants' privacy. Similar to Mitchell Duneier and Ovie Carter (1999), however, I decided not to use pseudonyms in my thesis because the people that I write about did not want their identities concealed. They want to be identified in order to really share *their* stories and experiences and it is my responsibility to respect their request and tell their stories candidly. This is particularly important given that Black people have felt invisible and that they do not have a voice or a platform to share their experiences openly.

I utilized surveys to contextualize the results of my interviews and the population I am studying (see Table 2). As is visible in Table 2, I had 34 participants for the survey and this survey identified a basic understanding of the age range of my participants, when they started dancing, the regional location of where most people dance and how they financial finance ballet. Given that ballet is considered an elite activity³, it is very expensive, so it is important to know how the participants are able to afford and gain enough capital to participate. I use these survey results to help contextualize the information I gathered from interviews.

Through social media (e.g., Instagram and twitter, email, phone, facetime) I contacted dancers to gather interviews. I conducted a total of 12 interviews (10 women and 2 men) and 34 surveys with Black women in ballet. To supplement the life history interviews and biographies, I also analyze two documentary films about Black dancers, including one that focused upon Misty

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Black Women in Ballet Survey

	Frequency	Proportion
<i>Date of Birth</i>		
< 1950	4	11.8%
1950-1970	3	8.8%
1971-1990	15	44.1%
1991-2000	12	35.3%
<i>Started Dancing (Age)</i>		
2-3	8	23.5%
4-5	13	38.2%
6-7	5	14.7%
8-9	6	17.6%
10+	2	5.9%
<i>Region</i>		
Northeast	21	61.8%
South	7	21.0%
West	4	11.8%
Other	2	5.9%
<i>Sponsorship</i>		
Sponsored	8	23.5%
Un-sponsored	26	76.5%
<i>Economic Support</i>		
Parents	1	2.9%
Scholarship	16	47.1%
Parents and Scholarship	15	44.1%
Workstudy	2	5.9%

Note: These figures represent reported results from a sample of 34 Black women in ballet surveyed (n=34).

Copeland, the first Black woman lead at American Ballet Theatre. I also collected data in internet-based archives—using sources such as Google.com, the New York Public Library, the American Ballet Theatre and the New York City Ballet online archives, and dance critics’ online articles and reviews on sites like MoBBallet.org.

Respondents to my interviews and survey were between 18 to 85 years old. They were

asked a series of questions about their childhood experiences in ballet, their financial support, their social support, the roles they performed, their hair and costumes, and their overall experiences in ballet. There were 41 survey questions and interviews lasted between 20 minutes to 120 minutes in length. All interviews were recorded. I interviewed respondents via phone, facetime, and in person. Because of the small number of Black women in ballet, collecting this small sample involved a great deal of time and represents a large number of Black women, particularly when considering the extremely small size of the population in ballet at these elite levels to begin with.

History of Black Women in Ballet

Katherine Dunham, Pearl Primus and Josephine Baker—talented Black women who choreographed, danced and trained others, within the US ballet industry—all greatly influenced American ballet. Each of them, however, was not given an opportunity to be hired and to perform as principal dancers within mainstream US ballet companies. Yvonne Daniel (2005) argues that Black Americans' major contributions include integrating African and Afro-Caribbean influence and idioms into American popular/vernacular culture and onto Broadway. Stephanie Batiste (2011) also writes, "African American awareness of and activity around American imperialism fostered the spirit of internationalism that fed diasporic movements of the early twentieth century" (Batiste 2011). These "Africanist tracings" challenged white thought and assumptions of Black art/culture by revealing how Black bodies and Black idioms, aesthetics and culture can exist beyond only Black spaces (Gottschild 1996).

While working with ballet dancer Mark Turbyfill, Katherine Dunham tried to open the company *Ballet Nègre* in Chicago. Due to strong opposition from white Americans in the industry such as Agnes de Mille (a successful white dancer and choreographer in American theater and ballet in the twentieth century), however, they did not succeed. de Mille reportedly

told Turbyfill that, “a Negro Ballet wasn’t possible ‘physiologically.’” A decade later, Agnes de Mille would change her position on this, after she watched Dunham and her company’s efforts, she launched a ‘Negro Unit’ of Ballet Theatre in New York City a decade later [1940] (Das 2017). She created a ballet entitled *Obeah, Black Ritual* in 1940, which was only performed three times in the United States and received various critiques and reviews.

Dunham also choreographed Broadway performances with George Balanchine, one of the founders of American ballet and most iconic choreographer. Dunham’s 1940 performance in *Tropics and Le Jazz “Hot,”* led to her to being cast in a feature role as Georgia Brown in the Broadway musical *Cabin in the Sky*, in 1941. In her biography, Dunham states, “Balanchine liked the rhythm and percussion of our [Caribbean style drums that she incorporated into her dance company’s repertoire] dances” (Banes 1994: 61). Through her contributions, Dunham became co-choreographer, with George Balanchine, for *Cabin in the Sky*, however, she did not receive creative credit, just fame (Gottschild 1996, Das 2017).

Prior to Balanchine’s collaborations with Katherine Dunham, he also worked with Josephine Baker. Josephine Baker, an iconic Black entertainer⁴, became George Balanchine’s muse while he was in France.⁵ Josephine Baker made her debut in *Revue Nègre*, in which Balanchine was helped to choreograph. However, the two did not formally meet until a little after this performance and did not start officially working with each other until Balanchine’s first Broadway show in 1935 in which he choreographed specifically for Josephine Baker. This dance, entitled *Five A.M. Five A.M.* debuted in the 1936 edition of *Ziegfeld Follies* (Genné 2005). Baker’s influence on Balanchine transcended to Balanchine’s work within the United States where he created the ideal ballerina body as long, lean, and leggy frame, her sort torso and small head and many argue that Balanchine was influenced in this construction by Baker’s body (Mitchell 1987, Gottschild 1996). While we do not know if Balanchine offered Baker the opportunity to dance with him in the United States, given the fact that he wanted a company with

eight Black dancers,⁶ it was never mentioned whether or not Balanchine credited Baker as his muse and inspiration.

Betty Nichols became Balanchine's muse, while touring in Europe, and was the first Black dancer at Balanchine's School of American Ballet in 1943. However, Balanchine did not actually employ and debut a Black dancer in the United States until 1955 when he had a Black male dancer –Arthur Mitchell perform with him and Kirsten Lincoln's later company New York City Ballet (Garafola and Foner 1999). Balanchine also faced controversies when he had Arthur Mitchell, a Black male, dance with a white woman, Diana Adams, in his 1958 pas de deux for *Agon* (Genné 2005). Throughout Balanchine's career, he was influenced by so many Black women who were not always acknowledged despite the fact that he continued to be influenced by Africanist idioms in his repertoires *Concerto Barocco*, *The Four Temperaments*, and *Jewels* (Genné 2005).

In June 2015, Misty Copeland, then 32 years old, became the first Black principal dancer at American Ballet Theatre on their 75th anniversary. As a principal dancer, Copeland continues to receive a great amount of attention because she does not fit the typical mold of a ballet dancer while still performing lead roles such as Clara and the Sugar Plum Fairy. Despite the emergence of Misty Copeland as a high-profile Black ballet dancer, Black women remain severely underrepresented in classical ballet companies.

Misty's achievements and success allows her to publicly break "color barriers" within ballet, a genre of dance with a history of commodifying and appropriating Black idioms while rejecting and marginalizing Black women for years. In 1931, John Martin, one of the most reputable dance critics of the mid-twentieth century, stated that Black people are not well suited for ballet, a genre he framed as a European-based dance aesthetic (Martin 1963).

Misty Copeland and a handful of other Black female dancers have challenged what has been called the "color line" in ballet. In 1975, Oliver Smith, then director of American Ballet

Theatre, stated “The carriage of the Black dancer is not classic. It’s the position of the spine’ The litany of bodily excesses and deficiencies lay at the ready to exclude the Black body from miscegenation within the white body or corps de ballet: critics rhetorically constructed and essentialized the black dancer as possessing a too-stocky bone structure, protruding buttocks, and feet that were too flat and too large” (Banes 1994: 61). In addition, the argument that Black people are absent in ballet because they do not possess the economic resources to participate in ballet has been embraced by professional dance schools since their establishment in the United States in the 1930s. This discourse has been employed as a rationale to exclude Black women from the classical ballet institutions while simultaneously continuing a history of disregarding the impact of African, Caribbean and North American Black influences on ballet (Gottschild 1996).

Managing Marginalization, Discrimination and Controlling Images

Since ballet was first created in the late 14th early 15th century, there has historically been a limited number of Black women in ballet who, if interviewed, have shared their experience with discrimination and marginalization. In 1955, Raven Wilkinson became the first Black woman to receive a contract to dance full time with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. While dancing with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Wilkinson faced pervasive racism while touring throughout the United States. While in Montgomery, Alabama to perform, there was a Ku Klux Klan convention at the same hotel at which Wilkinson was staying and due to the unsafe and hostile environment, she was unable to perform and went back to New York (McElroy 2016). In 1952, Janet Collins became the first Black prima ballerina for the Metropolitan Opera Company. However, Collins’ career did not last long because she was told that she had to perform wearing white make-up to make her skin lighter and she refused (Lewin 1997). These stories still continue on and in this section, I consider previous work on ideologies about racialized body

structures and controlling images, which underscores the stigmas⁷ shaping Black women's experiences in ballet.

As previously mentioned, *The Nutcracker*, while being a Christmas tradition, reflects distinct racialized and gendered ideologies within the roles performed. Every participant I interviewed mentioned *The Nutcracker* and I began to examine how not only *The Nutcracker*, but other ballets still have a color-bar that remains in which Black women have been casted in what Patricia Hill Collins (1990) terms "controlling images." Controlling images are images of a subordinate group developed by a dominate group that work to justify oppression. It is the portrayal of Black women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and jezebels which have been essential to the political economy of dominance and which work to further foster and shore up Black women's oppression (Collins 1990). Examining the roles available to Black women in ballet being cast in the "Black" roles available is profitably done by consider the roles as relying on and reproducing controlling images in ballet. One of my participants, Aesha (a former dancer for New York City Ballet), shares her experience of how a critic created a discriminatory and marginalized environment for her workspace as well as how the role fit into a controlling image that did not reflect her own views of herself.

"I had done the role of the Arabian [in *The Nutcracker*] I wanted to look on and see what people were saying and, one critic, audience member who said, and it was along the lines of, 'It was just so disturbing to see Aesha ... up there looking just like Lil' Kim. With her dramatic make up and blonde wig.' (she laughs) And I can laugh now but imagine a young adolescent me, you know, like, first time principal Nutcracker role and you know... it destroyed me and there was so much, and like, immediately your whole body just gets heated with blood because you're so angry because, one, you know it's not true. It's a veil and everyone has one. It's a part of the costume. My make-up is no more dramatic than everyone else's. Especially because I can put a little bit less because I am

dark skin you see so much more, and it was just so hurtful. It was so hurtful and then to write something that's so, so opposite of who I am and what I want to represent.”

Aesha was a part of sixty percent of those I interviewed who was given the role of the Arabian princess in *The Nutcracker*. Dancing this role is a normative experience for the Black women in ballet I interviewed; it was among the small number of roles they were routinely offered in major performances. Again, the Arabian princess is portrayed as exotic and erotic wearing a bralette and baring midriff. It is the only costume in the performance displaying the dancer's midriff, while also requiring her to move her body in sensual ways around the male dancer with whom she is partnered. The racist comment that the critic made (“...up there looking just like Lil' Kim”) creates a discriminatory and hostile work environment and is one instance of how controlling images work to discursively cast Black women as overly “exotic” or “sexualized” historically. Black women have been devalued and seen as nothing but a sexual object and labeled as prostitutes and “Black jezebels.” The Black jezebel—also considered as the “hoochie”—is a common stigma associated with Black women (Collins 2002). The “Black jezebel” exists in more contemporary iterations as well, such as the “video vixen.” The idea that being a video vixen is the only place for Black girls to be viewed and are shown to emulate “power” provides an unconscious desire to only be depicted as a video vixen. The exploitation that takes place within the music industry marginalizes Black people and can be doubly marginalizing for Black woman. Since the music industry is still controlled by white elites—who often lack desire and knowledge of the diversity and complexity amongst Black women—Black women are routinely homogenized as “Black prostitutes” and “jezebels” (Valerius, 2008). This operates as another way to maintain a racial hierarchy by both oppressing and suppressing the Black woman. The critic referring to Aesha as “Lil' Kim” reiterates the ideology that Black women can only be viewed within these controlling images despite that fact that Aesha's goal is to challenge that ideology through her work as a Black ballet dancer:

“I want to speak, and it was so powerful to go back home and do that for my neighborhood and for them to see a woman of color, other than what they see on a screen, other than the next video chick, other than someone twerkin’. I am just so tired of that empowerment. That’s fine if that empowers you, if that’s what works for you then it works. But I just don’t want it to be the only message and the only way that our women can feel like they can empower themselves.”

While reading Peggy McIntosh’s (1988) “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” she summarizes a list that identifies some of the forms of everyday white privilege within her life with which she knows her Black coworkers and friends cannot connect. McIntosh’s (1988) 46th privilege listed is: “I can choose blemish cover or bandages in ‘flesh’ color and have them more or less match my skin.” I highlight this specific statement because it reflects the discrimination Black women in ballet face when attempting to find “flesh colored” tights, leotards and pointe shoes that match their skin color. A pattern emerged in the interviews with Black women in which they repeatedly reported and identified the rejection they experienced in dance companies. This included not being able to find proper clothing including tights, pointe shoes, and leotards that matched their skin tone. As a consequence, they had to invest more labor to alter the clothing they could find to conform to the (implicitly white) dress code and make it work for their bodies. This labor certainly came at a cost, involving time, labor (dyeing tights and leotards and coloring shoes with makeup), additional financial burdens, and certainly emotional costs as well associated with confronting the question of why these required tools associated with work as a ballet dancer were not made with their bodies in mind.

Cynthia (a former dancer for New York City Ballet) addresses the rejection of what McIntosh list as a white privilege as well as reiterates the controlling image of the Black jezebel.

“When I was dancing *Cocoa* in *The Nutcracker*, the costume had short bottoms and tights attached to it and the tights were pink, so I asked them to change the color, but

they just removed the tights and I would wear it bare skinned and I would put a big rhinestone on my naval (laughs). I then had to pancake [put makeup on] my shoes to be able to match with my skin. So, I would just use my pancake that I used for my face on my shoes.”

It is clear the roles that Black women were given, specifically in *The Nutcracker*, fit the controlling image of the Black jezebel. In regard to the tights, Cynthia and myself are not the only ones. Ingrid (a current dancer for Dance Theatre of Harlem) stated, “I paint my pointe shoes using BLK OPI true color.” Similarly, Gabrielle (a current dancer for Ballet West) elaborates on the challenges she faced matching her tights with her skin from when she danced with Dance Theatre of Harlem up until now at Ballet West,

“We had to dye our own shoes at times and the tights are something that the company had for us. So, through several trials and tribulations, I eventually found like regular make up that worked for me and just stuck with that. For my years at Dance Theatre of Harlem and still now... But it took, a really long time.”

Similarly, Nia, a Black ballet dancer stated in an interview in *Elle Magazine* in 2017:

“In the ballet world, pink tights are the base of the uniform for ballet and it’s all about the aesthetic, and for women of color, the pink tights cut off our aesthetic... it makes us look bigger. So, when we wear flesh tone tights, we look longer and fuller. When I saw all the shades of brown tights, it gave me the courage to try Ballet myself.”

McIntosh highlights how white privilege can be perceived as something little like a flesh colored bandage, but this minor privilege is a major form of rejection and discrimination for Black women within the ballet workplace. Pointe shoes were created in the 1820s and it was not until 2017 when a few companies started to make pointe shoes on an even wider spectrum for darker skinned women. Pointe shoes are a reflection of their dress code, and for Cynthia, they placed her in a marginalized situation where she could then be criticized as not being

“professional” or not properly performing the aesthetic labor because she performed with bare legs. Cynthia, Aesha, and other participants all found themselves placed into roles that reiterated controlling images of Black women despite the fact that they themselves were trying to challenge the stereotypes associated with these cultural images and ideologies.

Emosthetic Labor: Performing Emotional Labor in Aesthetic Labor

Aesthetic labor involves the presentation of the body and body presentation requirements that produce a desired state of mind for potential or current clients (Warhurst and Nickson 2001). Within ballet, the body presentation is Eurocentric and excludes Black people. Brenda Dixon Gottschild (2003) mentions Afrocentric theory in dance to examine racial identities and racial embodiments by deconstructing the historical context within the racial stigmas attached to specific parts of Afrocentric theory of the body—i.e., feet, butt, skin/hair (Gotschild 2003). Afrocentric theory redefines and confronts the marginalization of hegemonic, racist beauty standards targeting Black women and provides agency through collective consciousness (Asante 1998).

The beauty standards and body presentations in ballet are racialized as a Eurocentric image, and as a result, Black women have to navigate their Blackness while performing aesthetic labor. By identifying how the women navigate these racialized aesthetic workplace demands, I noticed that their emotions and their performance of emotional labor were intimately tied to their performances of aesthetic labor. Debra, a former dancer for New York City Ballet, addresses the racialized fetish that she faced with her director and how she had to negotiate how she will perform her aesthetic labor.

“That was the look of New York City Ballet; very slicked back so we had to use a lot of hair spray and have a high bun... So, I wore my hair like everyone else in a high bun... I was a fairy, he [the director] actually wanted me to wear my hair natural and I

was like, ‘Jim I don’t think so’ (laughs). ‘I’m with the New York City Ballet and I don’t know if I should wear my hair like that.’ And the music that it was, it was an opera that sort of had this African Theme to it... and I was like, ‘No, I don’t want to wear my hair like this on stage.’

While Debra was addressing the aesthetic labor required of her by a director, she is also addressing the emotional labor she had to perform simultaneously and as a result of the aesthetic demands she was facing. She understood that her company required a specific look (“I wore my hair like everyone else in a high bun”) and she did not want to deviate from this “look.” In order for her to not offend her employer, however, who had just offended her, she had to perform a racialized emotional labor to dissuade this suggestion within implying that she was offended.

By not getting upset and calling the director out for fetishizing her Blackness, she instead laughed and declined “professionally.” Not only was aesthetic and emotional labor being performed simultaneously, but it is difficult to identify one without acknowledging a relationship with the other. In other words, these aesthetic labor demands came with emotional labor consequences. In fact, the director was overemphasizing and imagining himself as temporarily producing a “Black friendly” space for Debra. But it came with attendant aesthetic labor demands that Debra felt shored up racialized stereotypes and interpreted as additional labor that made her uncomfortable. Similarly, Giuffre, Dellinger and Williams study of “Gay Friendly” workplaces discovered that so-called “gay-friendly” workplaces often fetishized their gay employees by making them perform hyper-visibility in regard to their gayness (Giuffre, Dellinger and Williams 2008). For both Debra and Giuffre, Dellinger and Williams’ (2008) participants, are all performing aesthetic and emotional labor simultaneously, though Giuffre et al. (2008) do not explicitly highlight emotional and aesthetic labor as one, focusing exclusively on aesthetic labor demands. Their participants and mine, however, are performing *both* aesthetic *and* emotional labor, as I have shown here.

Aesha also dealt with an experience in which she had to perform racialized aesthetic labor. But when interviewed, she spoke about how the performance of aesthetic labor affected the emotional labor she felt compelled to endure to navigate these aesthetic demands.

“I remember I was in Europe... and my hair was still natural, and I just had it wet, gelled and put up and as he was choreographing, he was like, ‘Everyone take your hair down I want to see.’ And I was like, ‘ugh’ (laughs), ‘like seriously?’ And he was like, ‘Yeah. Just take it out.’ And he wanted to go one by one. Sekani, imagine: one-by one with dancers that were watching each other take down our hair... And it got to me, and I’m like this 100% natural girl, and I just sort of took it and just puffed it out and everyone just starts laughing and I was just like, ‘well’... completely mortified and just to have everyone else laughing really hurt my feelings. But in front of them I had to act strong. But inside, I wanted to cry.”

Both Debra and Aesha address how they have adapted to the aesthetic labor required of them at their original company so when they were asked to deviate from that particular “look,” they had to perform emotional labor to appeal and navigate around the racial disrespect they felt from their employers and peers (“...in front of them I had to act strong. But inside, I wanted to cry.”). The Black ballet dancers’ experiences of racialized aesthetic labor in my sample were routinely connected with emotional labor demands in ways that support what I refer to as “emosthetic labor.”

Emosthetic Labor: Performing Aesthetic Labor in Emotional Labor

People attend ballets to receive some kind of emotional experience from the performance. For example, people attend *The Nutcracker* to receive the Christmas joy and to get into the Christmas spirit. So, the job of the Ballet dancers is to provide audiences with that emotional experience. In Misty Copeland’s documentary, she shares how she performed *The*

Firebird, despite the fact that she was in crucial pain from fracturing her tibia in six places and was in need for a major surgery. Despite her pain, she was still able to perform the emotional labor needed in front of her audience. Like many dancers enduring injury, she got up there and the audience was none the wiser. And Copeland is not the only dancer who has had to suppress emotional pain in order to perform a specific emotional labor for their clients whether it be an employer (director) or clients (audience).

Adia Harvey Wingfield (2010) argues that Black professionals find themselves experiencing two types of racialized feeling rules: 1) rules that generally apply to all workers but are particularly difficult for Black professionals to follow; and 2) those that differ from the rules available to their white counterparts. Wingfield (2010) shows how Black employees find that the emotional rules in the workplace are not racially neutral but are in fact racialized in ways that works to Black workers' collective disadvantage. While Wingfield does not explicitly address aesthetic labor as the racialized rules associated with embodiment demands that Black professionals experience, she addresses one of her participants who expresses the racial comment a white woman makes in regard to a Black woman's hair by stating, "I work with a woman who is a complete racist and culturally clueless. And what do I do when she tells the biracial woman on our team that her hair looks like a poodle's" (Wingfield 2010:261. Throughout this section, I will examine how the participants' emotional labor begins is intimately intertwined with aesthetic labor.

The director, administrators, and dancers share the goal of providing entertainment that is emotionally fulfilling for the audience. However, dancers must also perform emotional labor for the directors in order to secure preferred roles and maintain their job. For Black women in ballet, there is a gendered and racialized dimension of this emotional labor. For example, Robyn, a former dancer for American Ballet Theatre, expresses how she reached a point in her career

where racial discrimination she faced affected her ability to mask her own emotions in order to perform the emotional *and* aesthetic labor demanded of a career in ballet:

“It really got to the point where it got to me in an emotional way to where I couldn’t move. They asked me to come to a rehearsal for *Themes and Variations* towards the end. I love *Themes and Variations*. It’s a ballet that I adore, and I know the choreography because the choreography just stays in your body. You know, I got to that rehearsal and I couldn’t do it. I physically was messing up. I went into the dress rehearsals crying and I knew that was my bottom and it was towards the end and so it was like the best and worst time of my life... This is what you chose to do so you have to deal with the issues but with the casting, and everything it was a very difficult thing for me.”

Andrea, a former dancer, also got to a point where she felt that the discrimination and rejection was overbearing to the point where she, similar to Robyn, could not perform the emotional and aesthetic labor anymore.

“The company did a film –*The Nutcracker*. And I was in the snow scene... every year we would do Nutcracker, I was the lead snowflake and when we got to the film, they took me out of the part. And the Ballet mistress said to me, “You know why.” I realized, you know, that you don’t give a crap about me. And you can let this happen to me and I’ve been with your company. And that was the main reason why I left the company. I could no longer perform the repertoires with the same energy I once had... it just wasn’t working. And my identity was being crushed. I was not living up to my potential anymore. I didn’t even care anymore.

Robyn and Andrea explain how the constant rejection and discrimination affected them so much emotionally (“...went to dress rehearsals crying”) that it got to the point where they physically could no longer perform the required aesthetic labor (“I physically was messing up” / “I could no longer perform the repertoires with the same energy I once had”). They were not

able to perform the required aesthetic labor in the repertoires that they have been performing for years. They were also unable to engage in a “cultural performance” which is a term used by Sass (2000) and Williams (2003) as a way to “save face” and maintain their pride to continue working. Despite not being able to perform emotionally, physically and culturally, Robyn specifically battled with the obligation that this is the career that she chose. Robyn is not the only one who experienced this obligation to accept the constant criticism. Many ballet dancers have shared their experiences that they felt lucky or honored to be a professional ballet dancer because they worked so hard to get here and not many people receive this opportunity. This discourse of good fortune causes some to feel they ought to have endured discrimination and harassment, despite the fact that it is still an occupation and employers should treat them with dignity and respect.

The significance of the experiences of Black women in ballet as identifying both emotional *and* aesthetic labor is that they face racism and discrimination in addition to the gendered criticisms of weight, technique, ability, and appearance that all women in ballet face. Limited studies on both emotional and aesthetic labor focus on the racialization of emotional and aesthetic labor and how each affect employees and, sometimes, push them out of careers. The constant discrimination led to a point where many of the women in my study could no longer perform the emotional labor demanded on ballet dancers. And this difficulty translated to failing to be able to continue with various aesthetic labor demands as well. Similar to my analysis of aesthetic labor having emotional consequences, here we see “emosthetic labor” being performed in the sense that Black women cannot perform emotional labor, due to the fatigue of constant discrimination, and they are experiencing aesthetic consequences in the fact that they can no longer dance physically. *Emosthetic labor* better captures the complexity of racialized and gendered workplace demands that, for many dancers like Robyn and Andrea, ultimately led

them to quit. The relationship between emotional and aesthetic labor underappreciates the demands associated with either without fully appreciating their relationship with one another.

Emosthetic Labor

In my research, I found evidence of how ballet dancers were unable to separate emotional and aesthetic labor and with the intersectionality of race and gender, emosthetic labor captures the racialized and gendered emotional and aesthetic experiences of the dancers. Consistent with a grounded theoretical method, this theoretical discovery emerged inductively from my analysis of the Black women's experiences in my study. I theorize emosthetic labor here within the organization of this thesis to represent this dynamic and inductive research process whereby my findings led me to discover existing theories as inadequate.

I argue that emosthetic labor is not exclusive to Black women in ballet. Indeed, while reviewing existing scholarship utilizing the theoretical frameworks of emotional or aesthetic labor, I found that some scholars address what I here refer to as emosthetic labor in that they address emotional labor without engaging with scholarship on aesthetic labor, even when they are addressing embodiment workplace demands associated with emotional labor. Ashley Mears and William Finlay (2005), for instance, focus on the emotional labor professional models perform, while also addressing their bodily capital. Similarly, there is important and rich scholarship that addresses aesthetic labor without engaging with scholarship on emotional labor despite addressing emotional consequences associated with various forms of aesthetic labor. Kirsten Barber (2016), for example, theorizes "heterosexual aesthetic labor" to address the labor women stylists working in men's salons adopt and addresses stylists' emotions while not fully engaging in emotional labor. Here I am addressing that emosthetic labor is influenced by previous scholarship addressing embodied labor *and* emotional labor simultaneously for years. I argue that, theoretically, emotional and aesthetic labor should be addressed simultaneously, as

one theory (i.e., emosthetic labor) when addressing ballet and other occupations e.g. modeling, stripping, sports, flight attendants. Indeed, I suggest that rather than suggesting these occupations are unique in which these forms of labor are intertwined, occupations in which the two forms of labor are truly discrete might be far more challenging to find.

This theorization of emosthetic labor is influenced by and builds on previous scholarship on emotional labor and aesthetic labor but differs in that it also engages the intersectionality of race and gender. Throughout my thesis, I consider the additional labor of race and gender that is being performed within emotional and aesthetic labor. Scholars such as Adia Harvey Wingfield (2010), Milian Kang (2010), Kayla Walters (2018) and a few other scholars address racialized emotional or aesthetic labor. It is clear that race and gender affect the hierarchy within ballet and we cannot discuss emotional and aesthetic labor without addressing the intersections between race and gender. Emosthetic labor provides a new lens through which we are better able to fully appreciate the racial and gendered performance of emotional and aesthetic labor required from Black women in ballet.

Conclusion

Returning to Adia Harvey Wingfield's (2010) analysis of the experiences of Black professionals who endure racialized feeling rules that prevent them from expressing emotions that their white peers are allowed to express, we see the parallels with Black dancers. The emotional-aesthetic labor that they are subtly required to perform is racialized and their expected rules are also racialized in at least three specific ways.

First, Black women in my study were assigned roles that reinforced racial stereotypes and controlling images—specifically the Black jezebel. These roles represent the forms of discrimination and marginalization that Black dancers endure in their occupation. Despite the negative comments and obvious marginalization, the dancers still performed emotional *and*

aesthetic labor. As Peggy McIntosh (1988) argued in her description of the forms of white privilege that are invisible to whites, Black women are forced to compensate for their lack of racial and gender privilege. In order to succeed in ballet, they routinely performed the racialized aesthetic labor as dancers in a white-dominated industry. One example is that black dancers described having to chemically dye leotards and tights and paint their point shoes with makeup to match their skin color because the attire provided was made for exclusively for white dancers. This not only communicates to dancers that their skin color places them outside of the industry standards, but it requires additional labor and costs that take an added emotional toll.

Second, the temporary “Black friendly” workspaces that fetishize Black women and challenge their required appearance. By over-emphasizing their Afrocentric features, it is affecting their ability to fit the required “look” which included how they are required to wear their hair or how they are required to move their body within their technique classes and the repertoires they perform. This was the experience for Debra and Aesha when they discuss the emotional labor they had to perform when describing their interactions with the directors and other dancers surrounding their natural hair.

Third, understanding how the discrimination affects their emotional-aesthetic and cultural performance. I examine how women were not able to continue to perform emotional and aesthetic labor because they became emotionally depleted. The dancers could no longer cope with the discrimination because it began to impact their ability to physically perform. This led them to leave their dance company. This is significant because ballet remains a hostile workplace for Black women.

My contributions to this literature include: 1. Black professionals face racialized emotional and aesthetic labor within the workplace through discrimination, marginalization and fetishization. Throughout my paper, I describe examples of participants being placed in roles that marginalize them into controlling images i.e. Aesha being called Lil’ Kim. Also, Debra

being fetishized in a temporary ‘Black friendly’ space to make her Blackness hyper-visible and characterized. 2. Theoretically, emotional and aesthetic labor cannot always be separated. Throughout my findings I provide specific examples of how emotional and aesthetic labor cannot be separate within ballet. Also, throughout other scholarship, I address how emosthetic labor is still taking place despite the fact that scholars theorize emotional and aesthetic labor separately. Ballet is not the only occupation that requires emosthetic labor. Occupations such as stripping, modeling, sports etc. utilize emosthetic labor.

In the future, I plan to address how emosthetic labor affects ballet dancer’s mental and physical health. I will expand my sample size to dancers outside of classical ballet companies and I plan to interview white women and Black men as a triangular comparison to greater understand the racialized and gendered experience for Black women. However, this study is important because it acknowledges the discrimination, marginalization, rejection and fetishization that Black women face within the workplace while negotiating boundaries and challenging controlling images projected onto them.

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NOTES

¹ Misty Copeland also states this in her documentary *A Ballerina's Tale* (2015)

² This is similar to Erving Goffman's dramaturgy (1959)

³ Pierre Bourdieu identifies ballet as an elite activity in his book *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1979: 122-123)

⁴ Josephine Baker was born in the United States but moved to France because she knew that she would have a better opportunity of becoming a star in Europe because of the extreme racial prejudices that were taking place in the United States.

⁵ George Balanchine is considered one of the most famous and iconic choreographers for ballet; creating an extraordinary body of work and many great ballets still performed today (Garafola and Foner 1999).

⁶ Balanchine wanted to "take four white girls and four white boys –about sixteen yrs. old and eight of the same, Negros" (Genné, 2005). He wanted to create a number titled *Two Faced Woman* with his fusion of black and white dancers, however he was not able to fulfill this vision (Genné 2005).

⁷ Erving Goffman uses the term stigma in his book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, to address how society profiles or stereotype people who deviate the normative expectations regarding conduct and character (Goffman 2009).