

## DANCE SCIENCE RESEARCH

### A REVIEW OF TWO RESOURCE BOOKS\*

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In many areas of dance research, there is a notable lack of background literature. The two volumes discussed here, *Introduction to dance research methodology* [Bevezetés a táncsal kapcsolatos kutatások módszertanába] (2020, edited by Lanszki), and *Research methods in the dance sciences* (2023, edited by Welsh, et al.), aim to address this gap, providing guidance on both theoretical and empirical research in dance studies.

The Hungarian-language volume, edited by Anita Lanszki, was published in 2020 as part of the textbook series of the Hungarian Dance University (HDU). The 186-page handbook serves as a practical guide for university students planning and conducting scientific research on dance, with a particular emphasis on thesis writing. The nine contributing authors are current and former faculty members from three different departments of the HDU (i.e., the Department of Hungarian Folk Dance, Department of Art Theory, and Department of Pedagogy and Psychology). The chapters systematically cover the entire research process, from conceptualization to the communication of results. The structure of the book follows key topics step-by-step including research paradigms, research design, methodologies, literature sources, referencing, empirical research, and the writing of research findings. Despite its scientific language, the volume remains readable and accessible for both novice researchers and university students.

Chapter 1 of the volume explores the differences between scientific and artistic approaches, emphasizing the need for a scientific approach in dance research. The remainder of the book goes on to explain this approach in more detail.

Chapter 2 discusses the various types of dance research, ranging from historical investigations to dance medicine, detailing the potential themes within each area, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of dance research throughout. Within the framework of the humanities and arts, the author underscores the role of aesthetics as a key element in the study of artistic works and processes. Pedagogical research, a relevant area for students, is presented as a means to enhance the effectiveness of teaching. The chapter details eight sub-fields of education and offers examples of possible areas for dance research (e.g., the didactics of dance education and the use of dance in therapeutic pedagogy). Teacher education students may also find the sections on theoretical and applied psychology research particularly interesting, as it explores the challenges and difficulties faced by dancers in their training and careers, with the aim of fostering healthier and more successful careers. A similar aim is pursued in the field of dance medicine (which features

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research into the health-related aspects of dance), providing recommendations for the prevention of health problems based on research results. Dance folkloristics is also included in this chapter; however, since Chapter 5 discusses this topic in detail, introducing a conceptual framework along with aspects and methods relevant to folk dance research, it would have been more logical to position these two chapters consecutively or to merge them into a single chapter.

Chapter 3, entitled *Methodological issues in dance research*, provides a theoretical foundation for conducting dance research. In addition to discussing the subject matter and process involved in research, it also addresses ethical issues.

Chapters 4 and 6 discuss background research, including the guidelines for locating sources and using citations. They present a wide range of recommended sources of research literature, both print and digital, and discuss their accessibility. Particularly valuable is the inclusion of concise descriptions and evaluations of libraries, archives, and journals, which assist readers in the selection of appropriate sources. The appendices contain fifteen pages of additional dance-related resources, from museum and archival sources to film footage and weekly news bulletins. The citation practices are based on the APA (American Psychological Association) guidelines and include, in addition to general scholarly works, sources specific to dance research (e.g., choreography, stage performance, music, and film).

To help readers design empirical research and select research methods, Chapters 7 and 8 describe both traditional methods as well as those specific to art and dance (such as ethnographic collection and arts-based participatory action research), providing specific dance-related studies as examples for each method.

The last two chapters discuss the genres of academic assignments and selected types of scientific publications (i.e., presentations, seminar papers, artwork analyses, abstracts, reviews, and case studies). In the case of the final three types of publications, questions may arise as to why the authors chose to introduce these specifically, when there are many other types of studies that are commonly used to present dance research.

The second volume, published in English by the *University Press of Florida* in 2023, also deals with dance research. The book is entitled *Research methods in the dance sciences* and is edited by Tom Welsh, Jatin P. Ambegaonkar, and Lynda Mainwaring. The editors emphasize the diversity and interdisciplinary nature of dance research, as demonstrated by the diverse backgrounds of the 24 contributing authors representing the following disciplines: dance sciences, health sciences, sports sciences, psychology, medicine, physiology, kinesiology, visual and performing arts, and theatre and dance. The book's main aim is to provide a scientific basis for empirical dance research for all interested parties, including dancers, teachers, researchers, psychologists, and clinicians. Spanning 417 pages, the volume covers the foundations, methods, and applications of dance research in six parts and 23 chapters. Its structure is reader-friendly: each chapter begins with introductory questions to stimulate thinking, answers to which are provided throughout the chapter, which concludes with a summary and highlights. The visual emphasis on the opening questions and concluding ideas further contributes to the reader's experience. At the end of some chapters, there are also exercises to help readers put into practice what has been discussed in the chapter.

Part I discusses the foundations and context of dance and other empirical scientific research, aiming to help novice researchers acquire the essential knowledge necessary for undertaking research.

In Part II, the authors explore the basics of research, including the first steps, such as collecting background literature, selecting a topic, navigating scientific databases, selecting relevant sources, and understanding the importance of references. This section also presents the main types of research in dance studies, which differ from the categories presented in the Hungarian volume and partially overlap with research methods that are discussed in detail in Part IV (e.g., observational, questionnaire-based, interview, or descriptive research). This distinction arises from the fact that research types are grouped according to their function, that is, whether the purpose of the research is descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory. Part II concludes with chapters on ethical issues in dance research and the steps and conventions for writing a literature review.

Part III focuses on research design, encompassing topics such as participant selection, data management, and researcher integrity. The discussion of data management includes an overview of data analysis techniques, while the section on integrity addresses issues of validity and reliability in research across different research paradigms.

Part IV discusses research methods used in dance research across nine chapters, some of which partly overlap, such as *Qualitative Methodologies* and *Case Studies, Case Reports and Case Series*, likely due to the involvement of different contributing authors. Similarly, data analysis is dealt with in several chapters with varying degrees of depth. These include detailed descriptions of statistical procedures that are probably beyond the capabilities of novice researchers, as seen in Chapter 17.

The final two sections (Parts V and VI) go beyond research design and implementation to discuss the presentation and application of research findings, as well as to outline career opportunities in dance sciences. The Appendices section (*Appendix A-C*) contains sample consent forms necessary for conducting dance research and a list of journals dedicated to dance research.

In summary, both volumes contribute to the promotion of scientific approaches to dance research and can be used as practical guides for designing and conducting dance-related research. While the Hungarian-language book is primarily aimed at university students, the English-language volume is intended for both novice and experienced researchers. The HDU handbook provides a concise and focused overview of research topics in the field of dance and includes topics specific to Hungary (such as folk dance research and folklore studies), making it more suitable for thesis research. In contrast, the volume edited by Welsh and colleagues is more extensive and detailed in scope. While some chapters may be challenging for novice researchers, the reader-friendly layout and accessible writing style make it suitable even for non-native speakers of English.

## References

- Lanszki, A. (ed.) (2020). *Bevezetés a táncsal kapcsolatos kutatások módszertanába* [*Introduction to dance research methodology*]. Magyar Táncművészeti Egyetem.
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