"Oi! Dancing Boy!":
how adolescent boys recuperate masculinity and (hetero) sexuality in dance schools and secondary schools.

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

Signature……………………………………………

Abstract

This thesis is an empirical study into the experiences of young male dancers, aged 11-18 years, in the north west of England who, outside of their secondary schools, attend private-sector dance schools for tuition in one or more dance genres such as ballet, ballroom/latin-american, contemporary, jazz, tap and urban dance. Its prime focus is to explore the ways in which these young dancers contest the two dominant Western discourses that position dance as a 'feminine' activity (e.g. Sanderson, 2001; Stinson, 2001; Risner, 2002a; Gard, 2003) and males who dance as subject to a homosexual presumption (e.g. Rodgers, 1966; Grant, 1985; Hamilton, 1999; Risner, 2007).

Data were generated from semi-structured interviews with 26 male dancers, 4 parents, 6 teachers and 4 dance policymakers / administrators. Explored through the theoretical lens of 'inclusive masculinity theory', characterised by a softening of masculinity and an erosion of homophobia (Anderson, 2009), data were analysed thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Findings suggest that most male dancers continue to experience bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation, especially from their male peers in secondary schools, where orthodox forms of masculinity proliferate still.

While my analysis finds 'inclusive masculinity theory' inadequate to explain the lived experiences of most of these young male dancers, I nonetheless find much value in the related concepts of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996) and 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012), these being identity-management techniques adopted by some males who transgress heteromasculine boundaries. Drawing on these 2 concepts, I pinpoint 6 strategies employed by boys to shore up their masculine and/or heterosexual identities: professing attraction to females; acquiring a 'sporty' boy identity; reconceptualising dance as a sport; opting for 'cool' dance genres; acquiring popularity through dance and, finally, the policing of movement and choreographic practices. I find that by employing some, most or all of these recuperative techniques, boys are able to contest the aforementioned dominant discourses - that dance is for females (via masculine recuperation) and that boys who dance are presumed gay (via heterosexual recuperation).

Attention is also given to boys' experiences of dance in their secondary schools. I conclude that while ostensibly a prescribed component of the P.E. curriculum (at Key Stage 3), dance continues to be marginalised and coded as a 'feminine' subject and one delivered mostly by non-specialist, female teachers - a problematic, discursive and material (re)production of gender normativity. Attempts to woo boys into dance via heteronormative schemes of work in schools or through external initiatives such as 'Project B' from the Royal Academy of Dance, are also deemed problematic in their gender essentialism. Furthermore, the philosophy of dance education in schools, one that privileges 'process' over 'product', does little to foster boys' engagement with dance. Taken collectively, these findings are a cause for concern as well as a call to action.

By furthering our understanding of how young male dancers contest the dominant discourses that pertain to dance and masculinity, this thesis contributes to knowledge in the fields of both dance and education, the former still hitherto under-researched in the UK, especially in regard to boys' experiences of dance education and training in the private sector. In drawing upon the concepts of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996) and 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012), I illuminate how young male dancers re-inscribe their masculinity, and heterosexuality if appropriate, by their deployment of various recuperative strategies - findings that are apt, novel and original to the sociology of dance in England.

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Acknowledgements

Doctoral study usually depends upon the co-operation, expertise and goodwill of numerous people; it certainly did in my case, and I should like to acknowledge them here.

First, my thanks go to the male dancers, parents, teachers and policymakers who agreed to participate by sharing their experiences and knowledge. Without them there would be no thesis and it is my hope that the findings and recommendations therein, to dance education policy and practice, will be of some recompense and value to them.

Second, my love and gratitude go to my wife, Alison, and son, Alex, for their wholehearted support and interest in this research. Over the course of 5 years, events in one's life can have a considerable impact. In my case, these events have included a relocation to Lancaster (via temporary accommodation for 9 months without internet access!), two spinal surgeries and the death of my father. Amidst such turmoil, the constant, unconditional love of family and friends has been essential, as has that offered by Finlay, our faithful dog, who has spent many hours by my desk side, awaiting his next walk or treat, wholly unimpressed by my scholarly endeavours.

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List of abbreviations

ACE   Arts Council England

AQA   Assessment and Qualifications Alliance

BTEC   Business and Technology Education Council

CDMT   Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre

CPD   Continuing Professional Development

DCMS   Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

DfE   Department for Education

EBacc   English Baccalaureate

ESRC   Economic and Social Research Council

IMT   Inclusive Masculinity Theory

ISTD   Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing

ITT   Initial Teacher Training

ODUK   One Dance UK

OFQUAL   Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

PD   People Dancing – the Foundation for Community Dance

RAD   Royal Academy of Dance

UCAS   University and College Admissions Service

UKA   UKA Dance

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 A personal preface

Although it was a long time ago, 1969 in fact, I remember the day with startling

clarity because that day I took, quite literally, my first formal step into dance, so

beginning a lifelong passion for the art form and the foundations of a fulfilling

career in the arts and education. I recall standing, apprehensive but excited, at the

foot of the stairs leading up to the dance school called 'Studio 99' in my local town

of Rawtenstall, a drab 'mill town' in East Lancashire. I was nine years old.

Earlier that week I had spotted an advertisement in our local newspaper for

children's ballroom and latin-american dance classes starting there and quite fancied

the idea of learning to dance. I was not from a family of dancers, nor were we in any

way 'arty'; we were just ordinary working-class folk whose home was a tidy house

on a post-war council estate. I lived with my mother, Mary, who ran a market stall,

and my father, Robert, (known to everyone as Bob), who worked in a footwear

factory. Attending a local state primary school, I enjoyed English and anything

bookish, but I abhorred team sports; hopeless at football and cricket, I was always

the last to be 'picked' for a team – a humiliating weekly ritual that only served to sap

further what little physical confidence I had.

It was little wonder then I told no one at school of my desire to dance - except for

my good friend, Nigel. Boys like me who were no good at sports were mostly

invisible and marginalised there. That said, I had done well academically - until Year

Six - whereupon I'd entered Mr G's class and begun to sink without trace. I had never had a male teacher before and unlike many of my peers who were in school sports teams, I couldn't find any common ground with "Sir", an avid cricket fan who played for the town team. A deeply unhappy year culminated in my 'failing' the 11+ examination – a shock to my parents and my previous teachers who had predicted I would *"walk it"* to the local state grammar school. Surprised and bewildered, my mother saw the Headmaster, who like Mr G, was a keen sportsman and ran some of the boys' football and cricket teams. He told her that while my scores were *"borderline"* I hadn't secured the other vital element – his recommendation to the 11+ admissions panel. *"Why not?"* enquired my mother. *"Because I don't know him"*, came the blasé reply. Only then did I realise that not being 'sporty' could incur a cost.

Despite this 'failure', life in Year Six was offset by my joy in starting to learn to dance. From my first step, I quite simply never looked back; I was hooked, and I wanted to do more. My initial plan, to dance in secret, proved naive and impossible as I shared dance classes at 'Studio 99' with a couple of girls from my primary school. Once it became common knowledge that I danced, teasing and bullying became the norm, especially from some of the boys. And while it was deeply unpleasant and upsetting, I was not deterred from my hobby. Indeed, I *expected* to be bullied for it, but I was determined to continue and responded by keeping my own counsel, both at school and at home. I certainly did not want to make a fuss lest it jeopardise my new pastime, and I could imagine my father's unsympathetic response to any complaint from me – *"Just give it up then!"*

Transferring to secondary school, I once again became accustomed to jibes and worse; being picked on for being a *"puff"* or suchlike was commonplace. It did not help that I was also academically quite able and so acquired another label - as a *"swot"*. Ignoring such epithets, I continued to work hard, both in and out of school, trying unsuccessfully for the most part to demarcate my school life from my out-of-school life. However, the two were inextricably intertwined, especially after I started to do well at dance and attract local press publicity. However, incrementally, over a period of three or so years, some of the bullying and harassment began to abate. While still an 'outsider', my identity at school had somehow become conflated with my hobby. *"Chris, the dancer"* was a familiar refrain from both pupils and staff. It was, at last, an acceptance of who I was - for I had always thought of myself as 'a dancer'; now though, it was as if everyone else was just catching up.

Having started off with ballroom and latin-american dancing, I had soon branched out into ballet, tap and modern, enjoying them all and passing multiple exams over the next seven or so years. By then, I had left 'Studio 99' in search of teachers who would push me to the limits of my capabilities. I travelled regularly to Leeds, Manchester and London for lessons with some of the country's leading teachers. Inevitably, this was both expensive as well as time-consuming, and the costs did create some friction at home. As always, my mother was encouraging and supportive, while my father remained aloof and indifferent, showing no interest in my dancing except for its cost.

My training, albeit expensive, paid dividends; I did well in several national competitions, culminating in my winning the UKA Dance 'Medallist of the Year' title in 1977, awarded to the highest marked performer in the UK that year. And while it was a pleasing achievement it also posed a dilemma for me; I was, by now, a sixth-form pupil on the cusp of applying to university, and while I wanted to read for a degree, I still wanted to dance - not as a hobby, but seriously and professionally.

And so, the following year, setting aside my decent A level results and my university places, I opted instead to continue my dance training. I figured that, while young, I should continue to dance and then, later on, return to higher education. After another two years of training, I began a professional performing career with my dance partner, Gina. While I was talented, I was also too short to ever be a soloist in a major dance company, and so we decided instead to create an original dance show for the two of us - an eclectic mixture of ballroom, cabaret and theatre dance. In between 'numbers' I would take to the microphone to 'fill' while Gina ran off stage for ridiculously quick costume changes. Luckily, I had only one full costume change, just prior to our final 'number' - into a white 'cat suit', striped jacket and straw boater hat - for a vibrant, climactic Charleston! It was all great fun, an unforgettable experience in fact, but one that began to pall after a few years. And so, after exorcising the performing 'bug', I changed my focus and started working for my dance teaching qualifications.

I also wanted to realise my longstanding ambition to accrue some 'academic' qualifications and set about obtaining them. Thereafter, I embarked on a school

teaching career (English and Drama). I got married, to Alison, a former professional dancer and teacher and formed a thriving dance and drama centre which we co-ran for 25 years. Beyond the dance centre, we both became dance examiners, adjudicators, lecturers and syllabus writers, enjoying varied and fulfilling careers before I once again re-entered academia to begin this research, a rationale for which now follows.

1.2 Why research boys who dance?

Above, I reflected on some of my own experiences of being a young male dancer - my desire for secrecy, family financial pressures, an unenthusiastic father and bullying at school predicated on a homosexual presumption. Now, with decades of teaching experience behind me, I wanted to explore the contemporary experiences of young male dancers to better understand what, if anything, had changed since my day and to provide an evidence base to help shape future policies for dance education and training in England.

As a dance teacher, I am anecdotally aware that many boys cannot openly pursue their passion for dance and are, as I had been, hindered by societal constraints rooted in a pervasive binary notion of gender and gender (in)appropriate behaviours. I reasoned that if this narrow conception of gender continues to exert a potent regulatory force, it deserves to be interrogated and strategies formulated as to how best it can be contested. Thus, the focus of this research is on exploring the lived experiences of boys who *"dare to dance"* to better understand the means and extent to which they contest these regulatory forces of gender normativity. These

words, *"dare to dance",* tellingly uttered by Iain Mackay, a professional ballet dancer in 2017, suggest an acute awareness of the discourses surrounding male dancers and the resilience needed to confront them.

Indeed, scholars have established that two key discourses lie at the heart of the debate concerning males who dance. The first is that in Western society at least, the male dancer challenges the very foundations of the masculine ideal since, as Risner notes, "*the Western European paradigm situates dance as primarily a 'female' art form"* (2009, p.58), a view shared by other scholars (e.g. Sanderson, 2001; Stinson, 2001; Gard, 2003). Having existed since the sixteenth century, according to Hasbrook (1993), this discourse is prevalent still and contingent on it, a second discourse exists that boys who dance are often deemed gay, irrespective of their sexual orientation (e.g. Rodgers, 1966; Grant, 1985; Koegler, 1995; Van Ulzen, 1996; Hamilton, 1999; Risner, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2007, 2014).

Thus, irrespective of his sexuality, a male dancer can often be regarded as effeminate, "*where 'effeminate' is a code word for homosexual"* (Burt, 1995, p.12), a reminder that femininity is deeply interwoven with male homosexuality (Kimmel, 1994). Risner rightly concludes that *"boys who dance, unlike their male peers in athletics and team sports, are participating in an activity that already casts social suspicion on their masculinity and heterosexuality"* (2009b, p.68). My research, original in its dual focus, provides insights into the experiences of young male dancers who, beyond having some dance experience in their secondary schools, have also opted to train in private-sector dance schools. More particularly, it

explores how they negotiate *"the stigma and challenges that arise around the topic of men who dance"* (Fisher & Shay, 2009, p.5).

Dance is an area through which, as embodied beings, *"we negotiate the social and cultural discourses though which gender and sexuality is maintained"* (Burt, 2009, p.150). However, we know that, speaking more broadly, the social and cultural discourses on masculinity are evolving and shifting, but to what effect? And so, while this research is ostensibly a study of boys who dance, it is also a study of their masculine identities and how these are contested. As such, it explores how the social construction of masculinity and the gendered meanings associated with dance can, and do, play a pivotal role in influencing boys' involvement in the art form. I will, for example, seek to illuminate how the masculine identities of these male dancers are, at least partly, (re)produced through their preferences of dance genre(s) since their choices, or "*taste articulations*" (Cann, 2014, p.17), can be regarded by themselves and others as examples of (in)appropriate performances of their masculinity. As Clark and Paechter remind us, "*[D]ominant discourses concerning the nature of masculinity and femininity have profound effects on how males and females are able to enact and perform their embodiment"* (Clark & Paechter, 2007, p.262).

My belief in the continued pervasiveness of the male dancer discourses is, however, conflictual with recent sociological research which argues we are living in an era of more 'inclusive' forms of masculinity (Anderson, 2009). That being so, I was curious to know if male dancers were benefiting from such inclusivity which, (according to

Anderson's research on white, often middle-class youth in the UK and USA), is characterised by a decline in cultural homophobia and the emergence of softer forms of masculinity. According to him, men are now more likely to bond in emotional relationships with other men and to embrace a variety of behaviours once coded as 'feminine'. And so, I wondered, does this inclusivity extend to males who dance?

Developing Anderson's research, McCormack posited another related cultural and attitudinal shift – a *"declining significance of homophobia"* among young men, concluding that *"this has expanded the range of behaviours that they can enact without social regulation"* (McCormack, 2012, p.95). However, we know that, historically speaking, male dancers have been liable to homophobic bullying, especially in their secondary schools, and subject to physical and verbal abuse (e.g. Risner, 2009). Central to this decline in homophobia is an understanding of McCormack's model of *"homosexually themed discourse"*, a constituent of which is *"pro-gay language"*, a form which lacks any pernicious intent and has a positive social effect (ibid., p.118). I will later use this model to determine how the language used to describe young male dancers can be best understood, and to determine if it is homophobic or is it better conceptualised as *"fag discourse"* (Pascoe, 2007), *"gay discourse"* (McCormack, 2012) or as McCormack finds, simply *"pro-gay language"?*

It is unsurprising, given the peripheral status of dance within primary and secondary education in England, that the majority of dance provision for young people is provided instead by private-sector dance schools, similar to the one I

attended as a child. Moreover, a huge gender imbalance exists within the sector as most dance schools are populated extensively, and sometimes exclusively, by girls. Hugely popular then, these private-sector schools operate on a commercial basis and provide (mostly) part-time education and training across a range of dance genres, often in the core theatrical styles of ballet, tap and jazz dance, but more recently contemporary and urban dance styles (such as break, hip-hop and street) have also featured in their curricula. Moreover, there is now some concern within the sector regarding the lack of diversity in dance school populations in relation to three key areas - ethnicity, social class and gender (Arts Council England, 2007; Henley, 2012) and what measures could or should be taken to address these inequalities. I envisage that my gender-based research will contribute to this debate and help inform policy and practice in how best to support boys who dance in England.

As regards ethnicity, as Chapter Four explains, I found it impossible to assemble a diverse range of young male dancers and ultimately recruited 26 boys, all of whom identified as White British, except one, Saul, a black Caribbean. None had partaken of non-Western dance forms such as bhangra, bollywood or kathaki (Indian), although a few had heard of capoeira (African) with its emphasis on martial arts-inspired movements. A few boys who studied ballet had some familiarity with European national dances such as flamenco (Spain), polka (Czech Republic) or tarantella (Italy), but nothing beyond that.

Although not central to my research, the intersection between dance, gender and ethnicity is a fascinating one, a brief examination of which can reveal a host of inequalities. For instance, Shay & Sellers-Young (2016) found that, historically, dance practices and attitudes about ethnicity have sometimes been a source of discord, as when African Americans were told their bodies were unsuitable for ballet, or when Anglo-Americans painted their faces black to perform in minstrel shows. Here in the UK, for example, ballet, often perceived as a bastion of 'high' culture, is mostly populated by dancers, male and female, amateur and professional, who are white and Western - a demographic also reflected in their audiences and, as mentioned above, in my sample.

Similarly, non-Western dance forms intersecting with gender and religion can be illuminating, but merits only brief attention here since it was beyond the experiences of my participants. In some contexts, dance participation is linked to religious faith, but not always harmoniously. Muslim communities, for example, exhibit a range of attitudes towards dance; although mixed dancing is not allowed in Islam, males are allowed to dance together provided they cover their `awrah' (the parts of the body between the navel and the knee) and so ensure there is no temptation. Clearly then, as most Western dance styles would be inappropriate in Islamic culture, this may largely explain the often mono-cultural profile of private-sector dance schools in England.

Also pertinent to this lack of diversity in dance school populations is another intersecting factor - social class. In my sample, 20 boys self-identified as middle-class

but only six as working-class. To some extent, at least, social class can be a determiner of access to private-sector dance tuition. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that children from middle-class families are more likely to afford fees and other associated costs, such as clothing and footwear, than those from working-class families. We know that some individuals can experience a culturally affluent familial environment which, long term, furnishes them with 'capitals' - economic, cultural and social - forms of assets that can lead to privileged trajectories. Although beyond the remit of this thesis, the relationship between social inequality and patters of cultural taste and consumption is a complex and interesting one. In brief though, and applied specifically to dance, ballet, like opera, is often regarded as elitist and remote from the cultural currents of many working-class children and their parents. This can set in train a pattern of cultural reproduction whereby certain dance genres are deemed inappropriate for some individuals. Moreover, in an age of neo-liberal austerity, the erosion of arts-based subjects in the school curriculum, such as dance and drama, is clearly deleterious to economically disadvantaged children who are unable to access or afford such provision elsewhere, such as in private-sector dance schools.

It is unsurprising then, that the private-dance sector continues to be dominated by white, middle-class females (pupils and teachers). However, this research is *not* principally motivated by a desire to increase dance participation rates among males, or in remedying the social-class based inequalities in the sector - pleasing though they would be. Rather, its intention is to better understand the contemporary experiences of young male dancers by providing a rigorous evidence

base that can be used to advocate for changes to dance education policy and practice. In turn, though, it is hoped that the sector could then begin to recruit and retain a more diverse range of boys, especially into dance genres such as ballet where males are a relative rarity.

1.3 Research questions, design and methods

Consequently, to seek insights into young male dancers' experiences, two main research questions were formulated:

- What are boys' experiences of dance education and training in their dance schools and secondary schools?

- How do these boys contest the dominant discourses about dance and masculinity?

To facilitate the intended impact of this research, both within and beyond the dance sector, with organisations such as Arts Council England (ACE), Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre (CDMT), One Dance UK (ODUK) and government, a further question was deemed vital:

- What do these research findings imply for policy and practice in boys' dance education and training?

Situated within a broadly post-structural, interpretive framework, my research is principally an empirical, qualitative study. Initially however, to provide some context for the state of boys' dance education, quantitative data, in the form of dance examination entry statistics, were generated and analysed descriptively by dance genre. The major element, however, was the qualitative data generation which comprised semi-structured interviews with 26 male dancers, six dance teachers and

four parents. The dancers, aged 11-18, were selected from eight dance schools across the north west of England. Four interviews with dance policymakers/administrators from across England were also conducted, making a total of 40 interviews. Thereafter, the data were transcribed, classified and analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1.4 Thesis structure, key arguments and contribution to knowledge

Chapter Two synthesises the relevant literature on dance and its relation to masculinity, while Chapter Three considers the key theorisations of masculinities and the changing nature of their enactments, but with special reference to 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2009) and its potential salience to the experiences of young male dancers. Importantly though, as implied by the personal preface above, I cannot and do not claim to be an objective researcher in a positivist mode. Instead, I am situated squarely within this research, keenly aware of my subjectivity and with a clear agenda - to utilise my research findings to press for reforms to dance education and training and for the development of support strategies for vulnerable young male dancers. Thus, in undertaking this research, the need for sustained reflexivity on my part was imperative, and the steps taken to assure this are detailed in Chapter Four (Methodology), with its focus on positionality, research design and ethical considerations .

Subsequent chapters then combine analysis with discussion, each with a key focus. Chapter Five explicates boys' often contrasting experiences of dance education in their dance schools and in their secondary schools. The latter is characterised by

patchy provision and an uninspiring curriculum, often taught by non-specialists, such elements being commensurate with its low status and perception as a non-academic subject. Dance schools, meanwhile, offer privileged access to those able to afford it, along with mainly specialist teaching and a plethora of performance opportunities, reflecting the sector's distinctive ethos which is predicated more on 'product' than 'process', the latter being the dominant philosophy of dance in education.

Chapter Six then discusses the problematic consequences often faced by young male dancers in their secondary schools, which were found to be prime sites of oppression – of bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation – in contrast to the dance schools where boys were accepted, welcomed and even prized as a valuable asset. Keen to avoid repercussions at secondary school, boys who attempted to dance in secret (14 out of the 26 participants did this) were usually 'found out', while boys who did not resort to secrecy were nonetheless mostly discreet in sharing their identity as a dancer at school. Some boys found the anonymity of online spaces to be a useful resource for researching about dance and for learning dance steps. Interestingly, even if boys had a visible online presence, and most did, only isolated incidences of cyber-bullying were reported.

How boys contest the dominant discourses that surround dance and masculinity is the main focus of Chapter Seven. Prior to that, however, and relatedly, the chapter also explores how boys conceive of masculinity and how they construct their identity to be a 'masculine' dancer. I find a reliance on traditional masculine tropes, such as physical strength, as a perceived component of masculinity and ergo, of being a

'masculine' dancer coupled with an adherence to a supposedly outmoded gender

binary. Accordingly, in the thesis I shall refer to gender in these binary terms since

this reflects the views of my participants and it is their voices that must be heard.

However, in line with my broadly poststructuralist orientation, my own view is that

gender is increasingly seen as non-binary, especially by many young people, and

current scholarship supports this. For instance, Bragg et al., (2018) found that,

despite the enduring regulation of gender norms and expectations, young people

are more accepting of gender diversity, equality and the rights of sexual minorities.

In an online survey of 505 young people aged 13-18 across England, 69% of

respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that "*there are only two genders*", with

only 20% agreeing/strongly agreeing, while 85% agreed or strongly agreed that

"people should be free to choose their gender" (Bragg et al., 2018, p.6).

Bragg et al.'s findings might, therefore, offer some support to the theory of 'inclusive

masculinity' (Anderson, 2009), which posits young men now embodying a softer,

more inclusive version of masculinity, free from homophobia and able to engage in

practices previously thought 'feminine', such as emotional tactility, without being

perceived as weak or gay. In an era of 'inclusive masculinity', young men should,

presumably, be able to dance without censure, but my findings problematise

Anderson's claims, finding them mostly inapplicable in this particular context.

However, as noted above (Bragg et al., 2018), attitudes to gender identity are

changing, and while most of the young male dancers in my study have not yet

benefitted from a culture of inclusive masculinity (in their secondary schools at

least), that is not to say gender relations more broadly are in stasis. Proponents of 'inclusive masculinity theory' (IMT) have often made bold claims as to its ubiquity. My problematisation of this, will, I hope, contribute to a growing body of scholarship that seeks a more nuanced understanding of contemporary masculinities with, for example, less reliance on typologies that, if accepted uncritically, can mask a host of underlying inequalities.

Moreover, as I explicate in Chapter Seven, an initial weakness of inclusive masculinity theory (IMT) was its inability to explain *how* boys regulated and reproduced their heterosexual identities in an inclusive setting without recourse to homophobic language. In response, McCormack, a proponent of IMT, conceptualised a social process, 'heterosexual recuperation', to illuminate how *"the boundaries of heterosexual identities are strengthened"* by its use (McCormack, 2012, p.89), and identified 2 forms - 'conquestial' and 'ironic' recuperation. The former conceptualises *"the ways in which boys boast of their heterosexual desires or conquests"* (McCormack, 2012, p. 90), a trait previously documented by Mac an Ghaill (1994), who noted its frequent use by some boys as a form of boundary maintenance. By contrast, in 'inclusive' settings, McCormack found it used infrequently and not in concert with overt forms of misogyny. The other form of recuperation, 'ironic', describes "*a satirical proclamation of same-sex desire or a gay identity made in order to maintain a heterosexual identity"* (ibid., p.90), but again this is not a new trait since it had been identified previously by Huuki et al., (2010) and Kaplan (2005).

While McCormack's refinement of IMT was focussed on seeking to explain how boys regulated and reproduced their heterosexual identities in an inclusive setting, my focus was to understand how young male dancers validated their masculine and/or heterosexual identities in *non-inclusive* settings – i.e. in their secondary schools – which were found to be prime sites of oppression for most of them. My analysis found that, irrespective of the boys' sexuality (n=7 homosexual; n=11 heterosexual; n=1 bisexual; n=7 unknown), all of them were keen to assert a masculine identity, albeit in different degrees. In addition, I found that heterosexual boys were keen to be recognised as such, rather than be presumed gay. Thus, to explain how boys validated their masculine and/or heterosexual identities, I identified six forms of 'recuperation' used by them:

- professing attraction to females

- acquiring a 'sporty' boy identity

- reconceptualising dance as a sport

- choosing 'cool' dance genres

- acquiring popularity through dance

- policing of movement and choreographic practices

All of the participants deployed at least some of these recuperative techniques, and in so doing accomplished two things. First, as noted above, they were able to shore up their masculine identity, thereby contesting the Western discourse that dance is for females (e.g. Sanderson, 2001; Stinson, 2001; Risner, 2002; Gard, 2003). I have termed these practices 'masculine recuperation', a term originally coined by Hansen, an anthropologist, to describe a prevalent theme in Hindu nationalist discourses and

organisations in India as they strove to overcome their *"perceived 'effeminization' by expunging the Muslim 'Other'"* (Hansen, 1996, p.138). It is also clearly relevant here since it represents a concerted attempt by boys to maintain gender boundaries (e.g. Thorne, 1993; Britton, 1990), by "*the overcoming of emasculation*" (Hansen, 1996, p.138).

Secondly, some heterosexual boys also employed an additional recuperative technique to reassert their sexuality and so contest the other dominant Western discourse - that boys who dance are presumed gay (e.g. Rodgers, 1966; Grant, 1985; Hamilton, 1999; Risner, 2002a, 2003, 2007). In such cases I have utilised McCormack's (2012) concept of 'heterosexual recuperation'. However, while McCormack found only a limited amount of heterosexual recuperation used by his participants in settings of inclusive masculinity with no homophobia, by contrast, my participants employed it frequently, both in their (often homophobic) secondary school and sometimes beyond. Male dancers' use of this strategy can therefore be seen as part of a broader pattern of practices identified by scholars such as Epstein (1997) and Salisbury & Jackson (1996), whereby boys who transgress heteromasculine boundaries often deem it necessary to publicly defend their heterosexuality through homophobia (not applicable to my participants since they all exhibited inclusive values) and/or other heterosexualising behaviours, such as the six recuperative ones identified here.

My findings contribute to knowledge in the fields of dance, education and sociology. I hope that dance, still hitherto under-researched in the UK, especially in

regard to boys' experiences of private-sector dance education and training, about which little is known, will be the main beneficiary. In particular, my analysis suggests the need for a sector-wide debate on key issues including retention strategies for boys alongside improved, coordinated support (between home, secondary school and dance school) for those young male dancers experiencing bullying or other negative consequences. Alongside this, I call for reforms to initial teacher training and CPD to develop a more inclusive, gender-sensitive and flexible pedagogy (Warin & Adriany, 2015; Warin, 2018). This is especially acute given the shrinking provision of dance and other arts subjects in mainstream education, where they struggle for parity of esteem with so called 'academic' subjects and attract fewer resources, including subject specialist teachers.

However, there are already several beacons of good practice evident in community and school/college dance provision and pedagogy, but these have yet to permeate into the private sector which, I argue, is too often isolationist in character. Thus, I believe, facilitating a process of knowledge exchange between these disparate public/private elements of the dance sector, (perhaps facilitated by organisations such as One Dance UK), would be highly beneficial in tackling these pressing issues.

These changes to policy and practice are, nonetheless, but a constituent part of my thesis, based as they are on my now greater understanding of boys' experiences of their dance education and training. As a contribution to knowledge, that understanding was enabled by my application of the sociological lens of 'inclusive

masculinity theory' (Anderson, 2009) and its related concepts of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996) and 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012). This lens illuminated how young male dancers used these recuperative strategies to re-inscribe their masculinity and/or heterosexuality and so nullify one or both of the dominant discourses surrounding males who dance. In so doing, I add to our knowledge of the social processes at work in boys' dance education and of their lives beyond the dance studio, especially in their secondary schools. The findings are original and significant, not only to the sociology of dance but to education and gender studies more broadly. The policy and practice recommendations mentioned above and explicated in full in Chapter Eight, stem directly from this theoretically informed contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 2 Theorising masculinities: concepts and interpretations

2.1 Introduction

In addition to exploring boys' experiences of their dance education and training (Research Question One), much of this thesis is devoted to discussing how these young males contest the two dominant discourses that surround them (Research Question Two) – that dance is 'feminine' (e.g. Gard, 2003; Risner, 2009a; Risner, 2009b) and that male dancers are subject to a homosexual presumption (e.g. Williams, 2003; Burt, 1995). These discourses are predicated on a key constituent - that of male dancers being unmasculine - and so this chapter will explore the concept of masculinity as a social construct, offering a critical interpretation and synthesis of its key concepts but with a special focus on 'inclusive masculinity theory' (Anderson, 2009), since this is the main theoretical lens for the thesis.

An important strand of IMT is the notion of 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012) which explains how, in inclusive settings, heterosexual males reaffirm their sexuality without recourse to homophobia. However, I operationalise and develop this concept to understand how it is used by many male dancers in secondary school settings which are *not* inclusive. Furthermore, I draw on the notion of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996) to explain how young male dancers, irrespective of their sexuality, also recuperate their masculinity. Using these recuperative strategies, young male dancers are able to contest the dominant discourses pertaining to dance and masculinity; masculine recuperation contests the discourse that posits dance is for females, while heterosexual recuperation contests

by the discourse that presumes male dancers to be gay. Before addressing 'inclusive masculinity' and 'recuperation' strategies, however, I shall explore the uses and limitations of Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1995) since this was the precursor to 'inclusive masculinity', the latter being written against it by Anderson when he declared the former *"redundant"* (Anderson, 2009, p.32).

A further chapter will then synthesise the concepts and interpretations relating specifically to dance and masculinity; that chapter will conclude with a comparative section drawing together key elements from both chapters. First, however, in this chapter, I begin by analysing the salient literature on masculinities, explaining how they have provided the academic context and informed the theoretical frame for this research, one broadly sympathetic to poststructuralist and social constructionist approaches to identity.

2.2 Boys can't dance, so boys don't dance: *"the gender straitjacket"* (Pollack, 1998)

I referred earlier to the two dominant discourses pertaining to dance and masculinity in Western society - that dance is an activity for females (e.g. Sanderson, 2001; Stinson, 2001; Gard, 2001; Risner, 2009a) and that boys who dance are often subject to a homosexual presumption (e.g. Rodgers, 1966; Grant, 1985; Koegler, 1995; Van Ulzen, 1996; Hamilton, 1999; Risner, 2002a, 2007, 2014). Importantly though, as I indicated in Chapter One, my research is not just focussed on dance per se but on the salience of these discourses and how young male dancers construct and embody versions of masculinity to contest them.

Although constructs of masculinity vary across historical and cultural contexts, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', proposed by sociologist Connell (1995), has been influential in explaining how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and some other men, such as gay males perceived as 'feminine'. As the dominant form of masculinity, and the one with most cultural value, its traits include heterosexuality, whiteness, physical strength and the suppression of emotions, since the latter are equated with the 'feminine' and must be repudiated. As a concept, hegemonic masculinity grew *directly out of homosexual men`s experience with violence and prejudice from straight men"* (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832), and led to Connell`s pioneering elucidation of four patterns of masculinity in the current Western gender order - hegemonic, complicit, marginalised and subordinated.

Complicit masculinity describes a form of masculinity in which, although a man may not fit all the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, he does nothing to challenge it either and so accrues some patriarchal benefit. Marginalised masculinity describes a form of masculinity whereby a man does not have access to hegemonic masculinity because of certain characteristics such as race or disablement, while subordinate masculinity describes men who exhibit traits that are anathema to hegemonic masculinity such as physical weakness or emotional expressiveness. Effeminate and gay men are often positioned as such by others, but as my homosexual participants attested, would not necessarily claim to possess a subordinated masculine identity themselves.

Clearly then, hegemonic masculinity theory could have been an appropriate

analytical lens for studying males who dance since, for example, it is well known that

the dance profession is home to plentiful numbers of gay males, many of whom are

marginalised by homophobia. At least 50% of men in American professional dance

companies identify as homosexual (Bailey & Oberschneider, 1997), as do seven out

of my 26 participants (26.9%). While Connell's view of hegemonic masculinity as

normative, since it *"embodies the most honoured way of being a man"* (Connell &

Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832), is now disputed by proponents of 'inclusive

masculinity', my reading of her theorisation was illuminating since it foregrounded

masculine embodiment as an important link between the construction of masculinity

and the social power structure of patriarchy. This focus on embodiment, and its link

to masculinity, (subsequently explored by, and central to Anderson's research on

inclusive masculinity), is clearly pertinent to my work on young male dancers, whose

bodies are not only gendered markers but also the instruments of their artistic

expression.

Significantly too, this nascent interest in embodied identity helped to shift my

thinking away from pursuing a purely poststructuralist approach by offering me

reassurance that the corporeal was as worthy of investigation as was the

discursive, and that in my research context at least, the two should be seen as

mutually entwined and insightful. As I discuss in Chapter Three, my subsequent

readings on the embodied nature of dance and dancers' experiences (e.g. Thomas,

2003; Allegranti, 2011; Pickard, 2015) further reinforced this belief that the

discursive can co-exist with the corporeal in highly generative ways.

Returning to Connell though, hegemonic masculinity has been applied to the field of education to explain the dynamics of classroom life, especially concerning models of resistance and bullying among boys, but also to account for male (and sometimes female) behaviours across the educational life span, ranging from primary schools (Frosh et al., 2002; Paechter, 2007), secondary schools (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Jackson, 2006a; Jackson, 2006b), further education and training institutions (Read, Archer & Leathwood, 2003) and higher education (Dempster, 2009, 2011). However, deploying hegemonic masculinity in these contexts also exposed some of its limitations. Jackson, for instance, argued that *"explanations that draw <u>only</u> (my underlining) on the concept of hegemonic masculinities to explain 'laddish' behaviours in schools are inadequate"* (Jackson, 2006b, p.11) since they ignore the interplay of the social, cultural and psychological, and pay insufficient regard to structure and agency.

Similarly, in a nod to the growing appeal of the newer theory of 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2009), Haywood & Mac an Ghaill questioned the conceptual usefulness of hegemonic masculinity within educational contexts and offered alternative ways that hegemonic masculinity may be configured without recourse to the *"cultural resources of homophobia or misogyny"* (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2012, p.578). If so, masculinity would no longer be equated with patriarchy; instead *" there may be discourses outside of traditional patriarchal masculinity where boys and young men can make their identities male"* (ibid., p.578), suggesting that a more nuanced relationship might exist between hegemonic masculinities and other masculinities where *"dominance is more fragmented and unpredictable"* (ibid.,

p.578). These points highlight the value of a more intersectional approach to the study of masculinities, with less reliance on the typologies inherent in Connell's schema, typologies that are unable to capture the nuances and sometimes contradictory nature of contemporary masculinities – a critique that can also be levelled against 'inclusive masculinity theory' since it polarises masculinities into 'inclusive' or 'orthodox' forms (Anderson, 2009). However, there is a recognition that while 'inclusive masculinity theory (IMT)' is singular in title, Anderson stresses that challenges to hegemonic masculinity will vary by contextual factors, such as geography, and are therefore best described in the plural as inclusive 'masculinities' since these masculine manifestations will be many and varied. For instance, Anderson did not find men performing same-sex kisses in California as he did at a British university, and so the pluralisation, 'masculinities', is meant to signify the multiple nature of IMT.

In opposition to IMT, Anderson's conceptualisation of 'orthodox' masculinity is synonymous with the key tenets of Connell's hegemonic masculinity (such as anti-feminine and homophobic dispositions coupled with bravado) and is perhaps exemplified by a particular and enduring construction of masculinity - that of 'the lad'. Listening to male dancers' accounts of their negative experiences in day schools, typified by harassment and marginalisation from male peers, I was struck by their frequent use of the term "lad(s)", often used pejoratively to describe, for example, *"being bullied by the lads"* (George, aged 13). For most of my participants, being 'a lad' was an alien identity since it denoted a problematic form of (hegemonic) masculinity, defined by Connell as "*particular kinds of behaviour and*

ways of being which are made culturally dominant and come to be seen as the pattern of masculinity in general" (Connell et al., 1982, p.10).

Scholars subsequently highlighted the link between laddishness and hegemonic masculinity, the latter being the *"standard bearer of what it means to be a `real` man or boy"* (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, p.119), and as my participants revealed, those who failed to match this dominant construction of valorised masculinity were all too aware of it. For instance, Roger (15) told me, "*I'm not one of the lads. I'm not into sports or after girls all the time like most of them are. I don't fight or get into trouble at school. It's just not me. I just keep my head down really."* Roger's testimony, like George's above, denotes the gulf between boys' own identities and those of 'the lads' around them. Moreover, it illustrates the tendency of many male dancers to define themselves in opposition to laddism, a conflation in their view with the excesses of hegemonic/orthodox masculinity. That said, while these male dancers did not aspire to be *'one of the lads'*, they did wish to (re) construct a masculine identity and, if appropriate, a heterosexual one too, but one predicated on the values of 'inclusive' masculinity which they were found to practise. Chapter Seven explores this point in detail.

Originally associated with the work of Paul Willis (1977), the term 'lad' originally referred to a group of white, working class anti-school boys. By the 1990s, however, it was also in use by, and descriptive of, some middle-class boys too. Similarly, 'laddishness' has been equated with school underachievement, often from working-class boys, but as Francis (1999a) found, contrary to popular discourse,

'laddish' behaviour can span both social class and ethnicity. But what, in scholarly

terms, does it mean to be one of *'the lads`* as mentioned by George and Roger,

above? Francis equated it with:

> *A young, exclusively male, group, and the hedonistic practices popularly associated with such groups (for example, `having a laugh`, alcohol consumption, disruptive behaviour, objectifying women, and interests in pastimes constructed as masculine).* (Francis, 1999, p.307)

As Epstein (1997) noted, and as the participants' narratives above imply, boys define

their identities against the 'Other', with the 'Other' including gay masculinities as

well as anything perceived to be feminine. Similarly, both Connell (1995, 2005) and

Martino (1999) found that not only was hegemonic masculinity constructed in

relation to, and against, femininity, it was also constructed against subordinated

forms of masculinity. Thus, masculine identities are not only historically and

culturally situated but they are constructed, maintained and regulated in social

milieus such as schools. Moreover, and pertinent to my work, this *"gender

straitjacket"* (Pollack, 1998) acts to police the behaviours of most boys; anything

regarded as 'feminine', such as dance, is therefore antithetical to both hegemonic

masculinity and laddishness and so must be rejected. As I discuss in Chapter Six,

many young male dancers, aware of these policing mechanisms and the

consequences of transgression, resorted to secrecy in their secondary schools when

learning to dance.

Schools then, are significant sites where the dominance of discourses that limit the

parameters of masculinity (and femininity) are played out. When applied to dance,

we know that dominant discourses position dance as 'feminine' (e.g. Gard, 2003, 2006, 2008; Risner, 2009a) and that male dancers are subject to a homosexual presumption (e.g. Burt, 1995, 2001; Thomas, 2003; Williams, 2003). However, this need not dissuade some males from participating in certain dance genres (especially newer ones such as hip-hop or urban dance) which are culturally coded as 'masculine' since they embody elements of valorised tenets of normative masculinity such as physical strength and competitiveness. As I discuss in Chapter Seven, for boys who dance more 'feminine' genres (such as ballet), and therefore exceed the *"parameters of masculinity"* (Cann, 2014, p.30), a range of mechanisms are deployed to recoup it (and their heterosexuality, if appropriate), such as reconceptualising dance as a sport or acquiring popularity from success in dance.

Investigating motives for 'laddishness' at school, Jackson asked some Year 9 boys what a lad would <u>not</u> do; a number of respondents referred *"to things that they perceived girls do"* (Jackson, 2003, p.588), thereby reinforcing Epstein`s findings (1997) that boys define their identity in opposition to the 'Other' i.e. to femininity. These behaviours included holding hands, potting plants, playing with 'Barbie' but, also significantly for this research, playing hopscotch, which in one transcript was articulated thus:

> *Int: What do you think a lad wouldn`t do?*
>
> *Shaun: Like you don`t play hopscotch and stuff like that, unless you`re just like messing about.*
>
> *Int: Why wouldn`t they do things like that?*
>
> *Shaun: `Cause they`re girlie*

I was struck by this example since hopscotch is analogous to dance. It too requires coordinated and rhythmical movement with an emphasis on intricate leg and foot work, as well as demanding physical strength and stamina for its skilful execution. Its key movements, hops and springs, are also basic steps in many dance forms, including ballet. Shaun (above) equates the game of hopscotch and *"stuff like that"* (dance, we infer), to merely *"messing about"* and *"girlie".* Such attitudes speak powerfully of the still dominant social constructions of masculinity, the salience of gender boundary maintenance and the fear and consequences of non-conformity.

We already know from Francis and Skelton (2005) that the fear of social failure, (i.e. unpopularity) is a crucial element in the lives of many children, who respond by constructing identities that enable them to *'fit in'*, since being `*popular*` and `*fitting in*` usually provide immunity from marginalisation or bullying. As Jackson reminds us, and as my participants attested, the performances required to *'fit in'* are not only *"gendered"* but *"policed"* (Jackson, 2010b, p.47) for gender conformity. Similarly, as Kenway et al., suggest, *"[f]ear of others` opinions and of isolation and the need for a secure identity are primary motivating forces leading many to adopt safe behaviours and to make safe choices well within gender conventions"* (Kenway et al., 1998, p.137-8). Moreover, as Jackson concludes, and as my research finds, fear can re-inscribe heteronormative power relations:

> *It is not difficult to find examples in schools of fears working to the advantage of the most powerful groups in society. Social fears about being "othered" for example, work to constrain and contain particular versions of (hetero) femininity and (hetero) masculinity and thereby reinforce established power relations pertaining to gender and sexuality.* (Jackson, 2010b, p.49)

This gender policing of heterosexual boys (and men) is not only a recurring theme in masculinities' scholarship, but a central thread in my analysis, reflecting its importance in boys' narratives when they spoke, for example, about the gendered significance of their choice of 'cool' or 'uncool' dance genres. Analogous to this is Cann's focus group studies with boys revealing the criticality of *"youth taste cultures",* together with a reaffirmation of the existence of *"limits"* regarding what is considered *"appropriate"* for boys to like (Cann, 2014, p.24). Instead of focusing on late teens or early 20s, as much previous work has done, Cann`s research, like mine, explored younger teens (14-year olds), a crucial time when young people are *"becoming more aware of their gender roles and what is socially appropriate for a male or female"* according to Dumais, (2002, p.59). Cultural taste is thus understood by young males (and females) in *"gendered terms"* argues Cann, who cites the television programme, *'Glee'*, which follows the activities of an American high school musical theatre group of actors, singers and dancers, as an example of this, concluding that, "*[t]he idea that a boy would be ridiculed for saying he liked something such as Glee reminds us that we still have some way to go before we can say we live in a time of inclusive masculinity"* (Cann, 2014, p.26).

Nor is this discourse of (in)appropriate tastes confined to dance, since Jarviluoma et al., (2003) found that engaging in certain music cultures associated with femininity *"endangered"* masculinity, while Ward's research (2014) into the experiences of white working-class heterosexual young men, self-identified as *"emos",* followers of an alternative music scene in the mining villages of south Wales, often found them

alienated, bullied and victimized for their apparent non-normative performances of masculinity. Such findings chime with my own - that the dominant discourses surrounding dance are, by and large, unchanged, since dance is understood in gendered terms as 'feminine' and those males who practise it are subject to a homosexual presumption.

However, despite the undoubted significance of these *"youth taste cultures"* (Cann, 2014, p.17), as Connell (1995) has noted, the most important marker among males is sexuality, with subordination occurring not only in the oppression of homosexual boys, but as noted above and elsewhere in this thesis, in the gender policing of heterosexual boys and men. As my research confirms, gay teens are often 'Othered' from their heterosexual male peers who are thought to be 'typical' and so *"it is through these distinctions that an 'acceptable' version of boys` masculinity is (re)produced"* (Cann, 2014, p.27).

This view is, however, contested by proponents of 'inclusive masculinity theory' (IMT) who argue, among other things, that gay teens are enjoying increased acceptance in the social world and that pursuits traditionally associated with the 'feminine' are now open to males without censure (McCormack, 2009, 2011). If so, this would augur well for male dancers since it would represent an erosion of the dominant discourses that posit dance as 'feminine' and male dancers as subject to a homosexual presumption, or as argued above, do we still have *"some way to go"* (Cann, 2014, p.26) before we can claim to live in an inclusive culture? While I wanted to believe the former, my long experience as a teacher suggested the latter

was more accurate. IMT was, therefore, an appealing if contested critical lens for my research and one I now explore in detail.

2.3 Inclusive Masculinity Theory (IMT): claims, critiques and uses

2.3.1 The end of homophobia and homohysteria?

If certain academic theories can be said to be fashionable, one could argue that IMT has been in vogue of late. However, as indicated earlier, the study of masculinities itself is not new, first attracting major scholarly attention in the 1970's. For instance, Pleck (1975) explored the social problems connected with masculinity, while David & Brannon sought to identify and define the 'rules' of masculinity, identifying 4: *"no sissy stuff"* (avoid feminine behaviours); *" be a big wheel"* (strive for status and achievement especially in sports and work); *"be sturdy as an oak"* (never show weakness and maintain emotional self-control at all times); *and "give 'em hell"* (take physical risks and be violent if necessary) (David & Brannon, 1976, quoted in Levine, 1998, p.145). Crucially though, it was Morin & Garfinkle who first posited that in the West gendered boundaries were principally driven by homophobia (1978), although the concept of homophobia had emerged earlier, the word being coined in 1969 by psychologist George Weinberg in the American pornographic magazine, *'Screw'*. There it referred to heterosexual men`s fears that others might think them gay, but this was later conceptualised by Anderson as 'homohysteria' to describe *"a culture of homophobia, femphobia and compulsory heterosexuality"* (Anderson,2009, p.7). As my findings will show, a related concern exists among many young heterosexual dancers who, while inclusive in their

attitudes to diverse sexual orientations (and therefore not homohysteric), oppose the presumption of homosexuality about themselves.

The salience of homophobia and homohysteria in young male dancers' lives is, therefore, central to this thesis, especially regarding boys' experiences in their secondary schools, as I explicate in Chapter Five. As such, it draws upon earlier work such as that by Nayak & Kehily (2008) who investigated homophobia's role in sustaining male hierarchies in schools, or in Plummer's (1999) work that showed the central role it played in many boys' lives. Moreover, the issue of homophobia was subsequently investigated by other scholars, including Anderson (2009) and McCormack (2012), the architects of IMT, who declared its significance to be in decline (McCormack, 2012). Central to this claim was an exposition of 'gay discourse' which they found was not homophobic in nature. I return to this below, but before then I explore more generally what constitutes IMT.

Emerging from qualitative research with (predominantly) white, middle-class team sport athletes and fraternity members in the USA and UK, IMT declares males to be more likely to embrace a variety of behaviours once coded as feminine, including certain same-sex sexual behaviours. It concludes that today's youth are less sexist, racist and less likely to indulge in bullying, including homophobic bullying, than earlier generations. Termed 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2009), it contrasts with another conceptualization, 'orthodox masculinity', a toxic form constructed in opposition to femininity and homosexuality and sustained by homophobia (a dislike of homosexuality) and homohysteria (the fear of being thought gay). While parallels

between Anderson's 'orthodox' masculinity and Connell's 'hegemonic' masculinity are seemingly obvious, Anderson argues that 'orthodox' masculinity is in retreat as more 'inclusive' forms now proliferate.

Sensitive to criticism that IMT's findings mostly rested on ethnographic work with university-aged males, subsequent research, conducted mostly with youths in schools and colleges, sought to establish if teenage males held similar attitudes (e.g. Adams, Anderson & McCormack, 2010; McCormack & Anderson, 2010; McCormack, 2011). The most comprehensive work on this, conducted by McCormack (2012), concluded that heterosexual male students *were* inclusive of their gay peers and proud of their pro-gay attitudes. Further, he found that being gay did not negatively affect a boy's popularity but being homophobic would do so. Consequently, he argued, in an inclusive setting, heteronormative masculinity, characterised by toughness and aggression is supplanted by emotional intimacy and displays of affection for male friends. Thus, free from censure and the threat of social marginalisation, teenage males are free to speak about and enact behaviours previously coded as 'feminine' and femininizing, such as to kiss, cuddle and express mutual love (Robinson, White & Anderson, 2017), to wear tight trousers, pink clothes and work in feminized occupational sectors such as retail (Magrath & Scoats, 2017). Even in the hypermasculine game of football, Magrath found almost universal acceptance of openly gay elite players (Magrath, 2017), while in domestic settings, Roberts (2018) found that young men were significant contributors to housework and parenting duties – all evidence, it is argued, of an expanded repertoire of male

behaviours and indicative of a growing culture of 'inclusive masculinity'.

However, such findings were in stark contrast to most of the narratives I heard from male dancers, parents and teachers in my capacity as a dance adjudicator, examiner and teacher, prior to starting this research. Irrespective of their sexuality, the majority of boy dancers had been called 'gay' or a variant thereof such as 'fag' or 'faggot'. And so, moving beyond a reliance on anecdote, when I began to generate and analyse data, I was keen to establish if these utterances were no more than harmless 'gay discourse' (McCormack, 2012) or were they, (as I suggest subsequently) more problematic than that?

As a central plank of IMT, the concept of 'gay discourse' describes the use of language that has a homosexual theme, but which is *not* homophobic. This was so termed by McCormack and Anderson (2010) as an attempt to understand how the effect of homosexually-themed language could vary according to social context. Their research, generated from ethnographic data with heterosexual rugby players, revealed that while participants voiced pro-gay attitudes and had openly gay friends, they nonetheless used phrases like *'don't be gay'* and *'that's so gay'*. The researchers asserted that this position was consistent because *'gay'* had two meanings – it referred to sexuality in some contexts and meant *'rubbish'* in others (Lalor & Rendle-Short, 2007). And so, it was argued, the two meanings were independent of each other, with McCormack concluding, "*[t]he word 'gay' has been used as an expression of displeasure without intending to reflect or transmit*

homophobia in many contemporary youth settings". (McCormack, 2011, p.670).

Along with Anderson he accounted for this by utilising Ogburn's theory of 'cultural

lag' (Ogburn, 1950), a phenomenon whereby *'two related social variables become*

disassociated because their meanings change at different rates' (McCormack, 2012,

p.114). Simply put, in this instance, the rugby players were using language that

lagged behind their pro-gay attitudes.

However, some earlier scholars held a contrary view and found the phrase *'that's so*

gay' to be homophobic (e.g. Sanders, 2008; DePalma & Jennett, 2010). Similarly,

research with male undergraduates on university campuses in the USA concluded

that this expression was "*a sexual orientation microaggression that can contribute to*

a hostile environment for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students" (Woodford et al.,

2012, p.429). Irrespective of one's position though, in considering the validity and

utility of IMT, contextual factors, such as the degree of intimacy in social

relationships, are also hugely significant. For instance, according to McCormack and

Anderson (2010), some heterosexual males use homosexually-themed language as a

form of *"social bonding"*, in which case it can have a *"positive social effect"*, but as

McCormack acknowledges, "*[w]hether language is considered homophobic, or*

whether it is better conceptualised as fag discourse, gay discourse or pro-gay

language, is primarily dependent on the homohysteria of the setting" (McCormack,

2011, p.664).

This term, homohysteria, defined as *"the fear of being homosexualised"* (Anderson,

2009, p.7) or a *'homosexually-panicked culture in which suspicion [of homosexuality]*

permeates' (Anderson, 2011, p.7) is another important and related plank of IMT, salient to my research since I wished to understand if my heterosexual research participants were themselves homohysteric. As homohysteria is the social fear of being thought gay because of behaviour considered gender atypical, it might be possible that some male dancers are homohysteric in outlook. However, Chapter Seven, which discusses this, finds no homohysteric (or homophobic) attitudes among young male dancers - only a concern that their sexuality be labelled correctly by others. Reflecting the inclusive nature of their masculinity, one heterosexual participant, Charlie (16), commented, "*some people think I'm gay just because I dance … obviously there's nothing wrong with being gay, but I'm not, I'm straight. I just wish they could get that right. It annoys me …*".

Contextually speaking, Anderson concluded that in order for homohysteria to exist, three variables must coincide:

> *a mass awareness that homosexuality exists as a static sexual orientation…*
> *a cultural zeitgeist of disapproval of homosexuality, and the femininity that*
> *is associated with it…and the need for men to publicly align their social*
> *identities with heterosexuality (compulsory heterosexuality) in order to avoid*
> *homosexual suspicion. In other words, a homophobic culture may look*
> *disparagingly at homosexuality, but without mass cultural suspicion one*
> *might be gay it is not a culture of homohysteria.* (Anderson, 2009, p.7)

This is important since, as my findings will show, some contexts in which boys operate, such as secondary schools, were often homohysteric ones, and as McCormack notes, "*high levels of homohysteria often cause boys to avoid any association with homosexuality*" (McCormack, 2012, p.71). In such circumstances, it is little wonder that some boys choose to disavow dance. Chapter Five, which

analyses boys' experiences of dance in their secondary schools (as well as their dance schools), has more to say about this.

Meanwhile, IMT scholars have been keen to interrogate any causal links between homophobia and homohysteria ; their conclusion, that decreasing homophobia has been accompanied by a decline in homohysteria, is unsurprising. Research by McCormack & Anderson in three school sixth forms in England found that young men were able to develop their masculinities without the fear of being 'homosexualised', citing one college as having a *"near total absence of homophobic discourse"* (McCormack & Anderson, 2010, p.15). Writing the Foreword II to McCormack`s book (2012), Anderson declared that *"it is no longer fashionable to be homophobic"* and it is *"no longer valid to assume homophobia among young men"* (McCormack, 2012, p.x1). Nonetheless, such bold claims can be problematic and while it is acknowledged that cultural homophobia is declining, (and this process may well be more accelerated within many youth cultures), based upon the findings of a relatively small sample of students, these are still sweeping claims to make. Moreover, they conflict with a large body of evidence drawn from organisations such as Stonewall, as well as from a plethora of other academics (e.g. Jackson, 2002, 2003; 2006b; Jackson & Dempster, 2009; McCarry, 2010; Phipps & Young, 2015; Rawlings, 2017) that suggest the continuing presence of homophobia in some contexts such as higher education. For instance, Stonewall found that two in five LGBT students in Britain (42%) hid their identity at university for fear of discrimination (Stonewall, 2018).

Nonetheless, Anderson maintains that his Anglo-American research suggests a rapidly declining cultural homophobia among 16-21-year-old heterosexual men which in turn has had a *"profound impact"* on their gendered performances (Anderson, 2013, p.25), a softening of their heterosexual masculinities and a shift away from *"conservative forms of muscularity, hyper heterosexuality and masculinity"* (ibid., p.26). Conceptualised as the aforementioned 'inclusive masculinity', and in a clear rejection of Connell's earlier schema, Anderson argues that the decreasing stigma against homosexuality has eroded the hierarchical stratification of masculinities *"leaving various forms of masculinities to exist without hegemonic dominance of any one type"* (ibid., p.26). Furthermore, he finds that the *"style"* of men`s masculinity *"most esteemed among these youths approximates to what I call inclusive masculinity"* (ibid., p.26), one characterized by an expansion of *"heteromasculine boundaries so that boys are able to express tactility and emotional intimacy without being homosexualised by their behaviours"* (ibid., p.27).

In sum then, for Anderson and other IMT scholars (e.g. Magrath, 2017), it is no longer fashionable to be homophobic in the West, since homophobia itself has now become a stigmatized social viewpoint. This is attributed to wider changes in legislation and cultural attitudes (Weeks, 2007) that have decreased homohysteria so that young people are now less concerned about being perceived as heterosexual (Anderson, Adams & Rivers, 2010). If so, this is a positive development and one of great potential benefit to, among others, young male dancers who have been subject to discourses that render them 'unmasculine' and subject to a homosexual

presumption. However, given its bold claims, both the premise and findings of IMT have been contested, and it is to those critiques I next turn.

2.3.2 Critiquing IMT

While IMT has been generative for many scholars, especially of late (e.g. Mc Cormack, 2012; Roberts, 2014; Ripley, 2017; Magrath, 2017), it has also been subject to substantial critique. For instance, although IMT conceptualizes masculinities as 'archetypes' ('orthodox' and 'inclusive'), the term is not clearly defined beyond constructing masculinity as an internal, relatively stable set of attitudes and behaviours. If this is the case, IMT seems incapable of allowing agentic change in individuals. This rigidity has led to IMT's critique (often, but not exclusively from feminist, poststructuralist researchers) for its seeming failure to accommodate fluidity, complex or even contradictory gender practices. Understanding individuals or social groups as exhibiting either 'orthodox' or 'inclusive' masculinity *"diminishes the fluidity and diversity of gender as both social and individual practice"* according to De Boise, (2014, p.326). Similarly, some have doubted how IMT can account for men who only partially engage with inclusive masculinity, or sometimes shift dynamically between orthodox and inclusive modes of masculinity (e.g. Dashper, 2012).

'Inclusive masculinity theory' was based originally on small-scale empirical work with mostly white, middle-class undergraduate men in educational contexts. As such, it gave insufficient attention to important intersecting variables such as age, race, religion, location or social class while nonetheless making bold claims for its

pervasiveness. Further research across a range of contexts then sought to address some of these omissions (e.g. Cashmore & Cleland, 2012; McCormack, 2012; Roberts, 2014; Blanchard et al., 2015; Murray & White, 2015; Magrath & Scoats, 2017), with their conclusions offering significant, additional support for the utility of the theory. For instance, Blanchard et al., undertook ethnographic work in a working-class sixth form in North East England and found only a *"small minority"* of boys embodying an orthodox archetype of masculinity but a *"proliferation of inclusive masculinities among working-class youth"* (Blanchard et al., 2015, p.1).

Critiquing some of the bold claims made by IMT, Simpson wrote in apparent disbelief that the schools cited by McCormack (2012) seem *"to exist in a vacuum and are extraordinarily free of any kind of conflict; there being no observed bullying or marginalization of any pupils, let alone overt homophobia"* (Simpson, 2014, p.74). He also took McCormack to task for '*uncritically'* accepting casual homophobic utterances which he (McCormack) believed had *"no intention to wound"* (McCormack, 2012, p.83), and for neglecting to examine why sexual differences might be concealed. Furthermore, Simpson argued that the notion, *"of a hierarchy with no clear dominance, on which inclusive masculinity theory is highly reliant, indicates that power relations have been swept aside or suspende*d" (Simpson, 2014, p.74), and so risks *"homogenizing younger men as largely unaffected by homophobia in societies now thought to encourage or oblige critical reflection on sexual difference"* (ibid., p.74). Thus, for Simpson, even if one accepts that overt homophobia is in decline, heteronormativity most often exists *"below the level of consciousness"*

(Simpson, 2014, p.74), and both Anderson and McCormack "*tend toward the assumption that heteronormativity is somehow less injurious*" as it can be "*more insidious and difficult to challenge given that it is most often covert*" (ibid., p.74).

However, this seems to be a misreading of the theory since, while Anderson has been keen to differentiate the non-hegemonic, lateral nature of IMT from the descending order of power in Connell's hegemonic masculinity, he has nonetheless maintained the continued but decreasing existence of orthodox masculinity, arguing that even in a setting of inclusive masculinity "*a diminished state of homohysteria is not to be mistaken as a gender utopia*" (Anderson, 2009, p.34), since certain men could still (re)produce heteronormativity, objectify women, value excessive risk-taking or use homophobic discourse.

2.3.3 Why use IMT?

In view of the above caveats and contestations, why, then, opt for IMT as the preferred theoretical framework? Obviously, exploring the research questions through the gender lens of 'masculinities' was immediately appealing since I could, for example, examine the ways in which boys who dance transgress the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' as theorized by Connell. However, further reading (beyond Connell and often poststructuralist in orientation) led me to believe that hegemonic masculinity was now rather limited in its utility to reflect on the more nuanced state of contemporary gender and power relations - especially so when, for example, one considers the improved social landscape for gay men and women in the UK in social, political and legal spheres (Weeks, 2007). What was required then

was a contemporary theory of masculinity, less reliant on typologies (although in practice these are hard to avoid) and one in sympathy with my social constructionist orientation.

Described as the *"most prolific paradigm of theorizing the increasingly liberal nature of contemporary masculinities"* (Magrath & Scoats, 2017, p.9), inclusive masculinity theory (Anderson, 2009), is a paradigm that offers a neat and complementary 'fit' between poststructuralist notions of identity and power and social constructionist accounts of gender and sexual identity formation. A further and compelling appeal of IMT is its regard for the materiality of the body (which is, after all, the essence of dance), but which in some post-structuralist theorising is an *"absent presence"* according to Leder, (1995, p.1). Writing about such approaches to the body, Pickard notes, *"[t]he body becomes a vehicle of expression of the self but in most cases what is explored are the kinds of talk or accounts that subjects give in particular social contexts"* (Pickard, 2015, p.47). This need to move beyond the confines of discourse and to embrace the corporeality of the body is enabled by 'inclusive masculinity theory' (Anderson, 2009), since it pays attention to both discursive elements and embodied experiences, vital constituents in capturing the complexity of young male dancers' lives.

Epistemologically speaking, as noted above, IMT is drawn from poststructuralist notions of identity and power together with social constructionist accounts of gender and sexual identity formation. As such, it accords with my own view that, *"there exist multiple masculinities among men, whether they be multiple*

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orthodox masculinities or multiple inclusive masculinities" (Anderson, 2009, p.31)

– a pleasing recognition of multiplicities within the seemingly binary constraints

of inclusive and orthodox masculinities.

Furthermore, IMT is flexible and capable of explaining the social dynamics in

contexts with both high and low levels of homohysteria, whereas Connell's

hegemonic masculinity is *"unable to capture the complexity of what occurs as*

cultural homophobia diminishes" (Anderson, 2009, p.7) since it was first

conceptualised in the mid-1980s when Western culture was not low in

homohysteria, but since then, *"significant changes"* have occurred which make

Connell`s theory *"redundant in today`s culture"* according to Anderson (2009,

p.32).

However, as previously explained, IMT has not been accepted uncritically. Anderson,

for example, appears too quick to relegate Connell's work to the annals of history.

Unlike hegemonic masculinity, IMT is not sustained by homophobia and an

associated fear of the feminine, and despite the indisputable changes that have

occurred in gender relations since the 1980s, the extent and effects of these changes

is still open to debate. While the paradigm of IMT is suitable for exploring

contemporary masculinities, Anderson's conclusion, that we are now living in a

culture of 'inclusive masculinity', is nonetheless bold and controversial. For example,

as a (supposedly) universalising discourse, I argue that, as yet, IMT has been under-

researched and not theorised fully in relation to men across the life course.

Furthermore, as I find and discuss in Chapters Five, Six & Seven, probably fuelled by

homophobia and a fear of the 'feminine', a minority of boys' fathers (educated and middle-class) were uneasy with, or even hostile to, their sons' dancing – a problematic masculinity at odds with IMT, while boys themselves were acutely aware of the necessity for ongoing gender boundary maintenance and masculine and/or heterosexual recuperation. It is, therefore, at least in part, this contentiousness that makes IMT a fascinating choice of lens to explore how young male dancers make sense of their masculine identities, and to understand why 'inclusive masculinity', practised by young male dancers themselves, is not enacted by all of their male peers.

In common with many other interpretative frameworks, I believe the study of masculinities is best regarded as an interdisciplinary field broadly concerned with the social construction of what it means to be a man, their behaviours, social roles and relations within a given society, alongside the meanings attributed to them. Importantly then, the term 'masculinity' stresses gender, unlike 'male', which stresses biological sex. This is significant and worth reiteration because the study of masculinities need not be confined to biological males; instead the field can deal with a diversity of identities, behaviours and meanings that occupy the label 'masculine' but, importantly too, it does not assume that they are universal. Although referring to 'inclusive masculinity theory' as a singular noun, we should, as Anderson acknowledges above, refer to 'masculinities' in the plural to accommodate this diversity, while acknowledging the cautions of several scholars (e.g. Hood-Williams & Harrison, 1998; Francis, 2000, 2002; Warin, 2006) to resist wherever possible the diminution of gender analysis to typologies or essentialism.

Speaking of essentialism, we know that male dancers engage in an activity which is culturally coded as 'feminine' often rendering them 'unmasculine' and liable to a homosexual presumption. As the preferred critical lens for analysing the experiences of these male dancers, IMT focuses directly on this fear of being thought gay, conceptualized as homohysteria (Anderson, 2009), alongside a related concept, homophobia, which was found to be of *'declining significance'* (McCormack, 2012, p. xxiv). Employing IMT would, therefore, enable me to ascertain if its claims could be validated by the lived experiences of young male dancers, but as I explicate over Chapters Five, Six & Seven, I was unable to endorse this.

Mine was an original and novel task; only Anderson's study of college male cheerleading in the USA (Anderson, 2005b), could be regarded as analogous since, like dance, it is culturally ascribed as 'feminine' (Davis, 1990; Adams & Bettis, 2003). Anderson found that males who cheerlead are "*self-promoted as real men, daring, heterosexual, and strong enough to hold a girl (or two) above their heads, yet agile enough to perform complex gymnastic routines*" (Anderson, 2009, p.116). Conceptualizing cheerleading this way assisted heterosexual men to "*raise their masculine capital and ward off homosexual suspicion*" but without the need to invoke homophobia, while living in a culture of *"gay suspicion"* (i.e. a homohysteric culture) these men were *"over-the-top about how heterosexual they were",* argued Anderson (ibid., p.118).

This point took my theorising in a new, but closely related direction, exploring the work of McCormack (2012) whose conceptualisation of 'heterosexual recuperation'

I subsequently utilised to explain how young male dancers re-inscribe their heterosexual orientation by deploying a range of heteronormative techniques, such as professing attraction to females. Chapter Three, which focusses on dance and masculinity, contains more discussion of this, such as the 'make it macho' strategy, identified by Fisher (2007) designed to broaden the appeal of ballet to males by constructing it as physically tough, competitive and solidly heterosexual.

And so, while recuperating heterosexuality was judged an effective means of contesting the discourse that posits male dancers as subject to a homosexual presumption, it was also necessary to address the other discourse that codes dance as 'feminine' and so I operationalised a further recuperative concept, that of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996) to explain how boys, irrespective of their sexuality, sought to re-inscribe their identity as 'masculine' not 'feminine'. This was first used in anthropology to describe a common theme in Hindu nationalist discourses in India, described as *"the metaphorical condensation of a myth of loss, or theft, of masculinity"* on the part of Hindu males who were *"driven by an urge to overcome this perceived effeminization by expunging the Muslim 'Other'"* (Hansen, 1996, p.138). The concept was later adopted by scholars in education to critique the 'failing boys' debate in Australia, North America and the UK and its siren call - for more male teachers. Such calls were driven by a *"recuperative masculinity politics"* (Martino & Kehler, 2006, p.1), predicated on the perceived feminisation of schooling and its detrimental effects on boys' education. These debates endure, and as I explicate in Chapter Seven, the call for more male dance teachers as 'role models' is sometimes accompanied by essentialist, recuperative practices such as '*Project B*' , a

recruiting initiative predicated on the aforementioned 'make it macho' approach (Fisher, 2007).

2.4 Summary

This chapter has analysed and discussed salient literature whose theoretical underpinnings are of gender as a social construction, such as Connell's conceptualization of multiple, hierarchical masculinities. However, this 'hegemonic masculinity' was but a precursor to the main epistemological basis of the thesis, my application of 'inclusive masculinity theory' (Anderson, 2009), predicated on poststructuralist theories of gender identity formation, to illuminate the lived experiences of young male dancers. After considering what constitutes IMT, I have then explored some critiques levelled against it before making a case for its use, arguing, amongst other things, that its bold claims such as a declining significance of homophobia and an erosion of homohysteria, ought to be tested in new contexts, such as the secondary schools inhabited by these young male dancers.

Furthermore, I have explored two related concepts - of 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012) and 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996), highlighting their relevance to my research, and in particular the ways in which they are used by boys' to contest the discourses about dance and masculinity. Thus, in subsequent chapters I will argue that coding dance as a 'feminine' activity is contested by boys' deployment of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996), while positing male

dancers as homosexual is contested by their use of 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012).

Retaining a focus on masculinities, the next chapter will focus on exploring, synthesising and analysing the salient literature on males who dance, and will illuminate the continued significance of the two discourses that pertain to dance and masculinity. A concluding and comparative section will then place these two chapters in dialogue with each other.

Chapter 3 Males who dance: addressing the dominant discourses

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and synthesises key literature on males who dance in the West. Specifically, I will interrogate the continued salience of the two dominant and interlinked discourses that surround dance and masculinity - that dance is for females (e.g. Sanderson, 2000, 2001; Stinson, 2001, 2005; Gard, 2003; Risner, 2009a) and that boys who dance are subject to a homosexual presumption (e.g. Rodgers, 1966; Grant, 1985; Hamilton, 1999; Risner, 2002b, 2002c, 2007, 2014) - and explicate how these discourses have been treated in dance scholarship. However, since they are so closely intertwined it would be unwise to consider them separately, and so I proceed by focusing on the key themes related to these discourses that have engaged dance scholars.

My analysis will focus on important geographical areas in the West where dance research has been relatively prolific - the USA and Europe, including the UK - and on the key genres of ballet, tap, and jazz, often referred to as 'theatre' dance, since the discourses emanated from here, especially from the realm of ballet. Nonetheless, I shall also consider more recreational forms such as ballroom and urban dance (e.g. break, hip-hop and street dance) since, discursively, these can be coded quite differently in terms of their 'masculinity'.

Initial searches revealed that academic literature on boys and dance in England is relatively sparse. My specific research topic, of boys' dance in their secondary

schools and private-sector pre-vocational dance schools has not been addressed in any substantive way. I intend, therefore, that my findings will help to address a gap in our knowledge and so help remediate the inattention paid to the experiences of young male dancers whose voices have been, as yet, unheard. This knowledge gap was recently flagged by scholars who noted, "*the lived experiences of the boys and girls in the dance studio remain to be explored …*" (Clegg, Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2017, p.11). Interestingly, this was a repeat of their call made in 2016 when, after researching gendered inequalities in dance, they concluded that as the experience of males was only available to them *"second-hand",* then further research could *"profitably explore male dancers' experiences directly, to give a voice to their lived experiences of gender within dance"* (Clegg, Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2016, p.14). My research has done just that.

However, while dance research in England has not principally focused on boys who dance, it has nonetheless been active in other, often related domains such as aesthetics and embodiment (e.g. Pickard, 2012, 2013, 2015), choreographic and somatic practices (e.g. DeLahunta, Clarke & Burnard, 2012); community/publicly-funded dance (e.g. Sanderson, 2000), dance science (e.g. Beck, Wyon & Redding, 2015), race (e.g. West, 2005) and dance and social class (e.g. Sanderson, 2008; Tsitsou, 2014). An exception is Burt's (1995) work on representations of masculinity in twentieth-century theatre dance, a seminal publication discussed later in this chapter.

Moving beyond England (and the UK), further pockets of literature were also located, most notably from the USA/Canada and less so from some European countries such as Sweden and Finland and further afield, from Australia. Irrespective of geography, and as in the UK, their emphasis has mostly been on male dancers in mainstream educational settings, vocational training schools or in professional performance: only a handful have focused on boys in private sector pre-vocational dance education and training. These will be considered in due course.

The paucity of literature is unsurprising since dance as a subject of academic enquiry is still relatively youthful. Significant research only began to appear in the late 1980`s but now the subject is more established at both undergraduate and post graduate level, the momentum of research and subsequent publication output, has increased commensurately. That said, most of the literature excludes the private dance sector since it is, by its very nature, marginalised from mainstream education, often highly specialized, vocational or pre-vocational, and unlikely to warrant much research funding or attention. Nonetheless, the sector is a significant provider of dance education and training for young people and so it is timely that it be subject to academic enquiry.

The chapter will also interrogate dance in the maintained sector of education in England where, sitting under the aegis of P.E., it is too often marginalised as a non-academic, 'soft' subject and one under threat from a neoliberal curriculum that places little value on the arts. Often taught by non-specialist teachers, most of

whom are female, it is too often regarded as a 'feminine' subject and, as with private sector dance, unworthy of much academic attention or action research by practitioners.

However, regarding dance and gender in particular, there has been some strong scholarship, both at home and abroad (e.g. Burt, 1995; Gard, 2006; Lehikoinen, 2005; Fisher & Shay (eds), 2009; Risner, 2009a; Pickard, 2015; Risner & Kerr-Berry, 2016; Oliver & Risner (eds), 2017). Much of this has been published in the new millennium, an indication of a growing intersectional and interdisciplinary cognizance in the field that augurs well for dance scholarship as it transcends boundaries. In common with my research, much of this scholarship draws on sociological (or sociologically inspired) theory, such as Lehikoinen's discourse analysis on boys' dance in Finland.

As I explicate below, this interdisciplinarity will be evident in much of the research analysed in this chapter which, consonant with my research questions, I have nested under three broad themes:

- dance in education – philosophy and policy

- the male dancer – identity, conflict and representation

- teaching gender to undo heteronormativity

3.2 Dance in education: philosophy and policy

As I stated at the outset, this thesis is not only a study of young males who partake of dance outside of school, but it also focusses on exploring boys' experiences of dance within their secondary schools, either as a component of P.E. or more rarely, as a separate examination subject at GCSE or Advanced level. As a school subject, dance is relatively new in educational terms; GCSE and A level dance examinations were developed approximately 30 years ago, although these were pre-dated by an Ordinary level examination in ballet. Nowadays, at Key Stages One to Three in England, dance is subsumed within the physical education curriculum, a key factor that has hindered its development as a discrete subject (Sanderson, 1996) and as I will argue, continues to do so. Beyond Key Stage Three, dance is merely optional, and deemed to be a non-academic subject, its status in the curriculum remains low. I begin, therefore, by analysing and synthesizing the key literature on dance in education since most pupils received their (often uninspiring) introduction to dance in their primary and secondary schools. Thereafter, I shall analyse the findings of recent reports to government on publicly funded dance provision, assessing their policy implications. Before that, however, I return to consider the philosophy that informs dance education in English primary and secondary schools.

This philosophy is based on the *"midway model"* of dance education (Smith-Autard, 1994), which views dance as an artform and is therefore concerned as much with aesthetics as with physical activity. As such, it advocates a balance between three key processes – of composing, performing and viewing dance. Moreover, this

model forms the basis of dance education in schools and its tripartite structure (of composing, performing and viewing dance) is at the core of GCSE and Advanced level syllabuses. While striving to maintain a balance between the three components is clearly necessary, anecdotally speaking, pupils are often thought keener to perform dance than to create it or watch it, a tendency recognized by private-sector dance schools whose main focus is on training dancers for performance.

While pupils` views on dance are important, little is actually known about them. An exception to this is the work of Sanderson (2001) who sought the opinions of adolescents on their attitudes to dance. One thousand six hundred and sixty-eight (1668) boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years from 19 schools throughout England were involved, using a questionnaire which included four Likert-type 'dance attitude scales'. Although analysis showed little change in attitudes between the ages of 11 and 16 and no interaction of age and gender, girls displayed more positive attitudes than boys on two of the scales, one being attitudes towards ballet. Concluding her research, Sanderson believed that boys were favourably disposed towards some types of dance but not, for example, ballet, which provoked extreme negative reactions. As some gender scholars have established (e.g. Jackson, 2003), many male adolescents are unwilling to be associated with any activity that may be interpreted as 'feminine'. O`Brien (1996) showed that not only are girls far more likely to attend ballet performances than boys in England but this bias is also reflected in the composition of adult audiences. Woolf (1983) described the major works of the ballet repertory as based on *"silly"* stories, unlikely to appeal to male adolescents.

Furthermore, classical ballet gestures are widely interpreted as 'feminine' and the male costumes, especially the wearing of tights, is anathema to most boys. These issues are instrumental in (re)producing the dominant discourses pertaining to dance and masculinity; against this backdrop, delivering dance in schools can be an *"uphill battle"* according to one participant, Margaret, a secondary school dance teacher.

Not only has there been a longstanding lack of male dance teachers in schools (Waddington et al., 1998), specialist female dance teachers like Margaret (above) are also in short supply. Consequently, as Chapter Five explains, the subject is often taught by non-specialist staff, usually female and with a physical education (P.E.) background. This led Sanderson to suggest that, *"schools seem to be perpetuating, by default, the prevailing negative view of the male dance artist among adolescent boys"* (Sanderson, 2001, p. 129). However, exceptionally, Keyworth wrote tellingly of becoming a male P.E. teacher with a particular interest in dance and of the resulting prejudice he encountered. He concluded that P.E. is often *"oppressive, patriarchal and sexist"*, and so restricts the *"corporeal presentations of the bodies it contains"* (Keyworth, 2001, p.117), a conclusion further validated by my research findings, discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. Keyworth believes, as I do, that dance, as a subject, *"undergoes a process of closure as it steps beyond the bounds of acceptable male 'performance' …"* and that men need to be educated to *"de-condition the ways they have been taught to be and think"* (Keyworth, 2001, p.133).

Since the millennium and despite its marginal status, dance has been the subject of some government-commissioned reviews. In 2008, Tony Hall (now Lord Hall) was asked to report on publicly funded dance education and youth dance in England and to produce recommendations to the government for future dance policy and provision. These findings, published as the *Dance Review* (Hall, 2008) found that 4.8 million people participate in 'community dance', with 13% of the population attending dance performances. While the private dance sector was necessarily excluded from Hall`s remit, passing mention was nonetheless made of it as a major provider of dance provision. Regrettably though, only brief reference was made to the stark gender inequalities in dance.

In response to the Hall review, the government extended the remit of Youth Dance England (YDE), originally formed in 2004, to include state-funded schools; YDE were also required to produce a national strategy to provide coherence across funders and so develop further opportunities for young people to dance. In their subsequent and important 2010 publication, "*Dance In and Beyond Schools"* (Siddall, 2010), it was noted, once again, that dance provision beyond schools could complement and enrich dance in the school curriculum. An emerging framework for engagement and progression in dance included reference to the role of the private-sector dance schools in offering a range of opportunities such as classes, examinations, performances and competitions. Disappointingly, the report fell short of promoting cross-sector working between the public and private dance sectors which too often continue to work in isolated, uncoordinated ways.

However, in contrast to the Hall review, the YDE report had this to say about dance

and gender:

> *Boys are the largest group of disadvantaged young people in terms of dance*
> *opportunities. In secondary schools where dance is taught within Physical*
> *Education single-sex teaching is the norm and dance may only be offered to*
> *girls. The majority of those teaching dance are female so there are few male*
> *role models and dance becomes associated with femininity at the very time*
> *that boys are establishing their adult masculine identity. The lack of access to*
> *dance in schools impedes boys accessing dance opportunities beyond schools*
> (Siddall, 2010, p.32)

Despite its reliance on the well-worn 'role model' discourse, it was nonetheless

refreshing to see acknowledged the problem of boys' access to dance, even if few

solutions were proposed. Moreover, the quotation amply illustrates the link

between dance in and out of school, and how negative attitudes to dance formed in

school can have adverse consequences for dance beyond it. However, it is difficult

to agree fully with the YDE view that *"equality legislation reflects the extent to*

which society has, in the main, moved on from homophobic and gender

discriminatory attitudes" (ibid., p.33) since the lived experiences of the majority of

my research participants indicates that nothing much has changed, despite us living

in an era of supposed 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2009). However, the report

contained a welcome reminder that, *"[s]chools and other organisations have a*

responsibility to challenge negative assumptions and stereotypes and to promote

equality of opportunity regardless of gender" (Siddall, 2010, p.33), but was short on

detail as to how best to tackle this.

Discussions around educational opportunities will often involve a consideration of social class (e.g. Reay, 2017), but as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, dance and social class has been largely ignored by dance scholars according to Wulff (1998) and continues to be so according to my analysis. For instance, no UK academic research was found on the social class composition of pupils in the private dance sector and how to overcome barriers for economically disadvantaged children. However, this issue was noted in a government report, *Cultural Education in England* (2011), commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Department for Education (DfE) to review the cultural education in England of children and young people aged 5-19. Its author, Henley, stated:

> *Cultural education is also delivered by privately owned providers in areas such as music, dance and drama. Much of this provision is of a high standard and helps children and young people to develop a passion for taking part in cultural activities. There is a relationship between children`s membership of these groups and the ability of their parents to pay. This particular sector of Cultural Education tends not to be as available to young people from economically challenging backgrounds.* (Henley, 2011, p.10)

The review concluded with several recommendations, among them being that, "*[c]onsideration should be given to promoting Dance and Drama to subject areas in their own right, rather than being seen as junior partners to P.E. and English*" (ibid., p.58). Unsurprisingly, given the current neo-liberal agenda driving educational policy, this recommendation has been ignored and dance continues to be marginalised.

Nonetheless, in whatever context dance takes place, it can facilitate positive impacts on children`s and young people`s physical health and wellbeing according to Burkhardt & Brennan (2012). A creative dance project, called *Go Dance* (2012),

located in Eastern England, examined the impact of a 10-week creative dance course on the physical health, psychological wellbeing and changing dance behaviours amongst children aged between 10 and 12 years of age. Of particular interest here are the findings which relate to boys, which show, as regards psychological wellbeing, that perceptions of pressure/tension (as a sub-scale of intrinsic motivation) were significantly improved among male members of the experimental group (Kozub, Spampinato-Korn & Chater, 2012) . Thus, creative dance has the potential to reduce perceptions of pressure and tension and improve levels of intrinsic motivation among boys. Some of the schoolteachers also reported improved behaviour and focus in other lessons, particularly among the male students who were seen to persevere for longer than perhaps they might have done previously. These findings accord with previous dance research by Carter (2004) and Hanna (2001) and underline, yet again, the myriad benefits that can arise from participation in dance. As childhood obesity is of growing concern in England and elsewhere (Public Health England, 2018), it surely behoves us to address the barriers discussed above, barriers that prevent participation in dance, be they of cultural or economic origin. Tackling the dominant discourses that surround dance and masculinity would be good place to start, and Chapter Eight contains recommendations towards this.

3.3 The male dancer – identity, conflict and representation

This section will use key literature to develop an understanding of how some boys develop their identity as a dancer and to consider how constituent parts of that identity can be mediated by such elements as patriarchal privilege and sexuality.

Thereafter, I shall explore the representation of masculinity in dance, using the film '*Billy Elliot*' (2000) to exemplify how (hetero)masculinity is performed. Finally, I consider attempts to recuperate masculinity and/or heterosexuality in dance through a 'make it macho' technique (Fisher, 2007), a valuable precursor to my findings in Chapter Seven of boys' use of 'masculine' and/or 'heterosexual' recuperation (Hansen, 1996, and McCormack, 2012, respectively). I begin, however, with a brief focus on how boys are socialized into dance and the formation of their identity as a dancer.

Nieminen, a Finnish researcher explored how children are socialized into dance and found that girls started to dance earlier than boys, with the average age of 12.8 years for girls and 17.0 years for boys. This is also borne out by research from the USA (Risner, 2009) and from the UK (Holdsworth, 2013; Clegg, Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2016). Reasons for this are, as yet, unclear but this finding is certainly worthy of further research since it would be useful to establish if, for instance, boys needed to be free from the heteronormative pressures of school before they opted to dance. By contrast, my findings indicate that 19 out of the 26 participants began to dance before they were 11 years old, and all were dancing by the time they were 15, suggesting that some boys were able to contest these heteronormative discourses at an earlier age.

The Finnish research also found that children's dance experience in their day schools was not found to be determining factor affecting dance participation elsewhere. This chimes with my findings which suggest that uninspiring dance tuition in schools does

not necessarily deter boys from dancing beyond the school gates. Nonetheless, Nieminen's study, which involved three hundred and eight (308) male and female adolescent dancers, highlighted a familiar gender-related theme and concluded that, *"the involvement of non-professional men in ballet and modern dance is still a complex issue today and their participation is therefore limited. Men are still afraid of the label of femininity in dance"* (Nieminen 1997, p.229). Although now dated, these findings reiterated the salience of the dominant cultural discourse that equates dance with the 'feminine'. As outlined previously, researchers have explored this fear of the 'feminine' in UK educational contexts (e.g. Jackson, 2003; Cann, 2013, 2014), and found it to be a potent, continuing force in policing the boundaries of acceptable masculinity, but as my findings indicate, one capable of contestation, nonetheless.

However, as Pickard's (2015) work reminds us, such contestation is not easy. Her innovative four-year longitudinal, ethnographic, empirical study of 12 young ballet dancers, (six girls and six boys), tracked their process of *"becoming"* a ballet dancer as they undertook tuition in private sector pre-vocational dance schools. While focused on ballet, Pickard's findings suggest that, in addition to managing the dominant discourses that surround dance, both male and female pupils must demonstrate an acceptance of emotional and physical suffering for the sake of ballet as a performance art and of the body as an aesthetic project, whose outcome is that of a dancer as an embodied commodity (Pickard, 2015).

Pickard's study tracked adolescent dancers as they negotiated puberty. Whereas puberty describes only physical maturation, adolescence also includes cognitive and

socio-emotional maturity (Blakemore et al., 2010) and so offers a more holistic view of maturational change. Irrespective of gender, this can be a challenging time for young dancers and can lead to a decreases in technical skill, control, coordination and balance (Daniels, Rist & Rijven, 2001; Bowerman, Whatman, Harris & Bradshaw, 2015). This regression, albeit temporary, is prompted by growth spurts in limb lengths (relative to the spine), and is accompanied by increases in height and weight, alterations in the accumulation and distribution of body fat and the development of secondary sexual characteristics. Such growth usually takes approximately 3 years from start to finish (Malina, Bouchard & Bar-Or, 2004) and starts on average at age 12 for girls and 14 for boys (Blakemore et al., 2010).

This activation of the growth axis, which leads to a shift in body proportions, needs careful management by skilled teachers attuned to the physical and psychological impacts of adolescence and dedicated to reducing the risk of injury (Buckroyd, 2000; Pickard, 2012, 2013, 2015). Allied to this, several dance scholars (e.g. Tremblay & Lariviere, 2009; Cumming et al., 2012; Pickard, 2013) have advocated a biocultural approach, arguing that an awareness of *'the cultural context in which puberty occurs and meanings and values ascribed to it is essential for a more complete understanding of pubertal adaptations'* (Mitchell et al., 2016, p. 83). As such, these adaptations, such as focussing on development of musicality and artistry (rather than technique), might well, in the hands of knowledgeable and sensitive teachers, go unnoticed by dancers. Indeed, they appeared to do so with my participants who made no reference to such practices, nor to sustaining any serious dance-related injuries, save for experiencing 'positive pain', which was seen as a legitimate, even desirable aspect of dance culture (Buckroyd, 2000).

Notwithstanding the above, puberty can also bring benefits for young dancers. Boys, for example, accrue strength and power in this phase (Buckroyd, 2000; Francisco, Alarcao & Narciso, 2012; Pickard, 2012, 2013), manifested in the development and definition of muscle, advantageous for grand allegro movements in ballet, but also in virtuosic movements in urban dance such as the single handstand. Gender theorists agree that these physical developments are crucial in defining men as 'masculine' (e.g. Connell, 2000), and as I noted during interviews, several participants described themselves (and other male dancers) as 'strong', 'toned', 'fit' and 'able to lead or lift a girl' – constructions that serve to recuperate their essentialist notions of 'masculinity' and contest the dominant discourse of male dancers as effeminate.

Such work is valuable in highlighting the physical and emotional barriers which ballet and other dancers need to overcome. It is little wonder, therefore, that the subject remains a minority pastime for children, some of whom will abandon it rather than attempt to surmount these hurdles. In Pickard`s study this is illustrated by the case of Kenzi, a British black African boy who dropped out after two years of the four-year programme, stating that he had to decide between, *"fitting in with (his) friends or fitting in with ballet…. ballet has changed me: hip-hop, street, crumping, they speak a different language"*. As I explicate in Chapter Five, my participants confirmed that *"fitting in"* was often problematic and/or impossible, especially in their secondary schools. In such circumstances, a resilient acceptance became essential to their longevity as a dancer.

Regrettably though, not all boys have the emotional resources to withstand such

normative gender regulation and 'drop out' of dance altogether or abandon a

particular genre. As Kenzi's withdrawal from the ballet course suggests, and as my

findings will illuminate, some dance genres are culturally coded as more 'masculine'

than others (hip hop, street, crumping) and are able to valorise and recuperate

masculinity in a way that, say, ballet cannot. In this vein, Holdsworth (2013)

investigated a *"Boys' Dancing"* project, launched in the West Midlands which overtly

and covertly challenged these dominant discourses pertaining to gender-appropriate

dance genres. A key challenge for the project was to get the boys to appreciate

dance styles other than street or hip-hop, taking movement vocabulary that was

considered *'cool or funky'* and manipulating and extending it to incorporate *'other*

modes of physical expression', according to David McKenna, the Artistic Director of

Beingfrank (sic) Physical Theatre Company who led the project. However, observing

a session, Holdsworth commented on the boys' *"non-conforming behaviours … of*

banter, back-chat and physical horse play", designed she believed *"to shore up their*

masculine credentials to offset the potential associations of the activity they were

engaged in." Or, put another way, their behaviour was a form of masculine and/or

heterosexual 'recuperation'. Although manifested in different ways, I too found that

boys seek to recuperate their masculinity; Chapter Seven analyses and discusses the

six specific recuperative strategies identified in my data.

While boys' deployment of such recuperative strategies is not necessarily

surprising, since they are in response to Western discourses that posit dance as a

'feminine 'activity and male dancers are presumed gay (e.g. Hanna, 1988; Shapiro, 1998; Krauss, Hilsendager & Gottschild, 1997), this should be seen against another enduring phenomenon - that of male privilege in dance (e.g. Garber et al., 2007), a result of their *"endangered status"* according to Fisher & Shay (2009, p.36). As my research shows, this male privilege can manifest itself in numerous other ways such as boys being given special treatment in performances, where they may be placed centre-stage, or given prominence in publicity and marketing by their dance schools. While relatively minor, these advantages can set in train a pattern of privilege that is reproduced throughout a male dancer's career, and as I will illustrate, such privileges are not always sought or welcomed.

Similarly, as Adair (1992) and others have pointed out, while female dancers vastly outnumber males, it is the latter who more frequently occupy positions as choreographers or leaders (Hanna, 1988; Van Dyke, 1996), and female ballet choreographers continue to be a rarity according to Meglin and Brooks (2012). Nonetheless, even today this male privilege has not led to any substantial increase in the number of male dancers, perhaps because, as Crawford noted, male dominance in dance leadership *"conforms to rather than challenges, the very structure that brought about the scarcity in the first place"* (Crawford, 1994, p.40). Similarly, as Risner later concluded, *"[d]ance and dance education may unwittingly reproduce asymmetrical power relationships, social inequalities and sexist patriarchy by reaffirming the status quo operating in contemporary American culture"* (Risner, 2002c, p.63).

In our Western heterocentric culture, where dance is considered a deviant activity

for males, especially heterosexual ones, there is clear evidence to indicate that

dance attracts a large proportion of non-heterosexual males. Hamilton (1999), for

example, established that gay and bisexual men comprise half the male population

in dance in the USA; more recently, Risner`s study (2009a), found similar statistics

with 47% of boys who danced self-identified as non-heterosexual. By way of

comparison, my small-scale study of 26 participants found as follows: heterosexual

11/26 (42.3%); homosexual 7/26 (26.9%); bi-sexual 1/26 (3.8%); unknown 7/26

(26.9%). Most of the 'unknowns' relate to younger pre-teen boys; over time then,

these figures will change as they define their sexuality. Nonetheless, the data

indicates higher incidences of non-heterosexual boys in dance than in the general UK

population, estimated to be 1.7% according to the Office for National Statistics

(2017).

Hanna attempted to explain why a disproportionate number of homosexual men are

attracted to dance, and ballet in particular, concluding that:

> *Gay men identify with the effeminate yearnings, feelings and romantic*
> *idealisations of the ballet… ballet presents an illusion experienced by some*
> *gay men as parallel to their relationship with women and the difficulties some*
> *gays have in establishing long term relationships with each other… dancing*
> *(for gay men) maybe an audition for lovers…ballet has had the attraction of*
> *colourful costume, glamour and make-up.* (Hanna, 1988, p.136)

Troublingly, (and beyond its wild generalisation), Hanna's view implies that

homosexuality is a problem for gay men, thereby reproducing narrow stereotypes,

including essentialised femininity and heteronormativity. Moreover, it homogenises

ballet as 'effeminate', thereby reproducing the discourse of dance as antithetical to masculinity.

Of greater significance though is the work of Burt (1995) who addressed the representation of masculinity in twentieth-century dance. By examining the cultural, social, political and economic history of masculine representation in dance, Burt argued that the prejudice towards male dancers and the homophobia that surrounds gay and straight men in dance, is rooted in societal ideas about the body and male behaviour. Although a British academic, Burt wrote principally of modernism and modern American dance, examining images of men in twentieth-century theatre dance to understand the representation of masculinity therein. Borrowing from both Sedgwick (1990) and Bristow (1988), Burt considered the conventions that regulate the gendered gaze of the male body, and especially the development of homophobia as a means for males to rationalize their close attraction to one another.

Burt argued that men might enjoy watching other men dance, but in order to do so they must profess a repulsion toward homosexual desire or attraction. For the heterosexual male spectator, Burt believed there to be a tension at this boundary - between acceptable homosocial bonding and repressed homosexual attraction. Similarly, but later, Risner (2002b) hypothesised that similar uncomfortable boundary issues might apply to many fathers, siblings and friends who watch male students dance. One has only to think of the film *'Billy Elliot'* (2000), discussed

earlier in this chapter and note the reactions of Billy's father and brother (among others) to his participation in dance, to see this hypothesis played out. This might also explain the reluctance of some fathers to see their sons perform, as reported by a minority of my participants.

Another key focus for Burt was that of dance movement/choreography and its relationship with masculinity. Here, he distinguished between modernist dance which evoked gender essentialism in the form of heroic 'hypermasculinity' and more radical avant-garde choreography which challenged and disrupted once dominant ways of representing masculinity. As I explicate later, the gendered associations with movement are still potent and problematic for many males who dance, reflecting the western European cultural paradigm that situates dance as primarily a 'female' art form and has done so since the sixteenth century according to Hasbrook (1993). Burt's seminal work spawned a swathe of research emanating mainly from the USA on gender and its social construction in relation to dance participation and attitudes to dance (e.g. Cushway, 1996; Sanderson, 1996; Stinson, 1998, 2001; Au, 2002 ; Gard, 2001, 2003; Green, 2004; Risner, 2009), much of which has informed this chapter and thesis.

As this research has shown, cultural contexts and differences are central to understanding and explaining why, in the Western world, most boys and men do not, or will not, dance. Some early scholars such as Kealiinokomoku (1970) criticised the implicit ethnocentrism in some dance research, noting that some non-

Western dance is presented as 'primitive', thereby allowing Western theatrical dance, especially ballet, to stand as the pinnacle of dance genres. However, subsequent research has done much to embrace multiculturalism and diversity in dance education, with some findings on world dance highlighting the intertwining between dance, gender and cultural context. We know, for example, that African dance can encourage both males and females to express themselves through gender flexible movement without fear of ridicule (Asante, 1993; Kerr-Berry, 1994). However, a fundamental difference between West African and Western theatrical dance is observed by Kerr-Berry who noted: "*Men participate freely in West African dance cultures without being ostracised by society - a fact reflective of the socio-cultural context within which dance is situated* "(Kerr-Berry, 1994, p.44).

In contemporary society, a key constituent of this socio-cultural context is the pervasiveness of the media, including social media, and its power in shaping the perceptions of audiences and users by its frequent (re)production or contestation of gender norms. In that vein, Ashley wrote: *"[t]here is little doubt that the media relish any story in which a boy or group of boys disrupts conventional discourses of masculinity that posit activities such as singing or dancing as unsuitable for young males and therefore 'gay'"* (Ashley, 2009b, p.179). The film, *'Billy Elliot'*, which told the story of a working-class boy from the North East who progressed to the Royal Ballet School, was a prime example of this, but contained many *"confused messages"* (Ashley, 2009b, p.183) about boys and ballet, not least the one that posited that boys would suddenly wish to take up ballet. This did not happen,

despite a small spike in the number of boys successfully gaining places at the Royal Ballet School in 2001 when 14 boys and 10 girls were accepted – marking a small departure from the usual 50/50 gender spilt in acceptances. Given that these dancers would already have had several years of training behind them before applying, it was highly probable that the *'Billy Elliot effect'* was nothing more than media hyperbole.

However, away from the rarified environment of the Royal Ballet School, analysis reveals that boys` dance genre choices are more likely to be tap, hip-hop, jazz or contemporary dance based on martial arts (Mirault, 2000). Notably, the key dance element in the *'Billy Elliot'* film, apart from the final queer version of Swan Lake, is not classical ballet but a contemporary-style piece infused with some (ironic) nods towards ballet but performed to the 'glam rock' song "*I Love to Boogie"* by T. Rex. Developed in the early 1970s, 'glam rock' was performed by musicians who wore flamboyant costumes, makeup and hairstyles, such as platform shoes and glitter, and included David Bowie, Alice Cooper and Marc Bolan of T Rex, alongside other bands like Queen and Roxy Music. These performances, often regarded as camp or androgynous, delighted in subverting normative gender roles according to Reynolds & Press (1996), just as Billy Elliot did in his preference for ballet over boxing, although Ashley regrets, as I do, that the *Billy Elliot* 'story' *"promoted only a sensational and superficial motif of 'ballet boy challenges masculinity stereotypes' "* (Ashley, 2009b, p. 190).

Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly the case that the film explored performances of masculinity; for instance, Billy was the sole male dancer in the class and was best friends with a cross-dressing boy. A notable scene in the Royal Ballet School changing room, with Billy`s rejection of and violence towards a *"soft"*, privileged middle-class boy, sought to recuperate his heterosexual credentials alongside his identity as a male dancer. In *Billy Elliot*, cinema's need to promote a heteronormative male dancer is paramount and little has changed since the recuperative techniques deployed in Fred Astaire films decades before. As Richardson noted, *"[T]he female dancer has never been viewed as suspiciously gender dissident in the way the male dancer has been. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a female version of the Billy Elliot story"* (Richardson, 2016, p.8).

As my research shows, the use of 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012), is prevalent still and its continued use, along with 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996), raises important questions about the ways in which patriarchal Western society continues to discourage males from dancing and also how it regulates those who do. Thus, in Chapter Seven I will explore how young male dancers contest the two dominant discourses surrounding dance and masculinity by their use of 'masculine' and/or 'heterosexual recuperation'. For now, though, by way of context, I offer a synthesis of key literature relating to the concept of 'recuperation' and trace its antecedents in dance scholarship, beginning with the work of Fisher (2007).

Related to the concept of 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012), but

pre-dating it, Fisher coined the phrase *"make it macho"* to describe the fallacious

strategy, popularly employed in the dance world, that:

> *Insisted ballet is as tough as football, a 'real' man's game, that it provides proximity to lots of barely-clad women (wink, wink), and is, in short, a lot like the Marines, only with briefer uniforms and pointed toes* (Fisher, 2007, p.46).

She critiqued this approach arguing that *"making it macho is not a strategy that will*

ever work, simply because ballet is not macho and never will be" and proposed

instead an alternative strategy, that of "*making it maverick"* since male dancers are

"unconventional and unorthodox" (ibid., p.65). In this way, she argued, the image of

a maverick offered *"new rhetorical associations"* and was *"meant to shift*

perceptions" (ibid., p.65). In personal discussion with Fisher at the 2018 Dance

Studies Association Conference in Malta, she lamented that the futility of the

"making it macho" strategy had not been recognized more widely. My research,

with its focus on the techniques of heterosexual recuperation (of which *"making it*

macho" is part), does just that.

Like Fisher, other researchers have drawn attention to ways in which some male

dancers recoup their masculinity. Hanna (1998) and Fisher (2007) both identified the

use of famous heterosexual male dancers as role models; Crawford (1994) noted the

use of masculinist comparisons between dance and sport (findings reiterated in my

research) and Spurgeon (1997) revealed attempts to minimize the significance of

gay male population in dance. More recently, Haltom & Worthen (2014) identified

male ballet dancers' use of three *"stigma management techniques"*. First, some

dancers emphasised their heterosexual privilege by describing how ballet allowed

them access to women, a point echoed in my findings where this strategy was

employed by a minority of fathers to legitimise their sons' interest in dance and to

recoup, by proxy, their own heterosexuality. Second, male ballet dancers made

comparisons with sport, (confirming Crawford's earlier findings and pre-empting my

own), emphasizing the combination of athleticism and artistry in ballet. Third, the

dancers classified ballet as an elite art form open to only to a minority of gifted

individuals. In sum, Haltom & Worthen argued that reclassifying ballet this way

might deflect its stigma as a *"sissy activity…and further reinforce it as a legitimate*

activity for men to engage in" (Haltom & Worthen, 2014, p.769). As I explicate later,

my findings suggest that although ballet might be deemed the most 'feminine' of

dance genres, these *"stigma management techniques"* are employed by dancers

across a range of genres.

Whether termed *"making it macho"* (Fisher, 2007) or *"stigma-management"*

(Haltom & Worthen, 2014), Chapter Seven will develop this theme and explore

boys' efforts to legitimate their dance participation. There, I draw upon

McCormack's (2012) conceptualization of 'heterosexual recuperation' to describe

the social process where young male dancers employ a range of strategies to

establish and maintain their heterosexual identities but without invoking

homophobia. I also explicate how, irrespective of their sexuality, these boys also

engage in forms of 'masculine recuperation'*,* drawing upon the work of Hansen, an

anthropologist, who first used the term to denote the *"overcoming of*

emasculation" (Hansen, 1996, p.138)*.* In both cases, I find that young male dancers

employ a greater range of strategies than those identified by Fisher or Halton and

Worthen above.

Clearly then, attempts at 'recuperation' are not new and although not termed as

such, popular dance culture has long resorted to employing techniques of

'heterosexual recuperation'. In the 1938 film, *Shall We Dance*, the leading man, Fred

Astaire, supposedly a famous ballet dancer, had to prove his *"skirt-chasing"*

heterosexuality within the first few minutes of the film by *"putting taps on his ballet*

shoes and ogling a photo of Ginger Rogers. And he never appeared in tights; instead,

he wore the pants male ballet dancers often wore then", according to Fisher, (2007,

p. 60). Be it Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, John Travolta or Billy Elliot, many male dancers

have had to quickly 'prove' or recoup their heterosexuality in film narratives, thereby

reassuring audiences of their heteronormativity.

Related to these recuperative strategies, Hebert (2017) explored the gender-based

pedagogical practices that commercial dance studios employed in Ontario, Canada,

to attract boys through their doors, noting the use of boys' only classes that

emphasized athleticism as an antidote to homophobia. Despite this attempt at

'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012), Hebert concluded that male

dancers *"remain the Other",* and in common with other research (e.g. Gard, 2006;

Risner, 2009a), found that boys often experience *"contradictory treatment"* in the

dance school. This privileged treatment in class and in choreography (e.g. prominent

positions and roles) can be contrasted with a lack of material provision for boys, such

as poor changing facilities*, "a storage room closet "*, while girls *"had an actual changing room with cabins"* according to (Hebert, 2017, p.103). A further contrast was noted in choreographic practices; some of my participants complained of having to execute 'female' movements in their mixed classes, whereas Herbert's participants experienced only 'masculine' athletic movement in their boys' only classes. As I discuss in Chapter Seven, this desire to appeal to boys through heteronormative practices continues in the guise of '*Project B*', an initiative from the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) to widen participation in ballet, and one "*inspired by sports and superheroes*" – a contemporary example of the institutional use of essentialist, masculine tropes.

Gard (2006), Risner (2004, 2007, 2009a, 2009b) and Broomfield (2011) among others, have illuminated how dance can both contradict and confirm normative versions of masculinity. Risner (2014) found that the bullying of young male American dancers was common, and as discussed in Chapters Five, Six & Seven, my findings suggest the same in England. Bullying and other negative repercussions such as stigma stem from the cultural (re)production of the discourses surrounding dance and masculinity, evident in gender and gay male stereotyping in society (Warburton, 2009; Polasek and Roper, 2011; Risner, 2014). Moreover, as my findings suggest, these discourses continue to have salience, despite us living in an era of supposed 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2009).

3.4 Teaching gender to undo heteronormativity

Recent research into dance teachers' perceptions of boys and girls in the ballet studio concluded that teachers encourage normative gender performances in their

pupils (Clegg, Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2017). In performing masculinity, boys were perceived to challenge traditional, authoritarian pedagogy by not conforming to behavioural expectations of docility in dance class. Like my findings, this research highlights dance teachers' reliance on an essentialist, reductionist model of pedagogy instead of one which, as I discuss below and in subsequent chapters, is gender-neutral, creative and empowering.

Drawing on the work of feminist philosopher Butler (1990), the theory of gender and sexuality as a performed identity has been adopted by several dance scholars who believe the social construction of gender to be significant in the formation of both pupil and parent attitudes towards dance (e.g. Cushway, 1996; Gard, 2003; Green, 2004; Risner, 2002b, 2004). That feminist theory has been applied to dance, (e.g. Daly, 1991; Adair, 1992; Shapiro, 1998; 2004; Green, 1999; Thomas, 2003), is unsurprising since, as Daly points out:

> *The inquiries that feminist analysis makes into the ways that the body is shaped and comes to have meaning are directly and immediately applicable to the study of dance, which is after all, a kind of living laboratory of the study of the body - its training, its stories, its way of being and being seen in the world* (Daly, 1991, p.2).

A central strand of this feminist-inspired research was to advocate for a pedagogy which promoted inclusive, non-hierarchical teaching (in contrast to the traditional authoritarian model of pedagogy found in many private-sector and vocational dance schools). For instance, Shapiro (2004) pressed for a greater emphasis on social justice in arts education, especially in how the body is valued (or not). She developed a useful pedagogy of embodiment in dance, one that, if applied, would be

of benefit to the male dancers in this research, since as Chapter Five explicates, current dance pedagogy (especially in private-sector dance schools with their emphasis on performance not process), is predominantly teacher-led and instructional, so robbing learners of valuable opportunities for agency and creativity. Similarly, Stinson (1998, 2005) drew attention to the 'hidden curriculum' in dance education which arises from a 'command and control' model of pedagogy producing passive followers rather than active leaders. Passivity and obedience constitute a stereotypical notion of femininity that is damaging for gender equity as well as deterring some boys from dance since it is equated with essentialist practices deemed 'feminine'. The remedy Stinson advocated was an *"awareness that all of us are teaching gender as we teach dance or anything else"* (Stinson, 2015b, p.103), but as my findings show, many dance teachers are insufficiently aware of this obligation and continue to work in ways detrimental to gender equity.

Pleasingly though, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) studies and queer theory have also informed dance scholarship (e.g. Sedgwick, 1990,1990; Bristow, 1988; Burt, 1995; Foster, 2001; Desmond, 2001; Risner, 2002c, 2003, 2007). Earlier, reference was made to the work of Burt (1995) and Risner (2002, 2003), the latter being instrumental in exploring prejudice and homophobia towards gay and straight men in dance, (although others too have addressed the issue such as Gard (2003), Keyworth (2001) and Sparling (2001)). More recently though, Risner returned to the subject, and with fellow researcher, Oliver, concluded that dance education may still *"unwittingly reproduce asymmetrical power relationships, social inequities and sexism by reaffirming the status quo.*

In doing so, the dance profession ignores opportunities for diminishing homophobia and anti-gay bias" (Oliver & Risner, 2017, p.11). My findings, in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, re-validate these pessimistic conclusions while Chapter Eight contains recommendations to dance education policy and practice to tackle them.

What is striking is that Risner had drawn attention to this issue a decade earlier, describing as *"problematic"* the *"lack of serious discourse and study of these critical issues"*, and offering a suggestion that the dance education profession:

> *Might benefit greatly from knowing more about its male students, their attitudes and experiences, rather than trying to increase male numbers with strategies that attempt to re-engender dance in traditionally "masculine" ways i.e. dance as sports, competition, jumping and* turning (Risner, 2007, p.973)

Risner's call (beyond his critique of essentialist recruitment strategies predicated on 'masculine recuperation' in dance) is to better understand our current male students, an outcome I wish to endorse in this research. Such knowledge will enable us to develop support strategies for young male dancers without recourse to essentialist or inequitable practices. Recently, UK researchers Clegg, Owton & Allen-Collinson (2017) lamented our lack of knowledge regarding boys' dance experiences in the private sector. My findings, which specifically address this sector, will help to address this gap in our understanding.

To date, efforts have principally focused on how best to attract boys into dance in the first place (perfectly exampled by the aforementioned *'Project B'* initiative and discussed further in Chapters Five & Seven), rather than trying to understand how best to retain and support males currently in training. I was reminded of this limited

focus when attending a symposium in the USA in 2017 entitled *'Men in Dance: Bridging the Gap'*, which sought "*pragmatic solutions to address the dearth of male students in our studios, schools and companies as students, professionals and educators"* (Risner et al., 2018, p.26). There, I was struck by how easily this laudable aim was too often reducible to simply discussing how best to recruit more males into dance, rather than asking *"new questions about gender inequity in dance"* and discussing *"fresh lines of inquiry about all genders and dance"* (Risner, et al., 2018, p.30), as the call for papers and keynote presentations had made clear.

Risner's desire to ask *"new questions"* about dance and gender is prescient since my findings suggest that young male dancers, especially those in private-sector dance schools, are subject to a restricted diet of heteronormative roles and/or are taught movements which are coded and rejected as inappropriately 'feminine' by boys who maintain a binary view of gender. Elsewhere, however, asking *"new questions"* has spawned innovation with for instance, queer, lesbian and gay choreographers such as Katie Pule, Mark Morris, Matthew Bourne and Masaki Iwana who have been eager to subvert traditional gendered movement tropes, in either new dance works or in reimagining canonical works from classical, often romantic, ballet (Midgelow, 2007; Jowitt, 2010; Tikkun, 2010; Duerden & Rowell, 2013; Alterowitz, 2014). Relatedly, later in this chapter (and elsewhere in the thesis), particular reference will be made to Bourne's queer version of *Swan Lake* since it is this production that featured in the film version of *Billy Elliot,* whose titular figure both contradicted and conformed to culturally esteemed notions of masculinity.

While applauding Risner's call for *"new questions"* and *"fresh lines of inquiry "*, we should nonetheless acknowledge that existing scholarship (including Risner's own) has cast a valuable light on the lived experiences of male dancers, much of which has inspired and informed my research. For instance, Williams` (2003) ethnography, involving 33 boys, aged 12 to 18 years, enrolled in a summer intensive dance programme, attempted a psychosocial understanding of male adolescent dancers and revealed three significant themes. These were: social isolation, unmet needs and the participants` desire to persevere in their dance study, the latter despite a lack of social support and plenty of negative experiences - findings that chime with my own. Bailey and Oberschneider's (1997) psychological study of 90 professional male dancers examined degrees of parental support and found that only 13% of homosexual male dancers cited parental encouragement to dance compared with 60% for heterosexual male dancers. The lack of parental support and approval experienced by the former may be attributed to parental distaste for dancing, or to dance as a career path for their sons. However, as my findings suggest (discussed in Chapter Seven), a fear of encouraging or condoning any suspected or latent homosexuality in their sons could also be a significant factor with some anxious parents.

More recently in the USA, Risner investigated the world of pre-professional Western theatre dance training and education (a sector analogous with mine) and focused on the *"social pressures of dominant masculinity, or the 'boy code'"* (Risner, 2009, p. 64). His findings exposed the fallacy that more boys would be drawn to dance if it was marketed as a competitive sport and 'masculine' activity; furthermore, he found that heterosexual male dancers recognised dance to be fundamentally different

from competitive sports, and that most boys valued the opportunities for self-expression and creativity that dance provides. Interestingly though, my findings, discussed in Chapter Seven, diverge from Risner's in one important way, since I established that some boys not only seek to recuperate their masculinity (and heterosexuality, if appropriate) by actively drawing on analogies with sport but go further and conceptualize dance itself as a sport.

In planning my research methodology, I was interested to note that some aspects of Risner`s approach had attracted critique. Questions regarding sexuality were posed only to dancers aged over 18 (understandably, I argue), leaving us ignorant of the emergence of younger boys' orientations and any consequences arising from them. As I explain in Chapter Four, I chose to exclude questions of sexuality in my interview schedule entirely, and hoped (correctly for the most part), that participants would freely share their orientation with me during the course of the interviews.

On reflection, the wording of some of Risner`s online survey questions might have impacted upon respondents' answers since, for example, question 35 asked, "What are the biggest challenges you face as a male dancer?". According to Rogers & Sanders *"this presupposes that the challenges are because the dancer is male - or at least asks him to identify the challenges in relation to that identity"* (Rogers & Sanders, 2012, p.180). More generally, they also question how *"the boxes and naming pursuits we continue to research may be inconsistent with a postmodern*

queer population seeking to resist the very labels Risner uses to name the problem”, and wonder *“if there isn`t a way to gather more rich and varied data by not so explicitly naming the performance we already seem to know”* (ibid., p.180).

Despite this critique, Rogers & Sanders offer no new methodological proposals to facilitate this and while applauding Risner`s fight for young boys they nonetheless want to *“trouble his notion that it comes in such neat boxes”* (ibid., p.180). Although not truly comparable, since Risner was conducting an online survey whereas I was conducting face-to-face interviews, reading this critique heightened my awareness of how a researcher's use of language is subject to contestation on a variety of fronts - ethical, epistemological and ontological - to name a few. However, despite these caveats, Risner`s conclusion was inescapable - that young males who dance are likely to have their sexuality queried by others and presumed to be homosexual. In the 1970`s, as a young male dancer, my sexuality had been questioned, and as I discuss in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, my analysis suggests that little has changed today.

As we know, societal attitudes and perceptions about masculinity often restrict the ways in which males are (dis)encouraged or (dis)allowed to move their bodies. In this regard, research into boys and dance provides an excellent opportunity to examine how masculinities are constructed, maintained, negotiated, resisted and justified. My findings suggest the continued operation of gendered boundary maintenance strategies, exampled by some boys' refusal to partake in dance movements coded as 'feminine' or to partake only of dance genres deemed 'masculine', such as urban

dance. Similarly, Australian researchers Gard & Meyenn (2000) found a resistance to forms of movement that were counter to the bodily practices of contact sports where movements were deemed appropriately 'masculine'. They examined school-aged boys` perceptions of physical activity and their preferred styles of movement, finding that boys held especially negative attitudes and perceptions towards ballet and modern dance, with some describing the dancing body as *"weird"* or *"pointless"* or *"gay"*. The researchers noted that for several of the boys dance did not allow for sufficient physical contact, a quality they deemed integral to physical activity/sport where it was sanctioned, unlike in dance where it could call one's sexuality into question.

Consequently, adolescents who are atypical and transgress gendered boundaries, such as boys who dance, are more likely to suffer bullying and harassment (Berger, 2003), with boys who identify as non-heterosexual especially at risk (Risner, 2014). As my findings (re)confirm, the bullying of young male dancers is commonplace; 85% of my participants (22/26) were bullied on account of being a dancer. Similarly, Risner's research on bullying, harassment and aggression investigated 33 adolescent male students aged 13 to 18 years who were studying dance at pre-professional level, (equivalent to UK pre-vocational level and so directly analogous with my participants). Risner's participants self-identified as: heterosexual (52%), homosexual (44%) and bisexual (4%), and while we must avoid generalising from a small sample (n=33), 85% of participants reported being bullied, compared with the US average of 9-12% of the general adolescent population, the latter figure the result of general research consensus, according to Berger (2003). Literature from Australia, Canada, Finland and the USA has similarly exposed homophobia, bullying

and masculinising dance practices in a range of settings, including pre-vocational, vocational and educational ones (e.g. Risner, 2002a, 2002b, 2009; Lehikoinen, 2006; Gard, 2008; Li, 2010, 2011, 2016; Pike, 2011; Risner, et al., 2018). However, in England, my research is the first to specifically and comprehensively address the topic of dance and its intersection with adolescent masculinities.

Reviewing, analysing and synthesizing the literature related to masculinity (Chapter Two) and to dance (this Chapter), it is clear that, too often, heteronormativity continues to condition the ways in which boys (dis)engage with certain movement activities such as dance, since not only is heteronormativity culturally embedded, it is also embodied specifically in and through movement. Gender theorists have long been interested in the ways people use their bodies, especially in the notion of *"investments"* (e.g. Hollway, 1984; Connell, 1995, 2001; Redman, 1996), since these identify what is at stake when we use one particular mode of deploying our body over others. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Butler (1993) believes gendered bodies materialise through reiterated actions that individuals perform in a gendered manner while, similarly, Gard, an Australian dance researcher, makes the point that *"movers are positioned with regimes of bodily practice and … the subjective feel of movement is never purely 'one`s own' to shape, never simply a straightforward matter of flesh-on-the world"* (Gard, 2003, p.109)*. As my findings subsequently illuminate, boys are sensitive to choreographic practices that might signify 'femininity' and so threaten their masculinity (and heterosexuality), if appropriate.

Others too have found this. Drawing on Butler's conception of a *'heterosexual matrix'* (Butler, 1990), Larsson, Redelius & Fagrell studied 24 students, aged 15 and 16 years in Sweden during their P.E. lessons, which included dance, and found that girls and boys `do` gender in multiple ways but usually within the constraints of a heteronormative culture. Boys, for example, learned to take the initiative, except in dance when *"they learn to lie low"* (Larsson, Redelius & Fagrell, 2011, p.79). In common with other scholarship, this research found that masculine values dominated physical education teaching and resulted in a privileged position for some boys while others who disrupt the heterosexual matrix *"seem more queer than girls who disrupt the matrix"* (ibid., p.79). The researchers noted that "*boys wearing tight clothes or performing `feminine` movements during class were met with giggles and ridicule … to a larger extent than girls performing `masculine` movements"* (ibid., p.79).

The question of how to `undo' the heteronormative gendered subject positions therefore becomes imperative; with Larsson, Redelius & Fagrell paraphrasing Butler's advice to engage in a strategy of *"subversive repetition during physical education lessons "* (ibid., p.79)*,* such as the encouraging of *"queer moments when things do not go 'according to (the gender) plan' "* (ibid., p.80)*.* In seeking to assist students to move in new, perhaps different ways, in order to embody new identities, one can speculate that teachers might find this a difficult task to accomplish - as illustrated in Chapter Seven which outlines the consequences faced by one teacher who allowed two boys to dance together in her class and faced parental opposition.

Contesting the commonly held belief that a lack of boys in dance classes is a problem that needs addressing, Gard argues that there is *"no self-evident reason why the number of boys participating in organised dance classes should, in and of itself, represent a problem that educators need to address"* (Gard, 2001, p.221). Instead, he advocates that more important focus should be on *"questions of sexuality and their significance when considering what is seen as gender-appropriate movement for boys and girls"* (ibid., p.222). So, instead of problematising boys and dance, Gard prefers to concentrate on finding ways to *"explore and legitimize sometimes transgressive ways of being and moving"* (ibid, p.223), a strategy reminiscent of the previously quoted advice of *"subversive repetition"* from Butler (1993, p.79), and one I advocate in subsequent chapters as a priority for dance pedagogy. As I stated in the Introduction, the rationale behind my research was not to encourage more boys into dance (although that would be most welcome), but to better understand the experiences of boys currently in dance education and training, and so develop more effective ways of supporting them by, for example, deploying gender-neutral pedagogies.

I have, therefore, much in common with Gard's aims, and support, for instance, his rejection of more athletic or boy-friendly approaches to dance education, believing these recuperative strategies would only *"reinforce the understandings that graceful, supportive, delicate or even eroticised forms of bodily movement and display are not consistent with male heterosexuality"* (Gard, 2001, p.223). As I have discussed previously, the recent dance initiative, *'Project B'*, from the Royal Academy of Dance,

has been predicated on this erroneous, essentialist notion of a 'boy-friendly'

approach to dance education. At the time of writing, '*Project B'* is still 'live' and no

data are available that would enable evaluation of it.

Overall then, it is clear that how boys chose to use their bodies is "*linked to the*

restrictions boys and men place on what it is to be male" (Gard, 2008, p.186),

although this policing and regulation of gendered behaviour cannot be limited to

males (e.g. Butler, 1990; Paechter, 1998, 2007; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002;

Jackson, 2006a; Nayak & Kehily, 2008). A challenge for dance educators then is to

"explore why certain forms of dance seem possible and others impossible" (Gard,

2008, p.187)*,* a task attempted by this thesis to better understand the gendered

"investments" some boys have in dance, or in/against particular dance genres.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has analysed and synthesised literature, predominantly from the USA,

UK, Scandinavia and Australia on dance and masculinity, finding that the dominant

discourses that pertain to males who dance remain potent forces that police and

regulate boys' dance participation. Other barriers, economic and social, such as

social class, have also been considered briefly in the UK context where

government awareness of the issue has not been matched by remedial strategies

to promote equitable access to dance and the arts more widely.

Informed by Chapter Two, which theorised masculinities, this chapter then

considered the extent to which gender, and especially feminist or pro-feminist

research, has become an increasingly significant topic in dance scholarship,

especially over the last 20 years or so (e.g. Adair, 1992; Burt, 1995, 2001, 2009; Briginshaw, 1998, 2001; Desmond, 2001). Thus, over the course of these two chapters I have sought to illustrate not only how poststructuralist notions of identity and power are complemented by social constructionist accounts of gender and sexual identity formation, but how a focus on embodiment is also essential to my approach, since the material body is not a passive receptacle *"lost in discourse"* (Pickard, 2015, p.50), but an active, dynamic agent capable of resistance and contestation.

Thus, as Chapters Five, Six and Seven will illuminate, boys who dance often seek to resist the *"regulatory regime"* (Butler, 1997, p.16), either discursively, materially or both, but not usually without attendant negative consequences, including homophobic bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation. This conclusion problematises many of the claims made by 'inclusive masculinity theory' (IMT), which asserts that it is *"increasingly unfashionable"* to be homophobic, violent or misogynistic (Anderson, 2009, p.153). This is an unfortunate, trivialising phrase, since "*unfashionable*" implies a recent, transitory state whereas homophobia, for example, has been a long-standing and serious socio-cultural problem. As I indicated in Chapter Two, writing about *"the profound nature of changes to masculinities in British and other cultures"*, Anderson draws on *"a substantial body of qualitative and quantitative research highlighting masculinity is shifting in response to both the awareness of and increasing antipathy towards homosexuality … as well as other religious, cultural, economic and political factors at play"* (Anderson, 2018, p.245), and so it seems timely to interrogate IMT in the context of the lived experiences of young male dancers.

However, of IMT, Anderson has previously acknowledged that while *"… broad claims about 'all men' or similar cannot be made…"* disconfirming research such as *"…finding orthodox aspects of masculinity among one group of people does not disprove the theory"* (Anderson & McCormack, 2016, p. 8). While this may be so, the empirical findings of IMT have nonetheless been critiqued for being over-generalised (e.g. Ingram & Waller, 2014; Simpson, 2014), but never before has the utility of IMT been applied to this specific context - of young males, aged 11 to 18, who dance in England. Chapter Four, which follows, explicates the methodology, methods and research design undertaken to accomplish this.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

At the start of this methodology chapter, it is timely to revisit the three research questions since Mason reminds us of the, *"centrality of the research question to the research process, and of linking research questions to one's philosophical or methodological position on the one hand, and to appropriate data generation methods on the other"* (Mason, 2012, p.9). Thus, they are:

- ▪ What are boys' experiences of dance education and training in their dance schools and secondary schools?

- ▪ How do these boys contest the dominant discourses about dance and masculinity?

- ▪ What do these research findings imply for policy and practice in boys' dance education and training?

Mason is not alone in highlighting the interrelationship between these key research components which unfold in a sequence, beginning with the researcher's ontological assumptions which in turn provoke epistemological considerations which, taken together, inform which methodological approaches are adopted prior to data generation. It makes sense, therefore, to tackle this chapter in a similar manner.

4.2 Ontological and epistemological positions

While an ontological position will reflect a researcher's axiology (i.e. their values and beliefs) it will not be grounded in *"an obvious and universal truth which can be taken for granted"* (Mason, 2012, p.14). This is a useful point which undermines any notion of simplicity in research by reminding us that there are different ways of

seeing and understanding an issue. It is, then, vital to make explicit the ontological, as well as the epistemological and methodological assumptions that underpin one's research because different ontological positions can, and do, *"tell different stories"* (Mason, 2012, p.14). As a subjectivist/interpretivist, I believe that *'social reality'* is mutually constructed between people in the real world, and therefore, my *'social reality'* is "*not external to individuals - imposing itself on consciousness from without"* (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.5). My epistemological assumption is therefore anti-positivist since I view knowledge as *"personal, subjective and unique"*, rather than *"hard, objective and tangible"* (ibid., p.6). And so, favouring empiricism over rationalism, I regard knowledge itself as a social construction since it is interpreted by individuals.

Within this interpretive paradigm then, 'reality' is socially constructed and premised on the belief that people's experiences occur within social, cultural, historical and personal contexts. Hence, 'social reality' is constructed through communication and interaction, developing shared inter-subjective meanings. Instead of a focus on facts, the emphasis lies with meanings and actions in context, creating multiple perspectives on 'reality' rather than one single truth. As a researcher seeking understanding of my participants' experiences of being a male dancer (or parent or teacher thereof), I am, therefore, interested in the multiple realities that emerge from the data, alert to any emerging patterns that a flexible, interpretivist research design, such as the one described below, affords.

4.3 Research Design

As befits the exploratory nature of the research questions, I sought to describe and explain the social phenomena around boys who dance, striving for an in-depth understanding of how these males negotiated their identities in the light of the dominant discourses that surround them. In so doing, I wanted to understand behaviours, actions, beliefs, values, emotions and so on *from their perspective.* It was, therefore, vital to ensure that *their* voices and views were heard and made visible in the thesis. Thus, a theoretically informed, qualitative approach, empirical and interpretive in its paradigmatic orientation, was deemed most appropriate since it could facilitate the use of various methods including interviews, case studies and vignettes.

However, in addition to the inevitably small-scale nature of my qualitative data generation, I also wished to capture a larger contextual picture about boys' involvement in private and public sector dance in England. While not strictly necessary for answering the research questions, I nonetheless wanted to know how many boys who attended dance schools took exams and in what genres. I was also curious to know how many boys opted to study dance at GCSE and Advanced level in their secondary schools/colleges. For answers to these questions, I needed to generate some quantitative data sourced from leading dance institutions.

And so, with these considerations in mind, and after several iterations, an appropriate research design was formulated. I began with the generation of

quantitative data, which offered some indication of boys' involvement in dance, but followed that with the major qualitative phase, where, in line with the research questions, the emphasis was on capturing the experiences of a sample of boys who danced. Employing both quantitative and qualitative methods would I hoped, avoid any *"false dualisms"* (Pring, 2006, p.46) since both paradigms can and do have their rightful places. My aim was for the two paradigms to be complementary; the findings from the initial quantitative data would provide a vital contextual frame, mapping the current dance ecology for boys and the extent of their presence within the dance sector. Beyond that, however, the dominant research paradigm would be qualitative and interpretative, comprising semi-structured interviews.

To begin with, secondary data were generated from two sources; firstly, from UKA Dance (UKA), a private-sector dance awarding organisation who deliver a range of graded dance qualifications, (like those awarded in Music and Drama) and secondly, from the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), the sole provider of GCSE, AS and Advanced Level dance examinations in the UK. These data were used to compare examination entry patterns by gender and genre in academic dance (AQA) with those of private sector pre-vocational dance (UKA Dance). In phase two, the major qualitative phase, data were generated from semi-structured interviews with male dancers, parents, teachers and dance policymakers/administrators. As I envisaged, the interviews were in-depth and lasted approximately an hour each. I also needed to balance the requirements of obtaining a reasonable sample size with the practicalities of time and expense involved in travel, transcription etc. and so determined that around 25 male dancers would be an optimal sample size, plus four

or so interviews each with teachers, parents and policymakers. In the event, I ended up with 26 male dancers, four parents, six teachers and four dance policymakers/ administrators – a substantial yet manageable sample.

4.4 Quantitative phase: dance examination data from UKA Dance and AQA

It was necessary to generate data to understand the popularity (or otherwise) of different dance genres with boys who dance in the private sector. However, generating data about private-sector dance in England was not straightforward, since the sector, diverse, fragmented and commercially competitive in its orientation, is unused to placing such data in the public domain. Having established that the sector did not collate data for overall participation rates, there were, however, some statistics available for dance examination entries stratified by dance genre, collected by the individual dance awarding organisations such as UKA Dance (UKA). Having close links with this organisation (as a member of its Executive Council), I was able to gain access this data relatively easily, whereas my requests for similar information from another two dance awarding organisations were declined on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Once collected, the data was analysed descriptively to establish how many boys took dance examinations and in what genre(s). Empirically speaking , I knew that boys who danced often leant towards certain 'safe' dance genres (in heteronormative terms), such as urban dance, and avoided other, 'unsafe' ones such as ballet, but as yet no data had been analysed to validate this. Hence, statistics for the 2017/18 academic year (reproduced in Appendix Four) were obtained from

UKA Dance and are discussed in Chapter Five. Awarding organisations such as UKA

Dance grant dance qualifications which are OFQUAL-regulated and valuable since

success at grades six, seven and eight earn Universities and Colleges Admissions

Service (UCAS) tariff points for entrance to higher education. For information,

Appendix Six shows these UCAS points alongside those awarded for Advanced level

subjects.

In the UK, dance examinations at GCSE, AS and Advanced Level are provided by the

Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). They were happy to furnish their

entry statistics, stratified by examination type (GCSE/AS/A Level), academic year and

gender from 2010-2018, thereby allowing some degree of comparability between

the gendered entry patterns in the academic sector and those in the private sector.

While statistical data for England alone are not collected by AQA, the data are

nonetheless useful in highlighting the gender discrepancies in entry patterns as well

as the declining rate of overall entries. The AQA data, contained in Appendix Five,

are discussed in Chapter Five. Further courses that might incorporate dance, such as

the BTEC in Performing Arts, were excluded from analysis as Pearson, the awarding

organisation, were unable to provide me with data in a timely fashion.

Nonetheless, I was now sufficiently equipped with some understanding of the

relationship between dance, dance genres and gender, and so I prepared for the

main qualitative phase of data generation by undertaking a small pilot study. Before

describing that however, I discuss the ethical considerations pertinent to my

research and the challenges of recruiting participants.

4.5 Qualitative phase: interviews with male dancers, parents and teachers

4.5.1 Ethical considerations and participant recruitment

In preparation for the pilot study (comprising six semi-structured interviews), ethical approval was secured from the Lancaster University Research Ethics Committee and I undertook to comply with its guidelines, together with those of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). To ensure adherence to child protection and safeguarding protocols, DBS certification was obtained via Lancaster University prior to the start of fieldwork.

My understanding of research ethics was no doubt honed by the two years (2016/17 & 2017/18) I spent as a member (student representative) of the university research ethics committee which oversaw proposed research in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Management School at Lancaster University. While I had previously undertaken a comprehensive research training module, I also benefitted from the specific training offered to all new committee members. Moreover, I found the experiential learning of attending meetings and debating complex ethical issues to be immensely valuable to my own efforts in conducting research in a way that respects the dignity, rights and welfare of my participants, and one which minimises risks to participants, researchers, third parties and the university itself.

In my case, these concerns were especially acute since most of my participants were children (under the age of 18) and so deemed 'vulnerable'. That said, vulnerability should not be understood as a fixed category related to, for example,

somebody's age, since it more properly relates to how susceptible an individual is to pressure, or to emotional, psychological and physical harm, and their ability to protect themselves from harm or exploitation. It was, nonetheless, proper to regard my 26 dancer participants as 'vulnerable' and as I explicate below, I proceeded with a range of measures designed to mitigate any risks they might encounter.

Sourced from an online database (dance-teachers.org), I identified ten dance schools in north-west England and approached the first two on the list from where I hoped to recruit six participants for my pilot study (explained below) subject to my sampling criteria - males, aged 11 to 18 years, studying at least one of the major dance genres of ballet, tap, jazz, contemporary, ballroom/latin-american and urban. After making introductory phone calls to each school principal, outlining my research and gauging their interest, (which was positive and enthusiastic), I issued them with paper and electronic copies of participant information sheets and sample interview questions. Furthermore, I explained my intended reliance on them to suggest and approach potential participants, subject, of course, to my sampling criteria.

It also felt important to meet the teacher(s) face to face at this point, and so I made arrangements to visit each school to continue the process of establishing trust and rapport. I was, after all, asking a great deal of these individuals, both in them acting as an initial conduit between the potential participants and myself, and ultimately in allowing me access to their pupils for whom they had a duty of care. On a more

practical note, I also wished to visit the school premises to establish if private

interviewing space would be available (and when), since I reasoned that

participants would feel more comfortable being interviewed in a familiar but

nonetheless private environment. I did not wish to visit boys in their own homes

since I feared they might feel constrained and/or distracted by any parental or

sibling presence. As expected, not all schools were able to accommodate me for

interviews and so I resolved to use online interviews via 'Skype', subject to

participant consent, instead.

A week or so after my visit, I contacted each school by telephone to confirm their

participation and to answer any further queries. Once confirmed, they began to

approach potential participants and distribute the information sheets, interview

schedules and consent forms. I was, therefore, wholly dependent on the schools for

my participant recruitment and knew that the pool of potential participants was

small. Moreover, in addition to the sampling criteria above, I wanted, ideally, to

recruit a diverse range of participants, spanning social class and ethnicity, and made

this known to the dance school principals who were acting as the recruitment

'gatekeepers'.

However, I realised meeting this additional criteria would be difficult owing to the

relative homogenous nature of private-sector dance and so would preclude any

substantive intersectional analysis of my data. Thus, my focus stayed on gender, and

in particular how young male dancers constructed their masculinities in the face of

the dominant discourses that surround them. However, during subsequent analysis

and discussion, I have made brief reference to salient intersectional factors, such as boys' social class and ethnicity (20 self-identified as middle-class, six as working-class; all were white British except for Saul, a black Jamaican), to illuminate issues such as the (un)affordability of private-sector dance education for some families.

Beyond these initial sampling concerns, obtaining consent then became imperative. For participants under 18, I required not only their consent but that of someone with parental responsibility for them, usually a parent or guardian. Although I knew that young people aged 16 to 18 with sufficient understanding were able to give their full consent to participate in research independently of parents and guardians, I nonetheless encouraged them to discuss their participation with their parents/guardians and supplied an additional parental consent form for their use. It was vital too that participants understood what, precisely, they were consenting to, and so clear, age-appropriate participant information sheets and consent forms had been produced for different classes of participants - one for children and young people (under 18); another for parents, guardians and carers and a further one for teachers, administrators and policymakers. Appendices One and Two contain these documents.

However, seeking written consent was not sufficient in my view, especially as I had not yet met the potential participants, and so, now furnished with their contact details (parental email address and telephone number, supplied by the dance schools with their permission), I made telephone appointments to speak with the

boys and at least one of their parents or guardians. This was to establish a rapport in readiness for the interviews, but also to reconfirm consent, answer any questions and finalise arrangements for the interview. Moreover, although the participant information had been written in age-appropriate language, I was unaware of participants' cognitive abilities and their capacity to understand it. My telephone calls were therefore an opportunity to summarise the contents of the written information and to satisfy myself, as far as was practicable, that I was indeed receiving informed consent.

During the calls, I stressed that participation was voluntary and explained the reasons for anonymising participants' data, assuring them that their identity would remain confidential unless I had safeguarding concerns (i.e. a belief that they or someone else was at risk of physical or mental harm). I reiterated that their consent would be reconfirmed on an ongoing basis, but especially so prior to the start of the interview and at its conclusion. They were also reminded they could withdraw at any time without reason, and how best to do this - by email or text, sent by themselves or on their behalf by someone with parental responsibility. These methods were chosen to minimise any potential discomfort and to reassure them that they did not need to speak to me in order to withdraw. An overriding concern was to satisfy myself that the boys were not under any duress to participate from parents, teachers or others.

As stated earlier, building rapport was a prime concern. Whereas Oppenheim (1992) describes rapport as an elusive quality and one that only experienced, skilled interviewers possess, I, like others such as Fowler & Mangione (1990) judged it

important for all interviewers and vital to successful data generation. To this end I placed much emphasis on establishing personal contact with my participants and parents, especially via the telephone (but also by email and text), and invited them to contact me with any queries, no matter how small. Few participants did this, and those who did usually contacted me for logistical reasons, such as to rearrange appointment times or venues.

Beyond reiterating information in the participant information letters, during the initial telephone calls I also drew attention to my personal history as an ex-dancer and teacher – an effective strategy designed to create empathy and trust (Ryan & Dundon, 2008). Not untypically, one parent commented in response, *'So you'll really understand where he's coming from then, won't you?'*. Thus, for many respondents, my familiarity with the field was perceived to be an advantage (while for me as researcher, also a source of potential bias, as I discuss in Chapter 8), but nonetheless I believe my familiarity with the subject undoubtedly helped in building rapport with participants, several of whom questioned me about my career in dance.

During these pre-interview interactions, I sometimes addressed participant (usually parental) concerns regarding issues of anonymity and confidentiality, since there was some confusion about the two, usually arising from a conflation of the terms. Thus, I went to some lengths to explicate these and reiterate the limits of confidentiality and the circumstances in which it could be compromised. I was acutely aware that some boys might currently be experiencing bullying, and if so, did not want to add to their distress. The telephone calls were therefore an

opportunity to establish something of the boys' 'hinterland' and form a judgement about their suitability for inclusion in the study since I had to satisfy myself that no harm would result from it. Consequently, I asked each parent, 'So how does X feel about taking part in the study?' and 'Does he enjoy life at secondary school?'; I then reiterated these question to each participant, noting and comparing responses to satisfy myself that I was safe to proceed with each individual. This step was imperative since the sample had been selected on my behalf by dance teachers and so this was my first opportunity to assess them (and they me) via our telephone conversations and so begin the process of building rapport.

I found that participants were enthusiastic about the prospect of sharing their dance experiences. An extract from my notebook, following my initial telephone conversations stated that Caleb (14) seemed *'pleased to talk about it [dance] since he doesn't usually discuss it with many people',* Alec (13) *was 'already in interview mode and ready to chat' and Neil (11) 'warmed up quite quickly'.* My notes on parents included the comment that Stephen, stepfather of Owen (15) thought *'he'd enjoy speaking to someone like you'* while Linda, mother of Roger (15*) joked, 'You'll have trouble shutting him up!'* .

Nonetheless, I also sought to allay any latent fears about the content of the interviews by providing the interview questions in advance, copies of which are in Appendix Three, since I wanted to make it clear what would, and as importantly, would not, be covered. I reassured participants (and parents) they had a right not to answer any question(s) and this would be accepted without demur. Most notably,

intrusive personal questions regarding sexual orientation would not be asked of participants, including those aged 16 and above. I had pondered how best to approach this sensitive topic which, in many ways, was central to my research, so choosing to ignore it in the interviews was a risky strategy while, conversely, asking about it was clearly intrusive and ethically unsound since it could cause distress. While I was comfortable to divulge my sexuality, if appropriate, I appreciated that differences in age, situation, status etc. between the participants and me were significant, and I could not expect this frankness to be reciprocated, especially to an relatively unfamiliar researcher. However, I hoped that some of the older interviewees would feel able to voluntarily share their sexual orientation with me, since it was likely to be a significant factor in their life history and probably in their experience of dance education and training too. In the event, it was heartening to note that most participants did share their sexuality with me, either implicitly, or more often, explicitly - an indicator of their trust in me and of the rapport we had established.

Interview schedules were differentiated for dancer, parent and teacher, together with the schedule for policymakers which was added later. The schedules contained questions which directly addressed the research questions plus a few more wide-ranging and open-ended ones, consonant with the nature of a semi-structured interview. The question wording was quite informal, and during the pilot and subsequent fieldwork, I posed them in a conversational way to create a relaxed mood which I hoped would encourage participants to talk more freely and to ask questions of me if they so desired. In essence, I wanted the participants to feel that

they were engaging in a conversation rather than an interview and to minimise the effect of any actual and/or imagined power relations. Interviews always commenced with a few general 'warm up' questions (not listed on the schedules) which were intended to relax the interviewee and so ease the elicitation of information during the interview proper. For example, a favourite one was to ask was, *"So, what have you been doing today"?* which prompted a range of responses, some of which segued into the actual interview*.

Furthermore, I had to consider the age and cognitive abilities of the participant dancers, who ranged from 11 to 18 years, to ensure that the questions were always understandable. Where necessary, this might demand that a synonym be used, so that, for example, the question relating to masculinity, *"What does the word masculinity mean to you?"* was reframed for younger interviewees as *"What is it like to be a boy?"*, and/or *"What do you like about being a boy?"*. Clearly, this was not ideal since the questions were not identical, more of an approximation to the original one, and while I was aware that such semantic differences could be significant, I knew too that the coding I planned to do could accommodate such variations. An explanation of the approach to the coding and analysis of the data can be found in 4.7.

Sources of support (e.g. contact details for Childline, Kidscape and StandUp (sic) Foundation) were made available to participants; in the event, none were requested. If participants changed their mind about participating within four weeks of interview, I reiterated that their data would be deleted and disregarded. They would not need to request this since it would be done as a matter of course; similarly, I

would confirm the deletion and disregard of this data with participants. Happily, though, no such requests were received.

4.5.2 Pilot study

As mentioned previously, a pilot study was necessary to assess if the draft questions were fit for purpose and would generate rich and sufficient data to answer the research questions. It was not thought necessary to interview policymakers at this stage as some of their questions would only be formulated following analysis of the dancer/parent/teacher interview data. The pilot study, which lasted three months, comprised semi-structured interviews (each lasting an hour or so), with four male dancers, one teacher and one parent, sourced from two dance schools, identified from an online database, 'dance-teachers.org', maintained by the ISTD (Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing).

During the pilot, I enquired how, in principle, boys would feel about me undertaking observations in their secondary schools, especially in their dance lessons, but this was rejected unanimously. While this was unsurprising (as well as being potentially fraught with ethical and logistical difficulties), boys did not want to be the *"centre of attention"* within their day schools, as one dancer put it. Sensitive to this, and of the negative repercussions that might well arise for participants, I abandoned the idea of obtaining ethnographic, observational data and so was left reliant on pupil and teacher accounts to garner an insight into boys' life at school. (Nonetheless, I strongly believe that gaining access to schools to research boys' (and girls')

experiences of dance education is a worthwhile endeavour and would be a valuable post-doctoral project).

Overall though, I judged the pilot study to have been successful and the research instruments fit for purpose. However, some minor revisions were necessary; for example, changes were made to the wording of certain questions to aid clarity, and additional questions were added such as one focussed on the media portrayal of dance and male dancers, (*"How do you think dance is portrayed by the media?"*) which boys had identified as being influential in shaping their perceptions of dance and male dancers. In view of this, I subsequently chose to exclude the pilot data from my analysis; however, as I planned to conduct 25 or so further interviews, I did not envisage being short of data.

As a former secondary school teacher, I was experienced in questioning pupils in a classroom environment but not so in a research interview context. However, my range of skills, of interviewing, observing and reflection, were all honed during the pilot study in readiness for the main phase of data generation. Adapting my vocabulary to suit the age of the participant, I was able to refine my questioning technique, realising the importance of asking open questions that were clear, short and unambiguous, and avoiding leading questions, technical terms and emotive language.

I was also able to hone the structure of the interview, beginning with a preamble to relax the participant, followed by a brief recap of its purpose and of their rights (e.g.

to not answer questions and to withdraw completely). Based on the pilot responses, I also revised the sequence of questions, calibrating them from easier ones to harder ones, but always ending with a positive issue or question. I found that allowing the interviewee some freedom to diverge from the question sometimes paid dividends in garnering an unexpected, valuable response, as did skilful probing, supported by such techniques as an expectant pause (to encourage vocalisations), small gesticulations or nods to signify active listening and returning words used by the participant. These techniques were especially useful in teasing out more data from nervous, reluctant or shy interviewees.

4.5.3 Interviews with male dancers, parents and teachers

Following the pilot study, I began to recruit participants for interview, returning to the online database, 'Dance-teachers.org', maintained by the ISTD, and again restricting my search to the north west of England (Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester), in order to minimise travel costs and time. Having decided to exclude the pilot data from my analysis, I identified a further eight potential participant schools from the database, all of whom agreed to assist me. I was most grateful for their co-operation and wholly reliant on their goodwill since, as gatekeepers, it was their task to select the participants (subject to my sampling criteria outlined above). The dance schools distributed my information sheets and consent forms to 30 or so potential participants, and once signed and returned I was given contact details for the 26 dancers who had agreed to take part. I could then set about arranging the interviews which would take place on dance school premises or by Skype, at mutually convenient times. In sum then, my data set comprised 26

dancers aged 11 to 18 in the secondary phase of education, 22 of whom attended state sector institutions, (including comprehensive and grammar schools since the latter still exist in parts of Lancashire), while 4 attended independent schools. The latter were free to ignore the government's National Curriculum which imposes a statutory duty on state schools to teach dance as a component of Physical Education (P.E.) for pupils at Key Stage Three, i.e. 11 to 14-year olds. Since I also wished to canvass the views of parents, interviews with two mothers and two fathers (from different dance schools) were subsequently arranged. Similarly, I was keen to interview dance teachers and so conducted interviews with six teachers, four of whom were female and two male.

My preference was to conduct interviews face-to-face with the young dancers, and I was able to accomplish this with 23 of them while the remaining three interviews were conducted, for logistical reasons, by Skype. Initially, I had wished to avoid this mixed-mode data generation (in person and online) since I wanted to capture as much verbal and non-verbal information as possible and judged this more achievable with a face to face encounter. I also felt it might be easier to build a rapport in person but, surprisingly, found the online encounters highly generative. Although there was a focus on the face, and much of the body language was lost online, it was, nonetheless, quite an intimate encounter, save for one participant whose father was out of shot but sometimes audible . Clearly, such instances are difficult to control but I intervened early on by diplomatically reminding the participant to close doors and windows to help eliminate the extraneous noise I could hear. Although this tactic worked, I could not guarantee that the participant was left alone for the

remainder of the interview, an inevitable consequence of this interview mode, nor was I confident that, at its conclusion, I had garnered all the possible data from him. Overall though, I took the view that, where necessary, and despite their constraints, I would rather conduct Skype interviews than lose participants altogether.

Each school principal had provided some basic information on their school - pupil numbers, differentiated by gender and the range of dance genres taught. As can be seen in the table below, which shows each school's pseudonym, all eight schools had an overwhelming majority of female pupils; only Beech and Pine had a relatively high proportion of boys attending (9.7% and 8.2% respectively). These two schools were unique in offering boys'-only gymnastic and urban dance classes which they believed were an effective recruitment strategy for male dancers. Beech and Pine were in stark contrast to say, Elms, a ballroom and latin-american dance school which had only two male pupils (1.6%) and 120 female pupils (98.4%).

The data also confirmed that the paucity of boys would have made the establishment of focus groups within dance schools, (an early idea of mine), difficult if not impossible to accomplish, and that my alternative method of individual interviews was a more feasible strategy.

Table 4.1 List of dance schools and dance genre codes

School Name	Girls on roll	Girls as %	Boys on roll	Boys as %	Dance genres taught
1. Alder	200	98.0%	5	2.0%	B/T/J/C/BL/U
2. Beech	260	90.3%	28	9.7%	B/T/J/C/BL/U
3. Elm	120	98.4%	2	1.6%	BL
4. Hawthorn	80	96.4%	3	3.6%	C/U
5. Maple	80	96.4%	3	3.6%	B/T/J
6. Oak	130	97.5%	3	2.5%	B/T/J/C/U
7. Pine	90	91.8%	8	8.2%	B/T/J/C/U
8. Willow	60	93.8%	4	6.2%	B/T/J/C/BL/U

B = Ballet; T = Tap; J = Jazz; C = Contemporary;
BL = Ballroom/Latin-American; U = Urban

4.5.4 Interviews with dance administrators and policymakers

The final element of data generation was an additional set of four semi-structured

interviews conducted with administrators/policy makers from two dance awarding

organisations . These individuals had volunteered their cooperation in response to

an appeal I had made in person to delegates at the Awarding Organisations

Committee of the Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre. As with previous

interviews, I provided participants with an interview schedule in advance, based on

the emerging themes from my analysis. The primary focus of these interviews was to

discuss my preliminary findings in order to address research question three - *"How

might these research findings inform policy and practice in boys' dance education

and training?*

The audio interviews were first captured using a voice recorder application on my

mobile phone, then transferred to my password-protected encrypted laptop

computer before being uploaded to Lancaster 'Box', a file sharing resource whose data is automatically encrypted.

4.6 Why choose semi-structured interviews?

A concern for the individual is a hallmark of the interpretive paradigm and this concern lies at the heart of my research which is to *"understand the subjective world of human experience"* (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.17). Semi-structured interviews were therefore ideally suited to capturing the individual, subjective lived experiences of boys who dance, their parents and teachers, and the meanings they make of that experience (Seidman, 2013). Moreover, I believe, like Roulston (2013) in the likelihood of a link between the type of interview used, the processes involved and the researcher's philosophical position. Hence, as a constructionist I envisaged the interviewees working with me in a semi-structured interview to co-construct or generate the data, making sense of the topic collaboratively. Listening back to the interviews and noting the degree of interaction, the requests for clarification or elaboration, the supportive and encouraging use of 'fillers' as well as a host of prosodic features, I believe this was the case.

More generally though, the use of interviews was consonant with my belief that the main beneficiaries of this research would principally be boys who dance, who so often are marginalised and stigmatised. They are worthy of support and of my advocacy, and their experiences deserve an audience. The semi-structured nature of the interview enabled not only focussed questioning but the flexibility for both parties to speak tangentially but nonetheless relevantly. Listening back to the

interviews and reading the transcripts, it is clear that some of the key

information provided by participants arose in this way.

A further related strength of using semi-structured interviews was that they seemed

particularly suitable for dealing with potentially sensitive issues, such as participants'

identities or sexualities, since they were capable of capturing lines of argument,

turns of thought, nuances and suchlike in a way that most other methods could not.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, such interviews enabled participant voices to

be heard in the first person, in a private and supportive environment.

It was also important, I believed, to take account of the contexts (social, cultural,

economic and physical) in which the research participants found themselves. Again,

I judged this could be best achieved through interviews, which are well-suited to

describing and interpreting a range of material practices. Such data can generate

"thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) which not only describe events in their context

but also *"participants' intentions, strategies and agency"* according to Cohen,

Manion & Morrison, (2011, p.540).

Wishing to address the research question, *"How might these research findings*

inform policy and practice in boys' dance education and training?", I judged that an

empirically-based thesis, attesting to boys' first-hand experiences of dance in their

dance and secondary schools, obtained through semi-structured interviews that

foregrounded participants' voices, was best placed to advocate for changes to

dance education policy and practice, so as to promote gender equity in dance

pedagogy, for example.

Dance, as a living, breathing art form with its focus on the body, also needed a voice, and I judged that such a voice (or a chorus of voices), could best be made material through using semi-structured interviews.

4.7 Analysing the qualitative data

4.7.1 The process of thematic analysis

The pilot and subsequent interviews were transcribed by me since I wished to familiarise myself with, and get close to, the data (Riessman, 1993). These were stored in and encrypted by 'Box', hosted by Lancaster University. The act of transcribing was also the first important step of analysis (Bird, 2005), an interpretive act where meanings are created (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Transcriptions were orthographic, verbatim accounts of all verbal and sometimes non-verbal utterances such as gestures, if they were deemed important.

Drawing initially upon Ryan & Bernard (2003), a close reading of the data was undertaken to generate a list of ideas about content and what was of interest. I identified, among other things: word repetitions, in-vivo terms, key-words-in-context, metaphors, analogies, transitions, connectors and nascent conceptualisations. These were then coded with a written definition of each new code added to a 'memo' book. I understood a code to be *"the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon"* (Boyatzis, 1998, p.63). Such codes initially included

"dance", "bullying", "secrecy", "school" and "isolation". Coding was inductive since did not wish to be constrained by a deductive pre-existing coding frame. The process, while organic, was itself part of the analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) since data was being organised into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). At this stage, however, coded data was not consonant with the units of analysis (themes), which were often broader, tentative and subject to revision.

I began coding by using 'AtlasTi' data analysis software but soon abandoned it since learning how to use it proved not only time-consuming but exasperating. More importantly, I had begun to feel detached from the data, having become pre-occupied with the operational mechanics of the software and so reverted to manual coding, using pen, paper, coloured highlighters and 'Post-it' notes. This proved beneficial and I was better able to focus on the task in hand - to reduce an initial list of flat codes from an unmanageable 153 to around 60. I did this by creating hierarchical (or tree) codes and a branching arrangement to create sub-codes so that, for example, the original flat code of "dance" nested to become "dance > ballet", with similar sub-codes created for all the other dance genres, a process that Corbin & Strauss (1990) call *"dimensionalising"*. At this point, I considered how different codes could combine into overarching themes and found visual representation to be helpful, forming 'theme piles' of 'Post-it' notes and mind maps to reduce the 60 codes into 15 potential themes including: 'the male dancer'; 'dance genres'; 'family and friends'; 'secondary school experiences'; 'dance school experiences', 'dance institutions' and so on. This visual representation was helpful in considering the relationships between codes, themes and different levels of themes

such as main and sub-themes. As such, it was an iterative activity, since the coding involved constant comparison to ensure consistency of approach, moving gradually from the descriptive to the analytical, together with a negative case analysis for codes which challenged classification.

Having devised a set of potential themes, it was then necessary to review them and reduce them for manageability. Writing of their approach to thematic analysis, Braun & Clarke speak of the necessity for themes to capture *"the contours of the coded data"* and of the creation of a *"thematic map"* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.21). To accomplish this, I reviewed each coded data extract to establish if they formed a coherent pattern; this involved the reworking of some themes, the creation of new ones and the discarding, merging or subsuming of others. In so doing, I considered the validity of the individual themes in relation to the dataset and whether the *"thematic map"* accurately reflected the meanings therein. This necessitated re-reading the entire data set again to check for the above, but also to code any additional data that had been missed previously.

Satisfied with the revised 'thematic map', three overarching themes were generated:

- pedagogy, performance and privilege; this code captured boys' mainly positive experiences of dance education in their dance schools

- regulation and (re)production; this captured boys' often problematic experiences of dance education in their secondary schools

- recuperating a masculine and/or heterosexual self; this captured the strategies boys deployed to counter the dominant discourses about dance and masculinity

It was now evident how the themes fitted together, and for each theme I wrote a detailed analysis, paying regard not just to the 'story' that each one told but how

it fitted into the overall 'story' of my data in relation to the research questions. This necessitated considering the themes themselves and each theme in relation to the others. Themes one and two are analysed and discussed in Chapters Five and Six, while theme three is the subject of Chapter Seven.

4.7.2 A rationale for thematic analysis

After explicating the process of thematic analysis, it would be remiss not to also explain the rationale for it. In fact, my choice of analytical framework was relatively straightforward. Having initially considered both phenomenological and grounded theory approaches, I finally opted for thematic analysis since it seemed the clearest and most appropriate method *"for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data"* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). While interpretive phenomenology focuses on subjective human experience and is often organised thematically, it seemed to me most useful in the realms of humanist psychology, whereas my approach was more sociological in emphasis.

Clearly, what can be said about one's data, and how meanings are theorised, are guided by one's research epistemology, in my case a social constructionist approach predicated on an understanding that experiences, meanings, events and so on are the effects of a range of socially (re)produced discourses in society. As such, *"thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework cannot and does not seek to focus on motivation or individual psychologies"* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.14), no matter how interesting they may seem. Instead, it proved

attractive and appropriate since it sought *"…to theorise the socio-cultural contexts and structural conditions that enable the individual accounts that are provided"* (ibid., p.14).

Consequently, while interested in generating data from individual dancers, my focus was on capturing their *collective* narratives, and explaining how those shared experiences, expressed as themes, reflected the gendered discourses that surround males who dance. Similarly, my priority was not necessarily to build new theory (the rationale behind grounded theory), but more to explore if an existing contemporary gender theory, that of 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2009), had utility in my research context.

By contrast then, thematic analysis offered a pleasing breadth of scope; it was capable of building theoretical models, if necessary, and of finding solutions to real-world problems. A flexible method, and one consonant with my ontological and epistemological paradigms, it involved searching across a data set to capture repeated, patterned responses of key words, phrases and ideas. This form of data-driven, rich, inductive analysis enabled a process of coding free from the constraints of a pre-existing coding frame or the analytic (pre)conceptions of the researcher. As such, themes can exist at semantic level, capturing the explicit, surface meaning or at a latent, interpretative level which encompasses underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies (Boyatzis, 1998), consonant with my constructionist paradigm.

As noted previously, both types of themes were generated. Describing this process, I prefer to use the term 'generated' rather than the popularly-used verb of 'emerged' since, as Taylor and Ussher (2001) note, the notion of themes 'emerging' from data might infer the process of analysis to be a passive one, so denying the researcher's active, interpretive role in identifying themes, selecting those of interest and reporting them. Indeed, this was a further reason for choosing thematic analysis since, not only did it accord with my constructionist, interpretive paradigm, but it offered the possibility of creative engagement with the data.

4.8 Validity

Critical to any research endeavour is the overriding issue of quality, which traditionally means demonstrating validity and reliability in reaching conclusions. However, both are contested terms, which have *"particular processes and criteria"* attached to them according to Bazeley, (2013, p.402). Both are critiqued briefly below, beginning with the problematic notion of reliability.

I agree with Thomas who wrote:

> *In interpretative research you are interpreting on the basis of you being you, interviewing someone else being them. Who you are … will affect this interpretation and you would not expect someone else to emerge with the same interview transcripts as you. So, reliability is, in my opinion, irrelevant in interpretative research.* (Thomas, 2009, p.106).

Similarly, Mason cautions that, rather than fixating on any dubious claims to reliability, our attention should instead focus on establishing that, "*[d]ata generation and analysis have not only been appropriate to the research questions,*

but also thorough, careful, honest and accurate" (Mason, 2012, p.188) and so she

endorses validity as *"a more sophisticated and meaningful concept"* (ibid., p. 188).

Validity, then, can be defined as "*the extent to which an account accurately*

represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (Hammersley, 1990, p.

57)*. What is significant here is the notion of representation, the nature of

which is dependent upon the ontological and the epistemological orientations

of the researcher. As Mason reminds us, at its heart:

> *Judgements of validity are, in effect, judgements about whether you are*
> *'measuring', or explaining, what you claim to be measuring or explaining.*
> *They therefore concern your conceptual and ontological clarity, and the*
> *success with which you have translated these into a meaningful and*
> *relevant epistemology".* (Mason, 2012, p.188).

Thus, as a reflexive researcher, I ask myself, *"Am I clear about what I am claiming to*

measure?" and while it is impossible for research to be *wholly* valid, we should,

nonetheless, explain how we believe our research design, data collection, analysis

and interpretation to be valid – a task I undertake below. Drawing on Gronlund

(1981), I concur with Cohen, Manion & Morrison that validity *"should be a matter of*

degree rather than as an absolute state" (2011, p.179), but one we should seek to

maximise, nonetheless.

And so, to ensure my research had optimum validity, I applied relevant aspects of

the 'Qualitative Legitimation Model', described as *"a comprehensive typology and*

description of methods for assessing the truth values of qualitative research"

(Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006, p.239), to my research. Particular attention was

paid to methods that would help me counter threats to the internal and external

validity at the three major stages of the research process - data generation, analysis and interpretation. Yet, working within an interpretivist paradigm, as I was, the notion of 'truth values' was potentially problematic, or so it seemed until I read Maxwell on the use of legitimation frameworks, such as the 'Qualitative Legitimation Model', which:

> *Does not depend on the existence of some absolute truth or reality to which an account can be compared, but only on the fact that there exists ways of assessing accounts that do not depend entirely on features of the account itself, but in some way relate to those things that the account claims to be about".* (Maxwell, 1992, p.283).

Applying the model was a useful exercise in reflexive thinking; indeed, this was an ongoing activity and discussion of it appears in this chapter only by way of convention.

I began by reflecting on my *"prolonged engagement"* in the field (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006, p.239) which comprised generating data over 18 months. This period, which included time for the piloting exercise, involved visits to ten dance schools for interviews and four visits to dance institutions and awarding organisations across the country – sufficient, I thought, to *"obtain an adequate representation of the 'voice' under study"* (ibid., p.239) or in my case, multiple voices. Although my detailed knowledge of the dance sector was helpful in understanding its culture and ethos, this was further developed during the prolonged period of data collection by, for example, building trust and rapport with the participants and maintaining contact with them so they could engage in member checking of the transcribed interviews (discussed later) which is *"the most critical technique for establishing*

credibility" according to Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.314). My knowledge of the sector

was undoubtedly helpful in understanding the key issues faced by it such as fair

access and gender equity. Furthermore, as far as commercially sensitive data was

concerned (i.e. examination entry statistics), my knowledge of sector politics

ensured I knew whom to approach for access to this.

The volume of quantitative and qualitative data collected was potentially

overwhelming and so necessitated careful, ongoing management. For example,

over the 5 years of the research, quantitative data such as GCSE, AS and A level

examination entry statistics were updated annually, including a final update in

August 2018 to cover the 2018/19 year. Prolonged engagement in the field had also

to be tempered with pragmatism so that, having established a notional, initial figure

of 25 to 30 interviews with male dancers, I stopped after 26 having reached data

saturation point.

To further enhance the rigour of my research and to provide multi-sourced

corroborating data, three types of triangulation were employed (Denzin, 1970).

First, of data (interviews, statistics); second, of method (combining quantitative

and qualitative approaches) and third, of theory, by using more than one

theoretical approach, of inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2009) and the related

concepts of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996) and 'heterosexual

recuperation' (McCormack, 2012). I concluded that, overall, the data

generation process was as robust as possible, with multiple data sources,

(a mixture of quantitative and qualitative), and a use of appropriate methods which, taken together, would overcome any weaknesses or intrinsic biases that might arise from single data or method studies.

Throughout the process, I was keen to leave an 'audit trail' and followed the old maxim of "keep everything", ensuring it was dated and filed accordingly. A working notebook/diary became my constant companion, a vital tool for scribbling thoughts and ideas, day and night. Viewed retrospectively, it was valuable in tracing lines of enquiry, for cross-checking and validation; it became known colloquially as my *"thinking book",* although, in fact, it was far more than that. Equally important, and mentioned previously, was the process of member checking/informant feedback (respondent validation), whereby participants were offered the opportunity to proof-read the interview transcripts to verify their accuracy. A majority did this and all confirmed the transcripts to be accurate.

From the outset, it was imperative that data generation was of the highest quality possible and this involved, among other things, 'weighing the evidence' to obtain the best quality data. So, for instance, the quantitative data from AQA and UKA Dance were generated from trusted sources and had been subject to institutional quality assurance checks prior to release. Overall then, I was satisfied that the data generated was fit for purpose and would enable robust and credible analysis.

While it is important to acknowledge the restrictions of the research design, such as the reliance on a small, regional dataset of participants, this was somewhat

mitigated by recruiting contrasting participants (by age and dance genre).

Moreover, weaknesses arising from a small-scale qualitative sample were offset (and triangulated) by using larger, quantitative datasets of dance examination statistics for contrast and comparison, so that cautious claims, such as analytic or theoretical generalisation, could be made. For instance, the qualitative data suggested that, in terms of normative masculinity, boys often started to learn to dance with 'safe' dance genres such as urban dance, with some progressing incrementally to other 'unsafe' genres such as ballet. This was supported by the quantitative data from UKA Dance which showed urban dance to be the most popular dance examination genre, with boys accounting for 17.9% of the total candidature; by contrast, only 2.2% of ballet and tap candidates were male.

Notwithstanding the above, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of researcher reflexivity, especially so when working within an interpretive paradigm, since the research cannot be objective or value free, nor can it be free of the researcher's influence. This demands continuous reflection on how one's actions, values and perceptions impact upon the research setting (Gerrish & Lacey, 2006), and is required throughout the research process since it can affect both data generation and analysis. I found using my research notebook to be of tremendous help in acknowledging and externalising this. Moreover, something further was required - a candid acknowledgement of one's positionality for the reader in terms of salient, intersectional elements such as social class, gender, sexuality etc. For example, as a former professional dancer and teacher, it was appropriate to disclose my prior dance experience to participants, believing that, in interpretivist research,

as knowledge is situated in relations between people, my situated, personal knowledge, (of having been a boy who danced), could perhaps be helpful in creating empathy with some of the research participants and might lead to a richer or fuller generation of data. Clearly, too, my gender identity as a male, and my heterosexuality, were also important in this study of masculinities, another recognition that qualitative research (and I would argue quantitative research too) cannot be neutral. In short, "*researchers are in the world and of the world*" and must therefore take steps to *"hold themselves up to the light" (*Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.225).

Thus, the inherent, inevitable subjectivity of the interpretivist should be regarded not as limiting or unbalancing the research but as motivating and illuminating it. However, as aforementioned, this subjectivity cannot go unchecked; instead, it requires a high degree of reflexivity, alert to the possibility of confirmation bias. I was acutely aware of this phenomenon, fearful that my familiarity with the dance sector could lead me to pre-conceived conclusions, not necessarily supported by the evidence, and so I made every reasonable effort to develop and sustain a critical awareness, or as Thomas puts it, an *"instinctive uncertainty"* (Thomas, 2009, p.111). For example, I did this by looking for (and finding) limited but disconfirming data which suggested the localised presence of an inclusive culture of masculinity in the secondary schools of four participants.

I was keen, like Anderson to *"explicitly examine my personal, emotional and theoretical influences that are implicated in my analysis of the data"* (Anderson, Magrath & Bullingham, 2012, p.18). Sustained reflexivity, such as keeping my

positionality in mind, also helped me interrogate the data for alternative meanings and readings, moving beyond the most obvious or predictable interpretation. It also meant that the analysis of data was an iterative cycle, one strengthened by revisiting early analyses and asking oneself questions such as *"What other explanations could be offered here?"* or *"How might another researcher regard this data?"*

The results of my data analysis were therefore compared with other research findings, such as that of Owen (2014) and Risner et al., (2004), who found that, like me, it was not dance itself that most boys feared but the questioning of their precarious social and sexual status, mainly by their peers. Similarly, a review of Scandinavian literature had revealed that constructing the young male dancer as an athlete was common and longstanding. This *"discursive rhetoric"* was also "*a discourse of normalcy*" since it emphasised *"the physical condition of male dancers"* according to Finnish research (Lehikoinen, 2006, p.97). This was also evident in my findings which I conceptualised as strategies for 'masculine' and/or 'heterosexual recuperation'.

My personal history, outlined in Chapter 1, led me to believe in a causal link between male dancers and their experiences of bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation, but, fearing bias, it was necessary to interrogate this robustly. To seek other plausible, rival explanations, I asked the male dancers about the experiences of any non-dancing male siblings and friends who attended the same secondary school, with the same question also asked of parents. Responses suggested that a clear

causal relationship did exist between male dancers and bullying at school, although as reported in subsequent chapters, this varied according to a range of factors such as the vigilance of the school in identifying and dealing with bullying.

Like most qualitative research, this study has involved a small dataset, but to what extent could it be said to have *"external validity"* (Denzin, 1970), whereby one could generalise these findings to other contexts? This is more a question of the validity of the data analysis than of method itself, although the latter is of course important. In subsequent chapters, I make cautious claims, believing the research findings likely to have resonance elsewhere, by providing 'thick description' and rich data, both quantitative and qualitative, to substantiate them. But, to reiterate Thomas, these claims are made in a context of *"instinctive uncertainty"* (Thomas, 2009, p.111), commensurate not only with my ontological and epistemological positions, but a realisation that the specificity of the research precludes generalisability.

Working in a supportive, collegiate department offered plenty of opportunities to share my work with other doctoral students who acted as critical friends. Lincoln and Guba describe the role of the peer de-briefer as *"the devil's advocate"* (1985, p. 308) who poses searching questions about all aspects of the research. This external evaluation of my research was invaluable since it offered fresh, critical yet empathetic eyes on the nascent work. For instance, the thesis has been strengthened by the input of a doctoral colleague who volunteered to review the

coding of some of my early interviews and suggested additional useful ways to move

from descriptive to analytic coding. I have also been fortunate to attend and

present my work at several conferences, both in the UK and overseas (e.g. Dance

Studies Association Conference, Malta 2018, and the National Dance Education

Organisation Special Topic Conference on 'Men in Dance ', USA, 2017). Explaining

and answering questions on my research from eminent scholars in the field has been

of immense help in challenging and clarifying my thinking, strengthening it in the

process.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has explicated my methodological approach, and its ontological and

epistemological underpinnings, to explore the experiences of young males who

dance, focussing on both ethical considerations and the steps taken to produce

rigorous, valid findings which are presented across the next three chapters. While

Chapters Six and Seven focus on, respectively, the consequences of being a male

dancer, and how boys contest the dominant discourses about dance and

masculinity, Chapter Five, overleaf, begins by exploring boys' often contrasting

experiences of dance in their dance schools and their secondary schools.

Chapter 5 *"It wasn't proper dance [at school]. I had to go to the Willow Dance School for that"*: boys' experiences of dance education in their secondary schools and dance schools.

5. 1 Introduction

Drawing on my analysis of interview data, this chapter focuses on boys' experiences of being taught dance in their secondary schools and dance schools, beginning with the latter. Participants reported largely positive and enjoyable experiences in their dance schools which were mainly free of the gender-based regulatory pressures found in their secondary schools. However, some boys were critical of aspects of dance pedagogy, where teachers delivered choreography which boys coded as 'feminine' and inappropriate for them to embody. Acutely aware of their minority status, some boys were also uncomfortable with the privileges that often accompanied it, such as being offered solo performances in dance shows.

By contrast, I found that the gender regulatory regime of secondary schools, and in particular, a fear of the 'feminine', was a barrier to boys' enjoyable and wholehearted participation in their dance education, and most of the chapter will be devoted to exploring this. In addition, the philosophy of dance in education which privileges 'process over product' is problematised for failing to engage boys (and probably girls too) in dance, as are schools' attempts to appeal to the heteronormative in some of their schemes of work.

Boys' experiences of dance in their secondary schools provide further evidence of dance as a gendered subject, and one in conflict with an overtly masculinised P.E.

curriculum with its emphasis on team sports such as football and rugby. Findings

suggest that many male teachers are uncomfortable teaching dance, eschewing it

wherever possible or reconceptualising it as a mode of fitness by terming it

"aerobics" or "gymnastics" – a form of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996)

and/or 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012). I also found that boys

studying dance at GCSE level were not always given adequate guidance and

support in school, and were instead reliant on their dance schoolteachers to assist

with choreographing dance for coursework purposes. While most secondary school

staff were supportive of boys' dancing, a small minority of male P.E. teachers were

overtly hostile to it, revealing troubling homophobic traits.

More broadly though, I found that dance continues to sit at the margins of the

school curriculum, and I illustrate this by analysing examination entry data for GCSE,

AS and Advanced Level Dance, obtained from the Assessment and Qualifications

Alliance (AQA). As the only awarding organisation to offer the subject, the AQA data

(see Appendix Five) shows sharply declining rates of entry - an intended

consequence, I contend, of the government's neoliberal agenda in education. Over

the decade 2008-2018, GCSE dance entries from males fell by 36.8%, and by 33.0%

for Advanced Level, while overall entries fared even worse, falling by 51.1% for

GCSE dance and 39.9% for Advanced Level. In stark terms, 642 males took GCSE

dance in 2018 compared with 8082 females, while only 83 males opted for it at A

level, alongside 1233 females. Moreover, the growing trend towards 'academy'

schools (publicly funded independent schools), which are not obliged to follow

the national curriculum could further erode the presence of dance in the curriculum.

Thus, in an age of austerity and curtailed dance provision in schools, I analyse and discuss boys' views on the occasional dance enrichment experiences offered in their schools, such as workshops from visiting dance companies. In so doing, I offer a critique of the (deficit) discourse surrounding the value of male role-models in dance, using a recent initiative, '*Project B*' from the Royal Academy of Dance, as an example. The chapter concludes with a vignette from a teacher whose attempt to free her pupils from the *"gender straitjacket"* (Pollack, 1998), met with resistance from a parent, a reminder of the pervasive power of gender normativity.

Perhaps nowhere is the salience of this gender normativity and regulation better illustrated than by examining dance examination entry statistics from the private sector. As Appendix 4 reveals, data from UKA Dance indicates significant differences in examination entry patterns when stratified by dance genre and gender. For instance, in 2017/18 male candidates accounted for only 2.2% of the examination entries for ballet, 2.2% also for tap, 2.8% for jazz dance but rising to 14.8% for ballroom and 17.9% for urban dance. The data shows that in 2017/18 only 55 male dancers entered for ballet examinations compared with 2547 females. Although an incomplete picture, since it pertains to data from only one awarding organisation, it is nonetheless in line with statistics from the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), the largest and most illustrious dance awarding body, which indicates that, worldwide, fewer than 2% of ballet examination candidates are male,

(Source: royalacademyofdance.org). These data indicate boys' clear preference for gender normative styles such as urban dance over more gender transgressive genres like ballet. As such, it suggests the continued presence of the dominant discourses pertaining to dance and masculinity, the salience of *"youth taste cultures"* (Cann, 2013, p.54) and a problematisation of IMT's claim that boys can now engage in terrain and activities heretofore coded as 'feminine', without fear or stigma.

5.2 Boys' dance education in their dance schools: pedagogy, performance and privilege

While some boys were apprehensive about joining the feminised community of a dance school with few or no other males attending, fears about repercussions within it, such as ridicule, were soon dissipated, as Callum explained:

> *I knew most of the people going there would be girls…that didn't bother me, I expected it, but I wondered how they'd treat me. Would they laugh at me and talk behind my back? But they didn't … they were really kind to me, and I made friends with some of them*

Participants reported that teachers, pupils and parents were welcoming and supportive of male dancers and no incidents of bullying or marginalising behaviours were reported. More practically though, some boys lamented the lack of changing facilities for them but *"it's to be expected I suppose, since there are so few of us"* according to Alec (13). Similarly, only half of the schools had separate male toilet facilities and some boys reported feeling *"awkward"* (Jacob, 11) using unisex toilets, but had little alternative. More significantly though, two issues proved problematic for some boys - pedagogy and privilege - and these are discussed below.

5.2.1 Dance curriculum and pedagogy

Teaching styles were found to be mainly instructional, often based on a 'command and control' model where dance steps were demonstrated and explained, often in musically phrased movement sequences. In some genres of dance, such as ballet, tap and ballroom, technical execution of the dance was privileged above all else, manifested in excessive repetition, justified by teachers as a *"practice makes perfect"* model according to Nathan (14). While such rote learning could be off-putting to some learners, irrespective of gender, boys understood that self-improvement came from regular practice: "*My teacher talks about muscle memory and 10,000 hours and all that",* explained Nathan (14)*, "so I understand why I've got to practise, even though it gets a bit boring. But I do most of my practice at home".* While such regimentation is reminiscent of the docility produced by military training, as I explicate below, some boys invoked their agency to contest aspects of it.

Owing to the relative scarcity of male pupils in dance training, it is little wonder that many dance teachers have limited, if any, experience in teaching males and so might be insufficiently sensitised to their concerns. For instance, George (13) recalled his teacher's instruction, *"Right girls, to the barre …and you too, George"*. A further example concerns a minority of (mostly older) boys who contested their 'docile bodies' after feeling uncomfortable at some of the choreography they were taught, whereby specific arm, leg or body movements were coded by them in essentialist terms as 'feminine'. One such, Marcus (16) remonstrated with his dance teachers since, *"[t]hey expected me to do the same moves as the rest of the class".*

In response, while teachers could have employed more gender flexible pedagogies (Warin, 2017) by creating a range of alternative movements, my findings suggest that they were more likely to differentiate their choreography to make it more 'masculine', thereby reproducing gender essentialism. George offered an example of this:

> *In tap, they [female dancers] kind of… like… show themselves off, and when the teachers choreograph a dance, they make sure that I'm not in with the girls and doing the wrist flicks, and they'll make sure it's kinda strong, if you know what I mean…*

I also found that some teachers would permit boys to 'masculinise' the choreography themselves, thereby facilitating a form of masculine and/or heterosexual recuperation by, for example, creating a supposedly 'stronger' arm line, or by substituting a lateral hip action with a pelvic thrust. Drawing on the theorisations of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996) and 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012), this point is developed in Chapter Seven where I explicate my findings on how young male dancers contest the discourses about dance and masculinity by recourse to a range of six recuperative strategies.

Only in ballet, with its separate syllabus for boys, is some of the dance content differentiated by gender, but it is nonetheless shackled by the constraints of gender normativity. For instance, several boys spoke of enjoying performing the RAD ballet syllabus which requires girls to execute 'pointe' work (with its roots in the Romantic era, reflecting an ethereal and idealised femininity), while they undertook extra 'allegro' exercises of bright, fast or brisk steps, often comprising jumps designed to

promote their strength and virtuosity. Boys also spoke of enjoying their 'male only' dance variations. As Nathan (14) explained, *"boys have different dances than girls, and I like that. I wouldn't want to do what they do. Theirs is good but ours is better 'cos it's more for us …with leaps and other tough stuff."* Despite these differences, I found that all of the boys studying ballet were taught in mixed classes, but these were sometimes supplemented by occasional or regular one-to-one tuition in order to cover the 'male only' work. Teachers reported that it was only commercially viable to offer 'boys' only' classes in the more popular (and overtly heteronormative) urban dance genres such as hip-hop or street. However, a handful of boys who attended these classes spoke of the gender boundary maintenance work they undertook by *"doing the same routines as the girls, but making them stronger"*, according to Marc (14), reflecting an essentialist view commonly shared by many of his peers, including Nathan, above.

Other boys also spoke unwittingly of the heteronormativity in the teaching and learning of certain dance genres such as ballet and ballroom, where in mixed-sex paired work they were required to 'lead' their female partner. Traditional approaches to teaching dance frequently demand female passivity (Stinson, 2005; Risner, 2009), when girls are expected to yield to their male partners' dominance as they are led, lifted and supported. Males are expected to control their partners, thereby reproducing a heterosexual narrative which once again reflects a societal attitude predicated on a binary construction of gender. In such instances, where dance gender roles are strictly defined, dancers are literally 'performing' gender (Butler, 1990, 1999). With this in mind and drawing on Warin's conception of

'gender flexible pedagogy' (2017), a recommendation to de-gender problematic aspects of dance teaching and performance is outlined in the concluding chapter.

Clearly then, the dance school is a place where masculinities and femininities are (re)produced in several ways - through student/teacher interaction, choreography, pedagogical practices or through a combination of these factors. My analysis suggests that developing a dance pedagogy without potentially reinforcing dominant social or cultural norms of masculinity and femininity is still a challenge for some private-sector dance educators. However, elsewhere in the dance world, some attempts to subvert these gender norms have been made by employing role reversal, re-gendering or the re-imagining of dance performances - Matthew Bourne's all-male *'Swan Lake'* being an obvious example. Regrettably, such innovations have been largely ignored by the private dance sector whose syllabi (such as the RAD ballet syllabus discussed earlier), remains largely untouched by societal advances in gender diversity and fluidity.

However, despite this conservatism in the sector, some boys were able to exercise agency and creativity in their dance schools. In a minority of dance genres, such as contemporary and urban, a few participants spoke of enjoying the autonomy of being creative in their classes by choreographing their own dances, either singly or with others, and while some boys did not benefit from this learner-centred approach, the ones who did valued it highly. For example, Allan (17) commented:

> *I really enjoy creating dances for myself and also for pairs and group work. I use some of it for competitions too. I like the freedom to put the moves*

together, sometimes with help from my teacher, but mostly on my own.
I'd like to do more of it.

Boys who either amended choreography to 'masculinise' it and make it *"kinda*
strong" (George, 13) or who were given opportunities to create their own
movements were, like Alan (above), enthused and motivated by it. However, for
most boys, teacher direction lay at the heart of their dance education. Without
exception, and despite the aforementioned concerns about 'feminine'
choreography, boys spoke warmly of their dance teachers, holding them in high
esteem for their expertise and support. As Neil (11) explained, *"they treat me the*
same as everyone else" which suggests that teachers were sometimes equitable
though, as outlined above, not necessarily gender-sensitive or flexible in their
pedagogy.

Of the ten dance schools featured in this research, only one employed a male
teacher but he did not teach any of the research participants. Overall, I found no
appetite among boys for more male teachers, since they recognised that *all* teachers
could be role models and someone they could *"look up to",* according to Lucas (15).
Vescio et. al., (2003) defined a role model as someone who is exemplary and worthy
of imitation, while Carrington and Skelton (2003) argued that a role model is often
equated with achievement or conflated with being an idol or star. While no
participant used the term 'role model', they clearly held their teachers in high
esteem and many aspired to emulate their success as a performer and/or teacher.
Beyond describing their teachers as *"tough", "firm" "demanding"* and *"a good laugh*

at times", boys also found them to be *"inspiring", "talented", "brilliant ",*

"dedicated" and *"special"* - implying a belief in a role model discourse but without

gendered connotations. As Marc (14) told me, "*I'd love to think that one day I could*

be as good and successful as my teacher. She's awesome. That's my aim anyway."

Significantly, and despite the pervasiveness of the extensively critiqued 'male role

model' discourse in education (e.g. Adriany, 2013; Brownhill, 2014), only one

interviewee, Julian (17), thought that male teachers *"bring something different"* to

the classes since *"they know what it's like …."*. Prior to starting the research, I had

wondered if having a male teacher would be seen by boys to recuperate dance as a

masculine activity and/or as a potentially worthwhile career path, but this proved

not be so. Simply put, boys wanted a *"good"* teacher; their gender was largely

irrelevant - a view that chimes with Carrington's & Skelton's finding (2003) about

gender and role models in school more broadly.

That said, like Julian above, another participant, Bradley (18), had formerly been

taught briefly by a male and had liked what he considered to be his unique

pedagogical attributes - a skill in verbal exposition using gender-neutral language.

He explained:

> *I had a male teacher last year, only for a week, and he was the best ballet teacher I've ever had. He didn't look like a ballet dancer at all; he was covered in tattoos, completely covered in tattoos, he'd got them all over his neck, on his legs, full sleeve, all sorts of stuff. And yet the way he taught wasn't… he didn't say be a prince or princess, or be this animal or that kind of animal; he used words like 'prowl' and 'make it look easy' … the universal things… I don't remember him once saying anything that was gender specific.*

While Bradley's enthusiasm for his male teacher's use of gender-neutral language was welcome, no doubt a skilled female teacher would be equally adept at using it, and as I argue in the concluding chapter, this could be achieved by adopting a gender - flexible pedagogy (Warin & Adriany, 2015; Warin, 2017). In so doing, teachers' professional practice would be permeated by an explicit gender consciousness minded to dislodging normativities.

5.2.2 Performing dance

Although principally focussed on teaching dance, most private-sector dance schools also provide numerous performance opportunities for their pupils. While these were found to be welcome, some boys spoke of a tension between the thrill of public performances (in competitions, performances and shows) and their personal desire for privacy and/or anonymity. This tension was frequently coupled with an unease for the privileges sometimes afforded to them by way of their gender.

On the subject of performing, Marcus (16), commented:

> *Then there were performances on the Winter Gardens stage which were always really good. You'd come off the stage and you'd been practising for months for a ten-minute performance. You'd come off and feel it was worth it, because you'd have had that experience of being in front of a full opera house, on the biggest stage in the country. I think that you learn something to perform it, it's something that's supposed to be seen by certain people at times, although I did keep it quiet a lot.*

When performing dance in public, some boys were aware of being the object of an audience's 'gaze', which made them self-conscious and uncomfortable. This was sometimes heightened by the necessity of wearing costumes or set uniforms, such as shorts or ballet tights, the latter being described as *"very revealing"* by Harry,

aged 11. While clearly unaware of 'gaze theory' which emanated from feminist film scholars who sought to repudiate the male gaze (e.g. De Lauretis, 1994), boys nonetheless had a clear awareness that, for the audience, *"there is power in looking"* (hooks, 1996, p.197). Such power allows women to reclaim *"the capacity for and right to visual pleasure"* (Greer, 2007, p.11), and *"also allows men to do the same, both within and outside of heterosexual norms"* (Allegranti, 2011, p.47).

If some boys were uncomfortable with this gaze, a minority of their fathers avoided it altogether by eschewing opportunities to see their sons perform. A handful of boys reported that their fathers had either never seen them dance, or like mine decades before, had watched them perform very infrequently. To account for this, Burt (1995), a dance historian, posited the importance of homophobia in regulating men's social relations with each other, and argued that in a dance performance context, men can only legitimate their gaze by professing repulsion for homosexual desire or attraction, i.e. by homophobia. Relatedly, Risner argued that *"[s]traddling this important boundary between acceptable homosocial bonding and repressed homosexual attraction is the crux for the heterosexual male spectator watching men dance"* and concluded, *"[i]t is instructive for dance educators to realise that similarly uncomfortable boundary crossings might reasonably apply for many fathers, siblings and friends attempting to watch or support male dancers"* (Risner, 2009, p.60).

These hypotheses chime with my findings. For example, Seb (16) commented that his father *"... wouldn't be seen dead at a dance show. I used to ask, but he'd get*

angry about it so I don't bother any more", while Julian (17) said his father "*… just about tolerates me doing it, but he wouldn't ever come and see me … that would look like approval and he wouldn't give that".* Another dancer, Owen (15) praised his stepfather's support and commitment to his dancing but lamented this did not extend to his biological father who *"obviously doesn't accept dance …he's kind of blinded to it that guys can do dance".* Paternal attitudes to dance such as these are clearly a fascinating, under-researched area, worthy of more scrutiny. However, access to the field could be difficult; for instance, my interview requests with two 'reluctant' fathers were declined - perhaps an example of men engaging in heteronormative boundary maintenance - a strategy discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Reticence in public performance was sometimes accompanied by boys' reluctance to seek public acknowledgement of their dance successes. For example, aware of the possible consequences that publicity might bring, Lucas (15) explained: *"When I first did English Youth Ballet, I didn't let them [the ballet company] put my photograph in the paper because I was scared people at school would find out".* A couple of boys recounted that their successes had been publicised by their dance schools and/or secondary schools, via printed or social media, without their permission. In these circumstances, the motives of the school, be they commercial, reputational or both, overrode the sensitivities of the male dancer suggesting, once again, that some schools are not yet sufficiently gender - sensitive to their pupils.

Most male dancers were also aware of their privileged position within their dance schools but for some this was a source of discomfort. Boys gave several examples, including: being given solo performance opportunities in shows or prominent stage positions (so they were clearly visible to the audience); choosing which female partner(s) to dance with; being consulted on choice of music, costume or theme – opportunities that were not always afforded to female peers. Lucas (15) told me *"I usually had a solo spot in the shows, and even when I was in a group I was often on the front row",* while Billy (17), added:

> It was like… they were kind of showing us off, like 'Oh, look, we've got a boy'… I don't think some parents were happy 'cos it was pretty obvious why they'd done it. It wasn't like I was there 'cos I was the best; some of the girls were better than me…".

These findings confirm earlier research that male dancers often benefit disproportionately because of their gender (e.g. Van Dyke, 1996; Garber et al., 2007) and are subject to contradictory and conflicting treatment in the dance studio (Gard, 2006, Risner, 2009). Similar to my findings, other research has established that some dance teachers feel the need to make young male dancers *"feel more comfortable"* by encouraging them to take leadership roles, or by inviting their input into other aspects of performances such as music or costume (Risner, Godfrey & Simmons, 2004, p.31). Thus, over time, this bias has been instrumental in creating something of a paradox for men who dance in the West, since they are both a marginalised population and a privileged minority. Recognising this, I concur with Risner's comment that "*[t]he experience of male dancers is fascinating in that they are frequently devalued by their culture yet prized in their field"* (Risner, 2009, p.28).

Moving beyond the privileges of the dance school, but framed by their mainly positive experiences there, I now turn to boys' experiences of dance education in their secondary schools where the subject, and those who practise it, are often marginalised.

5.3 Boys' dance education in their secondary schools: regulation and (re)production

5.3.1 Dance and the discursive (re)production of gender

As dance is a subsidiary element within the compulsory physical education (P.E.) curriculum in England at Key Stages One to Three, many boys reported that their first experiences of dance were within these lessons. What then, did they make of these potentially formative encounters? Analysis suggests that these dance lessons did little to inspire them to pursue the art form; tuition was described among other things as *"boring"*, *"basic"* and not *"proper dance"*. I contend that such views arise for two main reasons; first, an ignorance of the philosophical tradition from which dance in education emanates; and second, a misplaced expectation by some boys that curriculum dance should replicate only dance styles found in popular culture and media, especially urban dance including breaking, hip-hop, street etc.

More significantly though, participants reported that most of their male peers resisted engaging fully with dance at school. As I suggest below, this antipathy to dance is principally underpinned by a regulatory gender regime rooted in both a fear of the 'feminine' and a fear of failure in an activity coded as such. To illustrate, when

asked to reflect on his experience of dance at school, Jacob (11) commented

not untypically:

> *Everyone thought it was more of a girls' thing, to dance, more than a boys', so the boys didn't take part as much, they just dossed around a bit. They didn't try their best and they weren't focused … the girls got higher grades when we were graded.*

Jacob's account draws attention to the gender boundary maintenance strategy

employed by male classmates who *"didn't try their best"* and so underachieved in

the subject. The latter is a pertinent illustration, in a school context, of what

Paechter describes as a *"mutually observing panoptic gaze in communities of*

masculinity and femininity practice" (Paechter, 2007, p.38), whereby the regulatory

force of the gaze is exerted to promote conformity of group practice and its norms.

As a relational construct, with masculinity viewed in opposition to femininity and the

latter denigrated as inferior, Jacob's transcript implies a fear of 'Othering' (Paechter,

1998), a fear which deters boys from engaging in gender-transgressive behaviour,

such as being seen to actually enjoy dance. This is not new of course; it was a

strategy I had employed decades before, but its longevity is both disappointing and

indicative of its seeming entrenchment in children's gender relations.

However, a fear of failure could also account for boys' disengagement with dance.

Confirming earlier research (e.g. Francis, 2000; Frosh et al., 2002), Jackson found

that young people *"do not pressure each other to perform well academically"*

(2006b, p.60)*,* and that in effort to be cool and popular, boys (and girls) *"must*

display a certain nonchalance about academic work". However, Jackson's analysis of

interview data concludes that, *"[t]here was a palpable fear of academic failure in the*

accounts of most pupils" and a concern not *"to look stupid academically in front of*

their peers" (Jackson, 2006b, p.60). While boys would not regard dance as an

'academic' subject, they could, nonetheless, still experience a fear of failure, of being

'beaten' by other boys (or worse still, girls), since dance as a visual, embodied

medium can make it difficult for pupils to hide their lack of interest or skill in the

subject. Aden, a male dancer teacher explained it thus:

> *I see this all the time. Boys are fearful of dance since it exposes them to all sorts of vulnerabilities. There's really nowhere to hide. I often think it's easier to slide into obscurity if you're sitting behind a desk writing a history essay, or doing some algebra, because if you can't do those things you can keep your head down and pretend you can. But not so with dance. It's visual and immediately obvious… and kids can be cruel so I, as a teacher, have to be on the alert all the time. A lot of boys don't engage fully with dance when they're in class – too many preconceptions and insecurities - but I bet many of them dance in their bedrooms when no one's watching.*

A further account of boys' reluctance to dance was provided by Linda, a school

teacher (and mother of a male dancer), who commented:

> *I remember a boy in my school having a meltdown and crying because he was going to dance. Nobody was going to make him do a dance lesson! And yet by the end of it he was actually quite good. His perception of dance was the classical ballet type thing that his sisters had done, and he wasn't doing it.*

The potent effect of the discourse that posits dance as a 'feminine' pursuit was

pertinent in this case since the boy's sisters had participated in extra-curricular ballet

lessons. Thus, fearful of breaching the bounds of normative masculinity and of

comparison with his sister, this young pupil (Year Two) also exemplified the salience

and consequences of (in)appropriate articulations of taste in the lives of some young

children. As such, not only does it resonate with Cann's findings on the

(re)production of gender in contemporary youth cultures, with young people aged

13 to 16, (Cann, 2013), but it also reminds us that taste's role in the discursive, regulatory (re)production of gender starts much earlier than in youth.

I was reminded of this while working on a research project entitled, *"How Gender Matters to Children and Young People Living in England"* (Bragg et al., 2017), commissioned by the Office for the Children's Commissioner for England to research young people's experiences of gender. It found, among other things, that despite children's and young people's commitment to gender equality, diversity and the rights of sexual minorities, in practice, gender norms and expectations continue to regulate their experiences of their body, appearance, objects and activities. This finding reaffirmed our knowledge that gender binaries are often strongly felt and upheld in childhood, particularly as they entangle with sexuality (Renold, 2005; Paechter & Clark, 2007, 2015; Rysst, 2013). Thus, Chapter Seven explores how boys' taste articulations in dance (i.e. their choice of genre) were often found to function as a recuperative strategy for their masculinity and/or heterosexuality.

With regard to their choices of dance genre(s), as explicated previously, I found that urban dance was the most popular option for boys taking dance examinations in private-sector dance schools. Clearly though, this luxury of choice was not available to pupils in secondary schools; instead, as I explain in the following section, pupils were usually taught a form of modern educational or contemporary dance, which most found uninspiring.

5.3.2 The philosophy of dance in education

Asked to reflect on and describe the style and content of his school dance lessons, Jacob (11) commented, *"I wouldn't say it was a 'mick take' but it wasn't proper – very basic, hand gestures, things like that",* while Linda, a schoolteacher, described the dance unit she taught as involving *"nothing definite, but travels and turns and gestures"*. Such approaches are consistent with a long-held philosophy of dance in education which promoted *"process over product"* (Smith-Autard, 2002, p.5). However, this was superseded by the 'midway art of dance in education model' (Smith-Autard, 2002, p.ix) which placed equal emphasis on 'process' and on 'product' when creating and performing dances. In essence, this 'midway' approach to developing creativity, imagination and individuality in dance continues to underpin primary and secondary dance education today. It is, though, in sharp contrast to the approach of most private-sector dance teachers whose emphasis is usually on the 'product' and its performance, i.e. training bodies in stylistically-defined dance techniques. Pedagogically speaking, this latter model puts emphasis on directed teaching as a top-down model of knowledge transmission, with the teacher as expert and the pupil as an apprentice, whereas the 'midway' model is mostly characterised by a stimulus-driven process/problem-solving approach to teaching, with the teacher as a facilitating guide and the pupil as an agent in their own learning.

Thus, free from the constraints of perfecting dance technique emanating from teacher direction, a 'midway' model in secondary schools might be thought more likely to engage boys since its potentially abstract movements are not easily

codified by gender. However, as outlined above, this was not found to be the case, since boys were unable to 'read' the movements as anything other than *"basic", "boring"* or as summarised by Robin (11), *"not much to it , just moving about"*. My findings therefore suggest that boys' dance experiences in their secondary schools were often marred by a continuing emphasis on 'process' at the expense of 'product' – in contravention of the 'midway model' (Smith-Autard, 2002).

Salient to this, Hebert (2017) reminds us of earlier research (e.g. Crawford, 1994; Gard, 2001; Collins, 2009; Taschuk, 2009) which found that "*boys might be more likely to continue dancing if they are first exposed to forms of movement that are familiar to them, so they can have a sense of ownership*". Thus, viewed in essentialist terms, popular dance styles and ones culturally coded as 'cool', such as urban dance, are more likely to be of initial interest to boys than abstract, process-orientated educational dance. If so, the restricted dance repertoire currently offered in many schools represents a lost opportunity to engage more boys with dance. Once engaged though, further attempts could be made to expand dance horizons by introducing a range of dance and movement styles that transcend gender boundaries; currently though, some schools simply resort to regressive heteronormative measures, as I discuss below.

5.3.3 Appealing to the heteronormative

Besides the uninspiring nature of some boys' educational dance experiences, equally problematic was the heteronormative bias in some dance schemes of work used within the P.E. curriculum in some schools. Presumably intended to appeal

specifically to boys, was one such unit, titled 'Superheroes', inspired by Greek myths

and legends. Now at secondary school, Neil (11) recalled his experience of this unit

in Year 6 at primary school:

> *In PE, we would do dance about the ancient Greeks or something like the*
> *Olympics. I don't know what sort [of dance] it was, it was more like*
> *positions, that sort of thing. We would do that for a term and then move*
> *onto sports. It [dance] didn't happen every year.*

Beyond relying on anachronistic masculine tropes, it appears that, once again, the

abstract nature of the dance content did little to engage boys (and probably girls

too). Having also experienced the 'Superheroes' unit in Year 6, (as well as a unit

called 'Gladiator Games' at Key Stage 1), Jacob (11) commented *"It wasn't proper*

dance [at school]. I had to go to the Willow Dance School to do it properly". Overall

then, while unconcerned by the essentialist nature of some dance provision in their

early schooling, boys were nonetheless united in their view that dance at school

was not *"proper"* – a useful reminder that a reliance on heteronormativity is not

guaranteed to engage boys with the subject.

Appeals to the heteronormative were not, however, confined to schools; an eminent

dance institution, the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) recently sought to legitimate

dance as a masculine endeavour via a new initiative, *'Project B'*. Launched in June

2017 to *"widen access to dance for boys and to encourage them to take up ballet"*,

'*Project B'* attempted to counter the prevailing discourses surrounding dance and

masculinity by presenting dance as a valid activity for boys and, by inference, I would

argue, by presenting dance as a valid activity for *heterosexual* boys. To these ends,

professional heterosexual ballet dancers, such as Iain Mackay and Alexander

Campbell, were recruited as RAD 'Dance Ambassadors' to reach out to boys in a variety of settings including primary and secondary schools, by delivering masterclasses and workshops. Such role models are not new, of course; Fred Astaire, Rudolph Nureyev and Carlos Acosta, for example, could all have been classed as role models, but no evidence exists to suggest that they inspired males to dance.

More recently, there have been several young male heterosexual 'role models' such as Louis Smith, Jay McGuiness, Harry Judd and Joe Sugg appearing on the popular BBC1 television programme *'Strictly Come Dancing'* . However, the consensus among my participants (many of whom were fans of the show), was that these supposed 'role models' (sportsmen, actors and musicians) have, like their predecessors, failed to inspire young males to take up dancing. Indeed, male attendances at dance classes are *"still poor"*, according to Myla, a dance policymaker who added:

> *In the first instance, about ten years ago, there was a 'Strictly' effect, and we did see more men coming in to dance for year or two, but we didn't see young men or boys. It was men of a certain age instead. Most young people wouldn't touch ballroom dancing – its image is wrong, it's not fashionable and it's not cool, so why would they do it?*

Despite its apparent ineffectiveness, the male 'role model' discourse lies at the heart of '*Project B*'s strategy. By linking dance with sports, the project aims to fire boys' imaginations with *"new dance partnerships inspired by sports and superheroes"* that will promote the *"athleticism and physicality that ballet holds"* (royalacademyofdance.org, 2019). This is also reminiscent of the *"make it macho"*

strategy identified by Fisher (2007), an attempt to hyper-masculinise ballet by referring to dancers as 'athletes' and/or 'sportsmen' instead , and focussing on the more physical, virtuosic ballet moves for men such as grand leaps and turns.

As part of '*Project B*', a similar strategy involved Alexander Campbell, a principal dancer with the Royal Ballet, collaborating with Marylebone Cricket Club, London, to encourage more boys into ballet and more girls into cricket. Over six weeks, the project used dance and sport to explore such things as *"coordination, agility and communication"*, along with *"fielding, batting and bowling"*. Campbell commented that he was *"absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to introduce children to my favourite art form, as well as my favourite sport"* (royalacademyofdance.org, 2019). This is a telling reminder that, unlike sport, dance is an art form and one underpinned by distinct philosophical traditions such as aestheticism - in stark contrast to the tactical, competitive nature of a team sport such as cricket. At an institutional level, this approach - a masculinist comparison between sport and dance - is not new (Crawford, 1994; Fisher, 2007), but as discussed further in Chapter Seven, it continues to have utility among many young male dancers as a form of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996) and/or 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012).

Boys who enrol on *'Project B'* perform movements that embody a heterosexist version of masculinity. Such movements are predicated on a belief that boys wish to do *"cool"* moves and *"fun choreography inspired by popular male motifs"* so providing them with *"an outlet for their natural energy"* according to Iain Mackay,

the RAD's inaugural male Dance Ambassador. In particular, Mackay describes the movement content as ranging "*...from the Usain Bolt and Transformer pose to the Ronaldo jump... jumping and posing like superheroes, spinning across the room like Angry Birds, or creating patterns and shapes like building blocks in Minecraft*" (royalacademyofdance.org, 2019).Thus, while well-intentioned, I argue that '*Project B'* reproduces a troubling essentialist version of normative masculinity which, perversely, could act as a deterrent to some non-normative and/or non-sporty boys.

Moreover, regarding male dancers' sexuality, there is a danger of promoting a skewed picture of the composition of the dance profession since research, (albeit now dated) from the USA suggests that gay and bisexual men comprise half the male population in dance (Hamilton, 1999), a fact described by Risner as an *"open secret"* (Risner, 2002a, p.185). Although no comparable data exists for England, the self-reported sexual orientations of my participants were found to be 3.8 % bi-sexual, 26.9% homosexual, 43.3% heterosexual and 26.9% unknown. By contrast, one suspects that *'Project B'* seeks to erase the significant number of male dancers who are not heterosexual. This, according to dance scholars, is not a new strategy (Spurgeon, 1997, Risner 2002b, 2003); indeed, the narrative of 'Billy Elliot' functions in a similar way, whereby Billy (and ballet itself) are, despite the queering of *Swan Lake*, constructed as ostensibly heterosexual and heteromasculine.

5.3.4 Dance as a 'feminine' and marginal subject

As earlier comments from Jacob and Neil implied, boys revealed a clear awareness

that dance occupies only a marginal space in the school curriculum, the result, I argue, of an enduring Cartesian mind-body dualism, which privileges the cerebral over the physical. This form of binary discourse also helps to account for the historically low status of dance as a curriculum subject, a reminder that "*in school, as in the wider world, some forms of knowledge are more powerful and confirm more status than others*", according to Paechter, who classifies design and technology (D&T), physical education (P.E.) and music as *"marginal"*, adding that "*teaching and learning are generally thought of as being about the mind. It is only in some of the more marginal school subjects, such as PE, that the body is seen as having a role* (Paechter, 2003c, p.49). Similarly, Attar reminds us that "*it is no accident that the least powerful forms of knowledge are those taught to the least valued group of pupils*" (Attar, 1990, p.22). Historically, that has been to girls, through a raft of subjects deemed appropriately 'feminine' such as art, home economics, needlework, textiles and, of course, dance.

Unsurprisingly, the low, feminised and marginalised status of dance first manifests itself in primary education, where it comprises only a transient component in the P.E. curriculum and has a lower status than heteronormative activities such as football. Exemplifying this 'hidden curriculum' in action (Jackson, 1968), Jacob (11) explains that dance was taught by female teachers and was ignored by the only male teacher in his school:

> *At primary school, there wasn't much [dance]. We started it from year one up to year five. It was usually a topic in P.E. we did once a year for half a term maybe. It was taught by our class teachers who were all women… We only had one male teacher in our primary school, but I can't remember doing dance with him. He was in year six and we were doing activities outside like football most of the time.*

Jacob's experience reflects the gendered nature of dance teaching in many primary schools; no boys in this study reported being taught dance by a male primary school teacher, thereby re-inscribing it in the curriculum as feminised terrain. Similarly, no boys reported receiving specialist dance teaching in their primary schools (save from an occasional visiting dance company). Of course, in England, most primary school teachers are, of necessity, generalists and cannot be expected to possess subject-specific dance knowledge and pedagogy. However, when these factors are considered collectively, it is little wonder that many boys' first experiences of dance in schools are uninspiring, rendering them unlikely to breach gender norms by engaging enthusiastically with a marginal and risky subject. As Butler (1990) reminds us, the process of reaffirming 'acceptable' male identities also involves the repudiation of 'unacceptable' identities; thus, for boys in school, by pointing out what they are not (i.e. a dancer = a female), they are simultaneously confirming their own gendered identity as male. More specifically, in the context of P.E., Gerdin notes:

> *PE has long been strongly associated with the discourses of gender containing stereotypical views about the behaviours and activities that are believed appropriate for girls and boys and with notably singular images of femininity and masculinity* (Gerdin, 2015, p.891)

In secondary education too, and in concert with previous research, my analysis suggests that normative gender roles persist in the teaching of P.E.. Without exception, male dancers in Years Seven to Nine were taught P.E. by male teachers in single sex groups. Where dance was taught, again without exception, it was delivered by female P.E. teachers, but rarely in mixed-sex groups, thereby re-inscribing the dominant discourse alluded to by Gerdin above. However, unlike the

modern educational dance taught in primary schools, the dominant genre in

secondary education was found to be contemporary-style dance. A similarity exists

though since, like its predecessor in primary education, contemporary dance is

often focussed on developing "process over product" (Smith-Autard, 2002), an

abstract form ideal for delivery by non-specialist staff who lack technical expertise in

dance. However, in addition to contemporary, a few boys also did street dance, a

heteronormative genre, but this too was delivered by female staff.

This finding, of a continuing gendered division of labour within dance teaching

is reminiscent of Paechter's research regarding the masculinisation of the P.E.

curriculum. Drawing on Flintoff (1993), Paechter implicated teacher training as

bearing some responsibility, arguing that:

> *Despite co-education since 1976, gender divisions remain within some P.E.*
> *colleges, whose curricula have also undergone masculinisation in the face of*
> *male student resistance to aspects of the subject which they see as*
> *feminine, such as dance* (Paechter, 2003c, p.54)

My findings suggest that little has changed, and that despite a supposed softening of

masculine identities, a key tenet of inclusive masculinity theory (Anderson, 2009), it

appears that male P.E. teachers continue to shun teaching dance since it might

transgress their *"limits of masculinity"* (Cann, 2014, p.17). In so doing, they

reproduce the cultural discourses that pertain to dance and masculinity.

Perhaps aware of this, a few boys spoke of their schools' attempts to 'win

over' reluctant boys by avoiding the noun "dance" at all, semantically re-titling

it as "aerobics", "acrobatics", "fitness" or "gymnastics". Similarly, even when

timetabled

as "dance" there was no guarantee that it would be so according to Alec (13), who

commented that, *"it was timetabled as 'dance', but not really, not proper*

dance…more fitness-related stuff". Both strategies can be seen as clear appeals to

recoup masculinity (Hansen, 1996) and/or heterosexuality (McCormack, 2012).

Moreover, these heteromasculine tactics might be another illustration of how some

male P.E. teachers distance themselves from dance. In this light, and with Paechter's

(2003c) research in mind, Winifred, a dance academic who trains P.E. teachers in

dance, observed that some of her male P.E. trainee teachers:

> *Tend to go into the fitness side of dance… they hate the more aesthetic*
> *type of dance - not all of them, but some of them. And so, they treat dance*
> *a bit like a fitness regime and they go into that side of it because that gives*
> *them more credibility as a male who has to teach dance.*

While this strategy could also reflect a lack of subject expertise and competence, it

also enables some male teachers to resist embodying the more expressive aspects of

dance which are culturally coded as 'feminine'. Asked if she thought some male P.E.

teachers were uncomfortable with the more creative, dynamic, choreographic

aspects of dance, Winifred, replied "…*absolutely, totally out of their depth, yes".*

Overall then, a troubling picture emerges of dance as an anxiety-inducing subject for

some male pupils and their male teachers who continue to embody some tenets of

'orthodox' masculinity (Anderson, 2009). Furthermore, against a backdrop of

diminishing arts provision in schools, these findings suggest that dance as a

curriculum subject continues to be marginalised and its content sometimes

misappropriated.

To compound matters, (and as further evidence of its marginalisation) trainee

secondary school P.E. teachers on a four-year course (incorporating an

undergraduate degree and a teaching qualification) typically spend only a small

fraction of their time on learning to dance and dance pedagogy. Winifred, who runs

such a course at a high-ranking university commented:

> *Our P.E. course is very well-regarded and highly rated. It attracts 400 or so*
> *applications per year for 100 places. We require a minimum of 2 A grades*
> *and 1 B in STEM subjects, but there is no specific requirement for practical*
> *experience in dance, or anything else for that matter. Therefore, most of our*
> *students are absolute beginners when it comes to dance and over the 4 years,*
> *all we provide is 16 hours of dance tuition - 10 in the first year and 6 in the*
> *second year. 16 hours, that's it. We don't even touch dance in years 3 and 4*
> *and students are not assessed on their competence in it, even in Years 1 and*
> *2. Dance is the poor relation to sport. We can't produce skilled dance*
> *practitioners – we don't have sufficient time.*

The impact of this was noted by some boys. Where, for example, dance was on

offer, either as a GCSE. course in its own right or as an option within GCSE.

Physical Education, obtaining skilled guidance from staff was not always possible.

According to the two participants who choose the latter option (P.E.), they instead

relied on external help from their dance school teachers to choreograph their dance

coursework. Bradley (18), for instance, commented of his male P.E. teacher:

> *He just left me to it. He knew I danced outside of school and I had far more*
> *dance knowledge and experience than he had, so he was happy for me to*
> *work with my dance school teacher and put the coursework together, which*
> *we did. He didn't even see the complete piece until the day I performed it for*
> *the external moderator. But it was all good and I ended up getting an A* for*
> *it.*

While neither boy expressed dissatisfaction about this, such accounts are

nonetheless concerning for a number of reasons. Bradley was sufficiently privileged

(financially at least) to access private-sector specialist dance training in order to maximise his achievement at GCSE. level. Clearly though, this is inequitable and serves to further widen the achievement gap between those who have the financial resources to fund extra tuition and those who do not (or choose not to do so). Moreover, in accordance with GCSE. examination regulations, responsibility for supervising the creation of practical coursework rests solely with the school who are required to certify that the work submitted for assessment is the candidate's own unaided work. In Bradley's case (and similar), it would have been impossible for the school to certify this accurately since they would have been unaware of the extent and nature of the dance teacher's input into the coursework. While there is no suggestion of malpractice, we can nonetheless infer that Bradley was advantaged by the input from his dance teacher, and while this is not a new phenomenon, since many students of dance, drama and music often supplement their school provision with extra-curricular support, it remains a source of inequality in and beyond our schools, contributing to the achievement gap between differing socio-economic groups.

Clearly though, not all boys were as fortunate as Bradley. Another participant, Reece (16), attended a school with plenty of dance provision but was precluded from studying it because it was limited to female pupils. He explained:

> *There was a dance department, but you could only do dance if you were a girl; dance wasn't an option for boys. This applied to general P.E. lessons and to GCSE dance as well, because I remember thinking about choosing GCSE. P.E. and I wanted to do gymnastics, trampolining and dance within that, but they said no because dance was only offered to girls. So girls had to do dancing all the way through school and boys had to do football.*

This policy, albeit exceptional, contravenes the principle of equality of opportunity, and while these findings suggest such gender discrimination was rare, other barriers to participation were found to be more prevalent. For instance, of the 26 secondary school age participants in this study, only four reported that GCSE. Dance was offered in their schools; excluding Reece (above), the remaining three boys opted to take the course, and all were taught by female teachers, only one of whom was a dance specialist. In secondary education then, it seems that, too often, masculinity and dance are positioned as antithetical and susceptible to a range of heteronormative boundary maintenance strategies.

In this vein, a couple of boys described their male P.E. teachers as unsupportive of their dancing beyond school. George, for instance, recounted not only the masculinised P.E. curriculum at his single-sex independent school but his male P.E. teacher's reaction to his choice of hobby:

> *Int: What did you do in the PE lessons at your school?*
>
> *George: Ah, we did rugby, football, some cricket, tennis and health-related fitness, so all kinds of manly sports, yeah*
>
> *Int: Dance?*
>
> *George: No dance, no.*
>
> *Int: What about their reactions to your dancing?*
>
> *George: Mmm…they didn't know at the boys' school. I told one person and surprisingly he kept it secret for quite a bit but then… I told a teacher the reason that I couldn't do swimming [at a weekend swimming gala] was because I had dance on that day and he was a bit… he wasn't so nice about it… he was like, "dance? dance? What? That's not a good enough reason not to do swimming", and so I thought, "Right, I won't tell anyone else then if the teacher is going is going to be like that."*

A more troubling example was that narrated by Daniel (16), who spoke of his P.E.

teacher's outright hostility to his dancing. He explained:

> *My parents had to be involved, coming into the school to speak with him about it because he would humiliate me in front of everybody else because I wasn't particularly interested in football and cricket. I guess I didn't try that hard at it. He would continually humiliate me in front of all the other boys and say, "Why don't you go and make your ballroom dresses, if that's so important to you?" Silly things like that… so yeah, that wasn't good, but it was really only one particular teacher. But when you are getting bullied by other people in the school as well it's not a great feeling, is it? You've got to go to school and you are under threat of first being bullied by your peers and also your teachers.*

While Daniel's antipathy towards sports perhaps exacerbated the situation, this

account is particularly problematic since it draws attention to the compounding

effect of bullying from peers but also from teachers. Such discriminatory and

oppressive behaviour is rare, (one hopes), but its presence does, nonetheless,

suggest the longevity of a hyper-masculinised discourse that pervades the teaching

of boys' P.E and one which 'non-sporty' male dancers may experience acutely.

5.3.5 Dance at GCSE and Advanced level

Earlier, I outlined the reasons for the marginal status of dance as a curriculum

subject, and by implication those teachers and pupils who pursue it. Beyond this

however, the current government's neoliberal education policy has exacerbated

matters, threatening the sustainability of dance along with other arts and creative

subjects such as drama, media studies and music. As Myla, a dance policymaker

commented:

Dance in schools is akin to an endangered species. Opportunities to dance within the curriculum are more limited than ever; they were never good, but the current situation is dire. It's clear that the government doesn't sufficiently value their arts, and children, especially those who can't afford supplementary arts provision outside of school, are losing out on the range of potentially transformative experiences, particularly those relating to personal growth and the development of creativity.

Driving this shift in government priorities is a politically inspired discourse of education as a utilitarian commodity rather than a fundamental human right and an intrinsically enriching experience. The emphasis on, and push towards science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects has been accompanied by falling examination entries for arts subjects at GCSE and A Level for both male and female students. To illustrate, examination entry data for the period 2008 to 2018 (obtained from the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance), the only awarding organisation to offer dance at GCSE. level and beyond, shows a 51.1% decrease in total entries for GCSE. dance with male entries decreasing by 36.8 % and females by 52.0 %. As expected, male candidates were in the minority during this period and represented between 5.7 % and 7.4 % of the total candidature.

Declining numbers enrolling for GCSE. courses usually lead to a subsequent decline in entries at AS and Advanced level and so it has proved to be. At Advanced Level total entries from 2008 to 2018 declined by 31.9 %, with male entries falling by 33.0 % compared with a fall of 31.9 % for female candidates. During this period, male candidates represented between 5.9 % and 8.2 % of the total candidature. More detailed statistical data relating to dance examination entries are contained in Appendix 5.

5.3.6 Enriching the dance curriculum

As discussed above, boys have been left uninspired by their dance education in schools. However, some schools have attempted to enrich their dance 'offer' by organising workshops and performances from visiting companies or by arranging theatre trips. Nathan (14), spoke positively of the enrichment activities organised by his school but also of their subsequent curtailment from budget cuts and the consequent restriction in access to such cultural opportunities:

> *My school is short of money and last year they stopped bringing in theatre and dance companies which was a pity because I liked them, and we did some good stuff with them. Sometimes school arranges trips to the theatre but it's usually for plays that are being studied for exams… although we've had a few to theatre trips to see musicals too… but not one to see just a dance production. But you can only go on them if you can afford it and not everyone can.*

Another participant, Owen, recalled a dance company visiting his school but with mixed results:

> *I remember this dance company coming into school when I was in year seven and then again in year eight. There were three performers and one of them was a man. We did a workshop with them and then later they did performance. I think it was contemporary dance. I liked it, but a lot of the other lads just messed around, especially in the workshop. They just didn't try and there was a lot of laughing and giggling. The guy dancer was quite funny, but it was a struggle for him because they [the boys] didn't take it seriously. They thought he was gay …called him all sorts – queer and all that…*

Such a homophobic reaction further undermines the claims of inclusive masculinity in schools (McCormack, 2012). Furthermore, it reminds us of the limited efficacy of the male 'role model' discourse in homophobic and homohysteric environments. However, a further perspective on school-based dance workshops was offered by

Adam, now a dance administrator, but until recently, a dance in education company

artist. Skilled in delivering mixed-sex workshops, Adam recalled:

> *The education side was really important, being able to inspire young people,*
> *especially the boys, to feel it's okay to dance… and reduce the stigma about*
> *boys and dance…. For some of them it was a positive experience that had a*
> *knock-on effect on the rest of their schooling… It wasn't that dance was a big*
> *healer and made them able to understand maths, but it gave them self-*
> *confidence and some esteem perhaps in other subjects, and particularly so*
> *with some of the boys. It was great that…*
>
> *A major part of ethos was to pass on this art form and to inspire people to*
> *participate. We covered the whole age range from nursery schools upwards.*
> *It was brilliant… it was fab, but we had an easy job because we were 'hit*
> *and run'. We'd go in, deliver the workshop and then leave.*
>
> *Sometimes you'd get real resistance and we'd try different ways to interact*
> *with each other. You could be devious in partnering them up, such as boy-girl*
> *circles. It would sometimes depend upon the schools as well– whether they'd*
> *any prior dance sessions– and a lot of these workshops would be done in PE,*
> *so we were sometimes inheriting existing problems such as when a teacher*
> *had forced them into dancing boy and girl.*

Adam's narrative also alludes to the difficulties sometimes encountered in dislodging

preconceived ideas about dance in particular, or gender relations more broadly,

arising from pupils' negative formative experiences. Although originally

conceptualised by Jackson (1968), exploring the 'hidden curriculum' in dance

education can reveal complex issues of gender and sexualities according to Stinson,

(2005), ones which often reinforce stereotypes in wider culture. To illustrate, as

Adam attested, some schools are inclined to partner pupils with the 'opposite' sex,

thereby privileging heteronormativity whilst simultaneously marginalising other

orientations. While such actions can be powerful deterrents, so alienating some

youngsters from an activity, attempts to counter or resist such normativity can also

be problematic, as evidenced by Keira, a specialist dance teacher who recounted:

I actually had a very difficult experience when I was teaching in a school, and it was the beginning of my career in 2011. We were doing contact work – lifts - in a GCSE dance class. And sometimes, boys can feel a bit funny dancing with a girl, so I said, "Choose your partner so you feel comfortable with them". And two boys happened to go together, so fine. And then, after that, I was told that a parent had arrived in reception… and she said, "I don't want my boy having these homo experiences. I hear the teacher is pushing them on boys."

And I wasn't at all. I simply asked them to choose their own partner. It was an interesting experience because the boy in the class had no problem with it at all, he was enjoying the experience. I actually feel that the reason, really, was that he had possible gay tendencies and the mother had come into school that afternoon and she was going berserk about the fact that her boy was dancing with another boy.

I did not enforce this partnership; I only gave them the opportunity to be as comfortable as possible. It was just an odd experience for me because he had been absolutely fine and afterwards, he asked to dance with the same boy again and I said no. What can you do? Clearly, it's the parents who have got some sort of dilemma, not the child.

Keira's account reminds us that gender policing and homophobia can operate both within and beyond the school gate. As a teacher, her acquiescence to the parent's wish is understandable though regrettable, since a valuable opportunity was missed to resist prejudice and tackle homophobia. However, such actions would require the support of school leaders and governors – and this was not given to Keira.

5.4 Summary

In this chapter I have presented an analysis of boys' experiences of dance education and training in their dance schools and secondary schools, providing clear evidence of the discursive (re)production of gender therein, by boys who are subject to the panoptic gaze of regulation, especially acute in their day schools. However, in their dance schools, boys reported positive mainly experiences, of inclusive communities offering them plenty of support for their endeavours. Some boys were

nonetheless aware of the privileges afforded to them because of their gender, such as being given prominent roles in public performances. A few felt it necessary to undertake gender boundary maintenance work by masculinising choreography previously regarded as 'feminine' to make it *"kinda strong"*- a reminder of the continuing pervasiveness of gender essentialism. Relatedly, aware of transgressing gender norms, boys' thrill in performing dance in public was sometimes marred by their desire for privacy or anonymity, an uneasy tension that permeated their life in and beyond the dance school.

Regarding boys' experiences of dance in their day schools, this chapter has argued that the current philosophy of dance in education, with its emphasis on 'process' rather than 'product', has failed to engage most boys (and probably girls) with the subject, despite some ill-conceived appeals to the heteronormative in schemes of work. More broadly, the position of dance as a marginal subject within the school curriculum has also been considered, as have the potent effects of a 'hidden curriculum' (Jackson, 1968), which has served to re-inscribe dance as a 'feminine' pursuit. Consequently, my analysis suggests that dance is eschewed not only by many young male pupils, but also by some of their male P.E. teachers whose strategies to evade or negotiate their dance provision, were explored . The shortage of specialist dance teachers, irrespective of gender, was found to be problematic for many pupils; subsequently, some boys sought alternative tuition from their dance school.

Attempts by some schools to remediate the paucity of their dance provision, by arranging visits from dance artists/companies, were found to be equally problematic if they were underpinned by a questionable reliance on the value of male dancers as 'role models' or if schools were homohysteric and/or homophobic environments. The provision of school workshops led by male 'Dance Ambassadors', part of the *'Project B'* initiative from the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), was critiqued for its gender essentialism and its reliance on outdated masculine tropes such as 'superheroes' and its masculinist comparison between sports and dance, both of which, I argued, were graphic illustrations of a *"make it macho"* strategy (Fisher, 2007). Equally troubling was the finding that in one instance, a teacher's attempt to contest the dominant discourses around dance and masculinity, by allowing a same-sex (male) dance partnership, was abandoned in the face of parental opposition.

In the next chapter I examine the negative consequences which, according to participants, arose from their identity as a male dancer, and pay particular regard to their lived experiences of bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation in their secondary schools. The subsequent chapter analyses not only boys' responses to these experiences, but also explicates how they contest the dominant discourses that code dance as a 'feminine' activity and them as subject to a homosexual presumption.

Chapter 6 *"Obviously, you get called gay all the time"*: consequences of being a male dancer at secondary school

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses the negative consequences that can flow from being a young male dancer. Numerous researchers (e.g. Quin, Frazer & Redding, 2007; Blazy & Amstell, 2010; Lakes et al., 2016) have established that across a range of diverse populations (such as pre-school children, pregnant women and elderly citizens), there are many positive consequences arising from dance participation, including mental and physical fitness, as well as the acquisition of cultural and social capital. However, while these benefits are accepted and welcomed, the focus of this chapter is on the *negative* consequences which, according to participants, can arise from being a young male dancer. Secondary schools were found to be the prime site of oppression for male dancers, and so after a brief consideration of other contexts - dance school and home - this chapter will focus on boys' experiences in their secondary schools.

As discussed in Chapter Five, boys reported that, without exception, their dance schools were inclusive and safe spaces where they were welcomed and valued. No instances of bullying or homophobia were reported there. Any shortcomings, such as lack of dedicated male changing spaces, were not accorded much significance by participants whose emphasis instead was on the warm inter-personal relations they experienced and the quality of teaching they received. Any deficiencies in the latter, such as the lack of 'masculine' choreography, identified by a few participants, were not deemed significant enough to impact negatively on their experiences.

Similarly, at home, most boys enjoyed the support of their parents; mothers were generally enthusiastic about their son's dancing and took many of the maternal normative labour roles such as transporting boys to and from dance school and making dance costumes and accessories. While most fathers were also supportive, the majority had less direct engagement with dance; for example, they visited dance schools less frequently than mothers did and saw fewer dance performances. A minority of fathers were, however, indifferent or hostile to dance and sought to distance or recuperate themselves from it – discussed further in Chapter Seven. Despite this, most boys were satisfied with, and grateful for, the support they received from home, especially so if, as most did, they encountered negative consequences at secondary school. In view of this and generated from the interview data, two sorts of boys were identified - boys who danced openly (n=12) and those who danced in secret (n=14) - at least initially, until they were 'found out'.

6.2 'Open' and 'secret' dancers

6.2.1 'Open' dancers

A key theme to emerge from the data was that of boys' resilience in sustaining their interest in dance, irrespective of the gender normative forces exerted, particularly in their secondary schools. Boys who shared their decision to dance with relatives, friends and school peers I have termed 'open dancers', contrasting them below with 'secret' dancers - boys who opted to dance more furtively. However, within the term 'open' dancer' I also include a couple of boys whose parents chose to make their son's interest in dance public knowledge.

For 'open dancers', their boldest act of resistance to the dominant discourses pertaining to dance and masculinity, was to share their identity as a male dancer with their school peers. 12 of the 26 participants did this (46%), while the remaining 14 (54%) chose to dance in secret. Nonetheless, of the dozen boys who were open about their dancing, most adopted a low-key approach at school, responding to queries but not volunteering much information about their hobby. This response, from Caleb (14), was typical:

> *What I do out of school is no one's business but mine. Although people at school know I dance, I don't usually talk about it. If someone asks me, then I'll answer, but I don't usually start conversations about it.*

Caleb's evident defensiveness illustrates a tendency noted across most of the dataset whereby boys sought to compartmentalise their lives, segregating their school lives from their out of school existences. Thus, for many boys, their identity as a male dancer, whether open or in secret, was underplayed during their time in school. Such a tactic can be seen as a form of resistance or in the words of one parent, Judith, as *"a coping mechanism"* utilised by her son, Lucas, who *"likes to keep his worlds separate"*. She added:

> *He wouldn't actively go out to tell people that he started dancing, but it was something he did… people knew, he didn't try to hide it, but he didn't really think it was a public issue either, it was just something he did.*

By contrast however, two boys, Owen and Harry, were keen to publicise their interest and success in dance with others at school:

> *Int: At school, did you volunteer information about your dancing?*
>
> *Owen: Yes, I was proud of it; I was extremely proud of it. It was the focal point of my life at the time… so yeah, I was pretty proud and open about it. I didn't feel any remorse in telling people and that was both primary and*

secondary school. It was more advertised by my mum and the teachers at my primary school because I didn't have a lot of confidence right then, but then I got in year seven and year eight and I was still a quiet person, but I was still proud of my talents and so were other people. Other people had talents and I thought, why not me? Why can't I not share my talents with other people, and therefore I told people.

Owen is a particularly interesting case since, as one of the most 'visible' dancers in this study, he also recounted suffering severe bullying which necessitated him changing secondary schools on two occasions. While it is unclear if there is a causal relationship here, Owen (and also his stepfather who was a participant in the study), did not associate these factors. Both exhibited a determination for Owen to dance openly, without fear of recriminations and neither expressed any regret at this decision. So how did Owen account for the bullying? He explained:

I was more popular. I was more popular than them - simple as that. I had more popularity and I could do more with myself. I was more successful than them. And some of these people were my primary school mates. They had been loyal friends to me in years five and six, but when we switched over to secondary school, they met new people and that was it… it was hellfire.

Owen, academically strong as well as being a talented dancer, hints that some of his peers were jealous of his achievements and concomitant popularity. This is a familiar narrative used by young people who are bullied for being 'swots' according to Jackson (2006b) since it disrupts the *"uncool to work"* discourse prevalent in some schools. Bullying, as an aspect of 'laddish' behaviour can not only make perpetrators seem 'cool' but it can also be a response to their *"fear of failure"* since it can make students seem unbothered about failing, and so if they do fail, it will not look bad for them (Jackson, 2006b). In a similar vein, Frosh et al., (2002) found that few boys were able to be both popular and academically successful since conscientious boys were often labelled as 'feminine' or 'gay' – a problematic and resonant finding

for young male dancers such as Owen who have a strong work ethic and successful record of academic attainment.

Equally, the other participant, Harry (11), was also not afraid to share his passion for dance, but exceptionally among the boys interviewed, this extended to Harry being a highly visible, embodied dancer. He accomplished this by wearing dance uniform outside of the dance school, in public places such as in supermarkets or while walking to and from the dance school. Harry spoke of wearing ballet tights in public, explaining:

> *Sometimes I walk down to the dance centre from up the hill wearing them [ballet tights] and if people look at you and stare and say, "What the hell are you doing?", I just say, "I'm wearing tights" because that's the truth, because I am going to ballet.*

A member of the 'Billy Elliot' cast in the acclaimed musical production, Harry's behaviour was grounded in a mature self-confidence which stemmed, at least in part, from being a successful and relatively well-known performer. When interviewed, his father, Peter, commented:

> *He [Harry] doesn't care about other people's opinions. He takes his time and decides who he likes, who is going to be friends with, and he doesn't lose any sleep over people who don't necessarily like him. He's not bothered about them, he isn't interested in other people's opinions on him and he doesn't let them affect him, I don't think.*
> *He's quite happy being picked up from the dance centre and going out to Asda wearing his ballet tights and his ballet shoes, and while we are getting the shopping, he will find an empty aisle and go pirouetting down it - he is not bothered.*

Despite Harry's confident contestation of the dominant discourses, his parents were acutely aware of the potentially difficult transition Harry might face when moving

from primary to secondary school. Having been bullied at the former, they visited

his intended secondary school to air their concerns. Harry's father, Peter, explained:

> *We actually had a meeting with the high school and basically said, "Look, he is a boy who dances, he's been successful, he's going to come back to school … we've had a talk with Harry about the bullying and not to accept it and who he should speak to and we expect the school to do the same". And they said, "Absolutely, we have a zero-tolerance blah, blah, blah…." We said, "We appreciate that, but just to let you know, we're going to be very vigilant in looking after him."*

This pro-active stance by Harry's parents was found to be exceptional among the

dataset. While some parents were aware their child could be at risk of bullying, they

nonetheless trusted the schools to safeguard their children. Subsequently, most

parental interventions were found to be reactive and were instigated only if parents

were concerned with how the school had dealt with, or failed to address, incidences

of bullying.

Parental concern for their sons was found to be matched by pride in their offspring's

achievements, but this was sometimes detrimental to boys' wellbeing. Roger, who

unlike Harry above, danced in secret initially, recounted the point at which his

mother, a teacher at his primary school, *"began to make life harder"* for him by

taking his dance medals into school to be presented in school assembly. By failing to

respect her son's wish to dance anonymously, Roger then fell victim to bullying.

Now aged 16, he reflected:

> *In primary school … my mum, who worked at the school, used to take in all my dance medals which I got from doing festivals and exams and stuff. I used to be very proud of those and then I started receiving all this hate and so I said, "Please don't do this, mum," because I knew when I left that assembly, I'd just get teased or whatever… I received quite a lot of stick for what I did.*

This example suggests that the exercise of parental power over children is not always benign, robbing children like Roger of their agency to dance on their own terms – in secret. Similarly, Gareth (14), commented with some poignancy about what prompted the onset of his bullying, explaining that his *" friends didn't know about my dancing until I had done some competitions and won some medals there, and my mum said something to a friend's mum and then… yeah… it was all over"* While my data suggests such parental behaviours were rare, their deleterious effects were confirmed by Margaret, a dance teacher, who commented on the minority of parents who ignore their child's wishes to insist on public approbation:

> *I'm sure most teachers will tell you of their experiences with 'pushy' mothers. They're highly ambitious for their children and want them to be successful, famous performers. They think their child is the best and are ultra-competitive and proud of them, and they want everyone to know about it. Of course, because of numbers, we don't see it with mothers and their sons as much as we see it with mothers and their daughters, but they do exist. I think they're often living their life vicariously through their child and they can be hard work to deal with.*

> *We don't usually see 'pushy' dads, but there again we don't see most dads at all. But the mothers … oh yeah, what a nightmare some can be …demanding extra lessons or solo spots in shows or duets with the best partners … We don't have many, but they can be dangerous. And the irony is that their efforts can be counterproductive. Children become targets for bullies, or they can become stressed, embarrassed, demotivated or isolated by their parent's behaviour and they give up their dancing. And then everyone loses.*

6.2.2 'Secret' dancers

While all of the male dancers were aware of, and sensitive towards, the dominant discourses pertaining to dance and masculinity, nowhere was this more clearly illustrated than by the 14 boys who opted to dance in secret (at least initially). I wished to establish if this was motivated by homohysteria (a fear of being thought

gay), or were there other factors in play? As I discuss in Chapter Seven, irrespective

of their sexuality, once boys were known to be dancers they *expected* to be thought

gay, (such is the pervasiveness of the discourse that conflates male dancers with

femininity and homosexuality). However, my analysis indicates that they were *not*

afraid of being thought gay per se, or to use Anderson's term, they were not

"homohysteric" (Anderson, 2009). Indeed, the heterosexual young dancers were

themselves exemplars of Anderson's inclusive masculinity – open, diverse and pro-

gay.

So why the secrecy? My analysis suggests that these boys were fearful of being

stigmatised in their secondary schools since this could give rise to bullying,

sometimes homophobic in nature. In sum then, I found that while the young male

dancers were inclusive, most of their secondary schools were not. Thus, only close

family knew of their decision to start dance training. As George (13), explained, "I

didn't tell any friends when I started 'cos I knew it would go around school and I was

a bit scared that I'd get the mick taken out of me, so it was kind of just with family

for a bit".

Similarly, asked to explain his reasons for secrecy, another participant, Gareth (14),

recounted:

> *Yeah, I kept it a secret, because people still think it's a girls' sport. It was*
> *quite funny that I was the only male dancer in my schools, at both primary*
> *and high school. So, people would picture me as a really different guy, not a*
> *normal guy. I studied in a single sex high school, so it was all guys next to*
> *me and I was the only one who did dance*.

Overall then, I found that boys' general desire for secrecy was motivated by a desire

not to exceed the "limits of masculinity" (Cann, 2014), and a fear of the

consequences should one be 'found out'. As such, these behaviours suggest that

these boys do not inhabit a culture of "inclusive masculinity" (Anderson, 2009)

within their local school communities of masculinity practices (Lave & Wenger,

1991; Paechter, 2003b, 2006b).

For 'secret' dancers, the fear and risk of being 'found out' attending a dance school

was clearly understood according to Charlie (16), since *"you could find yourself in a*

dance class with people from your school and you don't know what they'll do or say

afterwards". Indeed, the 14 boys who danced secretly were unable to sustain their

secret, but time frames differed from a few days to, exceptionally in one case, five

years. Significantly, the participants did not ascribe malicious motives to these

disclosures, which, in all cases bar one, came from girls who were pupils at the same

dance school. In the words of one participant, Caleb (14):

> *It was going to happen anyway. It was just a case of when, not if. People talk,*
> *and soon it was all round school that someone had seen me at a dance class.*
> *The girls didn't bother; some of them were pleased, but the idiotic lads had a*
> *go at me. It was from the footy lads and I never got on with them anyway*
> *and they didn't like me. I didn't rise to it – well at least, I didn't let it show. I*
> *did get hacked off and it made me wonder about going back to dancing. But I*
> *really liked it. I felt comfortable there, so it was worth the stick.*

While boys' desire to dance in secret was understandable, my analysis suggests this

need was felt most acutely by the three participants who attended all-boys' schools.

Here, pupils were expected to enjoy competitive team sports in a culture of hyper-

masculinity dedicated to the accrual of masculine capital - an approach that was

antithetical to these three self-identified "non-sporty" boys. Billy (17), for example, described himself as *"into the performance stuff… more on the arty side than the sporty side …but there was no dance at school, there were no performances or after-school dance clubs"*. Instead, his state grammar school was described as *"very much rugby and football and if you couldn't hack it, then you were seen as a lightweight. If you're the star of the football team or the team captain, then you're top dog."*

Historically speaking, single-sex public schools were often sites of homoerotic friendships between pupils, and yet as Bullough & Bullough (1979) revealed , if made public, these behaviours were often denied and denunciated. Nowadays, boys such as Billy who attend single-sex schools might still feel the need to conceal their *"taste articulations"* towards dance (Cann, 2013, 2014), and its enduring conflation with effeminacy and homosexuality. This school's inattention to the performing arts served to reinforce the gendered nature of the curriculum by reproducing prevailing orthodoxies as to what best constitutes a boys' education. In such circumstances, unwilling to risk identifying himself as a dancer, an opportunity to challenge gender norms within a hegemonic, heteronormative school environment was, perhaps understandably, not taken.

By contrast, however, George (13), explained how his interest in dance became known at his independent school, following his accidental disclosure:

> *I go to an all boys' school and, mmm, I'm known for being a bit camp though I'm not gay, but I knew I'd get the mick taken out of me if I told people at school I was going to a dance class, so I decided to say nothing and see how it goes. I'm lucky that my school is in a different town to where I dance so I managed nearly twelve months before it got out. But it was my own fault*

> *'cos, mmm, well, the teacher was like, "Could you come on Saturday because I need help with this fair?" and I said, "No, sorry, I can't, I've got a dance exam" …and all eyes just turned on me …*

Within six months of this admission, and to save himself from further distress caused by relentless verbal bullying, George moved from his boys' school to a co-educational one in a different area. "*Things weren't improving at all,*" he said*. "The school did nothing to help me, so I got out. It was the best thing for me, and I never want to go back".*

A further pressure on boys' desire for secrecy was also noted. As commercial enterprises, dance schools can be understandably keen to advertise the presence male dancers within their schools. However, this desire for publicity was found to sometimes conflict with a boy's desire for secrecy or his wish to downplay his involvement in dance. Deprived of agency and pupil voice, a couple of boys were identified as dancers when their dance schools publicised examination, competition and audition successes on their websites, social media or in printed media such as local newspapers. Moreover, this lack of consent was not confined to dance schools; secondary schools occasionally adopted this practice too. One participant, Robin (11), recalled that:

> *I don't remember anything issue-wise in primary school. Obviously, when I got to secondary school, things started changing because in my first year I'd come second in the World Junior Dance Championships and it was announced in school, it was in the newspapers and then the whole school knew what I did. So then, of course, it was the stigma of dancing, even though it was ballroom it was like, "Oh he's a ballet dancer… a poofter."*

Robin's account is interesting since it draws our attention, yet again, to participants' frequent use of the adverb "*obviously*" when describing their expectations of trouble at school. As Marc (14), reasoned, *"if you asked most people to think of dance, they immediately think of ballet"*, a genre which holds a pre-eminent place in the Western collective cultural imagination. And so, despite Robin being a ballroom dancer, he was construed as being a ballet dancer, reflecting the popular conflation of dance as synonymous with only ballet. Thereafter, he was subject to homophobic bullying or what Pascoe (2005) calls 'fag discourse', a technique to subordinate young males by calling them 'a fag' or by accusing them of being gay - even if one does not believe them to be so. In so doing, the accuser demonstrates his heteromasculinity at the expense of others, a further example of a boundary maintenance strategy and explored further in the next chapter.

In line with Plummer's earlier work on the gendered nature of homophobia (Plummer, 1999), Pascoe asserts that homophobia is a form of gender regulation rather than a display of anti-gay sentiment, and while that may be so, as others have sought to show (e.g. Anderson & McCormack, 2010; McCormack, 2011, 2012), and as my research is illuminating, the effects on individuals so named can be nonetheless deleterious and lasting. To illustrate, recalling the *"aggro"* of life at secondary school, Robin commented, *"there are a few people I'd like to meet again, but things would be different now!"*

6.2.3 Online resources for dance

To preserve their anonymity or to escape censure from peers, many boys were found to use online sources such as 'YouTube' to explore the repertoire of dance genres, their movements and choreography. Being able to conduct this dance research in private was especially advantageous to those boys who desired anonymity and discretion. As Jacob (11), revealed:

> *No one knew I was interested in dancing until I told my parents that I'd checked it out online and I knew what style I wanted to do – street dance. I'd also looked and found which particular class to go to. They were really surprised, but I didn't tell them until I was ready and knew exactly what I wanted to do. My mates didn't know either.*

Using online portals enabled boys like Jacob to watch other males dance in safety and privacy; indeed, the majority of boys spoke of watching dance online, with some of them speaking enthusiastically about watching dance on television also. While boys could, anonymously if desired, create and then share online their own dance performances, no participants expressed an interest in this, and none had done so. However, Neil (11), spoke not untypically of his enjoyment of appreciating urban dance on 'YouTube':

> *I really like watching Street dance and trying to copy some of the moves. I tried to teach my mate a few of them and get him to come to dancing [the dance school]. He did the moves, but he wouldn't have lessons.*

Likewise, Robin (11), commented:

> *I watch loads of dance online. Not just boys but girls too. There's a lot to see. It's not all good but there are some fantastic dancers out there. It's good to see new dance styles and try and do a few steps and moves in my bedroom, but it's not always easy to follow.*

That many boys enjoyed the privacy of online access to dance is no surprise since it obviated the risk of public exposure and negative repercussions. For many though, the online world offered only a temporary respite from their 'real' world experiences, especially those at secondary school, and it is to those I next turn.

6.3 Bullying

6.3.1 An overview

This section begins with a brief, general overview of the bullying landscape before proceeding to describe, analyse and consider the effects of different forms of bullying - verbal, physical and online – experienced by boys in their secondary schools. As most bullies were identified as male peers, the significance of this is considered in the light of Anderson's claim of 'inclusive masculinity', characterised by a declining significance of homohysteria (Anderson, 2009) and homophobia (McCormack, 2012). The latter's model of 'homosexually themed language', comprising 'pro-gay language', 'gay discourse', 'fag discourse' and 'homophobic language' (McCormack, 2012) will be operationalised to establish to what extent boys' experiences in their secondary schools reflect this claim of greater inclusivity, findings for which are discussed in 6.4.

In short though, my analysis found that young male dancers were still subject to a regulated "*gender straitjacket*" (Pollack, 1998) and a homosexual presumption redolent of homophobic and homohysteric contexts. Moreover, 'homophobic language' (Plummer, 1999) and 'fag discourse' were found to be more prevalent

than 'pro-gay language' or 'gay discourse' (McCormack, 2012) in most of these schools, with little evidence to support Anderson's claims of a shift towards more 'inclusive masculinity'.

In line with the interpretive nature of this study which seeks to foreground boys' voices and their experiences, the term 'bullying' has been used since it was the word used most often by participants to describe their experiences. As Smith & Brain, (2000) note, internationally speaking, there are many definitions of bullying and various ways of understanding it. In England too, there is no legal definition of bullying, and so the one adopted here is taken from government guidance for schools which defines bullying as behaviour that is *"repeated, intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally, often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation* (gov.uk, 2017). While it is recognised that this term can sometimes fail to address the social and cultural power relations that enmesh young people (e.g. Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Charmaraman, et al., 2013), it is nonetheless preferred to, say, 'harassment' since it better reflects boys' own perceptions.

My analysis indicates that secondary schools were prime sites of bullying and where most boys were subject to oppressive gender regulation. Extensive research on the gendered expectations of pupils (and their teachers) has previously established that pupils who do not 'fit in' are liable to marginalisation and persecution (e.g. Glynn, 1999; Renold, 2003, 2006; Blaise, 2005; Pascoe, 2007; Rawlings, 2017). As will be explicated below, these young male dancers transgressed notions of normativity and

most attracted censure for it by being bullied. However, seeking more nuance and in recognition that the term 'bullying' can include a spectrum of behaviours, boys were asked to describe their experience of bullying on a Likert-type scale ranging from 'none', 'mild', 'moderate' to 'severe'. Only 15.4% (n=4) reported no bullying, while 38.5% of them (n=10) self-assessed their bullying as 'mild', 26.9% (n=7) as 'moderate' and 19.2% (n=5) as 'severe'. Boys experienced bullying in one or more forms, verbal, physical and online, narrating a range of incidents which included teasing, name calling, making threats, cyberbullying and, in a couple of cases, physical assault. Although often homophobic in nature, it was, nonetheless, unrelated to boys' actual sexual orientation so that, as will be discussed later, heterosexual and bisexual dancers also reported such abuse.

It was, then, important to ascertain if boys' interest in dance was *wholly* responsible for this or were other intersectional factors at play? Data analysis revealed an overwhelming consensus among participants (the exception being Owen, discussed below), that their identity as a dancer was the *sole* causal factor of their bullying. As a qualitative, interpretive researcher, I accept and respect these perceptions while also being aware that correlation does not imply causation, and of the need to remain open-minded when drawing inferences from data. Furthermore, as Owen's transcript below attests, it is possible that other intersectional aspects of boys' identities or individual character traits, unexplored in this research, could have contributed to this. A heterosexual dancer, but nonetheless subject to serious homophobic abuse, Owen (15), cited additional reasons for his bullying, explaining

"I was more popular. I was more popular than them… I had more popularity. I could do more with myself. I was more successful than them".

Although unacknowledged, a component of Owen's 'popularity' could still perhaps be attributed to his success with dance and his subsequent acquisition of social and cultural resources. Nonetheless, Owen's account does not detract from the compelling conclusion, evidenced below, that disappointingly little seems to have changed for many boys who dance - they continue to experience bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation, albeit in varying degrees. While these findings replicate my own experiences, both as a dancer and as a teacher of male students, they also echo the conclusions from a raft of other dance researchers including Burt, 1995; Keyworth, 2001; Sanderson, 2001; Thomas, 2003; Stinson, 2005; Lehikoinen, 2006; Fisher, 2007; Gard, 2008; Risner, 2009; Taschuk, 2009; Li, 2010; Holdsworth, 2013 and Craig, 2014. Thus, spanning most of the Western world, the academic consensus finds that most males who dance, irrespective of sector (leisure, pre-vocational and vocational) are still liable to social censure or worse.

While my research has concentrated on secondary - age boys, further work, larger in scale and scope, would now be useful to establish how younger male dancers, aged four to eleven, fared in their primary schools. Clearly, drawing conclusions from a small dataset such as mine must be done cautiously, and no claims are made as to the generalisability of findings. However, as the table below indicates, the bullying of male dancers took place irrespective of the type of secondary school they attended.

Table 6.1 School type and bullying

SCHOOL TYPE	NONE	MILD	MODERATE	SEVERE	TOTAL
COMPREHENSIVE	3	6	5	4	18
GRAMMAR	0	2	1	0	3
INDEPENDENT	1	2	1	1	5
TOTAL	4	10	7	5	26
TOTAL %	15.4%	38.5%	26.9%	19.2%	100%

Key

Comprehensive -   state funded secondary school/college for 11 to 18-year olds, including those with 'Academy' status

Grammar   -   state funded grammar school/college for 11 to 18-year olds, including those with 'Academy' status

Independent   -   independent (fee-paying) school for 11 to 18-year olds

Similarly, while this research did not set out to ascertain if there was a causal

relationship between sexual orientation and bullying, (and aware that correlation

does not imply causation, and that a small sample size (n=26) would preclude any

possibility of generalisation), the matrix below does nonetheless indicate that,

irrespective of their sexuality, the vast majority of young male dancers (22/26 =

85%), experienced some degree of bullying. As mentioned earlier, all of them

(except one, Owen), attributed this *solely* to their identity as a male dancer, and

irrespective of their sexual orientation, believed the common conflation of male

dancers with femininity and/or homosexuality to be the root cause of their

troubles.

Participants were asked to describe the degree of bullying they encountered, self-

defined as mild, moderate, severe or none, with responses as follows:

Table 6.2 Bullying and sexual orientation

Bullying & Sexuality	None	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Total
Unknown	3	4	0	0	7
Bisexual	0	0	1	0	1
Homosexual	1	1	2	3	7
Heterosexual	0	5	4	2	11
Total	4	10	7	5	26
Total %	15.4%	38.5%	26.9%	19.2%	100%

Significantly then, boys of *all* sexual orientations were found to be victims of bullying; it was not confined to boys who identified as homosexual or bisexual. That many heterosexual boys suffered homophobic bullying might suggest a failure of the heteronormative recuperative strategies employed by them and this is discussed in Chapter Seven. Boys whose sexual orientations were publicly unknown were found to be more likely to escape bullying altogether or to experience only mild instances of it. Conversely, the data indicates a greater frequency of severe bullying among homosexual male dancers than dancers of other orientations, suggestive of enduring homophobic and homohysteric school cultures.

6.3.2 Verbal bullying: *"They would literally call me a woman sometimes"* (Owen, 15)

Analysis suggests that most of the ten boys who defined their verbal bullying as 'mild' seemed not to conceptualise it as bullying per se and instead used alternative euphemistic nouns such as 'banter', 'getting some stick', 'taking the mick/mickey' and 'teasing' to describe it. Similarly, name calling such as 'boy dancer', 'dancing boy/queen', 'dancer-prancer', and 'twinkle toes' were often constructed by boys as *"banter"*. In that vein, Anderson & McCormack (2010)

might conceptualise such utterances as a form of homosexually - themed language, specifically 'gay discourse' - language that is not homophobic but instead is intended to develop social bonding and have a positive social effect. However, while boys constructed these utterances as ostensibly not injurious, their responses could also be interpreted as attempts to minimise or recuperate such behaviours and/or their effects.

Clearly though, context is crucial in establishing an interpretation of such utterances. Nonetheless, many linguists assert that 'banter' is often regarded as a traditionally male insult, often employed to sustain dominant forms of masculinity (Kotthoff, 2005; McDowell & Schaffner, 2011), such as those found in many sporting settings or, more especially here, in school environments. In the latter it can function as a form of gendered 'Othering', and a boundary maintenance strategy by perpetrators who wish to demarcate their heterosexual allegiance.

How boys interpreted these homosexually themed utterances was found to be complex and fluid. Friends of male dancers who employed jocularity could not always rely on it to promote social bonding (Anderson & McCormack, 2010). For instance, Marcus (16), a keen footballer known to have a girlfriend (and so ostensibly regarded as heterosexual), was not immune from getting *"stick"* for his dancing and being the butt of *"jokes"*. However, he recognised that some boys might be offended or upset by such treatment:

> *I get stick for it [dancing] off the football boys … none of it serious, it's just a couple of jokes - "He's a dancing queen" or "Disney princess". Sometimes though, jokes can be offensive, but I take it lightly whereas some people would not.*

Viewed in another light, such comments could be regarded as examples of *"new sexism"* (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), later conceptualised as *'indirect sexism'* by Mills who explains it as *"sexism which is undercut by humour or irony, signalled by exaggerated or marked intonation or stress"* (Mills & Keddie, 2008, p. 12). Utterances delivered as 'banter' are often intended to convey light-heartedness when arguably the 'real' meaning is more serious and reflective of the masculine ideals valorised in that context (Keisling, 2005). Interestingly, though, participants were not especially reflexive in this regard and did not speak of such utterances as sexist, perhaps reflecting a linguistic androcentrism that connotes sexism as pertaining only to remarks made by men about women. Nonetheless, as Marcus indicates, there was an awareness of the potentially deleterious nature of such utterances.

Similar to Marcus's account, George (13), spoke revealingly about responses to his dancing:

> *Int: Can you remember any comments made by people at school?*
>
> *George: Mmm, aah … they've all been like jokey negative, but I've not heard like proper positive from my friends...*

This description, of *"jokey negative"* is interesting and suggests, like Marcus's earlier comment, a tension between the seemingly jocular spirit of the utterance (*"jokey"*) but also an awareness of its potentially adverse (*"negative"*) impact. Considered linguistically, as an example of pragmatics, Garde (2008) notes that the tone of the delivery and the framing of suchlike utterances as 'banter' enables speakers to make comments freely. This view reflects earlier work by Lakoff (1990) on language and power whereby:

Saying serious things in jest both creates camaraderie and allows the speaker to avoid responsibility for anything controversial in the message. It's just a joke, after all– can't you take a joke? … worse than being racist or mean-spirited is not getting a joke or being unable to take one. (Lakoff, 1990, p.270)

Overall then, the absence of *"proper positive"* support from school friends (except those deemed 'best' friends who offered boys their unconditional support) was noted by the majority of participants. Crucially though, this was in line with their expectations - an anticipated consequence of exceeding the limits of normative masculinity. For instance, Neil (11) described his male school 'friends' as:

> *They're just people I hang about with at school. They're not like… proper friends, like the ones I have a dancing. Then know I dance but I don't talk about it much and they don't ask. I don't think they understand it really. Or why I do it. At first, they were like, 'Oh you dance? Cool.' But that was it, nothing else. Not interested… I think they think I'm weird… but they don't say so.*

This bewildered, mostly silent tolerance of Neil's dancing, (a strategy also employed by some 'dancing dads' as outlined in Chapter Five), was in contrast to several school peers who described boys' dancing as *"that's so gay"*. Most boys interpreted the phrase as both a comment on the transgressive nature of their dance activity, but also as a label of their sexual orientation, arising from a homosexual presumption. For instance, as Alec (13) explained:

> *I heard it ["that's so gay"] so much, first when I was at primary school and then at high school, but after a while I stopped caring. But it was hurtful that they were criticising me and my dancing.*

Thus, findings suggest that most boys were subject to a homosexual presumption, irrespective of their sexuality, and this presumption usually manifested itself in 'gay

discourse'. The most commonly cited utterances were, (in no particular order) *"poof", "queer", "faggot', "bender", "gay boy", "gay ballerina"* and *"shirt lifter"*, an attempt, according to one participant, George (13) to *"belittle people, make them feel small and not normal".*

Irrespective of boys' sexuality, gay discourse, uttered by school peers (males usually) who were not regarded as friends, was both anticipated and problematic. As Gareth (14), commented, *"… it's just the way it is. I don't expect anything else. These people are not my friends, they're just having a go at me. I try to ignore them, but you can't…".* Being the recipient of such gay discourse was clearly distressing and oppressive, as described by Owen (15), who revealed that:

> *They would literally call me a woman sometimes… but it was specifically all the homophobic comments that I got that really affected me personally. Because if you say something more and more and more it starts to get to you… they'd write the same gay comments, they would write stuff on bus windows, they'd… oh, it was a hard time I would say.*

Owen's recollection is significant since it reminds us yet again of the longevity of the discourse that positions male dancers as 'feminine' (e.g. Burt, 1995, 2009; Stinson, 2001; Gard, 2003; Risner, 2009). Furthermore, it implies an enduring conflation between a normatively coded feminised activity (dance) and a homosexual presumption, illustrating how these dominant discourses are often two sides of the same coin and for some are synonymous. Moreover, it reminds us that bullying can happen beyond the confines of school, such as while journeying to and from there.

Homosexual boys were, likewise, subject to gay discourse, and as Table 6.2

indicated this was sometimes found to be more serious and homophobic in nature

than that experienced by their heterosexual peers. In extremis, one gay interviewee,

Julian (17), a victim of sustained homophobic verbal bullying, described the gay

discourse as one of *"hate".* Judged 'Inadequate' and placed in 'special measures',

the following is an excerpt from his school's 2016 inspection report by the Office for

Standards in Education (OFSTED):

> *Pupils told inspectors that the use of racist and homophobic language is not always dealt with as a serious matter. In parts of the school the learning environment is particularly poor, including offensive graffiti that has not been removed. Equality issues have not been dealt with effectively by the school leaders…*

Pupils such as Julian are at substantial risk in such schools, where, in the absence of a

robust behaviour policy and in the words of the report, "*bullying is not always*

effectively challenged ". This was verified by Julian (no longer at school) who

commented*:*

> *Yeah, my school was grim. It was a sink school and I hated it. I never enjoyed a single day there and I couldn't wait to leave. There was no discipline and so much bullying – not just me but others too, if you didn't fit in. Sometimes the troublemakers would get suspended for a day or so but then they'd be back, but most of the time nothing happened, they got away with it... It was no good telling anyone, because you knew nothing would be done …*

However, this does not need to be the case, as I illustrate later in the chapter when I

discuss the four boys who danced with no negative consequences in their secondary

schools. Evidence suggests that these institutions shared common factors - all were

characterised by a culture of mutual respect and tolerance, of equality and diversity;

significantly too boys reported that behaviour policies were enforced consistently in these four schools. However, as Julian's narrative reminds us, not all male dancers were fortunate enough to attend safe, supportive schools. Another homosexual dancer, Caleb (14), who opted to study GCSE's in dance and drama at his comprehensive school, and ballet and tap outside it, was asked how his school peers responded to his interest in the performing arts. He replied, "*they say I'm gay for being a dancer … the boys will make jokes and say things like, 'Oh yeah, he's picked dance', and then have a laugh together*".

Like Caleb, another participant, Bradley (18), studied GCSE dance, along with 20 girls. A heterosexual, he then studied dance at advanced level, sharing a class with 14 girls. The following transcript illuminates some of the reactions he provoked at school:

> *Int: What reaction did you get at school being a male who danced?*
>
> *Bradley: Just the standard stuff really… obviously, you get called gay all the time.*
>
> *Int: Why do you say 'obviously'?*
>
> *Bradley: Just because you do, don't you? It's what happens. I got called 'gay' a lot, I got called 'bender' a lot, I got called 'twinkle toes' every now and again. They would pretend to be like, 'Oh, so you do ballet?' mimicking a ballet dancer as they said it.*

Significantly, in common with all the participants, Bradley *expected* his sexuality to be questioned ("*obviously, you get called gay all the time*") which suggests, among other things, a deep-rooted awareness among young male dancers of the discourses which conflate males who dance with a homosexual presumption (e.g. Burt, 2009; Risner, 2009). Most participants agreed that verbal bullying usually took place at

break times, lunchtimes, in corridors and playgrounds rather than in formal classes. Boys reported various strategies to obviate the risk, with some making conscious efforts to keep out of harm's way. A few boys shunned contact with most other males at school, preferring instead to associate themselves with girls who were thought (sometimes erroneously) to be more sympathetic to their dispositions as male dancers. Another strategy, reported by a couple of participants was to avoid the playground altogether, a practice already noted in earlier research (Renold, 2004). However, while such measures were effective in shielding boys, they were also instrumental in magnifying their marginalisation.

6.3.3 Physical bullying

In addition to being bullied verbally, five male dancers were also subject to physical assault; in all cases except Harry's (below), the perpetrators were male, and the incidences were frequent rather than one-offs. Assaults ranged from being pushed, pulled, shoved or having one's feet stamped on to more serious punching and beating. Harry (11), recalled that some of his classmates, including a girl, *"pushed me over and stamped on my ankles"* while Linda, a parent, recalled that her son was bullied *"quite frequently"* and would *"come home with bruises on his arms"*.

Having attention drawn the one's success in dance sometimes provoked extreme reactions. Daniel (16), spoke of this, explaining:

> *Of course, I was bullied an awful lot at school, especially at secondary school... I was always in the newspaper after winning some dance competition and there'd be a picture of me... so you could guarantee that the following day, coming home from school, I'd be beaten up. That probably happened about twice a week. I'd come home with the bust nose or a black*

> *eye or whatever, just because I won a competition or because I'd gone dancing. It was always, of course, the boys that bullied me because I wasn't doing the norm, playing football or cricket.*

A couple of boys chose to retaliate to these physical assaults. For instance,

Alec (13), recounted that:

> *I had to stand up for myself at school. I had a fight with a certain boy who was saying I was sissy because I was going to ballet, so I said, 'Right, okay, let's go outside and sort this out, because if I'm a sissy I won't be able to beat you up'. And we went out and I knocked him down. He stopped teasing me after that.*

Sometimes though, what began as verbal bullying escalated into physical abuse, as

this testimony from Owen (15), illustrates:

> *And then, eventually, people started to physically beat me up in school, which did get sorted and I did fight back because I'd done a lot of training in dance. I was quite strong although I didn't really look like it.*

Although it is impossible to directly attribute the sustained assaults on these five

boys (three homosexual and two heterosexual), as homophobic in motive, it does

nonetheless suggest something troubling about their particular school cultures and

their inability to safeguard minorities therein. Furthermore, it problematises the

claims of a burgeoning trend toward inclusive masculinity in schools (Anderson,

2009; McCormack, 2012). Thus, while temporally and spatially situated, these

behaviours, underpinned perhaps by a "*fear of the feminine*" (Jackson, 2003) and a

demarcation of the 'Other', manifested themselves in a school culture of

homohysteria (Anderson, 2009) and a hyper-masculinised propensity for violence.

6.3.4 Online Bullying

Surprisingly, given young people's penchant for social media usage, only one

participant, Owen (15), reported being the victim of online bullying in the form of

comments made via 'Facebook'. He also recounted remarks scrawled on the

windows of his school bus. Below, he explains at length the nature of these

incidents, the school's response and his family's reactions:

> *Int: Was the school aware of the online bullying as well as the face to face bullying?*
>
> *Owen: Yeah, but they weren't very good at sorting it out. There was one person on the team who was trying to sort it out and they never did; they were completely useless. This woman was just awful at sorting stuff out. Eventually it got to the head teacher who happened to sort it out because it was getting ridiculous. Two lads found my social site, and this was the only time I have ever been bullied online is when they started sending me messages such as "gay boy". I am a paranoid person, and I admit to that, so I didn't know if it was a joke or anything, but it didn't feel like a joke, and you don't just randomly go on someone's Facebook page and call them "gay boy". It's not nice to do that. Yeah, I took that really offensively.*
>
> *Int: How did your mum and stepdad respond to this bullying?*
>
> *Owen: They were more than aware of it, with me coming home crying at night because of it happening. It was pretty damn obvious. So, they would call the school repetitively, but they didn't know the extent of the bullying until people started writing stuff on the bus windows. And they noticed the bus coming past and the stuff written about me, so that's when they realised that this stuff was serious, and the school weren't doing anything about it. It kept happening and happening and eventually my parents walked into school one day and said, "That's it, we're taking our child home unless you can sort it out." They took me home and we came back the next day and the head teacher let me do my lessons and my work somewhere else and just sit out of lessons for a while because I couldn't cope.*
>
> *And my parents were getting more emotionally stressed then I ever was, worrying about many of the things alongside the bullying, and so they were problems at home, problems with money because of the dance, because it is very expensive, and I was doing freestyle competitions and the entries were about 20 quid per person. If you won there was no prizemoney, only a trophy. And it put us in a really bad financial state; we were coping with bullying as*

well as the home situation and it was this massive clatter of problems for two or three years and so it was hectic.

My analysis suggests that male dancers were not the only victims of bullying; in a minority of cases, such as Owen's, parents too were affected. Moreover, Owen's case study highlights the considerable financial and emotional costs incurred by parents to support their son's dancing and the attendant sacrifices and tensions that could entail, even for a relatively affluent middle-class family such as his.

While secondary schools like Owen's are obligated to support their pupils and ensure their wellbeing, my analysis finds that beyond a reliance on implementing schools' anti-bullying policies, no additional or coordinated support strategies between agencies (such as between home, dance school and secondary school) are in place for male dancers. As Marc, a dance teacher, commented:

> *We know that boys can have a tough time of it if they want to dance. And we, as teachers do the best we can, but in all honesty, it's not very much. I've known so many boys give up on their dancing because of bullying and what not. I don't think things are much different now. We need to offer better support to boys and their families because it's a big problem. And we don't really have contact with the[day] schools and that's where the trouble is. The dance teaching organisations could do something too. We could have an advice line or a bullying hotline, but I can't see that happening any time soon. It might need a tragedy before anything is done.*

I was interested in boys' views on whether this bullying could be stopped by their schools. George's reply (below) is representative of a pessimistic consensus on the perceived inevitability of bullying, and a telling comment on the culturally embedded

attitudes towards transgressive masculinities which appear to thwart moves towards a more inclusive society.

> *Int: And do you think the schools could do anything to stop this homophobic bullying?*
>
> *George: They can, they can find the person and say stop that or put them in detention, but it's not really going to change the person's attitude, 'cos they're always going to think what they're going to think, you can't really change that, so I think they can only do so much really.*

6.4 Exploring the limits of 'Inclusive Masculinity'

In light of the above findings of bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation of young male dancers in their secondary schools, it is now apt to consider what this implies for the utility of 'inclusive masculinity theory' (Anderson, 2009). As outlined previously, central to IMT is the concept of 'gay discourse', which describes the use of language that has a homosexual theme, but which is not homophobic. This was so termed by McCormack & Anderson (2010) as an attempt to understand how the effect of homosexually themed language could vary according to social context. Their research, which generated ethnographic data from heterosexual rugby players, revealed that while players voiced pro-gay attitudes and had openly gay friends, they nonetheless used phrases like *"don't be gay"* and *"that's so gay"*.

The researchers asserted that this position was consistent because 'gay' had two meanings; it referred to sexuality in some contexts and meant 'rubbish' in others (Lalor & Rendle-Short, 2007) and so, it was argued, the two meanings were wholly independent of each other. McCormack concluded that:

> *The word 'gay' has been used as an expression of displeasure without intending to reflect or transmit homophobia in many contemporary youth settings* (McCormack, 2011, p. 670)

 McCormack accounted for this by utilising Ogburn's theory of 'cultural lag' (Ogburn, 1950), a phenomenon whereby *"two related social variables become disassociated because their meanings change at different rates"* (McCormack, 2012), or simply put, in this instance, these rugby players were using language that lagged behind their pro-gay attitudes.

However, other scholars disagree, and, for instance, find the phrase *"that's so gay"'* to be homophobic (e.g. Sanders, 2008; DePalma & Jennett, 2010). Similarly, research with male undergraduates on university campuses in the USA concluded that this expression was *"a sexual orientation microaggression that can contribute to a hostile environment for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students"* (Woodford et al., 2012, p.416). Irrespective of one's position though, in considering the validity and utility of IMT, contextual factors, such as the degree of intimacy in social relationships, are also hugely significant. For instance, according to McCormack & Anderson (2010), some heterosexual males use homosexually themed language as a form of social bonding, in which case it can have a positive social effect. However, as McCormack later acknowledged:

> *Whether language is considered homophobic, or whether it is better conceptualised as fag discourse, gay discourse or pro-gay language, is primarily dependent on the homohysteria of the setting.* (McCormack, 2011, p.664)

Homohysteria, defined as a *"homosexually-panicked culture in which suspicion [of homosexuality] permeates"* (Anderson, 2011, p.737), has also been described as *"the social fear being socially perceived as gay"* (Anderson, 2009, cited in Roberts, 2014, p.132). According to Anderson, in order for homohysteria to exist, three variables must coincide:

> *a mass awareness that homosexuality exists as a static sexual orientation… a cultural zeitgeist of disapproval of homosexuality, and the femininity that is associated with it…and the need for men to publicly align their social identities with heterosexuality (compulsory heterosexuality) in order to avoid homosexual suspicion. In other words, a homophobic culture may look disparagingly at homosexuality, but without mass cultural suspicion one might be gay it is not a culture of homohysteria.* (Anderson, 2009, p.7)

In their secondary school contexts, I have found little evidence to suggest that most young male dancers are benefiting from inclusive forms of masculinity. Yet, taken societally, there *has* been a shift in some areas of masculinity, from more orthodox to more inclusive forms, as noted by a swathe of research (e.g. Swain, 2000, 2006; Heasley, 2005; Kaplan, 2005; Pringle & Markula, 2005; McCormack, 2009). For instance, there exists a much improved and more visible social and political landscape for gays and lesbians (e.g. Barnett & Thomson, 1996; Loftus, 2001; Anderson, 2005a, 2008), although issues of gender and other inequalities remain.

Moreover, as other researchers have found, progress towards a more general culture of inclusive masculinity has been disappointingly slow, as evidenced by findings into problematic masculinities, notably on 'laddish' cultures in schools (e.g. Frosh et al., 2002; Francis & Archer, 2005; Jackson, 2006b) and 'laddism' in higher education settings (e.g. Dempster, 2009, 2011; Jackson & Dempster, 2009; Phipps &

Young, 2013). Here, among other things, sexism, misogyny and homophobia are recurrent themes; the latter, especially, chimes with the experiences of the majority of my research participants who have found life in secondary schools continues to be difficult for people like them who don't 'fit in' to normative expectations. Jackson noted that " … *many boys are reluctant to engage with materials or activities regarded as a 'feminine' for fear of being Othered, harassed and bullied"* (Jackson, 2006b, p.128). The evidence presented here suggests, that in some secondary school contexts, little has changed.

To illustrate further, the 2017 *'School Report'* (Stonewall, 2017), an annual publication on the experiences of over 3700 lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Britain's schools concluded that:

- 45% of LGBT pupils were bullied for being LGBT at school

- 52% heard homophobic language 'frequently' or 'often' at school

- 86% regularly heard phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school

- 45% of LGBT pupils who were bullied for being LGBT never told anyone about the bullying

- Only 29% of bullied LGBT pupils said their teachers intervened when they were present during the bullying

- 68% about LGBT pupils reported that teachers or school staff only 'sometimes' or 'never' challenged homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language when they heard it

Despite these findings, some things have changed for the better since the publication of the first 'School Report' in 2007. Now, lesbian, gay and bi pupils are less likely to experience homophobic and biphobic bullying at school, falling from

65% in 2007 to 55% in 2012 and to 45% in 2017. Similarly, LGBT pupils reported that homophobic language in schools, while still prevalent, is on the decrease, from 71% in 2007, 68% in 2012 to 52% in 2017. As such, there is cause for optimism, but my findings suggest the longevity of problematic gender essentialism and regulation among some young people.

Furthermore, my analysis suggests that while the male dancers practised inclusive masculinity themselves, they were also aware of their transgressive behaviour (of being a male dancer) and so were unsurprised by the negative consequences that flowed from contesting such gender essentialism. Owen (15), was not untypical when he stated *"obviously, people will judge it [being a male who dances] and make comments on it"*. His use of the adverb 'obviously' suggests a self-evident acceptance of this binary and an unwitting reproduction of the dominant discourses which he was instrumental in contesting. However, alongside this, all of the young male dancers exhibited pleasingly inclusive attitudes towards their peers, "*a live and let live*" type of mentality according to Caleb (14) or as explained by Alan (17), "*I don't have a problem with how others choose to live their lives…it would be nice if everyone thought that, but there are too many people making judgements*".

One young participant, Neil (11), held a clear binary view of gender in relation to dance. He commented, "*I know it's more like for girls is dancing, but it's sort of my decision to join in, and it's my decision if I want to be more masculine or more, mmm, girlish at dancing things".* That some young people like Neil retain essentialist views is unsurprising to scholars (e.g. Renold, 2005), who have long established the

potency of young people's binary thinking and devised strategies to erode it.

Paechter (1998) writing about the relational nature of gender, observed that

boundaries between boys and girls are constructed through the "Othering" of the

opposite sex, particularly on the part of boys, but also by girls. Challenging this view

remains a work in progress.

As my findings confirm, in secondary schools a form of regulatory surveillance

exists which can serve to oppress transgressive individuals such as 'uncool' pupils

(e.g. geeks, swots) or boys who dance. However, although school cultures can and

do reinforce particular models of masculinity, especially heteromasculinity, and

boys who transgress this discourse are often subject to hate speech and bullying

from peers (e.g. Dunning, 1986; Scraton, 1995; Kehily & Nayak, 2007), my findings

also indicate that four young male dancers escaped this censure. The following

section offers an explanation for this.

6.5 Boys who aren't bullied – how so?

Despite the gloomy scenario above, data analysis revealed that four boys reported

no bullying or negative consequences at school from being a dancer, and so it was

necessary to account for this. Two factors were identified; sustaining a 'secret'

dancer identity and attending a supportive secondary school.

6.5.1 Secrecy

Of the 14 'secret' dancers, only two, Billy and Jacob, manged to sustain this and were

not 'found out' by peers from their secondary school. Jacob (11), danced for a

couple of years, spanning the transfer from primary to secondary school but like

Billy, he managed to maintain his secret and experienced no negative consequences.

To minimise the risk of exposure, establishing a clear demarcation of home life from

school life was important to him:

> *Int: Did you tell your school friends when you started dancing or that*
> *you were a dancer?*
>
> *Jacob: No, I didn't mention to them. I didn't say anything about it. I just…*
> *maybe I didn't find that it was their business, or maybe I had some sort of*
> *thought that I might get picked on or something like that. I don't know, I*
> *can't remember.*

Billy, meanwhile, whose appetite for dance was whetted at an after-school dance

club at his small co-educational independent school, then joined a weekend stage

school class after moving to an all-boys grammar school with no dance provision. In

the culture of his boys' school there was *"a scramble to be the alpha male"*, but as

an arts-orientated boy as opposed to a 'sporty' one, he opted for silence about his

dancing and so escaped censure. In resorting to secrecy, Billy and Jacob suggest a

continued unease with their hypermasculine school cultures.

6.5.2 Supportive schools

A further two boys benefitted from attending supportive secondary schools. Lucas

(15) told me that on first entering high school he had *"heard horror stories of*

people getting bullied for dancing and so I didn't advertise the fact that I did it".

Although *"scared that people would bully me for being a dancer"*, his fears did not

materialise, even after he was revealed to be a dancer. He reflected, *"I was quite*

worried at first, but no one actually said anything to me about it in a negative

sense… but I think some people might have thought I was gay because I did ballet."

Instead, Lucas received support from his form teacher, herself an experienced dancer, and from his peers. He recalled:

> *I think it was probably about year 9, when I was about 14, and I had done the English Youth Ballet, but I'd not been in the [news] paper, but my form tutor had found out and she had done a card to give to me and so then my form found out and then they wanted to put me in the school magazine for it.*

Lucas was fortunate to attend a school with a 'performing arts' specialist status where, per week, one hour of dance was taught in rotation with one hour of drama to all pupils in Years Seven and Eight. Dance was also available at GCSE and Advanced level, taught by specialist teachers in well-equipped classrooms and studios. An enriching curriculum of school shows, musicals and suchlike was also a feature of the school, an academically successful local authority comprehensive, rated as 'Good' by OFSTED, and situated in a predominantly working-class area in Lancashire. As Lucas's mother, Judith, commented, "*we felt the school was very supportive of the performing arts and respected them*". Alongside a strong behaviour policy, the school also placed diversity and inclusion at its heart, she said:

> *I remember in the first term of high school, they did several projects about 'Let's celebrate our differences", about how we are all different, and looking at race, looking at sexuality, looking at size, looking at all sorts of different features, which I felt was really positive.*

Such a school culture can help to dismantle stereotypes and allow individuals to thrive, free from the constraints of gender (or other) normativities. Underpinned by a robust and enforced anti-bullying policy, strong leadership and governance, such schools are models of good practice for their inclusive and diverse arts provision. Clearly, we need more of them.

Meanwhile, by way of contrast, two other participants, Owen (15) and George (13), were much less fortunate – at least initially. After suffering severe and sustained bullying at their (separate) secondary schools, they and their families decided to change schools. According to Owen's father, this was an attempt at *"a fresh start"* since the relationship with the school had broken down irretrievably. He commented, *"they had failed us by not tackling the bullying and we were left to sort it out the only way we could, and that was to move on".*

Similarly, George (13) also felt compelled to move school, (from a boys' large independent school to a small co-educational one), because:

> *Mmm, well, I never really thought I could properly say or express what I wanted to say or express… I was called gay a lot just because of the way I acted and 'cos I wasn't afraid of people to make fun of me, or afraid to, like, do, like, camp stuff, I was called gay quite a bit so…*

He subsequently elaborated on the "camp stuff ", explaining , *"Mmm, so I'd do a wrist flick or mmm … I don't know, just like, ah I'd speak, I'd say something in a camp way, I'd say "Hey" for "Hi" and yeah…".* These minor transgressions from the 'masculine' gender 'script' had a significant effect on George's wellbeing and ultimately led to his change of school. He explained ,*"Aah, it made the days longer, mmm, and… and apparently, I was quite grumpy, mmm, and when I moved [school], mmm, I wasn't, I wasn't so grumpy, and the world kinda like brightened up a bit".* Describing his life at a new school he concluded:

> *…yeah, it's quite a good feeling in the air, just people genuinely not doing anything to upset you on purpose. Mmm, well I think changing from the boys' school to a mixed school was better because at a boys' school you're kinda expected to do boys' stuff, so like if you're a bit camp you're going to get the mick taken out of you, but at a mixed school they'll just laugh about it.*

While these examples reiterate the debilitating effects of gender regulation, coupled

with the failure of some schools to safeguard the wellbeing of their pupils, one

vignette, concerning Janet (formerly James), a transgender participant, gives cause

for optimism. At the time of interview, Janet, a 15-year-old ballroom and

latin-american dancer was undergoing counselling in preparation for hormone

treatment and gender reassignment surgery (male to female) and was presenting as

female. However, Janet was interviewed about her previous experiences as a male

dancer. A pupil at a Church of England high school (now academy) in Greater

Manchester, described by her as a *"mixed, inclusive and caring"*, she commended

her school's actions to safeguard her, commenting:

> *I couldn't have asked any more support if I tried, to be honest, because they have just been so caring. They have made no fuss about it whatsoever. They came to me about the way I present myself in school, we didn't have to go to them. They make sure that I'm okay, that I'm not being bullied. There are such a caring and considerate school and I couldn't have asked for more.*
>
> *I received counselling in school because they wanted to make sure I'm okay, not getting bullied and I'm okay with the process I am going through because it can be very stressful and hard on people. The counsellor asked me once, 'So, would you prefer so wear a female's uniform?' and so I said 'Yes'.*

While Janet's account is rare, the inclusive nature of her school and the regular

monitoring of her wellbeing ensured that she could continue to dance without

censure, as she had done before transitioning. Nonetheless, and despite this, she

revealed an acute awareness of the still potent effect of gender regulation in her

school. Asked if she had ever encouraged her male school peers to dance, she

replied:

From what I've heard from my male friends, they are definitely more afraid of expressing themselves in a way which is stereotyped as having certain gender-type labels to it. They are too afraid to go into something as expressive as dance because the stereotype is there. So, I definitely think there are some people at my school who would like to do something as expressive as that but step away from it because they have worries they will get that label of being gay.

6.6 Summary

Clearly then, as Janet and others attest, schools are key sites where learner and gender identities intersect and where the limits of masculinity (and femininity) are policed. This chapter set out to explore dancers' lives at secondary school and found that most (86%), had experienced regular bullying, marginalisation and stigma (albeit in varying degrees), simply by transgressing 'masculine' norms. However, this is a complex and nuanced picture because of temporal and spatial differences, as well as the gender 'climate' within individual schools. Analysis also found that boys who identify as homosexual experienced more negative consequences than heterosexual boys and that 'sporty' boys were bullied less severely than 'non-sporty' boys. The latter, along with other forms of 'heterosexual recuperation', practiced by boys, are detailed in the next chapter.

These findings dispute Anderson's claim as to the pervasiveness of 'inclusive masculinity' among young people. IMT was largely inapplicable in these school contexts since most participants found them to be homohysteric and homophobic environments. There was scant evidence to support a *"declining significance of homophobia"* (McCormack, 2012), with most boys subject to labels such as *"bender", "fag", "faggot" and "gay"*, terms they regarded as both injurious and homophobic.

Using the model of 'homosexually themed language' (McCormack, 2012), there was little evidence of *'pro-gay language'* but substantial evidence of homophobic *'fag discourse'* whose intention is to wound and belittle.

Irrespective of their sexuality, and consonant with the dominant discourses that surround males who dance, most participants were found to be subject to a homosexual presumption. That most boys were not yet beneficiaries of 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2009), was an unsurprising conclusion since previous research (e.g. Bragg et al., 2018) had indicated that young people were too often shackled by gender binaries and regulation.

However, I also focussed attention on the four participants who experienced no bullying or adverse consequences at school. Two boys managed to dance in secret and so avoided scrutiny; however, their determination to remain furtive implies an unease with their heteronormative and hypermasculine school cultures. By contrast two other boys clearly benefitted from attending schools that promoted a culture of inclusion and diversity, inculcating these values in their pupils but also enforcing them where necessary. Clearly, it is impossible to homogenise boys' experiences, let alone account for a range of intersectional variables. Nonetheless, the broad trend identified here suggests that most participants have not yet benefitted at secondary school from the 'dividend' of 'inclusive masculinity'. And so, after examining boys' lives at secondary school, the next chapter focusses on the strategies they employ to contest the dominant discourses that surround dance and masculinity.

Chapter 7 *"People are really fascinated by us"*: contesting the dominant discourses about dance and masculinity

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse and discuss the ways in which young male dancers construct and negotiate their gendered identities in the light of the two dominant discourses surrounding dance and masculinity. To recap, these discourses posit that, in the Western world at least, dance is for females (e.g. Sanderson, 2001; Stinson, 2001; Risner, 2002a; Gard, 2008) and that boys who dance are presumed gay (e.g. Rodgers, 1966; Grant, 1985; Koegler,1995; Van Ulzen, 1996; Hamilton, 1999; Risner, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2007; Williams, 2003; Risner & Thompson, 2005). Kimmel, exploring manhood in America, wrote of males living under a *"burden of proof "* (2006, p.32) to demonstrate their masculinity and avoid any hint of femininity, and so this chapter will explore how young male dancers not only constructed a masculine self, but through a range of identity management techniques, 'recuperated' it where necessary to provide such "proof". Before that however, I explicate boys' views on what constitutes 'masculinity' and a 'masculine' dancer.

7.2 Masculinity and the 'masculine' dancer

As femininity and homosexuality tend to be associated with dancing men in popular discourse (e.g. Burt, 1995, 2001, 2009; Risner, 2009), it was important to understand how young male dancers conceived of 'masculinity' in a dance context, and what constituted a 'masculine' dancer. Not only were boys aware of these popular discourses, without exception they were also acutely aware of being the objects of frequent curiosity and ridicule. Reece (16) described himself as being

'different' and added, *"people are really fascinated by us"*, revealing an awareness

of how young male dancers can frequently be positioned as both 'Other' and

'Othered'. Aware of such difference, another dancer, Neil (11), commented, *"I'm*

not like most boys who like football or basketball, stuff like that, I'm not one of the

sport boys". This reminds us that identity is *"defined not just internally by the*

individual but externally by the group's inclusive or exclusive attitude towards that

individual" and should be understood:

> *[t]hrough the practices with which we engage, including those that are*
> *involved in the construction and performance of particular masculinities and*
> *femininities. These practices and performances, through their repetition*
> *(Butler, 1990), contribute to our constellated understandings of who we are.*
> (Paechter, 2007, p.23)

To illustrate, responses to the question, "What does the word masculinity mean to

you?" included:

> *When it comes to being masculine, I guess maybe pride and I don't*
> *know strength. I never really thought about it*. (Saul, 13)

> *I think it's like, I see like a big muscly man in my head and he is… it's like*
> *there's no… there's no touch of a wrist flick or kinda like having fun, he's quite*
> *serious and he's always afraid of doing something to embarrass him that*
> *might be seen as a bit gay or anything like that…* (George, 13,)

> *Masculinity is linked to males being strong and powerful. Can't really define it*
> *in any other way.* (Owen, 15)

Historically speaking, children have been found more liable to binary thinking, owing

partly to the limits of their conceptual ability (Lloyd & Duveen, 1992). These binaries

are then felt and upheld in childhood (e.g. Renold, 2005; Rysst, 2013) and as my

research affirms, such beliefs, which are tied to categories of biological sex, can

beget gender essentialism. For example, Owen described fixed notions of femininity

held by his peers:

> *Int: What does femininity mean to you?*
>
> *Owen: Well, I don't know what it means to me, but I know what it means to other people. It's like being all flirtatious, being all weak and pretty and all this lot.*

Interestingly, Owen was unable to offer his own description of femininity, a sign

perhaps of a more fluid and shifting gender consciousness among some young

people. Indeed, recent research found that *"[y]oung people's experience of gender*

are diverse and vary across peer groups, age groups, schools and regions" (Bragg et

al., 2018, p.4), a timely reminder that it is impossible to homogenise their

experiences. Nonetheless, the same research identified the enduring regulation of

gender, with young people describing *"a world in which objects and activities were*

acutely gendered" (ibid., p. 10), and where young people "*who did not conform (or*

were considered not to conform) to 'heteronormative' ideals or fixed ideas about

gender were often subject to specific forms of harassment and attack" (ibid., p.15).

In my research, a minority of boys, while sensitive to the existence of gender

'stereotypes', nonetheless fell back onto popular gender tropes or pathologizations

regarding, for example, female expressiveness. To illustrate, George (13),

commented:

> *Mmm, I think a lot of people regard ballet as a woman's dance 'cos stereotypically women are more stretchy than men so…mmm, but I think people just think dance is mainly for girls 'cos girls express themselves more than boys, typically*.

By contrast, a 'masculine' dancer was defined, not untypically by Gareth (14) as

having *"strong arms, really strong arms, fierce, leading the girls, doing all the*

shaping, on time, sharp". Such comments reflected male dancers' frequent wish to

contest the dominant discourse that positioned them as 'unmasculine'. During

interviews, I noted boys often resorted to narratives which emphasised the

physical strength necessary to dance, as well their desire to execute 'masculine'

choreography and movement. The following transcript, from George (13),

illuminates this:

> *Int: So, is dance masculine in any way?*
>
> *George: Yeah, I see it as quite masculine, because especially in tap because that's more of a man's dance. In tap, they kinda, like, show themselves off and when the teachers choreograph a dance, they'll make sure that I'm not in with the girls and doing the wrist flicks, and they'll make sure it's kinda strong, you know what I mean?*

This, and other 'recuperative' strategies for masculinity and/or heterosexuality, will

be discussed later in the chapter.

Nonetheless, while boys were keen to promote their masculinity (and reject both

femininity and effeminacy), they accepted the need to wear specific dance clothing

and footwear such as leotards, tights and dance belts, depending upon the genre

studied. 'Masculine' clothing and footwear needed for hip-hop dance, usually

comprising jeans or track suit pants, a 'hoodie' (or similar) and training shoes, could

even be codified as a 'cool' and fashionable non-dance outfit. By contrast, at higher

skill levels, ballet requires boys to wear tights, coded in popular culture as *'feminine'*

and *"very revealing"* according to Harry (11). However, these were necessary, a part

of *"the cultural apparatus"* according to Winifred, a dance academic and teacher

trainer, and were accepted as such by boys. To some non-dancers, however, such outfits could be markers of both femininity and effeminacy, as explained by Gareth (14) , an enthusiastic latin-american dancer, who recalled the negative responses of his secondary school peers to his outfit:

> *And when I showed them the kit I was wearing for the dance competitions - a V- shaped cat suit, open at the chest, which was meant to look sexy, they said it was for girls… "It's not looking good for guys" they said.*

Gareth, who elsewhere describes dance as *"a sport",* here refers to his dance outfit as a *"kit",* employing once again the discourse of sport to reaffirm his dance pastime as a heteromasculine one. Gareth brushed off his peers' views, as did Bradley (18), who recounted an incident where his masculinity was called into question because he wore a dance belt, popularly known as a 'jockstrap', intended to protect the genitalia. Recalling a conversation in his secondary school, he told me:

> *In my A-level English class we'd had this conversation about me having to wear a thong because I am… because it's a dance belt etc. etc., and they thought this was really funny, because it is. And then we were having a conversation about masculinity and femininity and I commented on something that was against this girl's point and she turned around and said, "What do you know about masculinity when you have to wear a thong everyday"? Oh my God. And she was 17 or 18! I think that was the last time I got really pissed off about it.*

7.3 Gender identity and sexuality

At the time of interview, all of the dancers were cisgender, except for Janet (formerly James) who was in the process of a male to female transition. Regarding sexuality, participants were not asked to divulge their orientation, but during the course of the interviews the majority (n=19) did so. Of the 26 interviewed, 7

identified as homosexual (26.9%), 11 identified as heterosexual (42.3%), 1 as bisexual (3.8%) and the remaining 7 (26.9%), did not disclose their sexuality. We have no data in England regarding the sexual orientations of male dancers, but research from the USA, (albeit now dated), suggests that gay and bisexual men comprise half the male population in dance (Hamilton, 1999) and, anecdotally speaking, it would be unsurprising if the UK was dissimilar.

By contrast, statistics on sexual identity, obtained from the Annual Population Survey by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2016, reveal that 2% of the UK population aged 16 and over identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), and the population aged 16 to 24 were the age group most likely to identify as LGBT, at 4.1% (Office for National Statistics, 2017). The ONS do not, however, collect equivalent data for under 16's. With specific regard to dance and sexuality, it is known that a disproportionate number of male dancers identify as homosexual (e.g. Bailey & Oberschneider, 1997), a situation described as an *"open secret"* (Risner, 2002a, p.85) and one that has fuelled the discourse that subjects all male dancers to a homosexual presumption.

As I have illustrated in previous chapters, for most participants, irrespective of their sexuality, this discourse has led to various forms of oppression, including frequent and often sustained homophobic bullying at their secondary school. Earlier, I made refence to George (13), a *"camp"* yet heterosexual dancer, who recalled what led to his move from a boys' independent school (*"very macho"*) to a smaller, mixed one:

> *Mmm, well I never really thought I could properly say or express what I wanted to say or express… I was called gay a lot just because of the way I acted and 'cos I wasn't afraid of people to make fun of me or afraid to like do like camp stuff, I was called gay quite a bit so…*

and,

> *Mmm, so I'd do a wrist flick or… I don't know, just like… oh, I'd speak, I say something in a camp way, I'd say "hi" for "hey" and yeah…*

I judged these quotations worthy of repetition since it illustrates, yet again, the operation of a tightly policed gender regime within schools predicated on the *'invisibility of heteronormativity sexuality'*, according to Paechter (2007, p.113), a pervasive discourse which seeks to efface or problematise other identities. For straight but 'camp' boys such as George, even minor transgressions from the heteronormative 'script' - *"a wrist flick"* or an incorrect mode of greeting *"hi for hey"*, was enough to trigger ridicule and homophobia.

7.4 Constructing and recuperating a masculine self

How, then, did boys manage their identities in their secondary schools? To contest the discourse that conflates dance and femininity (e.g. Sanderson, 2001; Stinson, 2001; Gard, 2003), I found that all boys, regardless of sexuality, deployed strategies of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen, 1996), while heterosexual boys, keen to contest the other discourse, of being subject to a homosexual presumption (e.g. Koegler, 1995; Risner, 2002a; Williams, 2003), also engaged in acts of 'heterosexual recuperation' (McCormack, 2012). In all, six recuperative strategies were identified:

- professing attraction to females

- participating in sport and acquiring a 'sporty' boy identity

- reconceptualising dance itself as a sport

- choosing 'cool' dance genres culturally coded as 'masculine'

- acquiring popularity through dance

- self-policing of movement and choreographic practices

These recuperative techniques are analysed and illustrated below.

7.4.1. Professing attraction to females

Unlike the other five recuperative strategies, professing attraction to females was the only one deployed exclusively by heterosexual boys. It is clearly akin to Mac an Ghaill's 'conquestial recuperation' in that it conceptualises the ways in which boys boast of their heterosexual desires or conquests. For instance, Billy (17) explained his efforts to (re)confirm his heterosexuality to his peers:

> *Int: Have you ever felt the need to say or do anything to 'prove' your sexuality?*
>
> *Billy: Yes, maybe early on. You just say that you've got a thing for a particular female celebrity or something like that, just to make it clear… because in the past I've had people who… my flatmate thought I might be gay because I wasn't bringing loads of girls back from nights out or stuff like that. So, on the back of that, I got paranoid that people thought I was gay, and I wasn't. But to set the record straight I might have said something to reinforce my attraction to girls. Ha, ha, I'm making myself sound really insecure, now aren't I? But I think since then I've become a bit more cool with it. At the start, I was a bit like, "I'm a guy doing ballroom dancing, so I've got to reinforce who I am, and what I am, and say I'm not anything that you think I might be", but since then I've just let it roll off my shoulders. I've not had to face or prove anything.*

Similarly, with his peers, Marcus (16) was discreet about being a dancer; however, the subsequent presence of a girlfriend had a neutralising effect on the gay male

dancer discourse:

> You get the whole jokes when you are growing up as a dancer – "Oh it's a bit gay". In fact, a lot of people only found I danced out when my girlfriend at the time was my dance partner...
> "How did you meet?"
> "Well actually we dance together."
> I guess that finding out that way meant that those jokes didn't come quite as often.

Parents sometimes promoted the supposed heterosexual benefits of being a male dancer. One parent, Linda, recalled how her husband was keen to emphasise to their son, Roger, how learning to dance would be useful way *"to meet girls"*. Aware of the skewed gender ratios in dance schools, he was implored by his father to *"keep it up, there's a lot of good-looking girls there"*.

While presumably well-intentioned, this parental heterocentric bias could also stem from homohysteria (Anderson, 2009), the cultural fear of being homosexualised. While homohysteria was developed to understand the power of cultural homophobia in regulating masculinity on a societal, interpersonal level, we can also see with Billy, Marcus and others, how it functions at an intrapersonal level, creating *"the need for men to publicly align their social identities with heterosexuality in order to avoid homosexual suspicion"* (Anderson, 2009, p.8).

According to Anderson, two significant factors affect a culture's level of homohysteria: an awareness that anyone can be gay and the level of cultural homophobia. In particular, Billy's exemplification of homohysteria (*" I got paranoid that people thought I was gay"*) would suggest the continued existence of cultural homophobia, a phenomenon which is difficult to quantify, but which McCormack

claims to be of *"declining significance"* (McCormack, 2012, p.xxiv). He is not alone in these findings; some scholars have concluded homophobia is in decline in sports settings, often thought to be bastions of heteromasculinity (e.g. Harris & Clayton, 2007; Anderson et al., 2012), findings which correspond with a broader trend, identified by some scholars of decreasing homophobia in British and American cultures (e.g. Weeks, 2007; Savin-Williams, 2009; Anderson, 2009; Clements & Field, 2014). The synopsis to McCormack's book, *The Declining Significance of Homophobia* (2012), asserts that decreased homophobia facilitates an "*expansion of gendered behaviours available to young men"*, and that *" free from the constant threat of social marginalisation, boys are able to speak about once feminised activities without censure"*.

Anderson, writing the Foreword II to McCormack's book (2012), makes several, similar bold claims: *"it is no longer fashionable to be homophobic"* (p.xi); *"it is no longer valid to assume homophobia among young men"* (p.xi)*; "youth view overt homophobia in the same unacceptable light as racism"* (p.xii) and that *"[E]ncouragement is expected among peer groups, and bullying is unacceptable"* (McCormack, 2012, p. xiii). However, as explicated previously, these claims often sit uncomfortably with my findings that, for example, more than half of boys (14/26) were unwilling to admit being a dancer to their secondary school peers (male or female), and where the vast majority of participants (22/26) experienced some degree of bullying, marginalisation and stigma at secondary school.

7.4.2 Acquiring a 'sporty' boy identity

A second strategy for recuperating masculinity (and heterosexuality, if appropriate) was for dancers to engage in competitive sports, especially football, and so acquire a label of being a 'sporty' boy. Across the data set however, only six boys (all heterosexual) self-identified as 'sporty' while the remaining 20 boys professed little or no interest in sports. Of the 20, a couple of boys enjoyed swimming and badminton, but none cited interest in the stereotypically 'masculine' competitive team sports of football or rugby, unlike the six 'sporty' boys who all cited these as pastimes.

Boys' self-identification as 'non-sporty' was a major narrative thread in these 20 accounts and this perception clearly formed a major constituent of their identities. This was often coupled with the construction of an alternative identity – that of being an 'arty' individual, often regarded by participants as the antithesis of being a 'sporty' type. Unlike their 'sporty' peers, these 'arty' boys, with two exceptions, had interests in drama and or music. Thus, analysis revealed a clear binary in the operation of boys' identity formations - 'arty' versus 'sporty' boys - with 'arty' boys aware of the likely risks associated with their non-'sporty' boy identities.

We know, for example, that boys who are successful at sport often gain popularity with their peers, acquiring social popularity and kudos that can aid their identity construction and management. Drawing upon Fitzclarence and Hickey's research with young footballers *"who don't eat quiche"* (2001, p.118), Paechter concludes:

> *By enacting masculine behaviours focused around competitive sports, boys and young men both form for themselves, and project for others, identities that are at least partly constructed around sporting masculinities.* (Paechter, 2007, p. 100)

However, in Britain, one sport, football, is clearly dominant, and as we know,

"masculinity is overwhelmingly constructed through participation in football" (ibid.

p.100). Moreover, this has been noted in a variety of school and out of school

contexts (e.g. Epstein et al., 1998, 2001; Swain, 2000; Connolly, 2003; Renold, 2005).

Marcus (16), a keen footballer, as well as a highly skilled ballroom and latin-american

dancer, recalled his experiences of being a 'sporty' dancer at school:

> *I'd always been into my football and stuff; you obviously you get a little bit of stick off the guys at football – "Oh, you do dancing! "and that sort of thing. I think it helped me that I was also doing other sports. If I'd only been a dancer, then maybe… but because they all knew me from football and everything before that… I don't know, I guess it's maybe different if you're just a dancer. I think it would have been different*
>
> *Int: What sports did you play?*
>
> *Marcus: I swam competitively for a while. I played cricket. I was generally good in PE as well. I was generally all right at sports. In sports, you are expected to be more traditionally manly, it's supposed to be more aggressive, you are supposed to be … but that's not quite what is given off in dance. I feel that in carrying on playing sports, I've not lost that idea of traditional masculinity that maybe you don't see in some people who have danced but not done anything else quite traditionally masculine. In sport, you have to kind of… almost have that kind of… I don't want to say laddish-like lad culture exactly, but you are expected to have some kind of like … you are supposed to be what a traditional man is supposed to be when you are in a team … I don't know… there is a difference there, I think.*

Marcus draws attention to the heteronormativity, or in his words, the *"traditional*

masculinity", which sport is meant to imbue in young men and then contrasts this

with what is *"given off"* in dance, where this masculinity is *"lost"*. It could be argued,

therefore, that in the case of Marcus, and perhaps that of other 'sporty' dancers, there is no necessity to 'recuperate' masculinity since it has not been lost in the first place - it simply co-exists with a softer, less *"traditional"* form of being masculine associated with being a dancer.

Later during his interview, Marcus suggested that some young males could be encouraged to dance by following the lead of well-known sportsmen such as Michael Vaughan, the cricketer, who featured on television's 'Strictly Come Dancing' programme. Although participants did not desire male dance teachers as role models, a minority like Marcus thought young males considering learning to dance could cite these sportsmen as a way of legitimising their own dance participation and in so doing recuperate their masculinity and/or heterosexuality. He explained:

> *There was a kid who came to lessons because he'd seen "Strictly Come Dancing" and wanted to give it a go. So, when you see your idols, like Michael Vaughan who was the England captain, going into dancing, for a guy who is into that kind of thing, you might think," He might be onto something here - why would a former England captain go along and dance if it wasn't something fun, something that is actually good to do, good to try?" I think it's something that will get more guys into dance….*

However, despite the importance of 'sporty' boy identities, a couple of boys were unable to exploit their sporting masculinity and so the possibility of 'heterosexual recuperation' eluded them. As aspiring professional dancers, both boys were prevented from participating in sports, in and out of school, by their parents and/or teachers for fear of injury. Bradley, for instance, was urged by his dance teacher to relinquish his hobby of skiing as a potential leg fracture could have jeopardised his nascent career. Another boy, Robin, spoke of the restrictions imposed on him by his

mother, herself a dance teacher, when, on entering secondary school in Year Seven, and with the school's agreement, he was not permitted to take part in some P.E. lessons. He explained:

> *I was stopped from playing games just in case I damaged my legs, so then I was having to sit in the room with all the people who were not doing games because they'd forgotten their kits, or they'd been naughty. So, it was, "Eh you! Get up and dance."*

Another interviewee, Saul (13), who is of Caribbean heritage, described himself as "popular" with his school peers and successful at sports. Asked if he identified himself as 'sporty', he replied:

> *I am, very. Whenever I start something, for some reason I get very good at it. I could go into athletics, but I cancelled football a while ago - I still play but I don't see a future in it. There was also acting as well. People would look at me and see a good performer. I was asked to be a model, but my mum said no. There were two things she cancelled for me – one was modelling, and the other was rugby.*
>
> *Int: Why did she not want you to model?*
>
> *Saul: I think it was because of the stigma attached to male modelling, although it isn't really that bad. I don't know, but that's the only thing I can think of.*
>
> *Int: In what sense is it stigmatised?*
>
> *Saul: Homosexuality.*
>
> *Int: And what about rugby?*
>
> *Saul: It was because of my dancing - she didn't want me to break anything.*

Saul was unique among the participants in that both of his parents were dance teachers, running a successful dance school. Contesting the dominant discourses surrounding dance and masculinity, they were happy for Saul to dance, but were

unwilling to allow him to be a model, fearing *'stigma'*. Black males are often 'read'

as hypermasculine and hypersexual (e.g. Slatton & Spates, 2016), but in Saul's case

this 'reading', nor his 'sporty' boy identity, were sufficient to recuperate his

masculinity and heterosexuality. He revealed:

> *A guy I don't even know - we were just commenting on a friend's thing on Facebook- and he said, "But you ballroom dance, so you can't say anything", and I was like, "Okay", but I really don't take offence to most things, especially when it comes to dancing.*

7.4.3 Reconceptualising dance as sport

During interviews, many male dancers drew parallels between sport and dance,

often emphasising dancers' athleticism rather than the expressive artistry required

of dance. Saul, for instance, described his ballroom and latin - american dance as

"highly athletic" and *"more sporty than ballet"*, adding that *"you could dance and*

practise and come out sore". This construction of dance as a sport appears to serve

as a resistance strategy to the prevailing discourse of dance and effeminacy, and

enables boys to legitimise their dance participation – a further example of the "make

it macho" strategy (Fisher, 2007), used to reinforce real or imagined

heteronormative aspects of dance and provide a spurious justification for one's

interest in it.

As with Saul, most boys believed that male dancers were thought to require physical

strength and power, (necessary for jumping, turning and other virtuosity), and in so

doing aligned themselves with what they identified as similar pre-requites for many

sports such as football and rugby, traditionally regarded as hyper-masculine. By contrast, female dancers were thought by boys to require such qualities as *"elegance"*, *"grace"* and *"poise"* instead. Although disappointing, such binary thinking is not necessarily surprising since it has an historical choreographic precedent, especially within the classical ballet repertoire and one engrained in public consciousness. It is also reproduced, I argue, contemporaneously by essentialist and conservative constructions of gender normativity in some portrayals of competitive dance in the media, such as the refusal of the BBC to admit same-sex couples to compete in the television series 'Strictly Come Dancing'. Moreover, as was noted in Chapter Five, the dance awarding organisations fuel such essentialism by having 'male' and 'female' ballet syllabi which, for example, features 'pointe work' restricted to females or those who choose to present as female. Regrettably, in terms of syllabus development at least, it seems that little has changed since Crawford made his plea in 1994 that:

> *Educators need to present dance in relation to both girls' and boys' lived experiences. This requires a multicultural view of dance as athletic, demanding, communal, and competitive, not just graceful and aristocratic…*
> (Crawford, 1994, p.42)

In that vein, some boys also equated dance with sport because it can involve a competitive aspect - by participating in dance festivals, competitions and auditions. Embodying aspects of orthodox masculinity, which privileges competition among males, Marcus (16) explained his motivation to keep dancing:

> *I think it's the competition that keeps me hooked on it. It's active but it's also sociable, and it gives you the opportunity to compete and pit yourselves against other people. I think that's what drives me – the fact that I enjoy*

socialising as well as exercising at the same time, and the fact that I can compete is just great as I'm very competitive generally.

Nor was this tendency to conflate sport and dance confined to adolescents; some adults also engage in it. Holdsworth, writing about a 2005 'Boys' Dancing' project in the West Midlands which aimed to challenge the perception of dance as an activity for females, noted that the project leaders were apt to use language such as *"well played lads"* and *"result"* in response to a skilful execution of a dance move. She concluded that this language *"was more akin to the sports field than elsewhere"* and was an attempt to "*shore up their masculine credentials in order to offset the potential associations of the activity they were engaged in"* (Holdsworth, 2013, p. 176).

Similarly, in an attempt to encourage more boys into dance, some institutions have also sought to align dance with sports. As mentioned in Chapter Five, foremost in the UK is a recent initiative from the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), entitled '*Project B*', a *"new dance partnerships inspired by sports and superheroes"* to promote the *"athleticism and physicality the ballet holds"*. Predicated on a belief that boys want to do *"cool"* moves according to Iain Mackay, a professional male dancer and 'Dance Ambassador' for the project, the initiative began by *"firing boys' imaginations"* with moves including 'The Dab', 'The Transformer' and the 'Cristiano Ronaldo jump'. However, in *"drawing inspiration from classical ballet movements to other aspects of popular culture"*, this initiative is heavily reliant on stereotypical male tropes that serve to reproduce heterosexist essentialist notions of gender. As such, it functions to recuperate ballet as both a masculine and a heterosexual

activity. However, this could be counterproductive since some scholars have identified a problematic association between the masculinisation of dance and persistent homophobic attitudes towards dance culture (e.g. Burt, 1995, 2001, 2009; Gard, 2001; Risner, 2000c, 2002a, 2009, 2014; Lehikoinen, 2006).

Nor is this linkage of dance with sport confined to the UK. In Finland for example, the prevalent discourse in boys' dance education emphasizes boyishness and masculinity and attempts to show that dance is a 'manly' form of expression by comparing a male dancer with an ice hockey player, for example. As Lehikoinen (2006) notes, and as '*Project B*' also illustrates, an unfortunate consequence of such a strategy is that attention is paid to prejudices and fears rather than to the possibilities and potential of dance itself.

For many of my participants then (and some of their parents), dance was conceptualised and rationalised as a sport rather than an art form. For instance, Gareth (14), a ballroom and latin-american dancer, recalled a conversation with his father:

> *I remember he told me there are more girls than guys in this sport [dance] and you need to be prepared that people will say you are doing something girlish. Just be prepared, because the majority of people think a guy's sport is like football, but dancing, my dad says, it's more like a girls' sport. I said okay, I can take it. I was seven or eight when he said that.*

Many participants also recognised the dualistic nature of the subject and had regard for the artistic elements too. This was perhaps best expressed by George (13):

> *I feel better, healthier after I've done dancing, so in that respect I think it's a sport, but it shows how you're feeling at that at the time and you can express your feelings, so in that respect it is an art.*

While I regard dance to be an art form, I wondered to what extent others conceptualised it as a sport . A quick internet trawl revealed mixed opinions as to whether dance is a sport, an art or both. Irrespective of this, it seems clear that for many young male dancers conceptualising dance as a sport is an effective way of valorising it while also recuperating their masculine and/or heterosexual identity. Put simply, it appears to have made them feel better about themselves since they were conforming to the normative notion of a sport-loving male.

7.4.4 Choosing 'cool' dance genres

Boys were clear that learning to dance involved choosing one or more dance genres. While these choices of dance genre were overwhelmingly made by the boys themselves, younger boys were sometimes guided by a parent, invariably their mother. Lucas (15), for instance, recounts that the decision to send him to dance lessons, aged 7, was that of his:

> *Mum and my mum's [female] friend. I was asked if I wanted to go to street dance class and I said yes. After a year or two I started street dance and jazz too, and then when I was 10 my teacher asked me to start on ballet and tap, because she said I had lots of potential.*

Despite the dominant discourse that dance is regarded as *"an effeminate and suspect activity for a male body"* (Migdalek, 2015, p.76), young male dancers can, like Lucas did initially, escape this gender straitjacket to some extent by choosing

'safe' dance genres. Indeed, my data suggests that the 26 boys were initially attracted to a limited range of dance styles - urban (incorporating break, freestyle, hip-hop, street dance), musical theatre and tap, with notable absences from the list including ballet, jazz and contemporary dance. However, this was not set in stone as boys' preferences changed. For instance, Lucas's pathway (above) could be regarded as an incremental progression from culturally 'cool' and 'safe' dance genres such as urban dance which valorises and esteems 'orthodox masculinity' (Anderson, 2009), towards culturally coded 'uncool' and 'unsafe' dance genres, such as ballet, jazz and latin-american, which could threaten normative masculinity.

Clearly though, the hyper-masculinised image of urban dance, for example, can enhance boys' popularity and attractiveness with and to their peers (Pascoe, 2005; Holdsworth, 2013). Relatedly, Prickett notes the *"theatricalisation"* of hip-hop dance which has now found its way into television talent shows, films, stage productions and cultural festivals such as the Olympic games ceremonies. This has shifted it from being *"a subversive subcultural expression into a prominent and popular performance style"* leading to a *"disruption of gender assumptions and preconceptions of hip-hop dance"* (Prickett, 2013, p.175). Thus, emboldened by its cultural approbation, it is now safe(r) for boys to partake of such a genre, one that plays to a particular script of orthodox masculinity – of physical strength and competitiveness. This can be aided by culturally validated and reified signifiers of 'cool' such as designer-labelled trainers and the inverted wearing of baseball caps. Such behaviours and presentations thereby enable boy dancers to remain within the *"limits of masculinity"* (Cann, 2014, p.17).

Negotiating these limits was therefore a key aspect of each boy's identity work and was contingent on a range of contextual, intersecting factors (e.g. dance genre, personal interests, family and peer influences). It must also recognised that choice can work *two* ways, and what dance genres boys opt <u>not</u> to do are also highly significant and are understood here as a form of gender policing and self-regulation. For example, Callum (11), described as *"impossible"* his desire to take up tap dancing; he explained that, **"***my friends would just take the piss…I'd get dogged for it and called gay. No… it's just not worth it"*.

Like Callum, some parents were alert to the threat that certain dance genres posed to the perceived heteronormative identity of their sons and regulated their choices accordingly. This was illustrated by Julian (17), a freestyle dancer, who recalled that, aged 12, he asked and was refused his parents' permission to start ballet and tap classes. He explained:

> I mentioned it to them when I was in high school, so when I'd been coming here [the dance school] a couple of years, that I wanted to do different style of dance because I really liked it, but at the time I was getting bullied at school a lot, and my parents said that I'd give people more ammunition if I started doing ballet and tap and everything, and people would start calling me gay more, so I was just like, 'Fine then, I won't do it'. To be honest, it's been my biggest regret. I should have just told my parents that I wanted to do it because I'd always wanted to do different styles when I was younger, and I feel like I could have done it really well because I would've been committed to it, so it's kind of really annoyed me over the years…

We saw in Chapter Five how the '*Project B*' initiative from the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) involved teaching boys 'cool' dance moves but within a ballet dance framework - an attempt to make an 'uncool' genre somehow 'cool'. In my research,

all 26 boys recognised that some dance genres were culturally coded as 'cool' while others were not. Gareth (14) spoke for many when asked about this:

> *Int: So, is this idea of dance being 'cool' important?*
>
> *Gareth: Yes, to attract guys to dance the first thing is for it to be cool. If something isn't cool, guys won't want to do it, definitely.*

There was a clear consensus among boys as to what genres constituted 'cool' ones – with urban and commercial dance at one end of the spectrum and ballet, latin-american and tap dancing at the other, with a few genres, such as ballroom and jazz dance occupying the middle ground. While most dancers did not consider themselves as 'cool' per se, they knew how to attain this identity, if desired (by a careful choice of genre) and so accrue substantial cultural, social and symbolic resources. However, not all dancers opted to do so, and a minority remained immune to these normative forces by focussing on ballet, tap and jazz dance instead. In so doing, they successfully contested the heteronormativity of a tightly regulated framework of *"youth taste cultures"* (Cann, 2014, p.17).

Aware of the salience of these 'taste cultures', but unable to resist the regulatory power of a discourse which posits boys who engage in 'feminine' dance genres as *"abnormal"* (Berger, 2003, p.22) or 'uncool', some boys chose to abandon such genres. One such was Reece (16), who explained,

> *I did Irish dancing from 6 years old to about 14, and I did that because I'm Irish and my little sister did it and I went along… When I was in high school, I got bullied a bit and got called gay and that upset me…I stopped it [Irish dancing] when I got into the middle of high school because it wasn't cool….*

While personally disappointing for Reece, my analysis suggests that, aided by a range of recuperative strategies, most boys chose not to capitulate to this discourse, but to contest it. As I explain see below, some boys used dance to enhance their masculine and social capital at secondary school.

7.4.5 Acquiring popularity through dance

While Chapter Five explicated how boys' dance success could spell trouble for them in their secondary school, the converse was also the case, since achievements in dance competitions, or in public performances, could also bring kudos and popularity at school. According to Gareth (14) , being judged skilled at something could enhance one's credibility with peers, especially if the success was the result of competitive endeavour:

> At first, people would just laugh at me… but over time I disproved their perception. I won a lot of trophies and I started to be more confident in saying I was a dancer, because people could not judge me because I was qualified to say I was a dancer because I had won lots of competitions and I was proud to say I was a dancer. Even though they treated me like a different kind of person, they still thought, "This guy is unique", instead than thinking of me as a girl or gay stuff.
> I started gaining more confidence in dancing and then became more popular in school. The teachers knew I was a dancer and asked me to do some performances in school. I did it lots of times in my primary school which was mixed sex and I performed in their "graduation" ceremony. At secondary school, I performed at school fairs and things like that. It was fun, and I started getting lots of confidence in telling people I was a dancer and my popularity improved. I started organising a dance society at high school which was the first ever society they had related to dance. I was really proud of this, I was 15. I asked my friends to participate in different roles like Secretary or Treasurer and engaged them in dancing.

Gareth's account illustrates how school identities can sometimes be fluid and flexible, capable of re-orientation with peers which can lead to a cessation of

bullying and marginalisation as well as a swell of confidence. All interviewees spoke of the increased confidence that dance had given them, but only Gareth made claim to such a dramatic transformation in his school fortunes, where he became acknowledged as a skilful, successful competitor and leader (normative male traits), which enabled a recuperation of his masculinity. Such a transformation is all the more striking since Gareth was short in stature, slight in build and unremarkable in feature - far removed from the tall, athletic and good-looking boys who score well in the 'cool stakes' according to Jackson (2006b), who argues that certain characteristics are inscribed on bodies so that, for example, *"black-working-classness is inscribed on the male body as cool"* (Jackson, 2006b, p.118). This is exemplified in my research by Saul (13), a Caribbean participant - tall, good-looking, sporty, popular with peers and the epitome of 'cool' - who experienced only mild bullying and some teasing (from his soccer team mates) that he described as mostly 'banter'. However, as I explicated in 7.4.2, even Saul's considerable attributes did not protect him from censure from "*a guy I don't even know*" for being a ballroom dancer*.*

7.4.6 Policing of movement practices

In (re)constructing masculine and/or heterosexual selves, boys' bodies and their movement practices were found to be of central importance, both to the boys themselves and to how they were perceived by others. Analysis suggests that it was often in their movement practices that the (re)construction and performance of their masculine/sexual identities were sited, and as such were subject to self-policing and external regulation.

As Paechter (2007, p.115) notes, *"[B]odily comportment is often used to signify an identity within a local community of practice"* and for male dancers who move in ways that are culturally coded as 'feminine', such as with a lateral swing of the hips, such gender dissonant performances can give rise to comment. As the extract below from Marcus (16) attests, one's physicality as a dancer is often evident beyond the confines of the dance class, since it is a visible and embodied identity, and one that can sometimes be erroneously conflated with a particular (homo)sexual orientation:

> *Even now, people will joke a little bit because of how I move my hips and stuff like that. Like if I'm in Tropicana [a disco], it's just a habit because I'm a dancer and I move my hips in a certain way, maybe more Latin-like. There is definite stereotyping that goes hand-in-hand with the idea that someone isn't heterosexual if they have these mannerisms, or maybe it's more in dance because it's seen as a more feminine domain.*

And so, while all of the male dancers were aware of the dominant discourses that situate dance as a transgressive activity for males, and male dancers as subject to a homosexual presumption (e.g. Sanderson, 2001; Stinson, 2001; Risner, 2002a, 2002c; Gard, 2003, 2006, 2008), often describing this as 'gender stereotyping', they showed little awareness that masculinity and femininity are historically and socially learned performances of the body. Instead, as noted earlier, some participants, be they dancers, parents or teachers, held fast to essentialist notions of gender (and sex) and regarded the body as a fixed essence with immutable properties. Hebert summarises it thus:

> *Outside of scholarly discourse and in the social world within which the subjects of this research mostly interact, sex is considered a biological fact that precedes and reinforces the construction of gender identity.* (Hebert, 2017, p.102)

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Just as some boys had fixed notions about what constitutes masculinity, so too did they have equally fixed ideas about femininity and were keen to maintain gender boundaries. Irrespective of sexual orientation, I found that a boy's masculine identity could be compromised by dancing in a way perceived to be 'feminine' or 'effeminate'. This view was neatly encapsulated by one participant, Alec (11) who stressed that while he wanted to dance, *"I don't want to dance like a girl"*. This view was shared by several other boys who sought to police the dance movements they were taught, and if not deemed sufficiently 'masculine', amend them to become so, or ask their teacher to do so.

Some participants reported feeling uncomfortable at some of the arm, leg and body movements they were asked to do in their dance classes, movements coded by them as 'feminine'. A few dancers, usually older ones, resisted this 'feminised' choreography, as exampled by Marcus (16) who recalled a freestyle dance class in which:

> *They [the teachers] expected me to do the same moves as the rest of the class. I remember when I started, I really wasn't into doing some of the moves. I really was like, "I'm not doing that". And they'd be like, "Okay, we'll come up with a different move that's maybe not quite as feminine or what not.*

> *Int: Can you describe these moves to me? What made them 'feminine'?*

> *Marcus: I don't know, like…. there was one where you had to crouch down to the ground and come up straightening your legs so obviously your butt comes up and out, like the end of a 'slut drop' almost, as it would be known nowadays … I remember I was a bit like, "I really don't like that", doing it in the sort of manner that they wanted wasn't for me, and I think in the end I sort of crouched down and back up again rather than doing the whole hips back and bringing it up. That's the main one I can remember changing but I'm sure there were a couple of others. And maybe hands too. Rather than having your hand in a 'flitty', kind of flowery fashion, I'd rather put it out*

normally or maybe change that a little bit.

Int: So, these changes were made by you, not the teacher?

Marcus: My teacher would have been happy for me to do it just as the girls were doing it, but it was only because of my apprehension to do those moves that they got changed by me. I think when they started teaching Street dance at the dance school, I feel then a couple of more guys came along and maybe then they had alternatives made, but that wasn't the case for me in Freestyle, Ballroom and Latin. I didn't take part in much Street, but I remember seeing the dancers and there were clear differences in the choreography.

To a minority of boys, it seemed as if 'their' (i.e. 'male') choreography was an afterthought for their teachers since they saw no evidence of teachers delivering differentiated lessons to take account of their 'masculine' sensibilities. As with Marcus, teachers usually permitted boys to amend the choreography themselves, thereby enabling a recuperation of their masculinity. However, as Marcus noted, the introduction of street dance into his dance school, with its heteronormative code, prompted, for the first time, gender-differentiated choreography from his teacher so as to *"appeal to the boys"*.

Interestingly though, no boys who studied ballet, often perceived to be the most 'feminine' of the dance genres, sought to recuperate their masculinity by amending dance movements. Why was this? Uniquely among dance genres, ballet has a separate examination syllabus specifically for males, which at higher levels features turns and leaps, described by Vanessa, a dance teacher, as "*ideal for boys as it plays into their perceptions of what a male ballet dancer should be - strong and virtuosic*".

7.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined several ways in which these young male dancers contest

the dominant discourses that surround them. A complex picture emerged, revealing

a range of context-specific, fluid and intersectional detail, illustrating how, regardless

of sexuality, boys' embodied subjectivities were predicated on being a 'masculine'

dancer, a belief often rooted in an essentialist discourse. The key strategy in boys'

contestation was the recuperation of their masculinity, coupled with their

heterosexuality, if appropriate, and six strategies were identified and discussed:

- professing attraction to females

- acquiring a 'sporty' boy identity

- reconceptualising dance as a sport

- choosing 'cool' dance genres

- acquiring popularity through dance

- policing of movement and choreographic practices

As Kimmel (2006) established, reaffirming one's masculinity is an ongoing task

rather than a one-off activity; my findings illuminated a repertoire of specific

strategies for male dancers to accomplish this.

While young male dancers employed these recuperative strategies primarily in

their secondary schools, they could, and were, deployed in other settings, such as

home or in the dance school, and were targeted at a range of audiences - family,

friends, teachers, but mostly at their school peers. These findings, of boys engaging

in identity management work, also chime with research from Pascoe (2007) who

identified that some boys deploy recuperative tactics after engaging in gender-transgressive behaviour.

The next and final chapter will synthesise the key findings from my research and offer recommendations for changes to policy and practice in boys' dance education and training.

Chapter 8 Conclusion and recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This research, the first of its kind in England to study young males' experiences of

dance education and training in their private-sector dance schools and their

secondary schools, was predicated on addressing three research questions:

- What are boys' experiences of dance education and training in their dance schools and secondary schools?

- How do these boys contest the dominant discourses about dance and masculinity?

- What do these research findings imply for policy and practice in boys' dance education and training?

With the final research question in mind, I will shortly provide the rationale for my

policy and practice recommendations by providing an overview of salient research

findings. Before that however, I want to attend to the central theoretical plank of the

thesis - the utility or otherwise of 'inclusive masculinity' in my research context.

I began the thesis with a personal reflection on important but often negative

elements of my relationship with dance during adolescence - a desire for secrecy,

bullying at school and an unenthusiastic father among them - unaware at the time

that I was experiencing and embodying the consequences of the dominant

discourses that envelop dance and masculinity. However, thus far in this thesis, little

regard has been paid to the many positive and pleasurable aspects that young

males experienced when learning to dance. These too merit some attention since

they often enabled participants to 'keep going' in the face of adversity, usually

bolstered by support from family, friends and teachers.

Without exception, warmly and enthusiastically, adolescent boys commented on what dance meant to them and what it gave them. An recurring narrative was the joy of kinship boys felt with others, irrespective of gender, who shared their love of the artform, and this was usually found within the dance school itself. Owen (15) for instance, reflected, *'It wasn't just the enjoyment of dance itself; it was the community of people I was in … they made it so much fun',* while Gareth (14) concluded, *' The dance school is like a family…we all help each other. Most of my best friends are from dancing because I see them every day '.*

In particular, adolescent male dancers clearly relished the camaraderie they forged with other males in the dance schools. Nathan (14), Daniel (16) and Allan (17), who all attended the Pine school were illustrative of this, with Daniel commenting *'Yeah, it's good having other lads there… we all look out for each other, you know.'* Similarly, Marc (14), Neil (11) and Robin (11) from the Oak school had developed close bonds. Neil recalled, *'I started to dance not long after Robin, and at the time we were the only boys in the school. Marc joined later so it was cool having three of us together. It just felt better than being on your own, even though we aren't always in the same classes.'* Being a member of this trio, Robin concluded*, 'We're such good mates now... we have a laugh, but we know what it's like being a male dancer, we're there for each other, we're proper tight…'*

Contrastingly however, boys had few opportunities for peer support from other male dancers in their secondary schools. Exceptionally, given that participants were recruited from across the north west of England, as Appendix 8 shows (marked with an *) , four boys attended the same secondary school (a large comprehensive with 'performing arts college' status). There, Harry, an 'open' dancer and Jacob a 'secret' dancer, while both Year 7 pupils, albeit in different 'forms', were not known to each other – in or out of school - since they attended different dance schools. Similarly, at the same school and for the same reason, Caleb, a Year 9 'open' dancer was unknown to Lucas a year 10 'secret' dancer. However, uniquely in the dataset, there was one instance of two 'open' dancers, Harry (aged 11, in Year 7) and Caleb (aged 14, in Year 9), who attended both the same secondary school and dance school (Alder). While in different school years, the boys had 'not much contact' within secondary school, 'just passing on the corridors … or saying hey', but they were, nonetheless, 'good mates' at the dance school, according to Caleb .

Moving beyond the peer support that boys enjoyed, they also spoke more generally of the *'fun', 'laughs', 'challenge', 'satisfaction' and 'sense of achievement'* that dance brought. Not untypically, Reece (16), noted that he had *'never been fitter'* and that dance was *'a total workout, but not boring, like going to the gym'.* Several participants spoke of the boost to their confidence, which they attributed to dance*. 'You gain a huge amount of self-confidence',* said Alec (13), while Oscar (14) commented, *' If you can dance in a room and dance on a stage in front of people, it gives you confidence in who you are, and that's probably the most important thing'.* For some boys, dance had a further instrumental value*;* as Saul (13) explained, *'I think it's the competition that keeps me hooked on it. It is active but it's also*

sociable, and it gives you the opportunity to compete and pit yourself against other people. I think that's what drives me'. Beyond that, a couple of boys had career aspirations in dance. For instance, Lucas (15) stated, *'I've invested a lot in my dance training and I just love it. I know what I want to do with my life. I want to dance, to perform. I can't imagine doing anything else. I love it so much and to do it for a job would be amazing'.*

While unsurprising, hearing such enthusiastic and engaging testimonies to the power of dance was nonetheless heartening, perhaps best summed up by Julian (17) who commented, in reply to my question, 'Were there ever times when you felt like giving it [dance] up?':

> *Oh, loads of times … a lot of times I'd come here [dance school], and I love coming here, it's just when you leave I'd just go back into wherever I was, and people were just so cruel. And sometimes you'd think to yourself, 'Is it even worth doing dance anymore? Should I just stop? Should I do normal 'male' things? Should I just do sports, or should I be more academic?' But I danced to escape the world that I hated because it gave me a place where I enjoyed being, where I could be myself. There was a time when I actually went away from doing dancing and drama. I didn't put myself into it anymore. I'd go to class, but I wasn't in the mood for it. I'd just be there in the background but I wasn't myself, but after a while I thought, 'There's no point in trying to hide or run away from stuff I love to do', so I got more encouraged to do dance again and so I started doing competitions and doing well which was a real shock to me as I don't see myself as an amazing dancer or singer. Someone once said to me that if you run away from something you come back to it a lot stronger because you know you how it feels to disappoint yourself. So ever since that time I couldn't be bothered to dance anymore because of what people kept saying to me, I've never let anybody say anything bad about dancing to me again. If people say to me 'You're a dancer?' I'm like, 'Yeah I am a dancer. You've got a problem with it? No? Then what's this conversation about then?'*

Above, Julian's' powerful narrative spoke of continuing difficulties for young male dancers, coupled with admirable resistance and resilience. As an experienced dance teacher, I had wondered what, if anything, had changed since my time as a young dancer, and it was this query that motivated my research. Central to that enquiry was a mobilisation of Anderson's 'inclusive masculinity theory' (2009), and in the light of its bold claims, and my findings, it is to that I first turn.

8.2 'Inclusive masculinity': limitations and implications

As a sociological theory, 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2009) was an appealing theoretical lens since it was empirical, grounded in ethnographic enquiry, yet flexible and able to accommodate my post-structuralist, interpretive stance. Moreover, while its initial findings were ground-breaking, suggestive of a seismic change in heterosexual practices and attitudes, they were also contentious. A highly generative theory, I put it to work in my research context but, as explicated in previous chapters, it has been impossible to reconcile my empirical findings, of widespread bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation of male dancers in their secondary schools, with its bold claims. Thus, its concomitant assertion of a *"declining significance of homophobia"*, evidenced by young males' use of *"pro-gay language"* which *"lacks any intent to marginalise or wound and has little if any negative social effect"* (McCormack, 2012, p.118), has also been problematised.

As explicated in Chapter Six, I found that 22 out of my 26 participants (85%) had been bullied in their secondary schools. These institutions were identified as the prime site of boys' oppression - in contrast to their homes, neighbourhoods or

dance schools - which were found to be mostly unproblematic. With one exception, the bullies were other boys of similar age or older. Their behaviours included homophobic remarks and chants, (mostly in person but exceptionally online and even scrawled on bus windows) and physical assault, ranging from pushing, shoving and stamping on feet to punching, bruising and kicking. In extremis, two boys changed secondary schools to escape their oppressors. It is therefore difficult to reconcile these findings with the proclamations of a new youth culture of 'inclusive masculinity' as made by Anderson, McCormack and others.

However, this is not to deny the existence of 'inclusive masculinity' per se. Indeed, without exception, my participants exhibited many of the traits associated with it, such as tolerance and acceptance of difference, including those who held binary views on gender, but were nonetheless accepting of individual differences. Moreover, as Chapter Six made clear, four boys attended secondary schools that were clearly inclusive and where these values, central to their ethos, were enforced by behaviour policies, applied consistently.

Thus, my findings suggest that 'inclusive masculinity' is more contextually specific than has been claimed previously, and is salient in some, but not all, localised communities of masculine practice. Anderson uses a theory of 'cultural lag' (Ogborn, 1950) to explain why change does not happen uniformly, and it might be the case that the discourses pertaining to dance and masculinity (that dance is for females and male dancers are therefore effeminate and presumed gay) is a case in point. Nonetheless, my findings call into question an underlying premise of 'inclusive masculinity theory' - that homophobia has replaced homosexuality as a modern-day

taboo. IMT purports to describe a widespread acceptance of a range of masculine identities, including softer ones and the acceptance and inclusion of gay males, whereas most of my participants told contrary stories.

Similarly, the quantitative data presented in Chapter Five, of dance examination entries for the decade 2008 to 2018, did not suggest any uptake by males towards dance. These data, an interesting barometer of dance participation rates, showed examination entries remaining stubbornly low, and worse still, in decline, especially in entries for GCSE and GCE advanced level dance. While similar decade-long longitudinal data for dance examinations taken by private-sector pupils were not available, data collected for the 2017/18 academic year provided an interesting (and probably not atypical) snapshot. Here, males accounted for only 2% or so of entries for the theatrically styled and normatively coded 'feminine' genres of ballet, tap and jazz dance, whereas male entries for urban dance examinations (normatively coded as 'masculine') comprised around 18% of the total entry. Thus, as Chapters Five, Six and Seven made plain, gender regulation, predicated on a reductive binary, continues to exert itself over many young people, and my work suggests this is felt acutely in secondary schools where behaviours and subject choices are policed and self-policed. Similarly, beyond the school gates, certain "youth taste cultures" (Cann, 2014, p.17) such as boys' dancing, transgress the limits of normative masculinity and so beget the consequences I have described.

If, then, homophobia and homohysteria are deterrents to boys` participation in dance, as my research suggests, then we clearly have some way to go to turn the tide. However, as Chapter Seven explained, boys deployed a range of strategies to

contest the discourses about dance and masculinity. In particular, I established that all boys, irrespective of their sexuality, sought to construct and recuperate a masculine self, while the heterosexual participants also engaged in acts that recuperated their sexuality, most notably and obviously by professing attraction to females. Other recuperative techniques included: cultivating a sporty boy identity; reconceptualising dance as a sport; choosing only 'cool' dance genres such as urban dance; acquiring popularity with peers through success in dance (such as in competitions and performances) and policing movement practices to avoid any choreography that could be deemed 'feminine'.

Thus, these findings suggest that boys' embodied subjectivities, regardless of sexuality, were predicated on being a 'masculine' dancer - a contestation of the discourse that posits dance as a feminine pursuit and ergo, male dancers as 'feminine'. Being a 'masculine' dancer was therefore a vital aspect of boys' masculinity per se and their rejection of 'femininity' was manifested in, say, a distaste for wearing ballet tights or a veto on enacting movements deemed 'feminine'. Such behaviours were an important, ongoing task of boys' identity management, since masculinity must be proved and re-proved (Kimmel, 2006).

While boys' deployment of these recuperative strategies suggest the continued persistence of the aforementioned discourses about dance and masculinity, my findings also point to the salience of other intersectional factors at play that impact on boys' dance experiences, such as the financial barriers to private-sector dance training or the pernicious effects of the government's neoliberal curriculum

squeezing out arts subjects in schools. Beyond the evident joy that dance offered

participants, and the support they received from their families, friends and

teachers, my conclusions paints a largely gloomy picture - that opportunities to

dance for boys (and girls) are limited and shrinking in the state education sector,

and boys who voluntarily engage with dance (in or out of school) are likely to be at

risk of bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation in their secondary schools.

Beyond my problematisation of 'inclusive masculinity' in schools, it is useful to move

beyond IMT's often restricted focus (on the attitudes and behaviours of male

youths), to address a further issue arising from my research - that of adult, usually

male, antipathy to dance, and to establish the prevalence of homophobia and

homohysteria in that population. Among my cohort of 26 male dancers, I was

unsuccessful in gaining consent to interview a couple of their fathers for whom

dance was a taboo topic - tolerated, but only just, according to their sons. While

their refusal to be interviewed might itself be significant, gaining access to this

population is imperative if we are to better understand how seemingly 'orthodox

masculinities' (Anderson, 2009) are manifested contemporaneously in relation to

dance. Thus, further research to explore parental attitudes to boys' dance is now

required since my findings suggest that attitudinal differences to dance are often

normatively gendered - supportive mothers (mainly), alongside some indifferent,

passive or even hostile fathers.

8.3 Research findings: implications and recommendations for policy and practice

It is now important to indicate how these findings might inform policy and practice

in boys' dance education, both in the private dance sector and in secondary

education. Although the research has been focused on these two contexts, and

most of the recommendations have specific applicability to them, some will have

wider resonance and could be of benefit to primary education, community or

vocational dance provision. I begin by discussing the policy and practice implications

arising from my findings of boys' dance experiences in the private sector;

thereafter, I shall discuss the same but with reference to boys' experiences of dance

in their secondary schools.

8.3.1 Recommendations: private-sector dance education and training

The distinction made above, between the private and public sectors, reflects the

structural reality of dance in England today - a disparate sector, lacking a unified

voice. Despite some recent sector consolidation, which led to the formation of

'One Dance UK', described on its website as *"the UK body for dance"* (One Dance UK,

2019), other dance organisations continue to exist. These include two significant

bodies; 'People Dancing', a hub for community and participatory dance, and the

'Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre' (CDMT), which represents private-

sector pre-vocational and vocational training organisations as well as dance

awarding bodies. While One Dance UK claims to be *"the sector support*

organisation" with *"one clear voice to support, advocate, enhance and give profile to*

dance in the UK" (One Dance UK, 2019), this is more of an aspiration than a reality,

which means that, as yet, their ability to advocate for dance at a national, strategic

level, to government and others, is compromised and undermined by competing

voices in the sector. At present, no formal channels exist for dialogue or knowledge

exchange between the disparate dance bodies. A merger of these (CDMT, One Dance UK and People Dancing) would be an important first step in building a unified sector, striving for a consensus on how best to address its challenges, such as a lack of diversity in its population or how best to recruit and retain boys.

Similarly, within the private dance sector, a number of awarding organisations exist, each with a raft of teacher-members and specific syllabi, often covering a range of genres. Currently 13 awarding organisations are 'validated' by the CDMT (cdmt.org.uk), including pre-eminent ones such as the RAD, ISTD and IDTA but also smaller associations like the Russian Ballet Society or the Spanish Dance Association. Each organisation competes for dance schools who will enter pupils with them for examinations, and so, as commercial entities, collaboration or consensus between them is rare.

As regards gender, the most problematic private-sector dance genre syllabus is undoubtedly ballet since it continues to perpetuate a binary male/female divide. The RAD, for instance, whose specialism is classical ballet, has some differentiated male and female syllabus content from Grade 1 upwards and entirely different syllabi for males and females at Grades 6 and above. Even prior to Grade 1, where there is no compulsion according to gender, essentialist undertones are present. For example, in the Pre-Primary grade (the first examination children take, typically aged 4 or 5), the list of 'props' includes 'maracas', 'a percussion instrument', 'ribbons', 'streamers', 'feathers', 'petals', 'small pom-poms' or 'lightweight fabric wings' (royalacademyofdance.org, 2019). Similarly, at Primary grade (the immediate precursor to Grade 1), teachers are offered a choice between a

'dressing-up dance' and a 'bouncing ball dance' for their pupils. Consequently, these restrictions can lead to a discursive (and probably material) re-production of gender norms within dance education.

Clearly, such normativity needs challenging, ideally by de-gendering the syllabus and replacing it with a single one but with options that develop particular qualities such as en-pointe or allegro that can be selected by teachers or pupils irrespective of their gender. Such innovation is not to disrespect the canon of the classical ballet repertoire, but rather to align dance syllabi content with contemporary notions of gender and identity. To accompany this, private-sector dance awarding organisations should perhaps incorporate into their syllabi some of the modern (or relatively modern) repertoire found in GCSE Dance syllabuses such as *'Infra'* (Wayne McGregor, 2008) or *'A Linha Curve'* (Itzik Galili, 2009) and/or at Advanced level where works include *'Rooster'* (Christopher Bruce, 1991) and '*Sutra'* (Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, 2008) (aqa.org.uk, 2019). Such a move would be welcome, not only in terms of gender equity, but promoting access to this broader dance repertoire would help to bridge the divide between dance in secondary schools and that found in dance schools.

Currently though, structural weaknesses bedevil the dance profession, inhibiting innovation and reform, as evidenced by a dearth of sector-wide strategies on key issues highlighted in this research, such as boys' dance education and training or on developing models of best pedagogical practice in initial teacher training and in CPD. If implemented, the potential rewards could be great. For example, better

knowledge exchange could help to challenge the dominant model of instruction-based teaching found in our private-sector dance schools, a model that offers few opportunities for creative, independent or peer learning, and which, as discussed above, too often reproduces normative masculinities and femininities instead of fostering more gender-sensitive, inclusive practices.

Relatedly, an over reliance on self-regulation in the sector means that many private-sector teachers can operate without any formal training and qualifications, insurance or safeguarding protocols. A lack of common baseline professional standards in dance initial teacher training means that training outcomes are variable, and consequently so are standards of professional practice. Currently, some private-sector teacher training courses pay insufficient regard to gender equity issues and so reforms are necessary to promote, among other things, a greater emphasis on disseminating best practice in inclusive teaching and learning. These failings, and others, were noted by Adam, a dance administrator/policymaker who commented:

> *The lack of regulation is a problem, especially in the private sector, because there are no agreed national minimum professional standards for teachers and there is no single authority to police them …so, as a result, professional standards are patchy. Also, many teachers are free to continue teaching without undertaking any continuing professional development (CPD) and they can quickly become out of date. Lots of teachers work on their own or in small numbers so they have little contact with others to see or exchange good practice. The USA have the National Dance Education Organisation (NDEO) which speaks with one voice for the entire dance teaching profession while recognising and respecting its constituent and diverse elements. And they are a very powerful lobby too. They also commission and undertake research which in this country is left to academics in a handful of universities.*

The lack of a common framework for CPD requirements for teachers, highlighted in Adam's comment above, is problematic. Only one organisation, the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), stipulates CPD as a condition of continued membership, requiring a minimum of 20 hours of training per year. While other dance teaching organisations also encourage CPD, by organising conferences and other events, these are not mandatory.

A lack of diversity within the governing bodies of dance awarding organisations is also evident. As membership organisations for teachers, pupils and parents are excluded from governance or representation within these institutions, contributing to a lack of pupil voice within the sector, together with a lack of accountability. As mentioned in Chapter One, a key rationale for this research was to contest this situation by giving voice and representation to young male dancers. This lack of pupil voice is also manifest within the dance schools themselves, most of which are run as private businesses, usually in the hands of one or two owners who exercise complete control over the enterprise.

In England then, a compelling case exists for a single national dance organisation, (similar to the NDEO in the USA), but one that puts pupils, equity and diversity at the heart of its governance, organisation and thinking. Were such an organisation to exist, it could develop initiatives to widen participation similar to the aforementioned *'Project B'* from the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), but without recourse to the gender essentialism implicit in *"fun choreography inspired by popular male motifs … providing an outlet for their natural energy",* delivered by male 'role models' who are all white, middle-class, able-bodied and heterosexual. While boys'

only classes can sometimes posit dance as a 'macho' activity to encourage male

participation (as in 'Project B'), I found no consensus among research participants -

male dancers, teachers or administrators - for more boys' only classes. Beyond a

recognition that they could be a useful short-term strategy for getting boys into

dance in the first place, integration was preferred over segregation by both boys and

teachers. Similarly, I found there was no appetite among boys for more male

teachers as 'role models': they simply wanted the best teacher, irrespective of

gender.

With specific regard to gender, it seems curious that in 2019 we are still discussing

'boys' only' dance classes, since beyond the confines of the dance sector there is an

increasing acknowledgement of gender identities beyond the binary, especially

transgender, intersex, androgynous and gender queer. Ideally, therefore, it would

seem preferable if dance teachers did not assume the genders of their students and

instead used gender neutral terms such as 'dancers' rather than gender-linked terms

such as 'girls' or 'boys'. On the evidence I have presented, this seems a long way off,

but as non-binary gender identifications become more visible, both within and

beyond dance schools, this should happen, accompanied, I argue, by the adoption

of a gender-flexible pedagogy (Warin & Adriany, 2015; Warin, 2017).

These reforms to teacher training, on inclusive practice and pedagogies, become

more pressing since a 'hidden curriculum' currently exists within single-sex classes

that reinforces gender stereotypes and promotes dominant notions of masculinity

and femininity (Stinson, 2005). In such classes, 'male' movements must always be

'masculine' since the dancing body is almost always gendered normatively. As stated above, one way of counteracting this is through revisions to pedagogy, while another is to utilise choreographic innovation, with greater use of, say, contact improvisation to hone weight-sharing, lifts and falls as an alternative to adopting traditional gender roles. As such, it is an effective approach in challenging a range of issues – sexism, homophobia, elitism and power relations according to Horwitz (1995) and is now being used extensively in professional and vocational contemporary dance training and in some ballet, contemporary and modern work such as that by Akram Khan, Russell Maliphant, Christopher Wheeldon and Wayne McGregor. Their work could be extended into several other styles, including jazz and urban dance - popular genres in the pre-vocational dance sector. Schaffman (2001) has argued persuasively that contact improvisation has enriched post-modern dance by developing partnering skills, as well as facilitating the exploration of gendered identities and variations in touch and weight. Improvisation of this nature is accessible to a range of bodies, regardless of level of training, age, size etc. and so could prove an effective tool in stoking and retaining boys' interest in dance.

As I explicated in Chapter Seven, to recuperate their masculinity and/or heterosexuality, boys policed the movements and choreography they were taught in their dance schools. Although Schaffman (2001) found many contemporary choreographers are not restricted by movement stereotypes, my findings suggest this view is not shared by all practising dance teachers, who, as part of their role, choreograph dance routines for their pupils on a regular basis. As Oliver and Risner note of professional choreographers:

> *Instead of emphasising 'difference' in their choreography, they find ways of keeping the choreography neutral by ignoring gender (for instance, by giving all dancers the same movement regardless of gender). Another option is to undercut or transform gender roles in some way (Alterowitz, 2014; Belling 2017; Boccadoro, 2006), for instance using role reversal or re-gendering.* (Oliver & Risner, 2017, p.2)

Such an approach underpins my desire for greater gender sensitivity from dance teachers in key areas such as their language use (e.g. by employing gender-neutral pronouns) as well as in their choreography (e.g. by creating and teaching gender-neutral movements). Aligning this with a continuing regard for the heritage of dance, ballet especially, will not be easy, but I believe the two can be complementary and must not be seen as mutually exclusive. Moreover, dance as an art form cannot exist in stasis or isolation, nor should it .

However, despite the private dance sector's failings on some aspects of inclusion and diversity, and despite dance schools being sites of (mostly) normative femininity, with pink ballet shoes et cetera (a 'hidden curriculum' in action) with little, if any, visible male presence, boys reported that their dance schools were warm and welcoming towards them. There were no reports of bullying or harassment therein. Indeed, some boys were aware of having a minority, yet special status, exemplified in shows and performances by placing them in prominent front stage positions or allocating them solo performances. For instance, Janet (15), recalled a conversation with her teacher a couple of years earlier (and before her transition from being James) who told her, "*you are one of the only boys we've got. You are special".*

However, while dance schools were usually keen to publicise the presence of male pupils, this was not always apparent in their marketing (leaflets, websites etc.), nor in the facilities provided for boys. Oftentimes, and despite their apparent male 'privilege', many boys reported there being no dedicated changing facilities for them, reinforcing the notion of male dancers as being 'Other'. Giles (13), for instance, spoke of the deterrent effect this might have:

> *Int: So, do you come to class ready changed?*
>
> *Giles: Yeah, I do… But I think if a boy did come and he needed to change and there were only girls' changing rooms, he'd be a bit put off by that.*

More troubling though, my analysis suggests that, faced with bullying or harassment in their secondary schools, boys are usually left with inadequate support from their dance schools. I argue that dance schools ought to be aware of the potential risks faced by male pupils and have mitigating strategies in place. While such schools have a duty of care to their pupils, my analysis suggests that poor lines of communication between home, secondary school and dance school can exacerbate any problems boys face on account of their dancing. I contend, therefore, that a strong case exists for the development of a coherent, sector-wide support strategy for young male dancers, utilising phone, online and peer to peer counselling and mentoring, available to boys, parents and their teachers.

In summary then, my findings suggest that reforms are needed in how young male dancers are taught and supported, overseen by a new, regulatory national dance organisation. The dance teaching profession is, rightly, keen to stress the benefits of

dance but is less willing to mitigate the risks of dance participation for young males. These risks are plentiful, ranging from physical injury to mental distress caused by bullying. The safeguarding of these vulnerable pupils should therefore be a priority.

A further raft of recommendations, but to policy and practice in secondary school dance education and training, is now discussed.

8.3.2 Recommendations: secondary school dance education and training

It is unsurprising, given the lack of a strong, unified voice, that dance continues to exist on the margins of an ill-suited P.E. curriculum in schools. Commissioned in 2011 by the Department for Education to review cultural education in England, the resulting report recommended that, *"[C]onsideration should be given to promoting Dance and Drama to subject areas in their own right, rather than being seen as junior partners to PE and English"* (Henley, 2012, p.58). Furthermore, despite hearing warm words in support of dance at a House of Lords reception earlier this year (organised by the CDMT), no substantive action has been taken, save for a plan to seek to recruit Members of Parliament to form an All-Party Parliamentary Group for Performing Arts Education and Training – an innovative, welcome act of advocacy by the dance sector. However, in an age of neoliberal austerity, it seems unlikely that dance will be given discrete subject status in the curriculum since it does not accord with the priorities of government who prefer STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths) as supposed drivers of economic growth. Consequently, to reiterate a previous recommendation, the need for a single voice to advocate for the importance of dance (in education and elsewhere) has never been more pressing.

In secondary education, where dance is delivered at Key Stage Three, pupils would clearly benefit from tuition by *specialist* dance teachers rather than by generalist P.E. staff. While not necessary as 'role models', a greater prevalence of male staff teaching dance would help to contest the dominant discourse that posits dance as a 'feminine' activity. Male P.E. teachers who teach dance should be sufficiently skilled and prepared do just that, able to deliver discernible dance content so that the subject's identity is not lost or compromised by offering 'fitness' or 'gymnastics' in the guise of dance. Clearly though, and irrespective of gender, new and existing teachers will require much greater training and support if we are to strive for consistently high-quality dance provision in our schools and colleges.

Relatedly, a comprehensive review of dance in education is long overdue to debate its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings (the 'process' v 'product' and 'midway model' debate) and to consider how best the subject can be made relevant for all pupils. A specific focus of this review should be to formulate strategies that explicitly promote gender equity in the art form, drawing on best practice from other spheres of the profession such as the community dance sector or, as mentioned in the previous section, by facilitating links with innovative contemporary choreographers, many of whom, such as Russell Maliphant and Christopher Wheeldon, are adept at de-gendering dance.

To reiterate an earlier recommendation, schools should develop partnerships with pupils, parents and dance schools to better support their young male dancers. Fostering such communication will be essential if we are to tackle the problems of

bullying, marginalisation and stigmatisation experienced by many boys. While some good practice already exists in this area, if established, a truly national dance organisation, (similar to the NDEO in the USA), could help to develop and disseminate this. Only then will we be able to recruit and retain a diverse population of young dancers who will go on to become the lifeblood of the sector.

Finally, I argue that these recommendations could help to inform a debate on boys' dance education and training, led by a newly formed national dance body. They would be tasked to formulate a strategy for supporting young male dancers, especially those in the pre-vocational phase - the subject of this research. Unlike this thesis, with its prime focus on gender, a national debate on dance should include a range of intersectional considerations, not least social class and ethnicity. Such inequalities are most acute in the private-dance sector which, as my findings attest, is populated predominantly by white, middle class pupils. 20 of my participants identified as middle-class and only six as working-class (and perhaps upper working class at that). In private-sector dance, where financial barriers to access are a given, this relative homogeneity is unsurprising . However, this unsatisfactory situation is then compounded by dwindling dance provision in secondary education which, in sum, makes the necessity of reform to dance education and training all the more pressing.

8.4 Contribution and Impact

Approaching the end of this thesis, it is now opportune to define the contribution this research makes, both to academia and to the dance sector, and to outline its potential for impact, as well as acknowledging its limitations. Beyond advocating for

structural reform in the dance sector (as outlined), I also intend that this research

will be theoretically significant, contributing to our understanding in the nascent,

intersecting fields of masculinities and dance education.

I began this thesis by outlining the two main discourses that surround males who

dance. The first was that in Western society at least, male dancers challenge the

very foundations of the masculine ideal; as Risner noted, *"the Western European*

paradigm situates dance as primarily a 'female' art form" (2009, p.58). Contingent

on this, a further discourse posits that boys who dance are often deemed gay,

irrespective of their sexual orientation (e.g. Rodgers, 1966; Grant, 1985; Hamilton,

1999; Williams, 2003; Risner & Thompson, 2005). Thus, irrespective of his sexuality,

a male dancer can be regarded as effeminate, *"where 'effeminate' is a code word for*

homosexual" (Burt, 1995, p.12). Similarly, Risner concluded that *"boys who dance,*

unlike their male peers in athletics and team sports, are participating in an activity

that already casts social suspicion on their masculinity and heterosexuality" (Risner,

2009, p.68).

The quotations above, and the discourses that underlie them, illustrate the difficulty

popular culture has in speaking about male dancers without it also raising questions

of their masculinity and sexuality. And so, cognizant of that, when seeking a

theoretical lens through which to consider boys' experiences of dance education

and training, it made sense to apply a gender theory, that of 'inclusive masculinity'

(Anderson, 2009). I would, therefore, test the contextual utility of IMT and ascertain

to what extent the dominant discourses about dance and masculinity had been

eroded, supplanted by softer, less judgemental forms of masculinity not predicated

on homophobia.

Given the pervasiveness of the aforementioned dominant discourses, it was unsurprising to find that, overall, the bold claims of 'inclusive masculinity theory' were not validated by my findings of bullying, marginalisation and stigma from 22 of my 26 participants. However, perhaps supportive of IMT's claims, four boys reported their secondary schools to be inclusive communities - open, tolerant and free from oppression - although whether this indicates a broader cultural shift suggestive of inclusive masculinity, or simply the dividend from enlightened, individual schools, remains to be seen.

Nonetheless, my problematisation of 'inclusive masculinity theory' (IMT) must be tempered by a recognition that my data was not generated ethnographically (as most work on IMT has been) but relied instead on participant narratives. However, their accounts were remarkably consistent (and lent themselves to thematic analysis). Furthermore, as Chapter Six stated, they were also in tune with a swathe of other scholarship problematising IMT's bold claims. Overall then, my important finding, that most young male dancers do not, as yet, benefit from a culture of 'inclusive masculinity' in their secondary schools, is a useful addition to knowledge.

Furthermore, it contributes to a growing body of scholarship that seeks a more nuanced understanding of contemporary masculinities in a range of contexts, 'inclusive' and otherwise.

McCormack, a proponent of IMT, acknowledged its central weakness - a failure to *"examine the mechanisms through which heterosexual identities are maintained in inclusive settings"* (McCormack, 2012, p.89). He sought to remedy this by identifying the ways in which the boundaries of heterosexual identities were strengthened, conceptualising this as 'heterosexual recuperation' (ibid, 2012, p.89). My subsequent utilisation of this concept, to explain the ways in which heterosexual male dancers reassert their identities in <u>non</u>-inclusive contexts (i.e. their secondary schools) is both novel and important. Similarly, I have also extended the concept of 'recuperation' to include that of 'masculine recuperation' (Hansen,1996), undertaken by male dancers (irrespective of their sexuality) to dispel accusations of femininity, or as Hansen, an anthropologist, puts it , for *"the overcoming of emasculation"* (Hansen, 1996, p.138). Thus, my research has established the concept of 'recuperation', both masculine and heterosexual, to be a key mechanism used by young male dancers to contest the dominant discourses that surround them.

In this regard, my main finding, of boys' use of six recuperative techniques to masculinise and/or heterosexualise dance, has developed our understanding of existing dance scholarship in three areas, namely, the drawing of comparisons with sport to recruit boys into dance (Crawford, 1994); the use of heterosexual dancers as role models (Hanna, 1988) and the minimalisation of the gay population in dance (Spurgeon, 1997). Furthermore, I have extended Haltom and Worthen's work (2014) on three stigma management techniques used by some heterosexual males in ballet (heterosexual privilege, ballet as a sport and ballet as an elite art form), by adding an additional three recuperative strategies (acquiring popularity through success in dance; acquiring a 'sporty' boy identity and choosing 'cool' dance genres). I have

also demonstrated that these techniques were not used solely by ballet dancers but were employed by males across a range of dance genres. Furthermore, I showed that these recuperative techniques did more than manage any stigma suffered by boys - they also, irrespective of boys' sexuality, re-inscribed their masculinity and, if appropriate, their heterosexuality.

Despite these claims, acknowledging the limitations of one's research is also vital. Salient to this, Chapter Four illuminated the steps taken to ensure the maximum validity of these findings. There, I noted that my personal experience of, and position within the 'field' is not, nor can it be, a wholly neutral one and could, therefore, give rise to bias (explicit, unconscious or both) - defined as any influence that provides a distortion in the results of a study according to Polit & Beck (2014). Thereafter, I explicated how I sought to do this; by ongoing critical reflexivity to promote rigour, trustworthiness, transparency and validity, all key elements in the Onwuegbuzie & Leech's 'Qualitative Legitimation Model' (2006), which I applied at all stages of the research process. However, and despite these best efforts, the risk of bias can remain; consequently, any claims must be made and evaluated in a climate of 'instinctive uncertainty' (Thomas, 2009, p.111).

In qualitative research such as this, a modest sample size is not uncommon and so it would be unwise to suggest any generalisability of its findings. Indeed, qualitative findings are *"impossible to generalise"* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.124), and it is for *"other researchers to determine the extent to which data are transferable to their settings"* (Haltom & Worthen, 2014, p.774). Nonetheless, these findings are not

untypical since, as previously explicated, they are consonant with the

conclusions from other dance researchers (e.g. Gard, 2006; Risner, 2009;

Pickard, 2015).

Clearly though, other limitations persist. There was, for instance, little consideration

of boys' social class, ethnicity or other intersectional factors, and having restricted

my focus to secondary age boys (11-18 years), I am unable to comment on the

dance-induced experiences of younger boys in the primary school phase. Moreover, I

am all too easily aware that research is never truly 'done' since it begets a host of

new questions. There is still much we do not know about boys who dance, such as

how they negotiate their maturational changes or their susceptibility to body

dysmorphia - issues that have been extensively researched in females but less so in

males. Large-scale quantitative research, rarely undertaken in dance scholarship,

could explore male attitudes to dance, for instance. Finally, as mentioned previously

and provoked by my research findings, qualitative research on 'hard to reach'

populations such as reluctant or hostile dance parents, typically male, would be

valuable, furthering our understanding of some problematic aspects of

contemporary masculinities.

8.4.1 Conferences, seminars and symposiums

My findings will be disseminated via CPD events for teachers/practitioners/arts

organisations; to policymakers and government; in journal publications

(e.g. Research in Dance Education; Sport, Education & Society; Gender and Education), online/social media and in person at academic conferences. I am especially keen to share the findings with front-line practitioners, dance teachers, administrators and policy makers, as well as the dance press, and intend to create a 'research digest', a brief summary of key findings for issue to interested parties.

From the outset, I have been keen to garner interest in my work, taking every opportunity to share it in academic circles and with dance practitioners/ policymakers. In chronological order, I have presented papers at several conferences, seminars and symposiums including :

- *Men in Dance: Bridging the Gap* (Symposium), National Dance Education Organization, University of West Virginia, USA (June 2017)

- *'Embodied Practice and Performance in the Arts'* (Conference), Canterbury Christ Church University (April 2018)

- *'Contra: Dance & Conflict'* Dance Studies Association (Conference), University of Valletta, Malta (July 2018)

A full list of presentations made during the course of my research appears in Appendix 9. As further evidence of my work's appeal and importance, I make reference below to three further paths to impact - online ('The Conversation'), radio (BBC Radio Merseyside) and in print ('Dance' magazine), plus a forthcoming chapter in an edited book entitled '*Why Boys (Don't) Dance: Intersectional Masculinities'*.

8.4.2 'The Conversation'

On the 2nd August 2017 I published an article in 'The Conversation', an independent website providing news analysis, comment and opinion on current affairs and

subjects, written entirely by academics. Entitled, *'We don't need 'macho'*

stereotypes to entice boys on to the dance floor', the article has been read 3502

times as at December 2018 (The Conversation, 2018), generating a flurry of email

correspondence from dance teachers, parents and general readers supporting my

main argument – a problematisation of the male 'role model' discourse that

underpinned the recently-introduced '*Project B*' initiative from the Royal Academy

of Dance. Most correspondents also shared their experiences of being a dancer (or

parent/teacher thereof) with accounts that echoed my own conclusions. Although

anecdotal, these accounts offered valuable triangulation of my findings and revealed

a pleasing degree of public engagement with my research.

8.4.3 BBC Radio

My article in 'The Conversation' was then immediately picked up by BBC Radio

Merseyside who requested an interview as part of a feature on boys who dance.

This was broadcast on their lunchtime phone-in on Friday 4th August 2017 and

reached a listenership of 296,000 people (Source: www.rajar.co.uk, accessed

8/1/2019). Feedback from the BBC was excellent, and I have been invited back,

post-PhD, to speak in more detail about my findings.

8.4.4 'Dance' (magazine) and 'Why Boys (Don't) Dance: Intersectional Masculinities' (book)

A further opportunity to disseminate my research arose when, after hearing my

presentation at the *Dance Teaching and Participation Conference,* organised by One

Dance UK in November 2017, I was invited by the ISTD (Imperial Society of Teachers

of Dancing) to write an article for *'Dance',* their members' magazine, distributed to over 7500 dance teachers in 65+ countries. Published in April 2018, the article *'Boys and Dance: taking the right steps'* also featured on their social media posts and generated plenty of feedback from practising teachers. The article was practitioner-facing and made the case for greater gender sensitivity by dance teachers and improved communication between dance school, secondary school and parents to better support young dancers. Responses from teachers and parents echoed my findings and were supportive of my recommendations.

Later this year, and based on my thesis, I shall contribute a full chapter (8000 - 10,000 words) to a new book entitled, '*Why Boys (Don't) Dance: Intersectional Masculinities',* edited by leading American dance academic, Distinguished Professor Doug Risner (Wayne State University) and Dr Rebecca Watson (Leeds Beckett University, UK). This is due for publication in 2020.

8.5 Final thoughts

I began the thesis with a personal preface charting my path into dance and of the subsequent joy and fulfilment it has given me. To end, it seems fitting to give the last word to a participant, Margaret, whose pupil Charlie (16), is now forging his path into dance by studying at a London performing arts conservatoire. She reflected:

> *He's been lucky, I suppose. He's not had too much stick for his dancing but, mind you, he did keep his head down. But, as he left for London, he said that whatever trouble he'd had, it had been worth it, since dance had given him so much and he was now going off to make a career of it. Most boys don't get that far of course, but they all should have the chance to dance, free from fear, shouldn't they?*

This recollection is reminiscent of the final scene of the musical 'Billy Elliot', where Michael, Billy's best friend, bids farewell to him as he leaves home, destined for the Royal Ballet School in London. Hollering to Billy, *"Oi! Dancing Boy!",* Michael's affectionate outburst, free from homophobia or pejorative judgement, became an inspiration for my research, and indeed forms part of the title of my thesis. I hope, therefore, these findings, and what they provoke, will play their own small part in nurturing and supporting boys who dance.

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Appendix 1 : Participant Information Sheets

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Participant Information Sheet : Male Dancers

Title of Project: **"Oi! Dancing boy!" : exploring the limits of movement and masculinity**

Research Student: Christopher Marlow
Dept. of Educational Research, County South, Lancaster University. LA1 4YD

Tel: 07792 309992
Email: c.marlow@lancaster.ac.uk

Supervisor: Professor Carolyn Jackson
Dept. of Educational Research, D34, County South, Lancaster University. LA1 4YD

Tel: 01524 592883
Email: c.jackson2@lancaster.ac.uk

Date: 1 February 2016

Dear: _____,

I am writing to invite you to take part in my research project on Boys and Dance which is based in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. The project has been reviewed and approved by UREC, the University Research Ethics Committee.

Before you decide if you wish to take part you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and don't hesitate to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

This Information Sheet includes:

- ☐ Information about the purpose of the project (what I hope to find out).
- ☐ Information about what taking part means, any benefits to you or others and how to withdraw.
- ☐ Details of what may count as 'data' in the project.
- ☐ Information about how this data will be secured and stored.
- ☐ Information on how you can be involved in checking and agreeing the data as well as consenting to its use.
- ☐ How the data and research findings will be used for purposes such as conference presentations or publications

Department of Educational Research, County South, Lancaster University, LA1 4YD, UK Tel: +44 (0) 1524 592685

What's the purpose of the study?

This research project is for my PhD thesis, being undertaken within the Centre for Social Justice and Wellbeing in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University.

It aims to offer an insight into the experiences of boys in England who attend private-sector dance schools and will consider how best to encourage more boys into dance.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because I would like to hear your views on the subject of boys who dance (and those who don't) and what, if anything, could be done to encourage more boys into dance. It doesn't matter if you are a girl or a boy, a dancer, a former dancer or a non-dancer, I would still like you to join in with this project.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

Participants like you are vital to this research and so I hope you will agree to be involved. While I can't offer you money or gifts for taking part there are some other worthwhile benefits. The main one is that your views are very important; in sharing them you will help me to understand what children and young people like and dislike about dance, what they want from their involvement in dance, any barriers they face and how we can try to overcome them. I hope that having time to reflect on and discuss your experiences will be a beneficial and enjoyable experience in itself.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, then please let me know by phone or email. If you wish to take part but do not wish to be audio - recorded, please indicate this on the Consent Form.

How do I withdraw from it?

You can withdraw at *any* time during the project and there is absolutely no obligation on you to continue nor is there any penalty for withdrawing; simply let me know by phone or email if this is the case. You do not need to give an explanation if you decide to discontinue. If you withdraw within 4 weeks from the end of your taking part, I will not use your data for my project; if you decide to withdraw at a later stage your data will remain part of the project since work will already have begun on it.

What will taking part involve?

We will arrange to meet (at a time and place to suit us both) for an informal interview which will last no longer than an hour. I will record the interview (audio only) and will later transcribe it (type it up) so that I can refer back easily to what has been said.

If you are currently attending a dance school, I would like the option to observe your class or lesson and also see what life is like in your dance school. My observations will not disturb or interrupt your activities; there will be no audio or visual recording in the dance school; the only data collected will be my handwritten notes which you can later request to read and comment on, if desired.

What will I have to do?

There is nothing for you to do prior to the interview, nor during any dance school observations. However, before the interview I will send you, (and your parent/guardian/carer), an outline of the topics we hope to cover. These will include, among other things: why some boys choose to dance while others do not?; what dance styles are popular/unpopular with boys and why?; if dance is a (un)masculine activity ? and what, if anything, could be done to encourage more boys into dance?

What will happen to the data?

'Data' here means my notes, audio recordings and any email exchanges we may have had.

The data may be securely stored for ten years after the successful completion of the PhD *Viva* as per Lancaster University requirements, and after that any personal data will be destroyed. The completion of this project is estimated to be by October 2018 although data collection will be complete by July 2016.

Audio recordings will be transferred and stored on my personal laptop. Identifiable data (including recordings of your and other participants' voices) will be stored on my personal laptop and will be encrypted; if other devices are used where this is not possible, such as password-protected portable recorders, identifiable data will be deleted as quickly as possible. In the mean time I will ensure such portable devices will be kept safely until the data is deleted.

You can request to read the transcript of our interview and make suggestions for changes or deletions. Data, such as quotations, may be used in the reporting of the research (in the thesis and then potentially in any papers or conference presentations). Please note that if your data is used, it will not identify you in any way.

Data will only be accessed by myself and/or my Supervisor. Transcriptions of the data will be undertaken by me alone; they will be encrypted for security and anonymity and stored on a password-protected computer.

The research may be used for journal articles and conference presentations

How will my identity be protected?

A pseudonym (made-up name) will be given to protect your identity in the research project and any identifying information about you will be removed from the thesis. All pseudonyms (made-up names) will be stored securely, password-protected and encrypted, and kept by myself. What you say in our interview will remain confidential, the only exception being if child protection/safeguarding issues arise, in which case the information will be communicated to the relevant authorities.

Who can I contact for further information or if I have any concerns?

If you would like further information on this project or have any concerns about the project, participation or my conduct as a researcher, please contact:

Professor Carolyn Jackson

Tel: +44 (0)1524 592883
Email: c.jackson2@lancaster.ac.uk

Address: Department of Educational Research, D34, County South,
Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YD.

Thank you for reading this Information Sheet and for considering my request.

Christopher Marlow

Participant Information Sheet : Parents, Guardians, Carers

Title of Project: **"Oi! Dancing boy!" : exploring the limits of movement and masculinity**

Research Student: Christopher Marlow

> Dept. of Educational Research, County South, Lancaster University.LA1 4YD
> Tel: 07792 309992
> Email: c.marlow@lancaster.ac.uk

Supervisor: Professor Carolyn Jackson

> Dept. of Educational Research, County South, Lancaster University.LA1 4YD
> Tel: 01524 592883
> Email: c.jackson2@lancaster.ac.uk

Date: 1 February 2016

Dear _____

I am writing to ask for your permission for your child/young person to take part in my research project on Boys and Dance which is based in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. The project has been reviewed and approved by UREC, the University Research Ethics Committee.

Before you decide if you wish them to take part you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for them. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

This Information Sheet includes:

- Information about the purpose of the project (what I hope to find out).

- Information about what taking part means, any benefits to your child/young person or others and how to withdraw.

- Details of what may count as 'data' in the project.

- Information about how this data will be secured and stored.

- Information about how you can be involved in checking and agreeing the data as well as consenting to its use.

- How the data and research findings will be used for purposes such as conference presentations or publication

What's the purpose of the study?

This research project is for my PhD thesis, being undertaken within the Centre for Social Justice and Wellbeing in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. It aims to offer an insight into the experiences of boys in England who attend private sector dance schools and will consider how best to encourage more boys into dance.

Why has my child/young person been invited?

Your child/young person has been invited because I would like to hear their views on the subject of boys who dance (and those who don't) and what, if anything, could be done to encourage more boys into dance. I wish to interview both boys and girls for this research and am aiming to seek the views of current dancers, former dancers and non - dancers.

Are there any benefits to them taking part?

Participants such as your child/young person are vital to this project and I hope you will agree for them to be involved. While I can't offer them money or gifts for taking part there are some other worthwhile benefits. The main one is that the views of children and young people are very important; in sharing them they will help me to understand what children and young people like and dislike about dance, what they want from their involvement in dance, any barriers they face and how we can try to overcome them. I hope that for your child/young person, having time to reflect on and discuss their experiences will be a beneficial and enjoyable experience in itself.

Does my child/young person have to take part?

No, their participation is entirely voluntary. If you/they do not wish to take part, then please let me know by phone or email. If you/they wish to take part but do not wish to be audio-recorded or observed in the dance school, please indicate this on the Consent Form.

How do I/they withdraw from it?

You/they can withdraw at *any* time during the study and there is absolutely no obligation on you/them to continue nor is there any penalty for withdrawing; simply let me know by phone or email if this is the case. You/they do not need to give an explanation for withdrawing. If you/they withdraw within 4 weeks from the end of their taking part, I will not use their data for my study; if you/they decide to withdraw at a later stage their data will remain part of the study since work will already have begun on it.

What will taking part involve?

I will arrange to meet your child/young person at a mutually convenient time and place (notified to you also) for an informal interview which will last no longer than an hour. I will record the interview (audio only) and will later transcribe it so that I can refer easily to what has been said.

If your child/young person is currently attending a dance school, I would like the option to observe their class or lesson and also see what life is like in the dance

school. My observations will not disturb or interrupt their activities; there will be no audio or visual recording in the dance school; the only data collected will be my handwritten notes which you/your child or young person can later request to read and comment on, if desired.

What will I /they have to do?

There is nothing for you/your child or young person to do prior to the interview, nor during the dance school observations. However, before the interview I will send your child/young person an outline of the topics we hope to cover; a copy will also be sent to you for reference. These questions will include, among other things: why some boys choose to dance while others do not? ; what dance styles are popular/unpopular with boys and why?; if dance is a (un)masculine activity? and what, if anything, could be done to encourage more boys into dance?

What will happen to the data?

'Data' here means my notes, audio recordings and any email exchanges we may have had.

The data may be securely stored for ten years after the successful completion of the PhD *Viva* as per Lancaster University requirements, and after that any personal data will be destroyed. The completion of this study is estimated to be by October 2018 although data collection will be complete by July 2016.

Audio recordings will be transferred and stored on my personal laptop. Identifiable data (including recordings of your child's/young person's or other participants' voices) will be stored on my personal laptop and will be encrypted; if other devices are used where this is not possible, such as password-protected portable recorders, identifiable data will be deleted as quickly as possible. In the meantime I will ensure such portable devices will be kept safely until the data is deleted.

You/ your child /young person can request to read the transcript of our interview and make suggestions for changes or deletions. Data may be used in the reporting of the research (in the thesis and then potentially in any papers or conference presentations). Please note that if your child's/young person's data is used, it will not identify them in any way.

Data will only be accessed by myself and/or my Supervisor. Transcriptions of the data will be undertaken by me alone; they will be encrypted for security and anonymity and stored on a password-protected computer.

The research may be used for journal articles and conference presentations.

How will the identity of my child /young person be protected?

A pseudonym will be given to protect your child's/young person's identity in the research project and any identifying information about them will be removed from the thesis. All pseudonyms will be stored securely, password –protected and encrypted, and kept by myself.

What you/your child/young person says in our interview will remain confidential, the only exception being if child protection/safeguarding issues arise, in which case the information will be communicated to the relevant authorities.

Who can I contact for further information or if I have any concerns?
If you would like further information on this research or have any concerns
about the project, participation or my conduct as a researcher, please contact:
      Professor Carolyn Jackson
      Tel: 01524 592883
      Email: c.jackson2@lancaster.ac.uk
      Address: Department of Educational Research, D34, County South,
      Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YD.

Thank you for reading this Information Sheet and for considering my request.

Christopher Marlow

Participant Information Sheet : Teachers/ Administrators/ Policymakers

Title of Project – "Oi! Dancing boy!" : exploring the limits of movement and masculinity

Research Student: Christopher Marlow

      Dept. of Educational Research, County South, Lancaster University. LA1 4YD

      Email: c.marlow@lancaster.ac.uk

      Tel: 07792 309992

Supervisor: Professor Carolyn Jackson

      Dept. of Educational Research, County South, Lancaster University. LA1 4YD

      Tel: 01524 592883

      Email:c.jackson2@lancaster.ac.uk

Date: 1 February 2016

Dear _____,

I am writing to invite you to take part in my research project which is based in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. The project has been reviewed and approved by UREC, the University Research Ethics Committee. Before you decide if you wish to take part you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

This Information Sheet includes:

☐ Information about the purpose of the project (what I hope to find out).

☐ Information about what taking part means, any benefits to you and/or others and how to withdraw.

☐ Details of what counts as 'data' in the project.

☐ Information about how this data will be secured and stored.

☐ Information on how you can be involved in checking and agreeing the data as well as consenting to its use.

☐ How the data and research findings will be used for purposes such as conference presentations or publications.

What's the purpose of the study?
This research project is for my PhD thesis which is being undertaken within the Centre for Social Justice and Wellbeing in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University.It aims to offer an insight into the experiences of boys who attend private sector pre-vocational dance schools in England and will consider how best to encourage more boys into dance.

Why have I been invited?
You have been invited because, in your role(s) as a teacher/dance administrator/policymaker, I would like to hear your views on the experience of boys who dance (and those who don't) and what, if anything, could be done to encourage more boys into dance.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?
Participants like you are vital to this project and so I hope you will agree to be involved. Although I am unable to offer you money or gifts for taking part there are some other worthwhile benefits: the main one is that your expert views are very important; in sharing them you will help me to understand what children and young people like and dislike about dance, what they want from their involvement in it, any barriers they face and how we can try to overcome them. I hope that having time to reflect on and discuss your experiences will be a beneficial and enjoyable experience in itself.

Do I have to take part?
No, your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, please let me know by phone or email. If you wish to take part but do not wish to be audio – recorded or observed in your school/class, please indicate this on the Consent Form. If you are a teacher who does not wish their class or lesson to be observed, please indicate this on the Consent Form.

How do I withdraw from it?
You can withdraw at *any* time during the project and there is absolutely no obligation on you to continue nor is there any penalty for withdrawing; simply let me know by phone or email if this is the case. You do not need to give an explanation if you decide to discontinue. If you withdraw within 4 weeks from the end of your taking part, I will not use your data for my project; if you decide to withdraw at a later stage your data will remain part of the project since work will already have begun on it.

What will taking part involve for me?
We will arrange to meet at a mutually convenient time and place for an informal interview which will last no longer than an hour. I will record the interview (audio only) and will later transcribe it so that I can refer back easily to what has been said.

If you are a dance teacher, I would like the option to observe some of your classes or lessons and also to see what life is like in your dance school. My observations will not disturb or interrupt your activities; there will be no audio or visual recording of

the classes, lessons or dance school itself; the only data collected will be my handwritten notes which you can later request to read and comment on, if desired.

What will I have to do?
There is nothing for you to do prior to the interview; similarly, if you are a teacher there will be nothing for you to do during the class/lesson /dance school observations. However, in advance of the interview I will send you an outline of the topics we will cover. These will include, among other things: why some boys choose to dance while others do not?; what dance styles are popular/unpopular with boys and why?; if dance is a (un)masculine activity ? and what, if anything, could be done to encourage more boys into dance

What will happen to the data?
'Data' here means my notes, audio recordings and any email exchanges we may have had.

The data may be securely stored for ten years after the successful completion of the PhD *Viva* as per Lancaster University requirements, and after that any personal data will be destroyed. The completion of this study is estimated to be by October 2018 although data collection will be complete by July 2016.

Audio recordings will be transferred and stored on my personal laptop. Identifiable data (including recordings of your and other participants' voices) will be stored on my personal laptop and will be encrypted; if other devices are used where this is not possible, such as password-protected portable recorders, identifiable data will be deleted as quickly as possible. In the meantime I will ensure such portable devices will be kept safely until the data is deleted.

You can request to read the transcript of our interview and make suggestions for changes or deletions. Data, such as quotations, may be used in the reporting of the research (in the thesis and then potentially in any papers or conference presentations). Please note that if your data is used, it will not identify you in any way.

Data will only be accessed by myself and/or my supervisor. Transcriptions of the data will be undertaken by me alone; they will be encrypted for security and anonymity and stored on a password-protected computer.

The research may be used for journal articles and conference

presentations. **How will my identity be protected?**

A pseudonym will be given to protect your identity in the research project and any identifying information about you will be removed from the thesis. All pseudonyms will be stored securely, password-protected and encrypted, and kept by myself.

What you say in our interview will remain confidential, the only exception being if child protection/safeguarding issues arise, in which case the information will be communicated to the relevant authorities.

Who can I contact for further information or if I have any concerns?
If you would like further information on this research or have any concerns about the project, participation or my conduct as a researcher, please contact:

Professor Carolyn Jackson
Tel: 01524 592883
Email: c.jackson2@lancaster.ac.uk
Address: Department of Educational Research, D34, County South,
Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YD.

Thank you for reading this Information Sheet and for considering my request.

Christopher Marlow

2. Consent Forms

Educational Research | Lancaster University

Department of Educational Research
County South, Lancaster University,
LA1 4YD
Tel: +44 (0) 1524 592685

Consent Form : Male Dancers

Title of Project – "Oi! Dancing Boy!": exploring the limits of movement and masculinity

		Please Initial
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the Information Sheet dated 1 February 2016 for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I confirm that I am taking part in this research project voluntarily. If I wish to withdraw I am free to do so at any time without providing a reason. I know of the time limits which apply to the use or non-use of my information (data) should I withdraw.	
3.	I consent to my interview being audio – recorded.	
4.	I consent to my dance school/classes/lessons being observed.	
5.	I understand the limits of confidentiality which apply to this project. If information comes to light that I or others might be at risk, I know that child protection and safeguarding procedures will be followed, and such information will be passed to the relevant authorities.	
6.	I know that the information (data) I provide will be used for a PhD research project and may be published. I know about my right to review and comment on this information. I know that my name and the dance school name will be changed to protect my anonymity.	
7.	I agree to take part in the above project.	
Name of Participant **Signature** **Date**		

Department of Educational Research

County South, Lancaster University,

LA1 4YD
Tel: +44 (0) 1524 592685

Consent Form : Parent/Guardians/Carers

Title of Project - "Oi! Dancing Boy!": exploring the limits of movement and masculinity

		Please Initial
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the Information Sheet dated 1 February 2016 for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily .	
2.	I confirm that my child's participation in this research project is voluntary. If for any reason they wish to withdraw they are free to do so without providing any reason. I know of the time limits which apply to the use or non - use of any information (data) they have provided should they withdraw.	
3.	I consent to my child's interview being audio – recorded.	
4.	I consent to my child's dance school/classes/lessons being observed.	
5.	I understand the limits of confidentiality which apply to this project. If information comes to light that suggests a child(ren) might be at risk, I know that child protection/ safeguarding procedures will be followed, and such information will be passed to the relevant authorities.	
6.	I know that the information (data) provided by my child will be used for a PhD research project and may be published. I know about my child's right to review and comment on this information. I know my child's name and that of the dance school will be changed to protect his/her anonymity.	
7.	I agree that my child can take part in the above project.	

Name of Child

Name of Parent/Guardian/Carer

Signature of Parent/Guardian/Carer

                                                   Date

Department of Educational Research
County South, Lancaster University,
LA1 4YD
Tel: +44 (0) 1524 592685

Consent Form : Teachers/ Administrators/Policymakers

Title of Project - "Oi! Dancing Boy!": exploring the limits of movement and masculinity

		Please Initial
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the Information Sheet dated 1 February 2016 for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I confirm that my participation in this research project is voluntary. If I wish to withdraw I am free to do so at any time without providing any reason. I know of the time limits which apply to the use or non	
3.	– use of my information (data) should I withdraw. I consent to the interview being audio –recorded.	
4.	I consent to observations being conducted in my dance school/class/lessons .	
5.	I understand the limits of confidentiality which apply to this project. If information comes to light that suggests a child(ren) might be at risk, then child protection / safeguarding procedures will be followed, and such information will be passed to the relevant authorities.	
6.	I know that the information (data) I provide will be used for a PhD research project and may be published. I know about my right to review and comment on this information. I know my name and the school/organisation name(s) will be changed to protect my/its anonymity.	
7.	I agree to take part in the above project.	

Name of Participant/ School/Organisation:
Signature
Date

Appendix 3: Interview Schedules

Interview Schedule: Male dancers

- How did you get into dance?
- Why did you get into dance?
- What dance styles do you perform and why?
- Do you avoid and dance styles and if so, why?
- Have you experienced any issues in learning to dance? If so, how did you respond to these?
- How does your family feel about your dancing?
- How do your friends feel about your dancing?
- What dance, if any, have you done in your primary / secondary school?
- What is/was the status of dance in your primary / secondary school?
- Does your primary / secondary school create a dance culture where anyone and everyone can dance?
- Have you heard of boys who, in or out of school, are afraid or fearful to dance because of what some people might say about them?
- How do you define or think about masculinity?
- Is dance a masculine activity?
- What about different dance genres such as ballet or hip hop. How masculine are they?
- How is dance portrayed in the media?
- Do you think attitudes to boys and dance are changing? If so, why and how?
- Dance is sometimes linked with sexuality. What do you think of that?
- Are their barriers to boys getting into dance and if so what are they?
- What could be done to encourage more boys into dance and by whom?
- How many boys are in your dance school?
- What is the age range of the boys and what dance genres do they perform?
- How many girls are in your dance school?
- What is the age range of the girls and what genres do they perform?
- Do you share classes and lessons with girls? Why / why not?
- How are boys regarded in your dance school by other pupils (male and female), by teachers and by other parents?
- Is your dance school a 'boy friendly' place?
- Are boys taught in the same way as girls in your dance school?
- What's your message to boys who want to dance or who have stopped dancing?
- Do you have any other hobbies and how do they rank in importance with dance?
- Have you faced any issues or problems with your other hobbies?
- What future, if any, do you envisage for yourself in dance?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me or discuss?

☐ Have you any questions for me?

Interview Schedule: Parents/Guardians/Carers

☐ Can you describe your own and/or your family's dance background, if any?

☐ How and why did your child get into dance?

☐ What dance styles does your child perform and why?

☐ Does your child avoid any dance styles and if so, why?

☐ Has your child experienced any issues in learning to dance? If so, how did you and they respond to these?

☐ What dance, if any, has your child done in your primary/secondary school?

☐ What is / was the status of dance in your child's primary/secondary school?

☐ Does your child's primary/secondary school create a dance culture where anyone and everyone can dance?

☐ Have you heard of boys who, in or out of school, are afraid or fearful to dance because of what some people might say about them?

☐ How do you define or think about masculinity?

☐ Is dance a masculine activity in your view?

☐ What about different dance genres such as ballet or hip hop. How masculine are they?

☐ What do you/ your partner/ family and friends think about your child dancing?

☐ Do you think attitudes to boys and dance are changing? If so, why and how?

☐ Dance is sometimes linked with sexuality. What do you think of that?

☐ Are there barriers to boys getting into dance and if so what are they?

☐ What could be done to encourage more boys into dance and by whom?

☐ How many boys are there in your child's dance school? Do you know what ages they are and what genres they perform?

☐ How is dance portrayed in the media?

☐ How affordable is private-sector dance tuition?

☐ How is your child's dance tuition funded and by whom?

☐ Does your child share classes/lessons with girls? Why/why not?

☐ How is your child regarded in the dance school by other pupils (male and female), by teachers and by other parents?

☐ Is your dance school a 'boy friendly' place? If so, what makes it so?

☐ How is your child regarded by his friends, peers and staff at his day school for being a male dancer?

- [ ] What's your message to other boys who want to dance or boys who have stopped dancing?

- [ ] Are you aware of any schemes to encourage boys into dance?

- [ ] Do you know of anyone who has participated in these schemes? What were the outcomes?

- [ ] Does your child have any other hobbies and how do they rank in importance when compared with dance?

- [ ] What future, if any, do you envisage for your child in dance?

- [ ] Is there anything else you'd like to tell me or discuss?

- [ ] Have you any questions for me ?

Interview Schedule: Teachers

- ☐ How did you get into dance?

- ☐ How did you later get into teaching dance?

- ☐ What dance styles do you do teach and why?

- ☐ Are there dance styles you don't / won't teach and why?

- ☐ Can you tell me about your dance school (size, location etc.) and the profile of your pupils?

- ☐ Do you experience any problematic issues in teaching dance? If so, what are they how do you respond?

- ☐ What has been your experience of teaching boys?

- ☐ Do you employ the same pedagogic strategies for teaching boys as you do for teaching girls?

- ☐ How do you and/or your colleagues feel about teaching boys?

- ☐ How are boys regarded in your dance school by other pupils (male and female), parents, teachers, visitors and support staff?

- ☐ Is your dance school a 'boy friendly 'place? If yes, how is it made so?

- ☐ Have you heard of boys who are afraid or fearful to dance because of what some people might say about them?

- ☐ If so, how did they /you /others respond?

- ☐ How do you define or think about masculinity in general?

- ☐ Is dance a masculine activity?

- ☐ What about different dance genres such as ballet or hip hop. How masculine are they?

- ☐ Dance is sometimes associated with sexuality. What do you think of that?

- ☐ How is dance and dance teaching portrayed in the media?

- ☐ Over the span of your career have you detected any change in societal attitudes towards boys and dance? If so, how can these be explained?

- [ ] How affordable is private sector dance tuition?

- [ ] What could be done to encourage more boys into dance and by whom?

- [ ] What are the main barriers to boys getting into dance?

- [ ] Are you aware of any schemes to encourage boys into dance?

- [ ] Do you know of anyone who has participated in these schemes? What were the outcomes?

- [ ] What could/should the ACE, CDMT, DfE & One Dance UK do to develop dance participation, especially for boys?

- [ ] What is the status of dance within the school curriculum?

- [ ] Do 'educational' foster an inclusive dance culture?

- [ ] What could the private sector dance organisations do to facilitate boys' engagement with dance?

- [ ] What's your message to boys who want to dance or boys who have given up dancing?

- [ ] Is there anything else you'd like to tell me or discuss?

- [ ] Have you any questions for me?

Interview Schedule: Administrators and Policymakers

- ☐ If applicable, can you describe your own dance background?

- ☐ What is your present role?

- ☐ What are your key responsibilities?

- ☐ If applicable, did you experience any issues in learning to dance? How did you respond to these?

- ☐ What does your own institutional data suggest about boys and dance participation?

- ☐ What are the generic benefits of dance to children and young people? Are there any specific benefits for boys?

- ☐ Have you heard of boys who are afraid or fearful to dance because of what some people might say about them?

- ☐ Is the lack of male participation in dance problematic for your organisation?

- ☐ How do you define or think about masculinity in general?

- ☐ Is dance a masculine activity?

- ☐ Dance is sometimes associated with sexuality. What do you think of that?

- ☐ How is dance and dance teaching portrayed in the media?

- ☐ Does it make a difference what dance styles boys chose and, if so, why?

- ☐ Are any particular dance styles preferred or avoided by boys and why?

- ☐ Have you heard of boys who are afraid or fearful to dance because of what some people might say about them?

- ☐ What could be done to counter this?

- ☐ What are the main barriers to boys getting into dance?

- ☐ What could be done to encourage more boys into dance and by whom?

- ☐ Are dance organisations, such as your own, 'boy friendly'?

- ☐ Are dance schools 'boy friendly'?

- Are you aware of any schemes to encourage boys into dance?

- Do you know of anyone who has participated in these schemes? What were the outcomes?

- Does your institution have plans and policies to address the issue? If so, please elaborate.

- What could/should the ACE, CDMT, DfE and One Dance UK do to develop dance participation, especially by boys?

- What relationship(s) should the private-sector dace awarding organisations have with the wider dance sector?

- What is the status of dance within the school curriculum?

- In your opinion, do 'educational 'schools foster an inclusive dance culture?

- What could private sector dance organisations do to facilitate boys' engagement with dance?

- What's your message to boys who want to dance or to those who have given up dancing?

- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me or discuss?

- Have you any questions for me?

Interview probe questions – a sample

That's interesting. Can you tell me more?

Could you go over that again please?

Could you please tell me more about …?

So why do you think that's the case?

I'm not sure I understand…could you tell me about that again?

I'm not certain what you mean by X . Can you tell me again/perhaps give me an example?

Did I understand you correctly when you said …?

Could you tell me more about what you thought of X?

Earlier you mentioned X. Could you tell me more about that?

What stands out in your mind about that?

Can you give me an example of …?

What makes you feel that way?

And why do you say that?

How did you decide that?

What do you particularly like/dislike about X?

You just told me about X. I'd also like to hear about Y too.

Earlier you mentioned A. Is that related to B?

Appendix 4

UKA DANCE

2017 / 2018 GRADED EXAMINATIONS : BALLET

LEVEL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
PRELIM 1	609	12	621	98.1%	1.9%
PRELIM 2	462	8	470	98.3%	1.7%
PRELIM 3	471	9	480	98.1%	1.9%
GRADE 1	276	6	282	97.8%	2.2%
GRADE 2	185	4	189	97.8	2.2%
GRADE 3	156	5	161	96.9%	3.1%
GRADE 4	119	3	122	97.5%	2.5%
GRADE 5	89	2	91	97.8%	2.2%
GRADE 6	62	4	86	95.3%	4.7%
GRADE 7	38	0	38	100%	0.0%
GRADE 8	37	1	38	97.3%	2.7%
PRE-ELEMENTARY	13	1	14	92.8%	7.2%
ELEMENTARY	9	0	9	100%	0.0%
INTERMEDIATE	1	0	1	100%	0.0%
ADVANCED	0	0	0	-	-
TOTALS	**2547**	**55**	**2602**	**97.8%**	**2.2%**

Source : UKA Dance

UKA DANCE

2017 / 2018 GRADED EXAMINATIONS : TAP

LEVEL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
PRELIM 1	480	9	489	98.2%	1.8%
PRELIM 2	309	8	317	97.5%	2.5%
PRELIM 3	319	7	326	97.8%	2.2%
GRADE 1	155	2	157	98.7%	1.3%
GRADE 2	151	3	154	98.0%	2.0%
GRADE 3	138	2	140	98.5%	1.5%
GRADE 4	113	4	117	96.5%	3.5%
GRADE 5	54	0	54	100%	0.0%
GRADE 6	43	2	45	95.5%	4.5%
GRADE 7	19	3	22	86.3%	13.7%
GRADE 8	34	3	36	86.1%	13.9%
PRE-ELEMENTARY	4	0	4	100%	0.0%
ELEMENTARY	4	1	5	80.0%	20.0%
INTERMEDIATE	0	0	0	-	-
ADVANCED	4	0	4	100%	0.0%
TOTALS	**1827**	**41**	**1868**	**97.8%**	**2.2%**

Source : UKA Dance

UKA DANCE

2017 / 2018 GRADED EXAMINATIONS : JAZZ

LEVEL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
PRELIM 1	99	2	101	98.0%	2.0%
PRELIM 2	63	0	63	100%	0.0%
PRELIM 3	73	2	75	97.3%	2.7%
GRADE 1	71	5	76	93.4%	6.6%
GRADE 2	67	0	67	100%	0.0%
GRADE 3	57	1	58	98.2%	1.8%
GRADE 4	39	0	39	100%	0.0%
GRADE 5	51	0	51	100%	0.0%
GARDE 6	18	0	18	100%	0.0%
GRADE 7	10	0	10	100%	0.0%
GRADE 8	14	3	17	82.3%	17.7%
PRE-ELEMENTARY	0	0	0	-	-
ELEMENTARY	0	0	0	-	-
INTERMEDIATE	0	0	0	-	-
ADVANCED	0	0	0	-	-
TOTALS	**562**	**13**	**575**	**97.2%**	**2.8%**

Source : UKA Dance

UKA DANCE

2017 / 2018 MEDAL TESTS : BALLROOM & LATIN-AMERICAN

LEVEL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
UNI - TEDS	105	18	123	85.3%	14.7%
INTROS 1-6	760	91	851	89.3%	10.7%
BRONZE / BAR	330	44	374	88.2%	11.8%
SILVER / BAR	186	24	210	88.6%	11.4%
GOLD / BAR	138	13	151	91.4%	8.6%
GOLD BAR / LAUREL	166	15	181	91.7%	8.3%
GOLD STARS	98	4	102	96.1%	3.9%
PRESIDENT/ PREMIER	7	4	11	63.7%	36.3%
PREMIER CUP 1-3	14	2	6	66.6%	33.4%
OTHER AWARDS	114	12	126	90.5%	9.5%
TOTALS	**1908**	**227**	**2135**	**85.2%**	**14.8%**

Source : UKA Dance

UKA DANCE

2017 / 2018 MEDAL TESTS : URBAN

LEVEL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
UNI - TEDS	290	17	307	94.5%	5.5%
INTROS 1-6	2233	389	2622	85.2%	14.1%
BRONZE / BAR	426	129	555	76.8%	23.2%
SILVER / BAR	269	43	312	86.2%	13.8%
GOLD / BAR	138	36	174	79.3%	20.7%
GOLD BAR / LAUREL	203	46	249	81.5%	18.5%
GOLD STARS	69	10	79	87.3%	12.7%
PRESIDENT/ PREMIER	25	4	29	86.2%	13.8%
PREMIER CUP 1-3	15	12	27	55.5%	44.5%
OTHER AWARDS	526	68	594	88.5%	11.5%
TOTALS	**4194**	**754**	**4948**	**82.1%**	**17.9%**

Source : UKA Dance

UKA DANCE

EXAMINATION ENTRY STATISTICS 2017 / 2018

GENRE	F	M	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
BALLET	2547	55	2602	97.8%	2.2%
TAP	1827	41	1868	97.8%	2.2%
JAZZ	562	13	575	97.2%	2.8%
BALL /LAT	1908	227	2135	85.2%	14.8%
URBAN	4194	754	4948	82.1%	17.9%

Source : UKA Dance

Appendix 5

General Certificate of Secondary Education
(G.C.S.E.) DANCE   2008 - 2018

YEAR	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
2008	16,838	1017	17,855	94.3%	5.7%
2009	15,630	959	16,589	94.2%	5.8%
2010	14,968	916	15,884	94.2%	5.8%
2011	12,535	908	13,443	93.3%	6.7%
2012	11,784	808	12,592	93.6%	6.4%
2013	11,095	761	11,856	93.6%	6.4%
2014	11,355	845	12,200	93.1%	6.9%
2015	11,039	826	11,865	93.1%	6.9%
2016	10,045	717	10,762	93.4%	6.6%
2017	8,752	649	9,401	93.1%	6.9%
2018	8,082	642	8,724	92.6%	7.4%

Source: AQA

NB. These are figures for the UK. Data for England alone are not available.

General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.)
Advanced Supplementary (AS) DANCE
2008 - 2018

YEAR	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
2008	3042	201	3243	93.8%	6.2%
2009 LEGACY	361	31	392	92.1%	7.9%
2009 NEW	2905	264	3169	91.7%	8.3%
2010	3348	291	3639	92.0%	8.0%
2011	3511	290	3801	92.4%	7.6%
2012	3126	291	3417	91.5%	8.5%
2013	2926	220	3146	93.0%	7.0%
2014	2939	253	3192	92.1%	7.9%
2015	2559	185	2744	93.3%	6.7%
2016	2223	145	2368	93.8%	6.2%
2017	272	13	285	95.4%	4.6%
2017	498	47	545	91.4%	8.6%
2018	214	18	232	92.2%	7.8%

Source: AQA

NB. These are figures for the UK. Data for England alone are not available. This data relates to June entries only; any modules sat in January were excluded as entry numbers were extremely small.

General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.)
Advanced Level (A Level) DANCE
2008 - 2018

YEAR	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %	MALE %
2008	1811	124	1935	93.6%	6.4%
2009	1850	116	1966	94.1%	5.9%
2010	2082	179	2261	92.1%	7.9%
2011	2117	167	2284	92.7%	7.3%
2012	1934	151	2085	92.8%	7.2%
2013	1815	164	1979	91.8%	8.2%
2014	1787	105	1892	94.5%	5.5%
2015	1721	154	1875	91.8%	8.2%
2016	1485	97	1582	93.9%	6.1%
2017	1371	84	1455	94.2%	5.8%
2018	1233	83	1316	93.7%	6.3%

Source: AQA

NB. These are figures for the UK. Data for England alone are not available. The data relates to June entries only; any modules sat in January were excluded as entry numbers were extremely small.

Appendix 6: Comparative table : UCAS points and Graded examinations in Dance

UCAS POINTS	A LEVEL	GRADE 6 DANCE	GRADE 7 DANCE	GRADE 8 DANCE	INTERMEDIATE DANCE	ADVANCED FOUNDATION DANCE
56	A*					
54						
52						
50						
48	A					
46						
44						
42						
40	B					
38						
36						
34						
32	C					
30						
28						
26						
24	D					D
22						
20				D	D	M
18				M		
16	E		D	P		P
14			M		M	
12		D	P			
10		M				
8		P			P	

Source : UCAS Tariff Tables 2017

Key

P = Pass

M = Merit

D = Distinction

Appendix 7: Dance school list

Name	Pupil Numbers		Dancer Interviews	Teacher Interviews	Parent Interviews
	Female	Male			
Alder	200	5	5	1	1
Beech	250	30	5		1
Elm	120	2	1		
Hawthorn	80	3	3	1	1
Maple	80	3	3		
Oak	130	3	3	1	
Pine	90	8	2	1	
Willow	60	3	4	1	1
Totals			26	6	4

Appendix 8: ADOLESCENT DANCER PROFILES - AN OVERVIEW

Name	Age at time of interview	Age when started to dance	Years of dance training	Dance genres studied at dance school	Open/secret dancer	Sexuality	Sec. School	Dance School	GCSE in Dance PE/ Perf Arts	A Level in Dance/ PE; BTEC in Perf Arts	Bullied
ALEC	13	11	2	B/J/T/C	OPEN	HET	IND	WILLOW	DANCE	NO	MOD
ALLAN	17	15	2	B/C/J/T	SECRET	HOM	COMP	PINE	NO	DANCE	MOD
BILLY	17	9	8	BL/U	SECRET	UNK	IND	BEECH	NO	NO	NONE
BRADLEY	18	10	8	B/C/J/T/BL/U	OPEN	HET	COMP	WILLOW	DANCE	DANCE	MOD
CALEB	14	12	2	B/J/C/MT	OPEN	HOM	COMP	ALDER	DANCE	NO	MOD
CALLUM	11	5	7	B/T/J/U/MT	OPEN	UNK	COMP	HAWTHORN	NO	NO	MILD
CHARLIE	16	13	3	B/C/J/T/MT/U	SECRET	HET	COMP	WILLOW	NO	BTEC	MILD
DANIEL	16	8	7	BL/U	OPEN	HOM	COMP	PINE	NO	NO	SEV
GARETH	14	7	7	BL	OPEN	UNK	IND	HAWTHORN	NO	NO	MILD
GEORGE	13	11	2	C/J/T	SECRET	HET	IND	HAWTHORN	YES	NO	SEV
HARRY	11	7	4	B/J/T/U/I/MT	OPEN	UNK	COMP	ALDER	NO	NO	MILD
JACOB	11	9	2	BL/U	SECRET	UNK	COMP	WILLOW	NO	NO	NONE
JAMES	15	8	7	BL	OPEN	UNK	COMP	ELM	NO	NO	NONE
JULIAN	17	10	7	MT/U	SECRET	HOM	COMP	ALDER	NO	NO	SEV
LUCAS	15	8	7	B/J/T/U/I	SECRET	HOM	COMP	MAPLE	DANCE	NO	NONE
MARC	14	6	8	B/J/T	OPEN	HOM	COMP	OAK	NO	NO	MILD
MARCUS	16	12	4	BL/U	SECRET	HET	COMP	BEECH	NO	NO	MILD
NATHAN	14	12	2	B/C/J	OPEN	HET	COMP	PINE	NO	NO	MOD
NEIL	11	4	7	BL/T/MT/U	SECRET	UN	COMP	OAK	NO	NO	MILD
OSCAR	18	4	14	J/MT/T/U	SECRET	HET.	GRAM	MAPLE	NO	NO	MILD
OWEN	15	6	9	BL/B/C/T/U	OPEN	HE	COMP	ALDER	PERF ARTS	NO	SEV
REECE	16	6	10	B/C/I/J/T	SECRET	BI.	COMP	BEECH	NO	NO	MOD
ROBIN	11	4	7	B/BL/J/MT/T/I	OPEN	HET	COMP	OAK	NO	NO	MILD
ROGER	15	5	10	B/J/T/U	SECRET	HET	GRAM	ALDER	YES	NO	MOD
SAUL	13	5	8	BL//U	SECRET	HET	COMP	BEECH	NO	NO	MILD
SEB	16	8	8	BL//U	SECRET	HOM	COMP	MAPLE	NO	NO	SEV

ADOLESCENT DANCER PROFILES - LISTED BY DANCE (& SECONDARY) SCHOOL

NAME (PSEUDONYM)	AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW	SECONDARY SCHOOL YEAR	SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDED	DANCE SCHOOL ATTENDED	DANCE GENRES STUDIED	SEXUALITY
Harry	11	7	*	Alder	B J T U I MT	UNK
Caleb	14	9	*	Alder	B J C MT	HOM
Roger	15	10		Alder	B J T U	HET
Owen	15	10		Alder	BL B C T U	HET
Julian	17	12		Alder	MT U	HOM
Jacob	11	7	*	Willow	BL U	UNK
Alec	13	9		Willow	B J T C	HET
Charlie	16	11		Willow	B C J T MT U	HET
Bradley	18	13		Willow	B C J T BL U	HET
Saul	13	9		Beech	BL U	HET
Marcus	16	11		Beech	BL U	HET
Reece	16	11		Beech	B C I J T	BI
Billy	17	12		Beech	BL U	UNK
Nathan	14	9		Pine	B C J	HET
Daniel	16	11		Pine	BL U	HOM
Allan	17	12		Pine	B C J T	HOM
Neil	11	7		Oak	BL T MT U	UNK
Marc	14	10		Oak	B J T	HOM
Robin	11	7		Oak	B BL J MT T I	HET
Callum	11	7		Hawthorn	B T J U MT	UNK
George	13	9		Hawthorn	C J T	HET
Gareth	14	9		Hawthorn	BL	UNK
Lucas	15	10	*	Maple	B J T U I	HOM
Seb	16	11		Maple	BL U	HOM
Oscar	18	13		Maple	J MT T U	HET
James	15	10		Elm	BL	UNK

The 26 adolescent dancers attended 8 dance schools:
Alder (5); Willow (4); Beech (4); Pine (3); Oak (3); Hawthorn (3); Maple (3); Elm (1).

Key: dance genres studied:

B = Ballet; BL = Ballroom/ Latin-American; C = Contemporary; I = Irish;
J = Jazz; MT = Musical Theatre; T = Tap; U= Urban (Break/Freestyle/Hip-Hop/Street

Key: sexual orientations:

Bi. = Bisexual; Hom. = Homosexual; Het.= Heterosexual;
Unk. =Unknown (participant did not declare their orientation).

4 boys attended the same secondary school, a large comprehensive with specialist 'performing arts college' status; these individuals are marked * above . No other participants shared secondary schools.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Parents

Judith (f) mother of Lucas, aged 15
Linda (f) mother of Roger, aged 15
Peter (m) father of Harry, aged 11
Samuel (m) stepfather of Owen, aged 15

Teachers / Lecturers / Practitioners

Aden (m) school and community dance practitioner
Keira (f) school and community dance practitioner
Marc (m) private-sector dance school teacher
Margaret (f) private-sector dance school teacher
Vanessa (f) school and community dance practitioner
Winifred (f) university lecturer in dance education / private sector dance school teacher

Administrators / Policymakers

Adam (m) director of examinations at a dance awarding organisation ; formerly a dance in education practitioner
Anita (f) president of a dance awarding organisation
Mary (f) director of education at a dance awarding organisation Myla (f) dance consultant / policymaker

Appendix 9: Conferences, seminars and symposiums

- *Men in Dance: Bridging the Gap* (Symposium), National Dance Education Organization, University of West Virginia, USA (June 2017)

- UKA Dance (Conference), Blackpool (June 2017)

- Gender and Education Association (Conference) , Middlesex University (June 2017)

- Centre for the Study of Women and Gender (Seminar), University of Warwick (October 2017)

- Dance Teaching and Participation (Conference), One Dance UK, (November 2017)

- *'Embodied Practice and Performance in the Arts'* (Conference), Canterbury Christ Church University (April 2018)

- Department of Educational Research, (Seminar), Lancaster University (June 2018)

- *'Borders and Boundaries : Debating the Limits and Possibilities of Education'* (Conference), Lancaster University (July 2018)

- *'Contra: Dance & Conflict'* Dance Studies Association (Conference), University of Valletta, Malta (July 2018)

- Toxic Masculinity (Symposium), Birmingham City University (September 2018)

- Teachers' Forum (Seminar), CDMT, London (November 2018)

- Lancaster University Continuing Learning Group (Lecture), Lancaster University (April 2019)

Appendix 10: extract from interview with George, with commentary, to demonstrate self-criticality

Q1: And you moved schools last year, can I ask, why was that? P: Mmm, well I never really thought I could properly say or express what I wanted to say or express… I was called gay a lot just because of the way I acted and 'cos I wasn't afraid of people make fun of me or afraid to like do like camp stuff. I was called gay quite a bit so…	This partial utterance could have been encouraged more and probed to completion. However, I did return to this at Question 4
Q2: Mmm, and what effect did that have on you? P: Aah, it made the days longer mmm and apparently, I was quite grumpy mmm and when I moved mmm I wasn't, I wasn't so grumpy, and the world kinda like brightened up a bit	
Q3: So, what's life like at school for you now? P: Pretty good, yeh, it's quite a good feeling like in the air, just people genuinely not doing anything to upset you on purpose.	
Q4: And just going back to these negative experiences that you had at your first school, you say you were called gay and you suggested that was because you were acting in a camp way. Can you give me a bit more detail, what do you mean by that? P: Mm, so I do a wrist flick or mmm … I don't know just like, ah, I'd speak, I'd say something in a camp way… I'd say "Hey" for "Hi" and yeah…	Probe question pertaining to Answer 1 Another incomplete response that might have benefitted from probing.
Q5: And would that be enough for other boys to accuse you of being gay? P: Yeah, as far as my experiences go, yeah.	
Q6: So, it wasn't related to your dance then? P: No, not really.	This was a leading question and a closed one too.
Q7: Because they didn't know that you danced? P: Nods head	
Q8: I see. Can you tell me a little bit about how many boys said this and was it said directly to you or did it come via third parties? P: Mm, there was, there was quite a lot said straight to me, and there wasn't, wasn't much talking behind my back I don't think, but I wouldn't know	Too many questions were packed into one sentence here. George answers them but the response (understandably) lacks detail . Had these questions been asked singly, they might have yielded more data.
Q9: And how did you respond when these things were said to you? P: I was just like "Alright then, I'm not, you can say it, but no…"	Again, another incomplete response that was worthy of probing.
Q10: What about the school, were they aware of what was going on? P: I'm sure they knew that some people were being called gay or were being a bit bullied, but they didn't really, they wouldn't really say anything. I don't now, they didn't really say anything…	
Q11: And did it happen to other boys? P: Mmm… it did a bit, mmm, but I was never really, like, one of the cool kids so I'd have it more said to me than other people 'cos a lot of other people were the cool kids	The notion of being 'cool' was worthy of further investigation but was not followed up in this early interview. Later, the salience of 'coolness', especially in relation to choices of 'cool/uncool' dance genres, emerged strongly in the data.
Q12: And were other boys accused of being gay like you were? P: Ah,… yeah.	
Q13: They were? P: Yeah, they were	The previous reply was delivered tentatively, and so I sought clarification here.

Q14: And why would they be <mark>accused</mark> of being gay? P: <mark>They'd just say something</mark> and somehow the other person would think, "Oh that's gay, let's say that was gay" and there'd be a lot of your like mum jokes going round, "Oh that's your mum", and then they'd go onto "Oh that's your dad" and then they'd go on to "Oh that's gay."	I dislike my use of 'accused' here and in Q15. Perhaps 'described' or 'thought' would have been less emotive or judgmental terms. I could have sought an example or two here of the 'something'.
Q15: <mark>And what did they mean when they accused you or others of being gay?</mark> P: I don't really know, I think it's a thing to belittle people and try and make them feel small.	A poorly worded question. Could have been, "And what *do you think* they meant when they described you or others of being gay '?
Q16: <mark>Is there a difference between " You're gay" and "That's so gay"?</mark> P: Yeah, 'cos there is a difference between a gay action and a gay person, 'cos a gay person could use a gay action and a straight person could use a gay action but they're just actions but, hey, a gay person actually likes the same sex rather than, rather than, a gay action being…	Another potentially closed question but George offers some detail and nuance in his reply. However, once again, the response tails off.

Appendix 10: extract from interview with Julian, with commentary, to demonstrate disclosure of sensitive data

Q1: You say you started with freestyle dance, why that particular branch of dancing? P: 'Cos it was like, I guess… I don't know; my parents didn't want me to do ballet, tap or jazz, they wanted me to do freestyle because they thought it was a bit hippier, more hip-hoppy …	
Q2: Why did your parents not want you to do ballet, tap and jazz? P: Well like …'cos when I mentioned it to them when I was in high school so when I'd been coming here [dance school] a couple of years I wanted to do different style of dance because I really liked it, but at the time I was getting bullied at school a lot and my parents said that I'd give people more ammunition if I started doing ballet and tap and everything and people will start calling me gay more, so I was just like "Fine then, I won't do it". To be honest it's been my biggest regret, I should have just told my parents that I wanted to do it because I'd always wanted to do different styles when I was younger and I feel like I could have done it really well because I would've been committed to it, so it's kind of really annoyed me over the years, but it's fine, ha.	A probe question that yielded an interesting answer – of fearful parents. A frank admission. Another frank admission.
Q3: So, did you ever do ballet or tap or jazz? P: No…	I left a long pause here , hopeful for more information, before sensing that Julian had nothing to add. His sense of disappointment was palpable though.
Q4: Tell me about the bullying at school. What started that? Why were you bullied? P: I don't know …I just wasn't …to be honest, I really don't know. People just saw me as an easy target because there were other gay people in our year, people who were a lot more flamboyant than I am, but yet they were really good friends with everybody, but when it came to me, half of my year didn't like me. I felt like a lot of people were very two-faced to me, friends who I thought were my friends would end up being, like being, awful to me in my last year	Probe question – to pick up the thread of bullying from Answer 2
Q5: And how old were you when the bullying started? P: 11	
Q6: And how long did it continue? P: It lasted all through high school	I could and should have asked if the bullying changed in nature or intensity over this time.
Q7: Do you think there was any link between the bullying you encountered and the dancing that you did? P: Yes, because they found out that I liked to do dancing and singing and everything and then they added it to the whole like… calling me gay all the time and stuff… because I'm not exactly a skinny person, I've never been a skinny person, I'm built quite broad, so that added more ammunition to people because they thought, "Oh, he can't really be a good dancer because he's really big, he's really fat", so it really gave me more determination to prove to people that I could actually dance	This question yielded a revealing response regarding Julian's atypical body size for a dancer. Julian's teacher had previously alerted me to this sensitive topic and so I chose not to pursue this line of questioning with him.

Q8: <mark>And were you open about your dancing at school?</mark> P: I wouldn't go around talking to everybody about it, like "Oh I did this at dance the other day"; it's just because some of the people who were in my dance class here [at the dance school] were in my year at school, so that's how everybody knew. I didn't go around saying that I danced, people just found out because I danced with some people here and they told their friends and their friends told everybody and then everybody ended up fucking knowing in the whole year and <mark>then it was just…</mark> People were fine with it at first but it's just the odd few. My friends were really fine with it, my friends liked it. Some of my friends even came to watch me in the dance competitions which I really enjoyed, but I know that you can't be friends with everybody in high school because that's not possible, it's not plausible, but I'm one of these people I don't like people thinking badly of me, so it used to like drive me crazy all the time when people would just hate me and I didn't know why. And people will just find the littlest thing to use against you, but dance was a big thing.	This question yielded a passionate response and was delivered briskly. Note the emotive phrase, e.g. ' people would just hate me' and strong language 'everybody ended up fucking knowing'. I recall nodding at this point, a non-verbal clue to signal interest, empathy and to encourage further utterances.
Q9: <mark>And what sort of things were said to you or about you?</mark> P: Mm, a lot of it was just … a lot of it was just calling me gay, which I mean , I knew at that time that I was, but because my family is really traditional and the place where… the environment, the school… I didn't really want to come out in year 8 and be like, "Oh by the way, I'm gay everybody", because I knew that would cause me more havoc, so… I just tried to hide it for a long time, but it ended coming out in year 10. But it didn't really come as a surprise to people because… it's just ...	Like many questions I posed, this started with the conjunction 'and', since I wanted to create a relaxed mood to facilitate fluent conversation. This probe question also led to Julian's disclosure of his sexuality. There were several hesitations, noted by … . I developed rapport and encouraged Julian to speak by using a range of active listening strategies – nodding, smiling when appropriate, a relaxed but attentive body language (with some mirroring), and by being patient, content with pauses and silences wherein Julian could compose his thoughts and then continue his narrative.
Q10: And when you did come out, did that make any difference how people viewed you, treated you or talked about you? P: <mark>It didn't really change much but I felt like, I felt a bit better in myself when people at school…</mark> when I could finally say to myself, "Yeah, I am gay, there's no point in pretending not to be gay anymore". It was a lot …I felt… 'cos I got to that point where I stopped caring; I just became numb to a lot of stuff. And at home as well it didn't really help that my parents weren't really supportive of the entire dance thing because my dad thinks… they haven't admitted it, I don't think my dad has… I think there were bit worried that I was going to turn out gay and they didn't want me to, but we just don't talk about it, so when I decided I wanted to do dance they probably thought," Oh no", and that's why they tried to steer me away from it as much as possible, which is why I never did much at the dance centre which I really wanted to [ballet, tap and jazz], but they let me do a lot of acting and stuff because, apparently, that's not as gay.	Again, there are plenty of pauses and hesitations in this answer, with changes of subject matter and incomplete explanations (revisited and probed in subsequent questions). Once more, active listening strategies help to sustain rapport and encourage disclosure.

Q11: <mark>Can you remember any conversations you had with them about it or them with you?</mark>	This probe question arose from Julian's previous reply. It sought information about his relationship with his adoptive parents and their attitudes to dance. This particular recollection (about his now deceased adoptive mother), was significant since it once again alluded to Julian's disappointment at being unable to study the 'feminine' genres of ballet, tap and jazz, previously alluded to in Answers 1, 2 and 3.
P: I remember one conversation with my mum; we were in the kitchen and I said, "I want to start doing ballet tap and jazz because my teacher wants me to, and I really want to". I think I was 13 at the time and we had just done our dance show at the [dance] school and I used to love watching all the other girls dance 'cos some of the routines were amazing and I wanted to be like that. And my mum always used to say to me, "Oh don't, stop being silly, you'll give people more reason and chance to bully you", and they kept saying to me that they couldn't afford it, but they could do. I understand dancing is expensive, but I was telling them that I would drop other stuff that I did, because I'd rather do dance, but it never really happened. I never used to argue with my parents, I never could win so if they said, "No" I was like, "Fine, I'll just give up".	