The Final Curtain?
Understanding the Career Transitions of Freelance Dancers

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Abstract

Becoming a dancer requires dedication and passion, years of tough, relentless training with fierce competition and harsh criticism. For dancers, dance is not only what they do, it's fundamentally who they are. However, by their early 30s most dancers must leave the profession and this is profoundly challenging. Research in the area is in it's infancy and a need to gain a better understanding of why these problems occur and how they develop, particularly in relation to freelance dancers, was identified. A qualitative study was conducted, drawing on literature from both sociology and psychology, informed by an ethnographic methodological approach, to gain an understanding of the problems facing dancers in transition. Data was collected from 43 in-depth interviews with dancers from both the UK and the USA, this was informed by and supplemented with field notes.

A thematic analysis was conducted using concepts from Elias and Becker to provide an understanding of transition as the dancers themselves experience it. It was found that the problems stem from a strong connection and identification with the profession and that embedded in their sense of self are the cultural values and norms of the profession which are universal. These values and norms are at odds with those in society more generally and there is therefore a cultural gap when they face transition into the wider social context. Unexpectedly this study also added to the literature on youth transitions in terms of entering the profession. The literature in this area, being largely policy driven, is focused on those who are disadvantaged or those who make the transition to work from higher education. This study provides an insight into a unique group which does not fit into either of these categories and therefore makes a further contribution to this literature. These findings are used to suggest an alternative way of conceptualizing transitions using the concept of culture and introducing the concept of the 'transitional zone'.

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CTfD	Career Transitions for Dancers (United States of America)
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DCD	Dancers Career Development
DCDC	Dancers Career Development Centre (Korea)
DTC	Dance Transition Centre (Canada)
IADMS	International Association of Dance Medicine and Science
IOTPD	International Organisation for the Transitions of Professional Dancers
ITV 1	Independent Television (British television Channel)
LA	Los Angeles
NEET	Not in Education or Employment
NYC	New York City
RPfD	Retraining Programme for Dancers (Netherlands)
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
TV	Television

Introduction

Professional dancers start their training at a young age, then enter into a finite career which will inevitably end earlier than most, it certainly won't take them to retirement age. As such they find themselves facing a career transition in around their 30s, a time when their peers will be establishing themselves in their own careers. This transition is notoriously problematic and dancers face periods of depression, isolation, loss of identity and other negative affects that are discussed further in the following chapters (see also Dancers Career Development and International Organisation for the Career Transitions of Dancers).

Current literature in the field is in its infancy with very few empirical studies. Those that have been carried out involve dancers from big dance companies rather than freelance dancers. Beyond that, information is either anecdotal or provided on the base of conjecture from studies on professions that require similar preparation from a young age and early transition away such as the field of sports. Anecdotally, for example, it has been assumed that freelance dance face fewer problems in transition than their company based counterparts as they have not been institutionalised in the same way[1]. Therefore they have had to cope in the 'real' world where their day is not planned for them which, it is assumed, will render them better equipped to cope with transition.

The literature on transitions is rather disparate. As such this study seeks to explore the ways in which the transitions of freelance dancers can contribute to existing research on transitions. An in depth exploration of this kind concerning the transitions of freelance dancers was not evident from the literature review. It is certainly the case that the experience of dancers is not typical of most people's

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[1] This is taken from an interview with the organization 'Dancers Career Development' as part of the research for this project.
[2] These concepts are discussed further in the following chapters.
[3] The researcher made many attempts to obtain statistics from the exam boards

experiences of transitions. However, the atypical example presented here is used to consolidate existing notions of transition and proposes an alternative model of transitions providing a theoretical contribution to our understanding of transitions more generally.

In essence then this study aims to look at the experiences of freelance dancers to ascertain what the problems are and with a view to gain a better understanding of how and why these problems arise. This will not only provide an insight into the practical problems facing freelance dancers and how these might be tackled but also contribute to theory in the field of transitions.

The thesis is presented in 10 chapters.

The first looks at the background of the problem and outlines the justification of the study both in terms of the practical and theoretical implications. It examines the background and training of the dancer, explaining why there was a need to look at the lifecourse of the dancer rather than focussing solely on the period of transition. It also looks at the way in which the dancers' career transition has been examined and understood in the past.

The second chapter examines literature that places the dancer's life in it's socio-historic context in order to provide a deeper understanding of how dancers' have come to develop such devotion to their art and career. This draws on the work of sociologists such as Elias and Wright Mills in conceptualising the foundations and formation of the dancers' sense of self within the wider contexts. This chapter also examines literature in the field of identity specifically as it relates to the issues facing dancers. The need to examine this area of research is evident in the previous chapter in which much of the literature suggests that is the dancer's loss of identity which is of primary concern. In addition to looking at individual identity this chapter also looks at the research on collective identity particularly in the workplace. Here the work of Becker (1969) comes to the fore and his concept of culture is used to gain further insights into the way in which

the problems facing dancers can be conceptualised. The importance of culture as a concept becomes apparent and the concept is examined and clarified for the purposes of this study.

The third chapter focuses on the literature on transitions. Due to the relative lack of literature on career transitions for dancers, and the prevalence and development of the literature in the area of school to work transitions, this literature is reviewed and used to provide a backdrop for the analysis and understanding of the freelance dancer's transition. Through this review the work of Elias (in Goodwin and O'Connor 2006) is highlighted and his concept of the 'shock' hypothesis is used in aiding analysis. More fundamentally however his concepts of sociogenesis and psychogenesis are used in order to gain insights from the socio-historic development of the profession and how this impacts on the individual through the mutual evolution of self and society. These concepts are used to provide a more holistic and in depth understanding of the problems facing dancers in transition. This eclectic approach to the use of theories and concepts in understanding the research problem is related to the overall ethnographic approach of the study (Atkinson et al. 2010, Brewer, 2000).

The forth chapter then provides a justification for the methodological approach taken and outlines the methodological detail of the research. Included in this chapter is a section on reflexive awareness and the pros and cons of being an insider researcher. This chapter also discusses the analysis and the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research approach.

The next three chapters focus on the data analysis.
Chapter five gives an overall view of the themes that emerged from the data and how they relate to each other. Chapter six traces the dancers early socialisation and training examining how the self becomes embedded in the profession and how the dancer begins to feel separated from the wider social context. Chapter seven follows on to examine the dancer's experience of transition from training

into the career and their experiences as working professionals. Having explored the origins and development of both the profession in terms of the socio-historic development) and individual (biographical), chapter eight is then able to analyse the experience of transition in context.

Chapter nine explores the implications that this has for theory in more depth. It draws on and discusses the implications for theories of identity as they relate to the problems facing dancers in transition suggesting that existing ways of understanding the problem (predominantly the use of identity foreclosure, Erikson, 1959) are conceptually misleading and that the problems are more socially bound. This chapter goes on to discuss the implication for theories and concepts of transitions, consolidating existing ideas and proposing the foregrounding of culture as another way to conceptualise transitions more generally. The final section examines the practical implications of the research, echoing the earlier chapters outlining the research problem as both practical and theoretical.

The final chapter briefly summarises the conclusions of the research, suggests some of the limitations and raising questions for future studies.

Chapter 1
The problem with dancers

Introduction

> *"At an age when others are just entering their productive professional years, the dancer's performing career ends. Years of training and rigorous apprenticeship prepare the dancer for a profession that is relentless in its demands, scarce in its material rewards and fiercely defended by those involved in it. Dance is a vocation, more than a profession. Professional dancers make major contribution to cultural life and economy, but the performing life is intense, insecure and short. When it comes to an end, either by personal choice, physical limitation or injury, the dancer faces a difficult challenge."* (International Organisation for the Transition of Professional Dancers, IOTPD, 2012)

From the current literature on the career transitions of dancers the problem can be seen as two fold. Firstly, there are practical issues and problems surrounding the transition from dance to an alternative career. At a time when most people are establishing themselves in their chosen career dancers face the difficult task of leaving their profession and starting from scratch in a new career. Secondly, there is a problem in relation to the dearth of academic research available in the area, which gives little in the way of a theoretical basis from which the transition can be fully understood. Gaining a better understanding of why dancers face problems in transition by grounding the research in a theoretical understanding will not only bring a new perspective to the existing academic literature but will also give practitioners a better foundation from which to conceptualise the problem in order to find ways of giving appropriate practical support.

This chapter is split into two distinct sections, the first looks at the problem from a practical point of view. It discusses the current understanding of transitions from

the practitioner's perspective through the general information that is available to them and provided by them. It also looks at the structure of training as this is highlighted as a particularly influential area that impacts on transition.

The second section examines the theoretical discussions surrounding the problem and examines our current understanding of this particular problem as gleaned through empirical research and from a theoretical perspective.

The chapter concludes with a rationale for this study in terms of it's potential to contribute to knowledge in this area on both a practical and theoretical level.

Section 1. A practical problem: why are the career transitions of freelance dancers problematic?

Whilst not an issue that is widely known or publicised, the career transition of dancers is profoundly traumatic for those affected. In the last decade or so there has been a growing concern with regard to how dancers manage career transitions (Buckroyd, 2000, Patton & Ryan, 2000, Baumol et al., 2004, Ijdens and Langenberg, 2008). It is therefore acknowledged as a particularly problematic aspect of the career within the profession but as it only affects a minority of people and is not a part of preparation for the career, nor part of the career itself, the issues it raises are consigned to a small group of self-funding, not-for-profit (charitable) organisations. These organisations emerged in various countries from 1974 onwards. Currently, the principle organisation is the 'International Organisation for the Career Transitions of Professional Dancers' (IOTPD) which in turn links other organisations across the globe including 'Dancers' Career Development' (DCD) in the UK, 'Career Transitions for Dancers' (CTfD) in the USA, 'Dance Transition Centre' (DTC) in Canada, the 'Dancers' Career Development Centre' (DCDC) in Korea and the 'Retraining Programme for Dancers' (RPFD) in the Netherlands. With so many organisations dealing with the affects of career transition, this is clearly an issue that affects dancers globally. These organisations offer career counselling, emotional and

psychological support, educational and practical support and grants for re-training or new businesses. Many problems have been identified including lack of funds for retraining, lack of opportunity to explore other interests and education etc. However, one of the main areas of concern is the psychological impact of the transition, the main problems here being loss of identity, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem (Leach 1997, Greben, 2002, Patton and Ryan, 2000, Buckroyd, 2000, Ijdens & Langenberg, 2008).

Loss of identity is often cited as one of the most devastating aspects of career transition, it is universally experienced but very difficult to address (Pickman, 1987; Greben, 1989; Horosko 1982; Leach 1997; Buckroyd 2000). It has been noted that intensive training at a young age leads dancers to develop an early and enduring identification with their field, the issue of identity loss is therefore seen to emanate from the structure of the profession and specifically training during the young dancers' formative years (Pickman, 1987; Saposnek, 1995, Buckroyd, 2000; Patton and Ryan, 2000; Lavalee, 2000; Ijdens and Langenberg, 2008). Buckroyd for example suggests that dance training reinforces the individual's identification with dance. In discussing transitions in trainees she observes,

> *"Perhaps the worst of all is the loss of identity as a dancer that the training has, up to this point, validated and confirmed. Dance students in my experience are often exceedingly proud of their identity as dancers." (Buckroyd, 2000, p 183)*

The identification with dance is therefore present during training rather than being a product of the professional working environment. Alongside this there is a positive emotional attachment to their identity as a dancer that appears to be evident even during training, which would inevitably lead to problems in transitioning away from the profession at a later stage in life.

The socialisation of dancers; the structure of training.

There are several aspects of the dancers training that shape and reinforce this identity, emotional attachment and associated sense of self-worth. Whilst not exhaustive the following discussion analyses the contribution made by examinations, competitions, auditions, jobs and workshops during training. The aim is to tease out the formative processes embedded in the structure of training.

Examinations

Many children (particularly girls) participate in some form of dance class at some point in their life. However, of the countless numbers who attend classes, from as young as 2.5yrs, only a very small minority will go on to become professional dancers of any kind.

From as young as 4 or 5 years old children who attend regular dance classes are able to participate in examinations. They memorize exercises and routines and are able to recite them for an examiner with only the name of the exercise to prompt them. Even at this young age they are trained to exhibit a high level of self – control and discipline both emotionally in terms of managing anxiety and/or excitement and in terms of appropriate behaviour and grooming.
When asked to write about their experience of a recent exam these young (7-11yr olds) South African students wrote;

> 'I love dancing because my teacher loves us and she teaches
> us how to respect each other. I enjoyed my exam because we
> were dressed beautifully and we danced beautifully.'

> 'It was nice going to my exams. I've learned a lot of things like
> discipline and how I must conduct myself as a dancer, like not
> chewing gum, eating in the studio, and that I must not laugh at
> someone. I love dancing because I spend my time dancing with
> my friends and I don't do other bad things.'

(In a published letter to the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) accessed via their website www.istd.org.uk)

These quotes show how, through formal training, children learn to value certain behaviours and more broadly, how to 'conduct' themselves 'as a dancer' (as the second quote states). It is also very clear that these young dancers were proud to have gained these skills. Gradually, such behaviours are internalized until they become tacit knowledge of the 'the norm', in the same way that Elias suggests that other behaviours such as manners are assimilated into the norm more generally in society through the inter related processes of sociogenesis and psychogenesis (Elias, 1978)[2].

On successfully completing the examination children / students are awarded a certificate and are marked and graded according to the level of artistic and technical ability that they have demonstrated in their exam. Successful completion of each grade allows entry into the next level where they learn new and more challenging steps, sequences and musical awareness.
As each level is completed there is a sense of achievement and progress. Children will start to gauge how well they are doing in relation to their peers by comparing marks achieved in exams and comparing their age relative to others in the class. This process of comparison develops into a tacit knowledge regarding their abilities and the value of their achievements. These experiences will also influence ideas regarding what it means to be a 'dancer'. Children gradually develop a cognitive understanding of the category and how they relate to that category.

Obviously attaining a high mark in exams will encourage children to continue. It is emotionally rewarding and will strengthen positive values for the category of 'dancer'. This is often reinforced through positive experiences such as praise

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[2] These concepts are discussed further in the following chapters.

from parents and teachers and having certificates presented before peers at dancing and in school. Those who are not achieving high marks are gaining an understanding and tacit knowledge of their abilities and limitations.

Losing interest: dropout rates

There are a number of examination boards that award these certificates. Table 1 illustrates the number of children that took these examinations at each level across 2 exam sessions for one such board. These statistics are taken from only a couple of schools and as such are (at best) indicative rather than predictive.[3] However, it is clear that, although there is an overall decline in numbers, there are distinct stages at which the numbers of children entering examinations decrease quite dramatically.

Level	Primary	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr.5	Gr. 6	Inter
No. Of students	178	146	74	70	76	36	24	6

Table 1. The number of students being entered for dance examinations at each graded level.

The first major drop is between grades 1 and 2 these children will be around 7 - 9yrs old. They may have completed a couple of preliminary exams and the exercises are becoming more technical. Reasons for exiting training at this stage can include a loss of interest, their friend may have left or they may have moved on to something else such as horse riding or brownies (another hobby or interest). The second is between grades 4 and 5. These children are usually between 10 and 14yrs old and may have started senior school. By this grade there is a need to attend more and longer classes in order to physically develop the muscles

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[3] The researcher made many attempts to obtain statistics from the exam boards themselves but all of them refused despite advertising government accreditation of the associated credentials.

sufficiently to achieve the levels of technique required to execute the steps. Clearly this requires an increased commitment from the individual. The stresses of extra homework and the development of increased social networks at school, leads some to decide to cease dance training at this stage. Those who stay may have to make sacrifices in the form of attending extra classes after school and at weekends rather than socialising with friends.

For those that stay, they are making a conscious choice to spend their free time dancing. This requires a value judgement about their priorities and preferences. Students will also be realizing that not everyone can continue training, which will give those who can a sense of being 'special' and different from those who cannot. This again reinforces a positive value of dancing and dancers as a category for those that are high achievers in the area, whilst simultaneously separating them from others. Their primary concerns and priorities will be different from other teenagers in their school but the same as those who attend class with them.

The next drop off point is between grade 6 and intermediate. Here the exams become very difficult and are technically and artistically, very challenging. Exams at the level of 'intermediate' and above are considered to be at a professional level. As such, training will intensify with many students attending classes most evenings after school in addition to intensive training at the weekends and during holidays. By now, the students will be in early adolescence and consequently academic examinations, peer pressure, hormonal drives and the desire to socialize means that in order to continue at this point many 'sacrifices'[4] have to be made. Not all students will be able to attain this level due to the level of technical ability required. Students who cannot reach the required standard will

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[4] This may not been seen as a sacrifice for those who are embedded in the dance world, it may be preferable to other teenage activities as seen in the quote from the child who said that it was better than doing other 'bad' things. This issue is explored during analysis.

either be unable to pass exams or will not be entered. For those that can, they will already have an idea of their potential and desire to continue training after they have finished school. At this stage it is reasonable to expect that the students who continue training will be highly committed and all students will have obtained tacit and explicit knowledge regarding their ability and the ability of their peers to enter into full time training. As mentioned earlier, many of these adolescences already identify themselves as 'dancers'.

The numbers of students taking exams beyond this point are not presented here as many students will not take these higher-level exams until they start full-time training at a professional college at the age of about 16-19rs. However, in order to attend a professional full-time course they now face another hurdle as entry into these colleges is by audition only. At this stage, despite the vast numbers of students that have already decided not to pursue a dance career, competition for places is fierce.

There are currently around 25 such colleges in the UK[5] with varying reputations. For one of the larger colleges (Laine Theatre Arts) there are around 700 applicants for 70 places and therefore only 10% of applicants will gain a place. Similarly, Central School of Ballet this year has seen over 300 applicants for 28 places. Those that are not accepted can try again the next year but may ultimately have to rethink their choice of career. If they already identify with dance this will be a painful process. For those that are accepted this signifies the start of a career in the profession (as without such training it is very difficult to gain access to jobs later on) and, having been awarded a place with such competition, students at this higher level will again feel a sense of achievement.

Attendance at these colleges separates them (categorically) from those of a similar age who continue at school or attend academic or other vocational

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[5] This number is taken from the numbers of institutions advertising in trade publications such as 'The Dancing Times' and 'The Stage'.

colleges. This is partly due to the selection process to enter such colleges but also in terms of the type of training as these students will be attending classes in dance, drama and singing for at least 9hrs a day though this increases markedly during show preparations. By contrast many students remaining at school or attending university may not have clear expectations of future jobs and careers (Brown et al. 2011) and may not be expected to attend as many lectures or classes. Continuing education to obtain academic qualifications may not be a vocational choice whereas trainee dancers are very focused on their career.

Whilst the above relates to the majority of dancers there are also elite institutions such as the Royal Ballet School which offer full-time training alongside academic tuition from the age of 11. However, entry into this establishment is very tough with over 1000 applications each year for only 24 places with physique and genetic shape playing a large part in selection. Once they are in the school they risk being 'assessed out' from the age of 13. By the age of 16 only about half of the original cohort will still be at the school (Jennings, 2012).

It is evident from this broad structural analysis of the training that there are practical constraints that restrict entry into the profession. Experiences of this structured training will contribute to the student's tacit and explicit knowledge of their abilities. Every stage can potentially either draw students in or put them off and ultimately, if they are unable to demonstrate the required skills they will not be able to continue training regardless of interest, passion or commitment, there are very real physical and artistic limitations. For those that choose to continue training and have the capacity to pass the examinations, each stage requires a greater degree of commitment, sacrifice and effort.

In this environment the students who are achieving high marks and continuing training become more and more separated from those who do not but at the same time have more contact with those who are. In this situation processes of categorization, identification and comparison will flourish.

Alongside examinations children, who go on to work in the profession, are often involved in other dance related activities throughout their training that add to the identification with dance and contribute to socialization processes.

Competitions and shows

Festivals and other competitions take place at various theatres and venues across the country and can be regional, national or international. For many competitions children as young as 4yrs old are taught dances which they perform to an adjudicator and an audience of parents and teachers on stage. Competitors are marked and the top three are awarded prizes and cups for their achievements, these trophies are often proudly displayed in the home. Dances may be demonstrated as solos, duets, trios or groups in various dance genres. Elaborate costumes are made or bought at great expense. For other competitions children are taken through a group class and then given the opportunity to dance in smaller groups, grooming for these is strict and all children are attired according to their grade. This makes their grade or 'status' glaringly apparent to those in the dance world.

There is a great deal of additional training and rehearsal for such competitions requiring further commitment and as these events can be some distance from home, attending them can require the involvement of parents or the entire family. Where a child's parents are not in a position to take them, other parents or the teacher will help out. Students may even stay at the teacher's house overnight preceding such events. This generates a closely linked network of people all involved in dance. The world of dance becomes all encompassing and as socialization more generally is enmeshed in activities surrounding dance it is not surprising that the child comes to develop an identity as a dancer which dominates the self-concept.

There are other competitions that are open only for those who excel in their dance examinations. These are large, international events that require the teacher to prepare and enter students though entry numbers are restricted so selection just to compete is prized. Often, students from a dance school who are not selected to compete will attend just to support their fellow students. This again promotes a sense of 'belonging' to the group in addition to adding value to membership of an 'elite' group and elevating the status of the selected students within the dance community.

Competitions also add to the latent knowledge that an individual builds up regarding their abilities and their suitability to the career as cross-school comparisons are made. These events take up time at weekends, during school holidays and may even require time away from school to attend (with the possibility of sacrificing educational achievement, school trips etc.). Schools generally support students who are excelling and will present cups and certificates in assemblies, again reinforcing a sense of being special and different often in a positive way[6] (Buckroyd, 2000). In addition such stage experience gives the students an opportunity to experience what performing on stage entails, with all the preparations from rehearsals to make – up. Other opportunities for this kind of experience exist in the form of shows that are presented by the local dance school for the relatives, parents and friends of those performing. Such shows can include literally hundreds of students. Parents will be asked to help with all aspects of the production from making scenery to helping with grooming, to co-ordinating the logistical task of getting 50 under fives on and off the stage at the appropriate time!

Again this active involvement of parents and friends leads to a sense of community and commitment. It also promotes teamwork and camaraderie amongst those involved as everyone has a part to play. Students will help each

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[6] This may be gender specific as boys do not always experience excellence in dance positively (Buckroyd, 2000).

other by rehearsing together and helping each other and younger students with hair and make-up and parents will work together sharing ideas, sewing tips, chaperoning etc. In this environment students are learning through interaction, not only with teachers and parents but also with older students whom they look up to as role models (Ijdens and Langenberg, 2008).

Working with other students and professionals

Alongside exams and competitions, students may also be participating in scholarships, summer schools and workshops. Scholarships give students access to additional classes with revered teachers although entry is usually by audition. Such scholarships give students the opportunity to take classes with talented dance students of roughly their own age and standard, who do not belong to their own school. This again gives further opportunity for comparison both in terms of behaviour and ability.

As well as dancing with other students, young dancers also have access to the professional, adult dance world through outreach programmes with dance companies. These are designed to give youngsters an insight into what it's like to dance in a company (all be it a selective insight) or attend full-time training. There are also touring companies that involve young dancers from local dance schools and include them in their professional performances enabling them to experience the life of a professional through the rehearsal process and daily classes to a final performance that is performed alongside professionals.

Involvement is generally contingent upon selection through an audition process as it would be in the profession. The selected students have the opportunity to engage with and gain experience of the profession. The professional dancers become role models and are often involved in teaching, rehearsal and performance procedures, embedding these within behavioural and cultural norms of the profession. As the students look up to the professionals and attempts to emulate them they learn appropriate behaviours. Thus, through interactions with

these members of the adult dance community the students internalize the associated norms.

There are also opportunities for young dancers to audition for paid employment as dancers. In London this includes large-scale professional productions in the West End theatres and with ballet companies such as the Royal Ballet or English National but elsewhere this also includes local pantomime productions and touring classical companies. Whilst participation is definitely peripheral it is nevertheless immersed in the activity of dance.

These activities again give students the opportunity to engage with the wider professional, adult community. Students may be given extensive leave from school whose consent is required and may be privately tutored to compensate for loss of schooling. Though tutoring is an extreme example any involvement that requires time away from school is out of the ordinary and permission is only granted for certain groups and situations. In this context children can feel that they are different from their school friends and that this difference separates them and is positively regarded (Buckroyd, 2000).

There is also a strong emotional element to all of the activities outlined above. Performances on stage, competitions and examinations are the culmination of a great deal of work and create an atmosphere of nervousness, anxiety and excitement and can involve elation and disappointment (Buckroyd, 2000). Such highly charged emotional events have an impact on the young participants and again can lead them to either become more or less involved in the activity.

The role of the teacher

The dance teacher also has an important role to play in the socialization of dancers particularly as students will often have a core of teachers who will take them through their entire crucial early training from 2.5 to 16+yrs. The importance

of this early training is reflected in the standard required to enter full-time training at a later stage.

The students' experiences with school teachers are that parents and teachers only meet in formal settings and teachers change every year or every subject. The dance teacher on the other hand, as we have seen, knows the parents and socialises with parents at dance events. The dance teacher therefore, unlike the school teacher, becomes a friend of the family.

The teacher is also the main point of contact with reference to advise to parents and students regarding entrance into the profession, and acts as a gatekeeper to some opportunities such as, scholarships, workshops, summer schools, competitions etc. as they will be informing and selecting students for these events. This, in turn will affect the pupils' perceptions of themselves and their membership to the group. In addition, the teacher's advice will be sought regarding the student's suitability for full-time training and recommendation letters will need to be written. However, as noted above, a great deal of tacit knowledge will have already been gleaned from watching older students, exam results and socializing with students, parents, teachers and professionals at different events.

Teachers are involved in preparing students for examinations and competitions. They often take students for private lessons creating a more intense learning experience for the individual. As we have seen in the early quotes from the children's experiences of exams, the teacher teaches behaviours alongside technical training and is therefore a crucial source in the development of the cultural practices and norms of the profession. Alongside this the student is given the responsibility of practicing and as such takes responsibility, in part, for his or her own learning. By the time they are in their teens students have developed a great deal of technical knowledge and through comparisons will be adept at

analysing differences in style, technique and ability and applying what they consider to be improvements.

In addition to the preparation of performance skills teachers will also be involved in preparations relating to appearance, grooming and costumes. As parents are initially responsible for their children both they and the children themselves will be learning what the requirements are from the teacher. Very specific criteria are laid out for the appropriate grooming for exams (see appendix A for an example) and less explicitly but more publicly for grooming relating to performing.

During early training teachers show parents or parents (of more established students) show parents (of newer/younger students) what is considered appropriate and how different hairstyles or costume styles (for example) are achieved. This then extends to parents showing their children and students showing each other with younger students seeking the advice and assistance of older students and copying them so that grooming rituals are passed on and evolve in line with the conventions of the community.

The structure of the training clearly places the young person in an all-encompassing environment in which dance is the centre. This is why, in order to fully understand the transition, we need to take a more holistic look at the dancers' lives and biographies, rather than just studying the transitions itself. Without an understanding of the formative processes during their lives as a young dancer we cannot gain an understanding of the problems inherent in the dancers' transitions[7]. As early as 1989, Greben suggests identity is linked to dancers' 'lifestyle' and suggests that dancers are used to supressing emotions. He suggests that during training they put their art first and themselves second leading them to be dancers first and people second.

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[7] The justification for this approach is discussed further in the methodology chapter.

It is already evident from the brief discussion above that not all young dancers will have the physical ability to become professionals and there are clearly mechanisms within the structure of the training that enable students to assess their own potential in addition to gaining feedback from various professionals. It is also evident that there is a huge drop out rate during training. It is not surprising though that, having been immersed in the profession from a young age and having been repeatedly selected and gained pride from success within the profession, that the dancer will face problems in career transition by their late 20s / early 30s, particularly as this is a forced rather than chosen transition. In practical terms, career transition is clearly a very real problem that dancers face but the processes through which these problems arise are not yet fully understood.

Section 2. An Academic Problem: why study the career transitions of dancers?

Despite all of the organisations that have emerged in order to deal with the consequences of transition there is still a dearth of academic literature on the subject. The literature which is available is either anecdotal, lacking a clear theoretical base (Patton & Ryan, 2000), or relates to dancers in companies such as classical ballet dancers (Mason, 1993). As Leach (1997) points out it is possible to extrapolate conclusions from such studies and apply them to the wider dance community (including freelancers) based on the similarities of the experiences but it would be foolish to do so. It is believed for example that because freelance dancers have experienced numerous transitions in and out of work during their career, they consequently may not experience the same problems in transition (anecdotal evidence from CTFD). This research is unique in its focus on freelance dancers and their experiences of transition.

The following discussion is divided into two sections; firstly a look at the current understanding gained through empirical research on the transitions of dancers and secondly a look at the theoretical ideas that have been applied to the problem.

Empirical Studies

The largest and most recent survey by Baumol et al (2004) has made quite an impact on organizations such as the IOTPD and the DCD. This is an international study by a group of predominantly American researchers, which incorporated a number of issues relating to dancers career transitions. These ranged (for example) from financial problems, to why they left the career or anticipated leaving the career. Whilst this survey has many merits, particularly in it's breadth of scope and practical implications, there are a number of problems inherent within it.

Firstly, there is a problem with the way they define transition. At the beginning of the survey dancers are asked to tick one of two boxes, either 'I'm currently working full-time or part-time as a professional dancer' or, 'I'm a former professional dancer'. This forced dichotomy leads to an over simplistic view of transition and misses the issues with regard to what dancing *means* to dancers. Anderson, (2000) by contrast, likens career transitions for dancers and athletes to a "long and convoluted passage" this suggests that transition is a dynamic and complex process which occurs over a period of time. Presenting the transition in this dichotomous way is also problematic for the freelance dancer who may not be dancing at present, may be a little older, and does not know when their next dancing job will come in but may still be actively seeking employment as a dancer. They may not have made the transition psychologically, but they also may not be working as a dancer at the time of the survey.

In addition, there was a lack of consistency in Baumol et al's definitions. For example, when reporting on dancer 'populations' some countries included teachers and choreographers in their definition of dancers whilst others did not.

A second problem concerns the categories of dancer used for the survey. There were 5 options: 1- Classical ballet, 2 - Contemporary / Modern, 3 - Organized indigenous or folk dance, 4/ Musical theatre or commercial and 5/ 'Other'. Categorizing the dancers in this way is problematic for freelance dancers who work in many different areas. Their careers may include working in musical theatre, working in contemporary dance and classical ballet, working in television and working in commercials and the corporate industry. They may even, for example, be working in a west end show and take time off to do a commercial job, which places them in two categories simultaneously. However, faced with the choice above, the freelance dancer is left to tick, either the box which was appropriate that day, or tick the 'other' box. This somewhat negates the use of such categories and questions the validity and generalisability of the results pertaining to these categories.

Thirdly, the survey did not have a sound theoretical basis; instead it proposed a number of hypotheses which were "designed to throw some light on effective methods for improvement of the transition processes." It is therefore practical in its focus and positivistic in approach which is consistent with its aims, one of which was to highlight areas of practical help for dancers in transition.

There are however, some advantages to this approach particularly in providing background information on the profession. The project identified some of the practical issues facing dancers, how low pay impacts on transition in terms of funding retraining for example. It also suggested that values in the dance world hindered preparation for transition, for example the tendency for the dance community to be myopic in it's focus, although this was not fully explored in the survey, rather it was a concluding comment. The study also noted particular

features of the profession that may affect the way in which transition is experienced. For example, there is a gender bias with women making up around 72% of the workforce[8] in the profession although there was no suggestion as to how this might affect transition for different genders. Further conclusions suggested that dancers leave the profession in their late twenties to mid thirties (although some company dancers can continue into their 40s, it is acknowledged that this is exceptional). This means that after a minimum of 10 years training (Avery, 1994) most dancers have a career that spans the same length of time (Wallach, 1988). The report also suggested that there is a great deal of mobility with dancers moving from one country to another in search of employment opportunities. It was also reported that emotional loss, emptiness, loss of identity, loss of self-esteem and loneliness were experienced during transition although again there was no rationale or explanation as to why this is the case other than stating that it was linked to the environment in which the dancer lives.

It is however interesting to note that many of these surveys and the anecdotal evidence supplied by the various organisations focusing on this transition, suggest that dancers across the globe face very similar problems and that the dancer's culture and community impact upon the psychological problems faced during transition (Baumol et. al., 2004; Leach, 1997). This was also implicit in the section above discussing the socialization of dancers and the structure of training but it is something that has not been investigated in a systematic way.

What is missing from these types of reports therefore is a greater understanding of *how* and *why* these well-documented problems arise. A stronger theoretical foundation could also demonstrate how the career transition experienced by dancers can contribute to our understanding of transitions more generally.

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[8] This varied slightly from country to country and the UK was not included in these particular statistics.

Theoretical links

Theoretical discussions on the subject are limited to the application of ideas transferred from sports psychology. These theoretical positions are applied to dancers by virtue of the similarities in the professions and timing of transition. Like dancers those involved in elite level sports also face problems of identity loss when experiencing transition from their sport to and second career (Murphy et al, 1996; Lavalee, 2000; Miller, 2009). As we have seen, this is also an issue for dancers. Lavalee (2000), writing from the field of sports psychology, uses Erikson's concept of identity foreclosure (from Erikson's developmental theory, 1959) to provide an explanation for this link between career and identity. Erikson (1959), whose ideas stemmed from psychoanalysis, proposed that adolescence is a crucial time in identity formation. He described it as a time when "childhood certainties and continuities fly out the window", which is fuelled by a desire for a distinctive, clearly recognizable identity. Gaining a stable identity is part of the adolescent task (or identity crisis as it is also known) which involves exploring a number of different identities and finding a sense of ones own self with the associated moral, religious and other beliefs independently of parents and significant others. Adolescents should explore different ways of looking at themselves before settling into their own sense of self and their individual identity. Identity foreclosure occurs when a teenager settles on one identity to the exclusion of all others. This usually happens prematurely and means that the individual will take on this identity without exploring other possibilities in order to gain a more stable and reasoned sense of self.

Research in sports psychology has suggested that intensive training and focus on a particular sport during adolescence can contribute to a lack of further identity exploration resulting in an 'athletic identity' that dominates the self concept hence the use of the concept. The adolescent task is thereby solved by developing an exclusive athletic identity resulting in 'identity foreclosure' (Murphy et al.,1996; International Sports Committee, 2012; Brown et al., 2000; Lavalee 2000, Miller, 2009). The problem is that this identity has a "use by date" so

Lavalee (2000) argues that athletes find themselves facing this adolescent crises during transition. It is during transition then that these individuals finally come to explore different ways of looking at themselves.

On the surface this seems instinctive and provides a seemingly satisfactory explanation as a way to understand the problems inherent in transition. It has been suggested that parallels can be drawn between dancers and athletes on the basis that dancers have a similar intensity of training during adolescence (Patton & Ryan, 2000). Other research also suggests that this could provide an adequate explanation for the problems facing dancers. Greben (2002) describes how the young dancer becomes a dancer first and an individual second; the concept of identity foreclosure provides a good theoretical understanding of why this is the case.

Erikson's theory is often seen as a product of it's time and therefore not pertinent to peoples experiences today (Arnold, 1997) where many post-modern thinkers suggest that identity is more fluid and interchangeable (see Elliott and du Gay, 2009 for example). However, his theoretical concept of identity foreclosure appears to hold up exceptionally well when applied to athletes or dancers careers. Whilst this is a logical argument and there is a good deal of anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is the case (Taylor & Taylor, 1995; Buckroyd, 2000; Patton & Ryan, 2000; Baumol et al, 2004), these theoretical assumptions have not been thoroughly investigated. For example, there is a question surrounding the extent to which identity can be reduced to an individual's journey when clearly the social environment in which the individual is embedded also plays an important role. It cannot be a coincidence or an accident that all of those experiencing these intense training situations in childhood should all latch onto a single identity without further exploration. In addition this theory doesn't help us to understand other psychological problems such as loneliness and loss of self-

esteem[9].

The use of this concept in understanding transitions has led practitioners to the logical conclusion that in order to alleviate problems during transition the dancers need explore other identities during adolescence (Baumol et.al. 2000; Lavalee, 2000). However, this has yet to make any impact either in sport or dance as the organisations providing support for those in transition have not reported a significant difference since these ideas were implemented. We have also seen how the structure of training leads to an intensity of training that is at it's highest during adolescence when dancers are vying for places at the top training colleges.

Another set of theoretical concepts that are attractive in terms of their apparent applicability and ability to describe some of the socialization processes are Lave and Wengers' 'communities of practice' and 'peripheral participation' (1999). A community of practice can be any group within which there are social norms and ways of doing things. 'Old timers' are those who are well established in these norms and pass on the tacit knowledge of 'how things are done' whilst newcomers are engaged in 'peripheral participation' meaning that they are engaged in the group in some way but are still learning the social norms and are therefore not yet fully integrated into the group. This can be seen, for example, through the ways in which children and parents learn about appropriate grooming rituals. In Lave and Wenger's (1999) terms the school could be conceptualised as a community of practice in which older students and their parents are the 'old timers' and younger students (and parents) are engaged in legitimate peripheral participation. This suggests that the associated behaviours and social norms will be passed on as those new to the environment become more familiar with and take on the social norms of the group. Such concepts have been successfully used to suggest how young workers learn to become adults (Goodwin, 2007).

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[9] These issues are discussed further in the following chapter.

The problem with applying these concepts to this particular research question is two-fold. 1/ dance becomes the central activity in the child's (and sometimes the parent's) life. Because the activity is so all encompassing from a young age dance is more than a group or club in which there are social norms that differ from other groups. With one of the greatest problems dancers face being loss of identity, socialisation into the group goes beyond becoming part of a community of practice. The logical progression using this concept would be for the dancers to become legitimate peripheral participants in a new community as they enter a new job but the reality is not that simple. 2/ One of the findings of the surveys in this area is that transition is experienced in very similar ways by dancers in different countries (see above). Lave and Wengers' concepts cannot help us to understand why this should be the case, surely the social norms involved in one country would not be the same as those in another. So, whilst these concepts are helpful on the surface when looking at individual groups and situations they don't assist a deeper understanding of how these processes relate to identity, why dancers experience such problems in transition and how and why it appears to be such a universal problem (IOTPD, 2012).

It appears from what we know about the problems in transition that the social milieu plays an important role. Turner and Wainwright (2003) conducted a sociological study of injuries among ballet dancers. Drawing on Durkheim's (1938) concept of the 'collective consciousness' they suggest that the experience of injury is "mediated through the social bonding of dancers into a professional company". Again, the social context is seen as an important consideration when attempting to understand the experience of these dancers despite the nature of the problem being physical in essence. This suggests a need to include this aspect of the dancer's life and career in the study of their experience of transition.

Other writers have stressed the problems of leaving professions in which work is a dominant activity in one's life. Atchley (1989) for example found that for people that are involved in their work to the exclusion of all else, retirement might mean

the withdrawal of a central aspect of their identity. Clearly, dancers fall into this category; the problem for dancers is of course exacerbated by the fact that they are forced to find alternative employment at a relatively young age. Atchley's finding, whilst interesting and reinforcing in terms of the conditions in which one might face loss of identity, does not provide a deeper understanding of the problems facing dancers in transition.

Conclusions

Our current understanding of the career transition of freelance dancers is clearly limited. The problem of career transition is acknowledged with loss of identity given particular prominence but there's very little knowledge in terms of understanding why it's such a problem or how it relates to other problems such as loneliness and loss of community. In the absence of any specific research or further understanding, theoretical approaches have been applied from Sports Psychology by virtues of the similarities in the professions and timing of transition. As a consequence the theoretical discussions that exist are dominated by the concept of 'identity foreclosure'. However, it is evident from the practitioner's literature and empirical research that the dancer's social environment also plays an important role in transition. Indeed, the findings from a previous study undertaken by the author as part of a Masters degree suggested that the dancer's culture was a significant factor in shaping the experience of transition. This study will therefore draw on literature relating to identity and culture, and more specifically to where the two intersect, to see how the dancers' experiences in transition can be understood within the social context. In order to understand the transition more fully this study will also draw on the literature on transitions more generally. One of the weaknesses of previous empirical research has been the lack of a clear definition of the transition, which has led to misleading information[10]. This is a two-way link to the literature on transitions in that the

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[10] See the discussion relating to the aDvANCE project, 2004

literature will inform the study and in turn the aim is for the study to further contribute to the literature.

The aims of this research therefore are to gain a deeper understanding of the problems facing freelance dancers in career transition at both a theoretical and a practical level.

Chapter 2
Literature Review Part 1: Culture and Identity

Introduction to the Literature Review (chapters 2 & 3)

In the interests of clarity and continuity the information gleaned from the various sources of literature are presented in the following way. The literature review itself is split into three parts, the first briefly presenting the socio-historic context and the importance of locating the profession in it's temporal setting. The second examining culture and identity and the third reviewing the literature on transitions.

Given the inadequacy of existing theory for understanding dancer's transitions, there was a need to identify an alternative strategy to developing the theoretical background for the research. An initial review of the literature on transitions gave a clearer definition and understanding of the concept and the issues surrounding it but this didn't help to gain an understanding of why the dancers' transition seemed different from the transitions discussed in the literature. From the previous research undertaken for a Masters' degree, some anecdotal evidence from secondary data and the researcher's own experience, dancers' appeared to experience the transition in a fundamentally different way from those outside the profession, feeling themselves to be different from others.

Culture and identity were not initially part of the literature review, it wasn't until the data was being analysed that it became apparent that there was a need to investigate these concepts further. Whilst this is not the conventional way in which research is conducted (as prescribed by the textbooks) it was felt that the strength of themes coming from the data necessitated a deeper investigation and further understanding of the concepts of identity and culture.

With so little in the way of previous research in this particular area and the inadequacy of existing theory in terms of providing an understanding of the process it was up to the researcher to establish which theoretical ideas would be most useful. This led to this novel route in establishing an appropriate body of literature for the literature review. However it is through this process that the theoretical ideas and empirical findings became so intertwined, with each informing the other.

Reading more general literature by Mills (1959) and Elias (1978, 1939, 1965) the importance of gaining an historical perspective came to the fore particularly as way of understanding the dancer's culture in context. This led to an examination of the relevant historical literature regarding the development of the dance profession. The historical insight was then used to examine the dancers' sense of difference further and search for its origins. Elias' concepts of socio-genesis and psychogenesis[11] became guiding principles in analysing the socio-historic development of dance and how this is inextricably linked to the interaction between dance and society as a whole, influencing the dancers' experience today. The way that dancers were viewed and indeed how they perceived themselves throughout the development of the professional gives greater insight and understanding into the way that they interpret the world today. Their frame of reference is not something which is just there, it is the product of complex interactions between dancers and societies over hundreds of years. Gaining this insight into the development of the dancers' world also facilitated a deeper understanding of how dancers came to see themselves as being significantly different.

In the interests of clarity and continuity the information gleaned from the various sources of literature are presented in the following way. The literature review itself is split into three parts, the first taking a brief look at the socio-historic context and the relevance of sociogenesis and psychogenesis in gaining an

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[11] These concepts are explained below.

understanding of dancers' current experiences of transition, the second examining culture and identity and the third reviewing the literature on transitions.

The geneses of the dancers' world

Many sociologists have pointed to the importance of understanding the historical context of what is being studied, most notably C. Wright Mills and N. Elias. Wright Mills (1959) stressed the need for social scientists to gain a perspective that incorporates the intersection of biography and history within society as a whole. This he argues is required in order to gain an understanding of a given problem, he states:

> *"The first fruit of the imagination and the first lesson of social science that embodies it is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period."* (p.5)

Locating the dancers' biography within the context of the socio-historic environment from which the profession emerged is therefore necessary in order to gain a full understanding of the problems they face.

Similarly Elias (1978) rejects any reference to the dichotomy of the individual and the social and instead stresses processes of change that are historically and contextually emergent. He uses the concepts of sociogenesis (the process of development and transformation of social relations, Goodwin, 2007) and psychogenesis (the process of transformation and development of the psychology that accompanies and is linked to changes, Goodwin, 2007) suggesting that it is the inter-relationship of these two processes that historically shapes behaviours and social norms (Elias, 1939). Essentially, the concepts of socio-genesis and psychogenesis encapsulate the synergy between the individual and society through time. These concepts are very useful as they get to the heart of the problems facing dancers which appear to be located not solely at the level of the individual or at societal level but where the two intersect. This

is evident from the discussion in the previous chapter in which problems in transition were seen at the individual level in terms of the discussion of identity foreclosure and identity loss yet the role of social factors such as training and the dancers' environment were also stressed.

These concepts interact though time showing how the individual and the social mutually shape and change social norms and values and individual perceptions of what 'goes without saying' through their symbiotic relationship. In order therefore to fully consider the dancers' current dilemma concerning transition it is necessary to look back at how the interaction of the social and the individual have shaped the norms that are present both in the dancers' world and in wider society (as suggested by Becker, 1969[12]) today.

Dancers are aware of their professional heritage and the importance of classical ballet as the root of technique. It is stressed through the need to take daily ballet classes if one wishes to become a professional dancer. Those trained in the Cecchetti method for example can directly trace their heritage through their teaches to the great masters including Enrico Cecchetti, Vestris before him and right back to the origins of ballet in the French courts of Louis xiii and xiv. Similarly dancers who train in ISTD modern are aware that their heritage stems from Zeilia Ray, student of Madame Rambert who worked with Nijinsky in deciphering Stravinsky's music using Delchrose Eurythmics, patronised by Diaghalev the man to whom the commercialisation and artistic stance of dance is largely attributed (see Garafola,1988 for example). Through Nijinsky our heritage can be traced to the great early Russian masters. There are various other examples of connections to the past through Sir Frederick Ashton and Dame Ninette de Valouis of the Royal Ballet. This is common knowledge amongst dancers but is verified by and can be confirmed in books such as 'The History of Dance, (Clarke & Crisp, 1981) The Magic of Ballet, (Fonteyn, 1980) 'The History of the Royal Ballet' (Bland, 1981), '100 years of the ISTD' (MacInnes, 2004), 'The Routledge Dance Studies Reader' (Carter, 1998) 'Diaghalev and the Golden Age

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[12] See Chapter 2 pt. 2

of the Ballet Russe' (Pritchard, 2010) and other reputable books on the history of dance. The point here is that this historical perspective not only affects the dancers through their sense of heritage and belonging but also through the sociogenesis and psychogenesis of the profession and the interaction between dancer and public through the centuries. For example, initially dance was something that everyone could perform. The gentry performed the early ballets and the steps were accessible to anyone, technically speaking, in the form of Baroque dance (see historical sources given above). However, as we have seen, it has evolved into a highly specialised ability, demanding great skill and physical strength, flexibility and agility developed from a young age. This specialism and demanding technique is not something that emerged in isolation but was a result of interactions between social demands and fashions, technical advancements, the development of social institutions dedicated to the teaching of dance (Royal schools in Europe in particular) and the drive of the individuals to surpass their peers, developments in music and theatrical technologies etc. Accordingly these impact on how dancer views themselves in relation to their broader social world. The development of pointe work is one such example. Pointe work came into fashion in around the 1830s partly as a response to the audiences preference for the ethereal during the Romantic period (Clarke & Crisp, 1981). It then influenced fashion itself whilst simultaneously changing the role of the female ballet dancer elevating her to the spotlight for the first time (Vaughn & Clarke, 1977). This penchant for the romantic and other-worldly was partly attributed to a sense of exemption from human laws during that era, it is argued that this is the reason for it's popularity following the French revolution (Jowitt, 1998). What is certain is that the ballets of the time were aided by new technical abilities that were developing and being utilised by the theatres (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). Dancing on pointe therefore, something that young girls think of as synonymous with ballet technique, is actually the result of complex social interactions and developments.

As popularity for dance grew so did the boundaries to the technical range of the dancer to provide ever more spectacular performances for the demanding and

critical audiences (Clarke & Crisp, 1981). For example, it is recorded that on one occasion when Carlotta Grisi leapt from a platform 6' in the air, into the arms of her male lead, the audience insisted that she repeat it 4 times before they were satisfied with the achievement. As Garafola notes "The circumstances of productions are inextricably tied to the politics of consumption." (Garafola, p. 215). These dynamic, interactive processes however also impact on the individual dancers' sense of what it means to be a dancer within a given social context. The processes of sociogenesis and psychogenesis operate to create and recreate each other, shaping both the social environment and the individual in relation to each other through time. The dancers' abilities that set them apart from their peers at a young age and make them different in a concrete way are the result of these socio-historic processes. As the dancers work hard to attain great physical abilities that non-dancers may never achieve this in turn impacts upon individual and group identity.

Another aspect of dance that sets dancers apart from their peers is their attire. Again this has evolved through interactions between the individual dancers, choreographers, audiences, musical advances, technical advances etc and it now forms part of the dancers' way of life and as we've seen has an impact on how they feel about themselves (see the quote from young dancers from S. Africa, p.8). Costumes such as the tutu and men's ballet tights that are synonymous with ballet today are the result of complex interactions over the years as they developed from huge garments in the 15th to 18th Centuries into the iconic images that we associate ballet with today. (see history books cited above). Another very significant aspect of dance as a profession that needs to be seen in context is the attitudes of those outside the profession towards the profession. Dance shows went from something that only Royalty and high gentry could participate in in the 15th to 18th centuries to something that was considered akin to prostitution in the 19th century and back to some respectability in the 20th Century to the present time where it sits uncomfortably between the two but has gained popularity and respectability in recent years (see dance history books). This again is a result of the processes of psychogenesis and sociogenesis,

woven together and affecting public attitudes towards dance and the dancers' sense of self within the profession simultaneously. The relationship between the dancers' sense of self and the attitudes and beliefs of those in the dancers' wider social sphere is explored further throughout the thesis but particularly in the section on culture and identity below.

With the democratisation of dance and the theatre in the late 19th and 20th centuries, more and more parents sought dance training for their children. The process was formalised in the UK through the establishment of professional qualifications and National syllabi such as the ISTD, RAD, BBO[13]. In other Western countries such as the USA, there is less emphasis on the attainment of formal qualifications in dance however the structure of training, age of commencement, intensity and connection to the profession is much the same. This provides the institutional structure through which young children are trained from an increasingly early age to learn the techniques and acquire the physique and attributes that will enable them to meet professional standards. It provides a framework for the establishment of a separate culture and identity of which little is known by those outside the profession. Dancers are seen as a separate group, but for some of the public this is just another job, another occupation. For dancers trained to gruelling standards over many years this is a different way of life. The lack of understanding from the outside world feeds back into the dancers' own sense of isolation, difference and separation from the 'normal' world. The integrated processes of sociogenesis and psychogenesis are ever present.

Through this complex history the symbiotic processes of socio-genesis and psychogenesis have affected, changed and shaped social norms and individual perceptions. How dancers perceive themselves, how they are perceived through the 'public' eye, how they interact, how they became separated from the 'norm' and why they face a finite career today are all rooted in this socio-historic context.

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[13] Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD), Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), British Ballet Organisation (BBO).

Their identity, culture and experience of transition today form a continuation of the processes of yesterday. In the next part of the thesis we explore other literature that relates to this.

Culture and Identity: Introduction

"So, who are you?"

"I'm a dancer"

"No, I mean what's your name?"

(Taken from the film 'Black Swan', 2011)

The previous chapter gave an overview of the problems facing dancers and our current understanding of the issues they face. It is evident that both culture and identity are pertinent issues that need some clarification. The intention here is not to provide the reader with a comprehensive guide to current thinking in these areas. Clearly one could not hope to tackle or cover two such huge concepts in their entirety. The aim here is to give an overview of some of the ideas surrounding these concepts and provide a discussion to ascertain which ideas are relevant to the thesis and which are less than helpful, in order to clarify how these terms are used to aid understanding in this research. In doing so this chapter will explore the way in which the self as an individual and social being is conceptualised on a theoretical level. To this end the chapter is presented in three sections, the first examining identity, the second occupational identity the third culture.

Identity is discussed because, as we've seen, loss of identity is one of the core problems facing dancers in transition and previous studies of the dancer's transition and the problems associated with identity focus particularly on identity foreclosure (Erikson, 1959). This is followed by an examination of theories about the part played by occupations in identity formation in contemporary societies. As the dancer's identity is not an individual endeavour but a social process constructed and situated in the culture of their profession and wider societal norms, culture is therefore a key concept in this thesis. In view of this, the final section gives particular attention to how culture is conceptualised and defined,

drawing largely on the work of Becker (1969). Together these provide part of the theoretical heritage drawn on to guide and make sense of the findings.

Identity

i)   Explaining the loss of identity for dancers: extending foreclosure theory.

"Few other professions create such a strong personal identity for the performer. Practitioners 'become' dancers at a relatively young age, with other interests rarely encouraged as they might distract from the total commitment and passion the dance profession requires. Therefore it comes as no surprise that many dancers do not think about what will happen when dancing ends and can be deeply affected by the sudden gap in their lives." (Dobler, 2008 p. 4 – publication for the DCD[14])

The literature has already established that the intensive training that dancers experience from a young age, alongside a dedication and passion for their art leads them to develop an early and enduring identification with their occupation (Pickman, 1987; Saposnek, 1995). Young, trainee dancers at the Royal Ballet's lower school (White Lodge) are encouraged not to perform an arabesque[15] but to become the arabesque "it's about transformation" (Jennings, 2012 p. 24). Due to the athletic nature of their career, dancers are forced to leave the profession early, in the UK this in their late twenties to early thirties creating profound problems, the most significant of which is a 'loss of identity' (Wallach, 1998; Levine, 2004). Kielhofner et al. (2002), provides an illustration of the synergy that exists between a ballet dancer's sense of self and her occupational status as a dancer.

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[14] The Dancers Career Development is a charitable organisation that provides advice and support for dancers facing career transition.
[15] An arabesque is movement in which dancers stands on one leg and raises the other in the air behind them.

"Life without ballet. What would I do? Who would I be? Would
anyone love me if I couldn't dance? Would I be desirable if I had no
gift to offer, no special talent? It may seem silly now, but I had
known nothing else for my entire lifetime … My identity as a
ballerina had provided me with a sense of belonging and
understanding of my place in the world. Without that identity, I felt
lost." (pp. 134-135)

It is this loss of identity that dancers experience that has dominated discussions
in the literature (Pickman, 1987; Greben, 1989; Horosko, 1982; Leach, 1997;
Buckroyd, 2000). As we have seen problematizing the dancer's identity in this
way has led writers on the topic to draw on the concept of 'identity foreclosure'
(Erikson, 1959) in order to understand the dancer's identity and the associated
loss during career transition (Lavalee et al, 1997, Patton and Ryan, 2000, Levine,
2004). The problem is seen to lie in the dancer's fixation on and internalization of
dance as an identity, instead of gaining a stable sense of self upon which
different occupational identities can be incorporated and worn as a symbolic
badge relating to the self (Murphy et al., 1996; Lavalee and Wylleman, 2000).

There is a clear logic to this argument and to then use of the concept of
foreclosure in understanding the problems facing dancers in transition. The idea
that it is the fixed, rigid nature of their identity that creates problems for the
individual moving away from the profession seems to fit perfectly with the
problems facing dancer's that will no longer have this occupational badge to
identify with. Indeed Lavalee and Wylleman (2000) suggest that it is only in
career transition that the dancer (or athlete) resolves the 'identity crises' (as
conceptualized by Erikson (1959)).

Another facet of 'identity foreclosure' that makes it particularly attractive is that
the concept gives a clear rationale for why the identity becomes rigid and as a
result, a clear solution with regards to how to 'fix' the problem of identity. These
ideas have led to the assumption that it is a lack of exploration during

adolescence that leads the dancer to develop a problematic identity and this can be solved by encouraging more exploration during that age. However, there are essentially two problems with conceptualizing the dancer's identity in this way. Firstly, there is the overt assumption that the dancer's identity and identification with the career is inherently problematic. 'Identity foreclosure' is, after all, a dysfunctional state and therefore dancers are dysfunctional in their resolution of the identity crises. This conceptualisation belies the complexity, development, legitimacy and integrity of the dancer's identity leading to an over simplistic and individualistic view of how to assist future dancers. Secondly, it assumes that identity formation is an individual process.

Within these two theoretical challenges for the use of this concept there is the practical problem that, being individualistic in nature it cannot account for the universality of the problem affecting dancers from different genres and from different geographical locations (Ijdens and Langenberg, 2008; Baumol, et al., 2004)[16].

ii)   Current Concepts of Identity

Clearly, Erikson's concept of identity foreclosure does not encompass the importance of group status in the formation and continuity of identity and neither does it give scope for a consideration of the ways in which cultural norms and values impact upon identity. Of course, Erikson's concepts of the 'identity crisis' and identity foreclosure within it have been heavily criticized over the years. It is often seen as a product of it's time with little relevance to the fast changing, ambiguous, global societies within which identities are currently negotiated (Arnold, 1997; Bauman, 2009).

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[16] It is also noted that much of the formal research that has been done is based on classical dancers in dance companies rather than freelance dancers.

In contrast to Erikson, current conceptualisations tend to focus on either the fluidity of identity in contemporary society or the process of individualisation. Those that focus on fluidity though variable, tend to stress the changing, fragmented and transitory nature of identity (Elliott and Du Gay, 2009). These conceptualisations are often given in contrast to identity formation in the industrial era when strong communities with a sense of history were seen to have a central role in shaping identity. The assumption is that these traditional and historically grounded communities have been eroded and they therefore no longer provide the strong sense of belonging and shared cultural values and beliefs that used to be central to identity formation (Elliott and Du Gay, 2009; Marshall, 1997; Beck, 1997; Bauman, 1997).

The second group of contemporary conceptualisations focus on the tension between the current emphasis on individualisation and the formation of an identity that incorporates a sense of belonging (Lasch, 1979; Winlow and Hall, 2009). The suggestion is that individuals look for 'groups' with which to identify and belong but that these are transient in nature as ultimately the individual is negotiating their identity alone and not as part of a group. This search for identity then becomes an identity in itself (Elliott and Du Gay, 2009). There is also the suggestion that these identifications are bound in a consumerist and globalised world, which is constantly changing, the result being that identification with particular groups tends to be transitory rather than lasting (Bauman, 1998; Castells, 1997). Young (2009) suggests that there is a lack of community in today's global world and as such people search for communities 'like pegs' on which to hang their identity.

As can be seen from the previous chapter and again in the quote from the ballerina above, dancers *do* have a strong sense of shared history, a strong sense of belonging and shared cultural values and beliefs. The historical foundation and social development of these shared values and beliefs will be fully explored in chapter 5. The link between this strong sense of belonging,

cultural values and identity is also evident for other professions such as the cases of the slaughtermen and gynaecological nurses discussed below. What is interesting about the case of dancers (and freelance dancers in particular) is that unlike the cultures cultivated in traditional, 'working communities', dancers are not concentrated in a particular geographical location. Therefore, their culture is not spatially bound but it is nevertheless undeniably historically grounded. The global nature of the dancer's culture is explored in the analysis.

Occupations and identity

There is a set of literature that focuses on the relationship between occupations and identity. Writers such as Beck (1992, 2000), Bauman (1998) and others suggest that the 'destandardization of labour' has eroded the importance of work and occupations as a meaningful source of identity. For example, Bauman states:

> "By contrast with a society based on production, ours is a 'consumer society' in which work has lost its 'privileged' position as an axis around which all other efforts at self-constitution and identity-building rotate" (Bauman, 1998 p.32).

Beck (2000) also suggests that the diminishing centrality of work as a locus for identity is directly related to the nature of increasingly insecure, non-standard work. Doherty (2009) challenges these claims and demonstrates how factors such as skill development and social networks within an industry facilitate the ways in which work continues to be important for identity. To add further support for Doherty's argument that work is important for identity through social networks, a nurse in Bolton's study said of her work that; "It gives me the feeling of belonging and being important in the community" (2003, p.173). Bolton also observed that the Gynaecological nurses had formed a tight community amongst themselves creating "their own ways of asserting their collective identity." (2005, p.172) Similarly Ackroyd and Crowdy (1990) observed that the slaughtermen they studied spent much of their leisure time socializing and participating in

activities with each other. They felt that only other people in their industry really understood them and we have seen this in the previous discussion around occupational cultures of difference. This again demonstrates how work can be important for identity through the social networks formed in the workplace, but also seen through the wider lens of societal norms discussed previously, which mean that these people feel to a greater or lesser extent extraordinary.

Both Cartmel (2007) and Brown et al. (2000) also stress the importance of work for people's sense of self and self-esteem. However, Bauman argues that:

> "Getting attached to the job in hand, identifying one's place in the world with the work performed is neither very likely nor to be recommended given the short-lived nature of any employment" (1998: 35).

Whilst this seems entirely logical given the changing nature of work and employment, at the same time, freelance dancers are dependant upon such short-term and unstable contracts of this kind. Clearly this is has not prevented them from identifying their place in the world with the work performed.

The common thread linking these modern notions of identity is that they, in some way, treat identity as a badge in that it is something that changes as both society and ourselves (as active participants in that society) change, morph and evolve throughout the life course. Identity is not conceptualised as something that is stable and enduring, indeed this is seen as something that is both unrealistic and undesirable in today's society. Paradoxically, it is Erikson's assertion that a healthy resolution to the 'identity crises' involves the attainment of stability and continuity in the sense of self, that Bauman (2009) finds least relevant in today's society and yet it is the dancer's sense of stability and continuity that has led to a diagnosis of 'identity foreclosure'.

Whilst identity formation is an individual process, it is also socially constructed and it is only through the shared meanings attached to that identity that it has any significance at all. As such, in order to understand what it means to be a dancer and therefore what it means for a dancer to lose that identity, we need to have an understanding of the frame of reference within which their sense of self is constructed, namely their culture.

Culture

Popular in organizational research but widely acknowledged as a difficult and slippery concept (Alvesson, 1989) culture remains a powerful notion that encompasses the shared knowledge, beliefs and values that guide behaviour and make one group distinctive from others (Trompenaars, 1993). It can be seen at varying levels from the societal to the individual, which is one of the reasons why it is often considered problematic and difficult to pin down.

Redfield (1941) defines culture from an anthropological perspective in the following way:

> "In speaking of "culture" we have reference to the conventional understandings, manifest in act and artifact, that characterize societies. The "understandings" are the meanings attached to acts and objects. The meanings are conventional, and therefore cultural in so far as they have become typical for the members of that society by reason of inter-communication among the members." (P.132)

Whilst this definition is clearly quite dated and aimed at the societal level, for largely homogenous groups, the same principles regarding the relationship between acts, artefacts and shared meanings can be applied to smaller groups or sub-cultures (Becker, 1969). Becker is also very cognizant of the relationship

between any sub-culture and societal norms in general. In his study of 'deviant' groups he states that "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance" (1969, p.9). At the individual level, culture contributes to the shaping of individual perceptions, understandings and identity (Louis, 1980; Morgan, 1996). As Becker (1969) points out, in order to understand the behaviour of an individual we need to understand their way of life, and the concept of 'culture', in the way that Becker conceptualizes it, provides a vehicle through which we can achieve this.

Ackroyd and Crowdy (1990) highlighted the ways in which occupational culture, as a sub culture, is bound in and only makes sense in relation to wider social norms.

> "Occupational culture can involve the incorporation of latent elements reflecting 'deep structures' (in a Levi Straussian sense) of a general culture. At this level culture can be seen as categorising experience in fundamental ways and, precisely because much of this is not seen, the obligatory nature of culture can be easily overlooked…. the dominant values of society at large are implicated in what appears to be the spontaneous formation and character of occupational cultures." (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990 p. 1&2)

Becker suggests that when the values and norms expressed through everyday life in the wider social sphere reflect distaste for the sub-culture concerned (as we shall was the case with dancers in Victorian times) these norms are inverted so that what is considered 'distasteful' (or deviant) by those outside the group is considered a source of pride by those inside the group. This is evident in his study of dance musicians who considered those outside of their profession to be 'squares'[17]. Similarly, in Ackroyd and Crowdy's study of Slaughtermen, this is seen in the way that young workers were observed splashing blood on

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[17] 'Squares' refers to people who do not understand and appreciate music.

themselves prior to leaving the slaughterhouse, their 'dirty' and socially distasteful job of killing animals displayed with honour and pride (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990). This inevitable link between culture and identity is discussed further below.

It is important to note here that occupational culture is sometimes conceptualised as an outer layer to a deeper culture that is associated with socio-economic status. Whilst the socio-economic status of the slaughtermen and nurses is not given it is implied that the slaughtermen are of a similar socio-economic status given their mutual leisure pursuits, locality etc. In part 2 of this chapter we will also see how socio-economic status (through the cultural meanings inherent within it) has also been linked to other aspects of identity such as masculinity McDowell (2004). Dancers however come from very varied socio-economic backgrounds and geographical locations and yet they share a deep-rooted connection to each other by virtue of their culture which overrides other group identifications. As this very strong and pervasive cultural connection appears to be quite an unusual phenomenon outside the world of dance, this theme is explored further in the analysis chapters.

The term 'culture' used here has some similarities with Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital in that it incorporates the tastes, style and lifestyle that the individual has acquired (Webb et al., 2002). However, more fundamentally it stresses the core values and beliefs held by a particular group of individuals and incorporates the processes through which these are formed and reinforced. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital implies an element of fluidity so that if the environment changes (in terms of the cultural capital) then the individual will respond to this by changing their own values and beliefs (Webb et al. 2002). It is argued here that such core values and beliefs are not so transient and can form the basis of a more enduring sense of self. As such the concept of 'culture' is favoured over the concept of 'cultural capital'. As Salaman suggests, the conceptual problems of the term 'culture' do not vitiate its importance and

usefulness both for academics and practitioners alike (Salaman, 2001) providing it is used in a clear and consistent manner.

Culture and identity

This intrinsic link between culture and identity has been widely acknowledged (Becker, 1969; Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Bolton, 2005; Louis, 1980; Morgan, 1996). Becker (1969) for example, in his research into the culture of dance musicians, describes them as a group whose "full-time activity is centred around the occupation and whose self is to some degree deeply involved in it." (p.82) Whilst Becker acknowledges that the dance musician's live a life that is outside the parameters of societal 'norms'; the relationship between the musician's occupation and identity or 'sense of self' is highlighted without their identity being deemed inherently problematic as it is with dancers.

As Becker noted with all 'deviant' groups, their view of what they do is not necessarily shared by society and this sense of difference is inverted so that musicians and other deviant groups feel that it is people outside of their group don't appreciate and understand who they are and what they do. One of the musician's in Becker's study said:

> "You know it's hard to get out of the music business because you feel so different from others …. Being a musician was great, I'll never regret it. I understand things that squares never will." (Becker, 1969 p.86)

The impact of a collective sense of 'otherness' (being different from the norm or 'special') on identity is also something that is highlighted in Sharon Bolton's study of Gynaecology nurses (2005). Here the sense of 'difference' is specifically related to a group whose occupation is seen as 'dirty' by virtue of the types of issues that these nurses deal with, including abortion, cancer and other socially unpleasant situations. She observes that these nurses find ways of asserting

their own sense of collective identity through rituals, norms and ways of behaving, coping and understanding their world in relation to more general, societal perceptions:

> "Although there are many similarities with other aspects of nursing
> a strong sense of 'otherness' means that they rely very much on a
> form of collective sense-making which excludes 'outsiders'."(Bolton,
> 2005, p.179)

This leads to a culture with which the nurses strongly identify, feeling that their job is a vocational calling giving them a sense that by belonging to this 'different' group they are 'special'. This resonates with the examples of the dancer's sense of belonging and loss of status when faced with the prospect of no longer belonging to this 'special' group (Buckroyd, 2000; Baumol et al, 2004). As we've seen in the first chapter, for dancers, the culture spills over into family and social spheres at an early age. This creates a blurring of the boundary between leisure activity, home life, occupation and sense of self that is explored in the analysis.

So, the collective sense of difference, seen in relation to wider societal norms, manifests itself at the individual level as being in some way 'special' and certainly different from others, or in the case of Becker's musicians, 'squares'. The very fact that there is a special name given to 'outsiders' demonstrates a strength of group identity and can be found in other domains such as religion[18]. They felt that they are not fully understood, as people, outside of their communities. Alongside this is the knowledge that not everyone is capable of performing the job that they perform and that it is extremely hard work. These core values for the occupation and their association with it are reflected in the individual's sense of self and pride in what they do. What Becker (1969) and Ackroyd and Crowdy (1990) both point out (as noted above) is that an occupational culture and the inevitable impact that this has on the sense of self, is shaped as much by factors 'external to the workplace' as those deeply embedded within it because they too are inter-

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[18] For example the Jewish community gives the name 'Goy' to non-Jews.

related. Societal perceptions and 'norms' form part of the processes of collective identity in the sense of self versus 'other'. The point here is that any sense of difference is a two-way processes between the societal norms and values that are accepted within a society at large and the cultural norms and values expressed, understood and practiced by the individuals who identify with and belong to a particular group.

Another study that is also influenced by the 'Chicago School' and similarly foregrounds the concept of culture (or sub-culture) is taken from literature on youth transitions and focuses on a study of lapdancers. Colosi (2010) also uses the socio-historic context as a focus, highlighting the similarities between the cultures of taxi-hall dancers in the 1930s with the lapdancers of today. Again this suggests that the influence of work and it's ability to form strong cultural meanings has not dissipated for all professions.

There are many similarities between Colosi's and Becker's work particularly in relation to cultures that normalise acts that might outside the context be considered deviant such as the consumption of class 'A' drugs and drinking before and during work (Colosi, 2010 p.5). Similarly a study by Dressel and Petersen (1982) found that male stripers also undergo a process of socialisation which leads to the reconceptualization of the occupation of stripping for those participating in that occupation. Colosi's study also highlights the tacit 'house' rules that are shared and created by members within a given club, this gives a strong geographical element to the study. Professional dancers also have tacit understandings that make up their culture but these are not geographically bound.

It should be noted here (to avoid confusion) that despite the word dancer being in the title lap dancers are not professionally trained dancers (see Sanders and Hardy, 2012). The lap dancers' culture is vastly different to that of those working in the dance industry. The structure of the sex industry and lap dancing within it is very different from the structure of the dance industry.

 This may be one of the reasons for the differences which are strikingly clear as there is no strong connection or core value relating to the occupational role

neither is there an identification with dance. Professional dancers would not be found drinking prior to or during a show as this would be dangerous both to themselves and their dance partners, it would jeopardise the show and more importantly their reputation within the industry thereby potentially costing a loss of future work.

Colosi's study does demonstrate a strong connection, bond and understanding between the people within the occupation which includes a shared tacit knowledge that one obtains through interactions with others working in the same job (Colosi, 2010 p.10). In this regard it is similar to Ackroyd and Bolton's studies above particularly as they all relate to occupations that have an element of social taboo. As with Ackroyd's study the lap dancers have their own 'ways of doing things' which are tacit but understood and behaviour is adjusted according to these unwritten cultural 'rules' and norms.

The literature in the area of lap dancers therefore has some similarities particularly in relation to the way in which occupational groups can have a culture which affects the individual's identity. As Becker suggests it is perhaps the case that occupations (or groups more generally) that do not conform to broader societal norms are more likely to develop a strong culture due their position of difference within society. This is certainly a question for future research but it is also something that unites all of these studies.

So, whilst there are some similarities in terms of the strong cultural impact of the lap dancing occupation it is the differences in how this is manifested that is most interesting. These differences in terms of the lack of dedication and centrality of the art form in conceiving the self highlights the impact that intense training and early exposure to the profession has on the dancers' identification with dance and the deep core value of the activity and more crucially the career.

Interestingly, most of the studies of strong occupational cultures discussed above are linked to a particular geographical location. The case of dancers with no geographical basis for their community raises questions regarding the

importance of geographical place in the formation and development of shared core beliefs and understandings.

Conclusion

What this survey of the literature has revealed is problems with the conventional psychological analysis of the dancers transition, centred largely around our understanding of the concept of identity. Yet when we look to the literature on identity from other disciplines this does not take us much further in our understanding. Indeed there is considerable disagreement over the part played by work in identity formation in contemporary society yet work is still central to the dancer's identity. Attempts will be made to resolve some of these issues in this thesis.

On the other hand the literature on culture and its role in identity formation has proved a much more useful source of ideas with which to inform the analysis. In particular the theme that Becker proposes, regarding how self and other are mutually constructed through the dancers' culture, that is the core values and beliefs that are shared by a group, and taken into the self-concept of the individual. The dancer's culture is therefore the mechanism through which the individual constructs what it means to be a dancer and this as we shall see has major implications for how the transition is experienced. The culture as it is seen in this study is not a static entity in it's own right but a set of shared beliefs, values and meanings that are ever evolving and only really understood in context. Having briefly seen how the dancer's culture has evolved the concepts of sociogensis and psychogenesis have proved useful in comprehending the dynamics of the self and the social and will be used to guide the analysis.

Chapter 3
Literature Review Part 2: Transitions

The literature relating directly to dancers' transitions again led to a wider search in this area. The literature on transitions in the social sciences more generally is quite erratic and at times disparate in that it involves different disciplines looking at different types of transition. The term 'transition' itself can be quite ill defined and broadly used. For example one can transition into something, out of something or through something, they have been described as subjective versus objective (Louis, 1980), as a series of life course tasks or developments (Erikson 1968, Super 1990) and as a cycle (Nicholson, 1990) they have been described from different angles according to the perspective used (sociological, psychological, anthropological etc.), they have been defined through their relative level of complexity (France, 2007) with conceptual metaphors ranging from 'niches' to 'trajectories' (Furlong, 2009) and the analogies used to describe them including 'changes', 'pathways' and 'rivers'. Beyond this is there are also authors such as Quinn (2010), writing from a post-modern / post-structuralist perspective who argue that the concept of transitions doesn't really exist as it implies that we experience periods of stability. The point made is that we are 'lost in transition' throughout our lives as the continuity of transition leads to a fluid state[19]. Despite this, understanding and conceptualizing transitions is clearly necessary in order to gain a better understanding of the problems facing dancers in their career transition.

In an attempt to unpick these different ways of talking about transitions and to make sense of them in relation to dancers' experiences this section will provide a brief outline of how research and theory have been used to conceptualize transitions. As the literature on the school to work transition is the most developed this is used to understand the existing research on dancers which by

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[19] This body of literature will not be examined here, as it is not relevant to the research question.

comparison is in its infancy. The conceptualisations of the transitions presented are summarised and are broadly found to a) consist of two main groups of transitions, linear and protracted and b) contain an underlying three-stage model. These are then used to provide a framework against which to evaluate the findings on the dancer's career.

It is worth noting here that there is also a very large and significant body of literature that focuses on youth transitions. Roberts (2011) however notes that there is a propensity for these studies to focus on either disadvantaged youths at one end of the spectrum or those who follow a 'government preferred' route of higher education into employment. This study focuses on dance transitions away from the career and as such is not obviously aligned to this literature, however dancers do fall into what Roberts terms the 'missing middle' that is an occupational group that have experienced transition neither as a 'NEET' (not in education or employment) nor as a 'tidy' (government preferred route through higher education) group. So, although it is not appropriate to examine this area of literature in depth as the focus here is on dance, work and transitions away from the career rather than youth transitions into work, nevertheless this research may provide a valuable contribution to the literature on Youth Transitions, providing an insight into one such 'middle' group.

Conceptualising transitions

Research on dancers' transitions has focused on transitions from a psychological perspective. In this limited literature there is an emphasis on the transition as a process of loss and mourning with authors such as Leach, (1997) and Buckroyd,

(2000) drawing on the work of Adams et al. (1979) in order to understand the process as a bereavement. This reflects the research on the career transitions of those in sporting careers (Lavalee, 2000: Murphy et al. 1996: Wylleman et al., 2004: Torregrosa et al. 2004). This individualistic approach whilst useful from a counselling perspective does not assist in gaining an understanding of why the transition is experienced in this way, why the experience is universal or how other social factors might impact upon it. The focus is on the individual coping with one aspect of the transition process.

Some of the literature deals with a particular aspect of transition such as the transitions into something or out of something. Lave and Wenger (1991) for example discuss how transitions can be made into an occupation or group through processes including legitimate peripheral participation. Other writers describe transitions as a process of 'becoming' (Ball et al., 2000; Ecclestone et al., 2010; Reay & William, 1999; Colley 2006) or 'unbecoming' such as Colley et al's (2007) discussion of how teachers disengage and transition away from aspects of their profession. From a psychological perspective authors including Adams et al. (1976) and Leach (1997) look at the experience and process of loss and mourning when transitioning out of or away from something. These studies bring an in-depth understanding of how and why different aspects of transition are experienced in the ways that they are, with some researchers focusing on the experience of the individual and some on the impact of broader social issues. More broadly there is a mind-boggling array of studies researching a diverse range of transitions. For example there are studies on school to work transitions (Ashton and Field 1976; McDowell, 2002; Furlong and Kelly, 2005; Bynner and Roberts, 1991; Heinz, 1999), transitions to adulthood (Elias, 1939; Erikson, 1968; Goodwin and O'Connor, 2009), career and job transitions (Louis, 1980; Super, 1980, 1996; Patton and Ryan, 2000; Nicholson, 1990), transitions to and from employment (Adams et al., 1976; Latack and Dozier, 1986; Lave and Wenger, 1991), transitions into motherhood (Hollway, 2007) and transitions between employment (Fouad and Bynner, 2008) to name a few. In addition, overlaps

between these different transitions have been identified and discussed, in particular the link that still remains prevalent between school to work transitions and transitions into adulthood (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; France, 2007; Goodwin, 2007).

Once again as research relating to dancers in this area is in it's infancy and very limited it is up to the researcher to find an appropriate body of literature. With the literature on transitions more generally being so varied it was necessary to select a single body of literature to focus on. To this end the case of 'school to work' transitions will be used to guide the conceptualisation of transitions. It provides the most coherent account and has a well-documented history incorporating both psychological and sociological perspectives, which reflects the nature of the research problem at hand.

A brief history of school to work transitions

Early work in this area was drawn from psychological theories. This stemmed from Hall's work (1903), which suggested that the transitional period of adolescence was a natural progression, shaped by psychological stress and due to physiological changes (France, 2007). Havighurst, (1948) also stressed a model based on natural growth tasks (in Evans and Furlong, 1997), likewise, for Erikson (1968) the transition from youth to adulthood (as with other transitional moments in the human life course) was marked by a psychological task, which if undertaken successfully, would lead to a balanced individual but if unfulfilled, it led to an imbalance in aspects of the personality[20]. The underlying assumption is that it is a natural, individual, developmental process and therefore unrelated to issues in the wider environment. It is from this body of literature that the current understanding of the dancer's transition has emerged.

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[20] Such as identity foreclosure as discussed previously.

This dominant, psychological position was challenged in the late 1960's and early 1970's when sociologists were keen to point out that they had identified patterns in the ways that school to work transitions were negotiated and that these patterns were enmeshed in powerful social structures and forces which were hugely influential for the ways in which school to work transitions were experienced. Elias (1970) drawing on the ideas of psychoanalysis provided an explanation that incorporated the wider social environment, emphasizing transition as both an individual and social process. His 'shock hypothesis' suggested that because children were immersed in a child's world they did not have a clear understanding of the adult world and as such the transition from school (child's world) to work (adult's world) produced a sense of shock, as it was essentially a transition from child to adult. Elias discussed the need for young workers to adapt to and adopt adult behaviours such as self-discipline, both in terms of arriving on time and taking appropriate breaks and in terms of general behaviour and conduct (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2006).[21] This conceptualisation bridges the individual – societal gap and shows a move away from an individual, developmental approach.

Dealing specifically with the experience of school to work transitions Ashton and Field's (1976) research suggested that, important social networks such as families and schools and the experiences of those who were influential in those networks, shaped young people's perceptions about the jobs that were available to them. Their approach to the study of school to work transitions contrasted to those that had been used previously as they drew from industrial, educational and family sociology and social psychology to highlight how the subjective experiences of individuals related to socialization processes and this, in turn, impacted on the individual's experiences of work. In their study they challenged the dominant view that transition from school to work is a stressful or even traumatic time for all young people. From their study they found that most young

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[21] The implications of this in terms of dancers' transitions both from school to work and as a career change are discussed in the analysis and discussion sections.

people did not experience serious problems, as the transition equated to a continuation of their previous experiences and expectations. This is not to say that problems did not exist for many young people but just that these were not lasting or significant (Ashton and Field, 1976 p.12). Where there were major problems these occurred through discontinuity of expectations and experiences. The main tenant was that 'adjustment to work' was not random or individual but took place within organized social boundaries that had consequences for the ways in which the transition was experienced. This conceptualisation of transitions gives a better understanding of how transitions occur in context, that they are a part of but not wholly determined social constructs. At the time that this literature was being written however, socio-economic status was seen as the most influential social boundary. The discussion surrounding the extent to which socio-economic status continues to shape school to work transitions continues to this day (see Furlong, 2009; Heinz, 2009; Goodwin and O'Connor, 2009; Smith, 2009; Ecclestone et al. 2010; Roberts, 2009).

Socio-economic status as a social force that shaped transitions gained prominence (in the West), as historically it is associated with educational attainment and this in turn affects the level of entry into the labour market. Thus there was a sense that school to work transitions were somewhat 'linear' in that those who were from more wealthy socio-economic groups tended to have access to gaining higher level qualifications, entering higher status jobs as a result and perpetuating social inequalities (Ashton and Field, 1976). Similarly, those from poorer socio-economic groups (or classes) did not achieve higher-level qualifications and tended to enter the labour market with lower skilled jobs. The community or background from which young people emerged was seen as pivotal to the types of jobs that young people went into. This was particularly prominent for those from strong communities that were allied to a particular job such as the extractive industries. A miner's son for example expected to be a miner. Furlong and Cartmel (2007) suggest that the processes of social reproduction (evident in work such as Ashton and Field (1976) and Bowles and

Gintis, (1976)) meant that children were likely to enter the types of jobs that their parents did without necessarily giving much thought to alternative jobs or careers. In this respect school to work transitions for the masses were considered to be "relatively standardized and homogenous" (Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 34). However, in 2005 Goodwin and O'Conner re-examined data on transitions from the 1960's and proposed that the earlier studies had over-simplified the experiences of young people. From this secondary analysis of the data they reject the idea that transitions had been 'homogenous' or 'standardized' and instead suggest that they were also complex and 'individualized'.

With the decline of the manufacturing industry during the last three decades of the century and the continued expansion of the service sector the routes into the labour market for youth with low levels of educational achievement declined as employers were now seeking some form of educational credentials for an increasing proportion of entry level jobs. In the USA these credentials took the form of high school grades while in the UK with its national system of educational qualifications these performed the same function.

In Western Europe these changes gave rise to a questioning of the continuing importance of class or socio-economic status as a determinant of the transition. As many of the traditional working class communities based on the manufacturing and extractive industries disappeared, young people from working class origins entered non-manual jobs in the service sector for which some educational credentials were necessary. The old class bonds appeared to have weakened with sociologists conceptualising this as a part of a process of individuation (Beck, 1992) in which individual agency was seen as more important than structural factors in determining the transition. Previous literature was seen as being too functionalist and thereby not taking account of personal agency (Brown, 1987). Some writers went as far as to argue that structural forces and inequalities such as class, gender or race were no longer useful as a predictor of opportunities in the labour market (Lyotard, 1984). However, talk of

the demise of social class or socio-economic status proved premature. Work by Furlong (2007, 2009) and others demonstrated that although individual agency may be more prominent, and factors such as unemployment and underemployment more pervasive, the underlying power of structural factors in the form of class or socio-economic status remain unabated in structuring the transition.

Current research and subsequent thinking in this area have lead to a view that, with the recent changes in social structures, transitions from school to work have become more protracted (Roberts et al 1987), ambiguous and in certain respects less predictable (Furlong et al 2003). France (2007) suggests that local and global forces have lead to a breakdown in the 'traditional' routes into adulthood in the ways that had been recognized previously. The transition from school to work is therefore currently viewed as being problematic, filled with uncertainty and risk (Furlong and Cartmel 2007, France 2007). This is primarily attributed to the recent rhetoric of individualization and the disjuncture between that rhetoric and the reality experienced by the individual (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; France, 2007). The rhetoric of popular social discourse implies that young people should take responsibility for themselves and use their agency to shape their future employment opportunities. However, it is argued that this does not stand up to scrutiny of the available evidence. The predominant argument and evidence suggest that powerful social structures (in particular class) remain significant forces in shaping the opportunities available and the paths that individuals can 'choose' (Furlong, 2009; Fouad and Bynner, 2008; Smith, 2009; Heinz 2009; Roberts, 2009; France 2007). The extent to which socio-economic status impacts upon dancers' transitions is explored through the data.

The conceptualisation of transitions therefore appears to be somewhat confusing with historic transitions being considered both homogeneous and individual and current transitions likewise. This has led researchers such as Furlong (2009) to suggest that whilst there have undoubtedly been changes in education systems

and the labour market, the apparent changes in transitions reflects a change in theoretical and conceptual focus rather than a change in the way that transitions are actually experienced.

> *"Guided by theoretical paradigms, prior to the 1990s, researchers tended to seek out simple stratified routes within their data … In contrast, the search for complexity in contemporary contexts has been driven, in part, by theoretical paradigms that stress the fluidity of modern life contexts while rejecting structural perspectives." (Furlong, 2009 p. 345)*

So, whilst there was (and still is to some extent[22]) a position that suggests that school to work transitions have changed from linear and homogenous to complex and individual this is not born out by research. Goodwin and O'Connor (2005) question whether the 'new' complex transitions are new at all and in a similar vein other researchers (Furlong, 2009; Heinz, 2009; Roberts, 2009; France 2007) suggest that current transitions are not driven purely by individual choice but continue to be shaped by powerful social forces. The link between the era and the way school to work transitions were / are experienced is therefore heavily criticized. It appears that, although school to work transitions have changed, both linear and complex transitions have always existed and continue to exist today; therefore, the distinction between linear and protracted transitions continues to be useful. Clearly the concept of transitions have come a long way from the more deterministic approach from which it emerged, the current conceptualisation of dancers' career transitions is, by contrast, in its infancy.

Transitions, culture and identity

Examining these different conceptualizations and different ways to understand transitions is useful as a way to contrast different transitional experiences. This historic perspective also highlights particular groups who have experienced

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[22] Taken from working papers given at the International Sociological Associations 'Transitions' conference 2012. To be published.

difficulty as the nature of school to work transitions has changed, due to their cultural values and beliefs. France (2007) has identified one such group for whom this change in transitions is most stark, young working-class men in areas like Sheffield in the UK that were previously dominated (economically) by heavy, manual intensive industries such as steel works[23]. In these areas the jobs that working-class men once did are closely linked to and personify masculinity and masculine identity (McDowell, 2004). The types of work available to young men were an important and influential presence in their social and cultural environment. Here, despite their parent's desires that their sons should explore different avenues the majority entered into the jobs that their fathers and other 'men' in the location did and into which their social network was enmeshed. In such areas McDowell (2004) finds that white - collar work is viewed as being 'soft' and this creates a disjuncture between traditional male identities and the jobs that are available to young men entering the labour market today. In addition, employer's views on the norms associated with these jobs (appropriate attire, hygiene etc.) are at odds with core, local values, beliefs and understandings about what it is to be 'a man' (McDowell, 2004).

The connection between the culture of the young people involved and the type of work that they would have been drawn to in the past would have meant a relatively stable transition from school to work. In the current social and economic climate these jobs are no longer available and this causes problems because the white - collar work that is currently available in these areas is not seen as 'man's' work. There is therefore a huge amount of tensions and clearly a turbulent and difficult transition ahead for young men in these geographical locations (France, 2007). What this case highlights is that where there are strong cultural values there is also an impact on identity and where the transition is at odds with the values and therefore identity the transition is deeply problematic.

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[23] This is a typical scenario for those who worked in the extractive industries.

Whether school to work transitions are viewed as traumatic or relatively unproblematic, the theme that emerges and re-emerges through the research and literature on transitions is the need to understand the individual's experience in light of their wider social environment. Studies on dancers' career transitions have however, thus far, not included this aspect of their life. This study will therefore use an approach to analysis that integrates the impact that the social environment has on the experience of transition.

In summary

Bringing these different conceptualisations of transition together they can be broadly equated to a three-stage model consisting of an initial state, a transition and an end or desired state (a 'successful' transition). This is evident whether one stresses social or individual forces in shaping the transition and is presented below in figure 1.
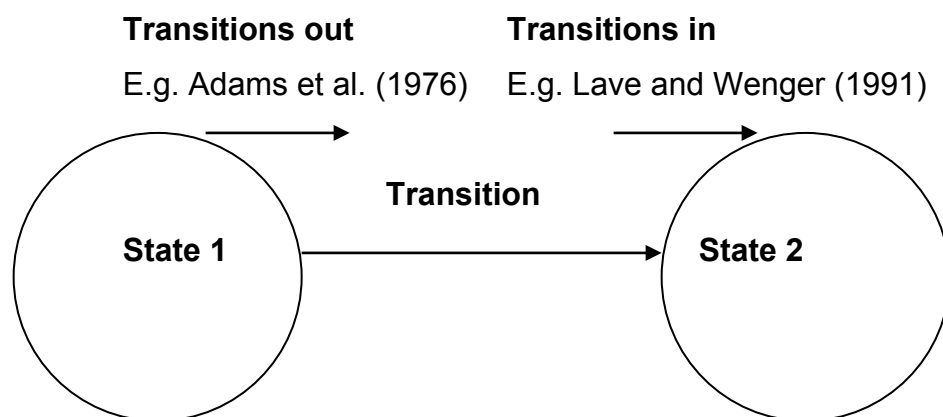
Figure 1 – Three-stage model

The transition itself is therefore conceptualised as the journey from one state to another or a process of change. For Erikson (for example), State 1 might represent childhood and State 2 adulthood with the transition marking the adolescent task. Different aspects of transition such as transitions into or out of something are indicated as different parts of this journey (or process) and can be seen in relation to the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) on the transition into a group and Adams et al. (1973) in transitions away, as discussed above. This representation is clearly an oversimplification but it is used here to momentarily strip back the complexities in order to illustrate some of the basic understandings and assumptions surrounding transitions. What this model does not explain is why the nature of transitions change, for example why some transitions are experienced as linear whilst others are more complex and meandering. Furthermore, there is an implicit (and sometimes explicit, see Lui and Nuyrn, 2011 for example) notion that a 'successful transition is one in which the individual reaches a desired state. The extent to which this is applicable to dancers is explored in chapter 10.

While not trying to negate the importance of this basic three-stage model in furthering our understanding of the majority of transitions the experience of dancers questions the universality of this model. So, whilst the three stage model and emphasis on socio-economic status and credentials is clearly important for the majority of school to work transitions, the extent to which it applies to dancers for both school to work and career transitions will be explored. As the notion of a 'successful' transition is also prominent in the literature regarding the career transitions of dancers this concept, its meaning and usefulness will also be discussed in the later chapters.

The literature has brought to light four key issues for this research. Firstly, the importance of thinking about transitions as an interaction between the individual and the wider social environment in which they are immersed. Secondly the extent to which the three-stage model discussed above is universally useful in

conceptualising transitions. Thirdly the extent to which socio-economic status is relevant to the dancers' experience of transitions and finally the extent to which it is useful or desirable to apply the notion of 'successful' transitions to the study of dancers' transitions.

Chapter 4
Methodology

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the problems facing dancers in transition. It is argued that this can only be achieved by uncovering what transition means to the dancer in the context of their own worldview. To this end, a qualitative, interpretive methodology was employed using an ethnographic approach. This approach raises a number of complex methodological issues that are dealt with in this chapter. The first part of the chapter deals with the overall approach. It starts with a discussion of the philosophical/ontological issues that underpin the data collecting techniques that were employed. It then continues to examine the reasons for choosing these methods and the ways in which they were employed. The final section discusses the data analysis techniques employed and a consideration of the ethical issues.

The second half of the chapter is predominantly focused on reflexive awareness (see Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009,) dealing with the technical issues of sampling, recording data and the difficulties faced in gathering background data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the special problems I encountered as a result of my "insider" status, what I referred to as my "ontological wobble".

Philosophical/ontological basis of the research

As with many methods, what constitutes an 'ethnographic' study is hotly contested and defining ethnography is therefore a complex task (see Atkinson et al. 2010; Brewer, 2002; Becker, 2006,). Ethnographic research is better viewed as a continuum with 'big-ethnography' (meaning any qualitative research that does not involve questionnaires) on one end of the scale and 'little ethnography' (meaning research that is conducted solely through field studies of participant observation), at the other (Brewer, 2002). The methodological approach taken

here stems from the philosophical ideas that underpin ethnography (particularly in relation to the Chicago School); namely that in order to understand the phenomenon of the dancer's transition we must try to see it through the prism of the dancer's life. A study of their interactions, beliefs, fears and understanding of the world (their culture), in which the meanings of transition are embedded, enables us to gain insights into what transition means to dancers and consequently helps us to understand why it is problematic.

The premise therefore is not to prove the existence of particular relationships that logically then affect transition in a particular way or lead to specific problems. In many ways this has already been done (see Baumol et al., 2004; Ijdens and Langenberg, 2008; Lavalee, 2000) and has even led to some misleading conclusions. For example, the general acceptance of 'identity foreclosure' as the cause of problems in transitions. The premise instead is to understand and describe a system of relationships, connections and interdependencies that are historically and culturally specific to this particular group (Denzin, 1997; Becker, 1998). This facilitates a better understanding of the process of transition and what this means for the individuals themselves. This focus is the primary link to an ethnographic approach rather than the research design itself.

The distinction between different methodological approaches is often blurred (Mason, 2006) and as such the approach adopted here lies within the fuzzy edges that surround the ethnographic and the interpretive approach. The ontological assumptions are that reality, as it is experienced and interpreted within social interactions, is socially constructed. In order to look at how these processes of interaction operate, the epistemological assumption used here suggests that people are able to access accounts of their own experience and interpret them. Whilst interviews are necessarily a forced social interaction (Mason 2002) it is nevertheless the position of this research that people are still able to report on their experiences and their interpretation of those experiences.

The ethnographic element of the study then seeks to understand the ways in which these experiences are interpreted from the context of the dancer's culture. So, whilst acknowledging that meanings and understandings of the world are socially constructed and context dependant, nevertheless these understandings make up the dancer's 'reality' and have implications for their interactions both within their community and outside.

Of course, this 'reality' is subject to the interpretations of the researcher and there is no suggestion that the researcher is uncovering a greater 'truth'. Instead the intention is to reveal the dancer's interpretations of their reality as interpreted by the researcher. The method is therefore underpinned by a subjective epistemological approach. Thus thoughts, feelings and understandings are not treated as an objective 'thing' out there to be measured. In operationalising this approach both interviews and participant observation were employed using theoretical ideas and concepts to guide analysis. This is appropriate for an ethnographic approach in that the researcher will use various concepts in order to build a framework within which to interpret and understand the phenomenon under scrutiny rather than taking a single theoretical position. This eclectic approach to theory, as part of a wider ethnographic approach to research, is discussed later in the analysis section.

The postmodern critique of this approach argues that there is no 'reality'. Science becomes a language game of truth claims in a broader sphere of politics and power (Alvesson and Deetz, 2005; Forester, 2003). Denzin (1992) for example rejects any notion that the nature of the social world can be captured in any way that could be considered accurate. This emphasis on the relative nature of reality is not rejected in its entirety but is qualified here. It is acknowledged that this study is the product of one researchers interpretation of the data provided. However, it is also argued that this data represents the experiences of 'real' people and as such is reflective of their 'reality'. The aims of this study were two fold, firstly to make a positive contribution to the academic literature, secondly, to

provide the basis for more effective interventions in alleviating the problems facing dancers in transition through a better understanding of the transition process. As such one starts from the premise that there is a 'reality' for these dancers, in terms of their experiences and the problems that they face in transition, regardless of whether the researcher deems this 'reality' as a 'true' reflection of the situation. For example, a dancer may suggest that the dance profession 'chose' them and they had little choice in the matter, it reflects an inner drive and desire. The researcher may believe this to be unrealistic or that it doesn't concord with an external or 'objective' measure of 'reality', however this is an unhelpful starting point. Who is the researcher to report that the individual's experience is invalid or not 'real'? The experience is clearly real to the individual and if patterns of similarities in experience are found then the important thing is to understand why it is experienced in this way in order to gain insight and understanding.

The processes of data collection and analysis are clearly subjective and open to interpretation (Bryman, 2004) and there is no suggestion here that the data represents a universal truth. All of the dancers had different biographical 'stories' and experiences but in looking for common patterns in these experiences through an understanding of their interpretations of their environment it is claimed that we can gain an understanding of their reality as they experience it.

The aim here is not to reproduce the full richness of the dancer's lives and experiences, certainly not through a medium as restrictive as language (by which I mean the ways in which dancers physically experience their bodies in a kinaesthetic sense, the sights, sounds, emotions, smells, spaces that they inhabit, the many and diverse social structures that shape their experience etc., all of which contribute their experience). Indeed Rock (2001) reminds us that such a task is futile. But the data of moments and experiences recorded here are deemed to be representative of freelance dancers in the UK and USA and the themes that are discussed, whilst not exclusive and certainly open to

interpretation, are nevertheless useful in gaining a better understanding of the problems facing dancers in transition.

Interviews

An understanding of the social processes and cultural context requires rich, in depth data that could not be gleaned from a survey or strictly controlled interview. Interviewing dancers in a more open way, using semi-structured interviews gives me greater access to what transition means to dancers from different geographical locations, with different career trajectories, different biographies and varying experiences within the freelance community. This is one of the reasons why this method was chosen, operating alongside the rich cultural data obtained through participant observation. The interviews also enabled me to explore further some of the themes that had emerged through participant observation and the findings from a previous study conducted as part of a Masters degree[24].

Using a semi-structured interview approach it was possible to engage dancers in what Burgess would call "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984 p.102). Entering the interview with a list of pre-determined questions would not necessarily give me the dancers' own take on their experiences, so whilst a list of general themes were identified prior to the interview, the information sought was left to emerge more organically from the conversation. In framing the questions around the context within which the dancer's experience is embedded (rather than asking abstract questions), semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to gain information regarding social processes that operate within a given situation (Mason, 2006). Whilst each dancer enters and negotiates transition as an individual, the process itself and the problems associated are socially constructed and it is the juncture between the individual and the social that this study is located. Semi-structured interviews enabled me to generate

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[24] MSc in Occupational Psychology.

data that simultaneously highlighted issues that are socially constructed and culturally embedded. As Mason points out, interviews that seek to create open conversations "enable you to follow up their specific responses along lines which are peculiarly relevant to them and their context, and which you could not have anticipated in advance" (Mason 2006 p.64)

Regardless of how 'true' the accounts are these experiences as they are understood affect future interactions and as such make up the 'reality' of the individual. This study does not therefore seek to uncover a greater 'truth' but understand the processes. The participant observation goes someway to help triangulate the extent to which the experiences offered are representative of dancers experiences more generally. In addition, the insider status of the researcher gave a greater level of trust. Of course, respondents may construct their story to their choosing and in some instances this was noticeable, however, the majority of dancers were very open about their thoughts and feelings regarding the profession and issues of transition. This may, in part, be related to the researcher's insider status which is discussed below.

There is also a concern that interview data is not generalizable and more research would need to be conducted to see the extent to which the themes that emerged do apply more generally. However, the population was sufficiently diverse to include dancers from a range of backgrounds and one must also walk the line between gaining enough data to allow the themes to emerge whilst not overwhelming oneself with masses of data.

The location of interviews was often left to the dancer (particularly in NYC as I did not know of suitable locations). Interviews were conducted over the phone for those who could not or did not wish to meet face to face. Face to face interviews were conducted in café's, restaurants, park benches or at the dancer's or my home. The venues for the interviews were not always ideal but the nature of social science research is such that we are conducting research in an imperfect

world. The cafés were often quite noisy so the recordings were not always of high quality. The restaurant in New York was particularly difficult in this regard. Other interviews by telephone were fraught with interruptions from family members or work colleagues. This meant that the conversations were occasionally cut off and had to be picked up after 20 minutes or so. This did of course interrupt the flow of conversation although it quickly resumed and it only happened twice. At the other end of the spectrum interviews conducted in private houses tended to be far quieter and the park bench interview in New York was quite idyllic. The nature of the study however is one of the reality of people's lives, conducting interviews at the University for example would have been formal, unfamiliar and formulaic. As Briggs, (1986), Bryman, (2004), Atkison et al., (2007), Brewer (2000), Banister et al., (1999), Mason, (2006) and others have noted there is no such thing as the perfect interview and there is certainly no such thing as the perfect 43 interviews. However, this is not a study conducted in a laboratory, it was not designed to eliminate unwanted variables rather it was examining the messiness of everyday life. It was also more important that the dancers felt relaxed as this meant that there was an opportunity to build trust and a good rapport. This would not have been possible in a more clinical setting.

I had anticipated that maintaining my concentration throughout the interviews would be problematic however this was not the case as I was genuinely interested in both the topic and the responses of the dancers. Mason (2006) discusses the importance of a researchers ability to 'think on their feet' in loosely structured interviews such as the ones conducted for this study. Whilst the conversation could at times drift off point a little during the conversation it was not problematic to bring it back subtly. I think that my position as an insider and 'kin' and my genuine desire to hear their thoughts on the subject was most helpful in this regard. Therefore, whilst the interview conditions were far from ideal they were nevertheless conducive to provide relevant and interesting data relating to the research.

The interview used an abbreviated life history (Musson, 1989) to develop the story of the dancers career from when they began dancing to the present, integrating the topics and issues that were on the agenda (see appendix B) as they arose. The interview then became quite conversational with questions being asked to cover any topics that had not emerged spontaneously. Whilst the abbreviated life history was an excellent way to gather pertinent data from the dancer's early years in training it did have the drawback of generating a lot of data that was not directly relevant to this project.

Interviews lasted between 25mins and 2hrs 30mins, this discrepancy reflects the fact that some of the dancers had emerged from a long career, period of transition and subsequent life roles whilst others were just at the start of their career as a dancer[25]. All interviews were recorded using an Olympus digital recorder which has the advantage of being small and discrete. These recordings were backed up on computer, on CD and a separate (password protected) hard drive as soon as possible after the interviews. On one occasion, the memory limit of the recorder was reached and the interview had to be paused so that I could delete a previous recording (that was already backed up) in order to make space. This did not seem to affect the interview in a negative way but left me very apologetic and a bit flustered. Two other interviews had interruptions; the first was due to childcare responsibilities and the second because the interview was taking place while the respondent was at work. All of the dancers agreed to the interview being recorded and there was only one hesitation. A dancer was talking about another dancer and asked 'can I say their name' whilst looking at the recorder. I assured the interviewee that no names would appear in the final thesis and that their friend would remain anonymous but if they chose not to say their name that was also fine. The presence of the recording equipment did not seem to inhibit the respondents in any other respect, although the conversation often continued after the interview. Sometimes, these conversations yielded

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[25] The reason for this wide range of experience within the sample is discussed later.

further important data that was written down immediately following the interview and full consent for the use of such data was obtained.

Some amendments were made following a pilot interview with a friend, although the technique itself had been piloted through the previous study for a Masters dissertation. The interviews varied to some extent as different themes emerged with different dancers.

Four dancers were asked follow up questions either via the telephone or via emails due to these emerging themes. For example, it became apparent when interviewing a dancer in the UK that the expected age for transition in the UK is much younger than that for dancers outside. Having been ensconced in the dance culture in the UK, I had taken it for granted that dancers leave in their early 30's. I then added a question regarding the age at which they anticipated leaving (for those who were still in the profession).

All respondents were provided with information regarding the study, their rights as participants and data protection (Appendix C), this was reiterated before commencing the interviews and verbal (recorded) or written consent was obtained. Some interviews were transcribed by the researcher others through a transcription service, due to time constraints. The data obtained through interviews was supplemented by other data derived from participant observation and fieldwork.

Participant observation and fieldwork

The advantages of using participant observation in addition to interviews is that one does not rely solely on verbal reports from the interviewee. Conversations can be recorded as they arise organically alongside the ways in which people interact and behave within the community (Atkinson et al., 2007). Observing and participating in these interactions then enables the researcher to use the

interview as an opportunity to delve deeper into any themes that emerge and gain clarification of any initial observations (Mason 2006). The participant observation phase of the study started prior to interviews and to some extent informed them, then continued which helped to maintain a check as to the extent themes emerging from interviews were congruent with everyday experiences as they occurred.

The participant observation aspect of this study was conducted through complete immersion, with an overt role (Bryman, 2004), according to Gold's classification of ethnographic roles; I therefore occupied the participant-as-observer role (Gold, 1958). As an active member of the dance community I was able to fully disclose my position as a researcher because I am well known and trusted within the community. In addition I didn't feel there was anything to be gained from withholding my interest as a researcher (issues concerning my 'insider' status are discussed below). People that I interacted with in the community (be they dancers, parents, gate keepers or others) were interested in the research and would talk freely about it when hearing what the research was about. My overt status also meant that notes could be taken at the time of conversations and incidents or shortly afterwards without the dancers feeling suspicious or pressured. This provides a great advantage over covert methods, which can prove difficult with regards to data collection (Ditton, 1977). A further advantage was that I was able to obtain verbal consent from those who I came in contact with which alleviates many of the difficult ethical positions that ethnographers can encounter in covert studies. My ability to be so open and honest was due to my total immersion in that I am considered to belong to the community in which my study is immersed.

The situations in which conversations or interactions were noted varied. They included:
1/ Social events in which groups of dancers were gathered – For example, wrap parties (the party held at the end of a film shoot), the researcher's 'Hen party',

weddings, a Broadway show re-union in NYC and other celebrations. These were varied events but interactions were very relaxed and the dancers spoke freely. At a Hen party for example a few dancers who had finished their professional career (aged between 35- 46) were sat around a pool chatting about the way that they missed this kind of relaxed conversation with fellow dancers.

2/ Work and training situations – For example, during rehearsals, classes (as a dancer, choreographer and teacher), in changing/dressing rooms and backstage. This sometimes included conversations between students that I overheard, conversations that I was included in as a dancer / teacher and choreographer or conversations between dancers and other people in 'management' positions (such as the musical director, director or company manager). I mention in the analysis for example that the ageism in the industry was demonstrated through a chance conversation with a Musical Director. Normally, this would not have seemed note-worthy but as I began to question my own assumptions through the process of the research (see the section on my 'ontological wobble') I realised how important all these conversations are in reinforcing cultural values and beliefs.

3/ Down time on jobs – For example, in cars travelling to and from venues, break times and time spent together whilst staying in hotels away from home. These situations constituted 'down time' during working or training hours and tended to be more purposeful or intense conversations. For example parents would talk to me about the experiences of their children having returned from an event or show or a dancer might be chatting to me about dance, their career, the profession or their future plans and whilst these were relaxed the conversation would sometimes get into depth about the reasons why dancers put up with the conditions, poor pay etc.

These were all opportunistic situations. As a freelance dancer / choreographer and teacher it was not possible to predict the situations that would yield

appropriate data or to predict the jobs I'd be working on or the individuals that I would be working with. As such the recording of conversations and events was opportunistic rather than pre-planned and structured, hence the need to also conduct interviews (Bryman, 2004).

Extensive notes were taken either during conversations (where the researcher was not directly involved) or shortly afterwards. These included the context in which the conversation occurred and the themes that emerged. Of course, without recording equipment it is sometimes difficult to recall exactly what is said word for word, where this occurred efforts were made to convey the meaning of what had been expressed. As this method was being used as a trigger for exploring themes further in interviews, the exact wording was deemed less important than the general meaning and underlying assumptions and cultural codes. Disengagement from the field was never an issue as each job, or class was finite in itself. Furthermore, I continue to be engaged in professional dance activities.

In addition to the types of data gathered above, there was also an effort to gather background data. This not only helps to set the scene in terms of wider social and societal structures and norms but also further helps to inform the themes that are then explored at the interview phase.

The sample

There are a number of difficulties in trying to define this group of dancers in terms of what is meant by 'freelance' dancers and whether dancers are 'in' or 'at' a given stage of transition. Firstly, freelance dancers have not been defined as a group in previous research and as many dancers change their status frequently this was a challenge. To overcome this the only dancers who were not included

were those who had worked solely with large companies, on long-term or open-ended contracts. Thus dancers who had worked in companies but had at some time (and certainly towards the end of their career) been 'freelance' were included. Freelance then consisted of all dancers who have been predominantly reliant on successive, short-term contracts.

Secondly, although Walbach (1998) suggests the median age for the transition of non-classical dancers is between 31 and 35, there is a great deal of variance and therefore age could not be used as a reliable predictor of transitional stage in sampling[26]. Studies from school to work transitions often had criteria such as interviewing people who had been employed for two years (Ashton and Field, 1976), or using age as starting point (Bynner, 1999; Vanoverberghe et al., 2008; Arikai, 2012), or structural limitations such as leaving full-time education (Anisef et al., 1999). Those researchers taking a life-course approach advocate the use of longitudinal research to studying transitions especially where the research is allied to studies on youth transitions to adulthood (Heinz, 1999).

The dancer's career transition is by contrast very difficult to identify or define as it is not bound by age or social structures, which would provide a set of defining boundaries. There are therefore no points of origin or destination and dancers can appear structurally to be 'in' or 'out' of transition depending on the day that you speak to them. This is particularly relevant for freelance dancers who will take employment in other sectors when they are in between dance contracts. It would therefore not be possible to simply identify a group of dancers who were at a pre-determined stage of transition.

This study builds on a Masters dissertation and it became apparent from the interviews conducted for that research (involving 12 participants) that in order to understand what transition means to dancers and how this understanding was

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[26] Surveys such as those discussed in chapter 1 have offered ages anywhere between 'mid-twenties' and 'early forties'.

embedded in their social and cultural practices, I would need to interview dancers who were at all stages of the career, including those who were just beginning and those who had left some time ago. This was also evident from the literature used for the background to the study and the literature review in which there was a clear link to training and other socialisation processes. In addition to enabling an examination of the transition process this age span also facilitated an examination of the attitudes of those entering the career which gave rise to a greater understanding of the process and the problems. Selecting only former dancers, reflecting on how they had felt about their transition, could have mislead the research into providing a retrospective rather than current understanding and it as it not possible to identify a particular stage of transition it would not be possible to conduct a comparative study.

Choosing a sample across a range of ages would enable me to gain a greater understanding of why transition is difficult, the extent to which dancers prepared for transition and explore the reasons why they may not engage in activities that may aid the transition process. In addition, talking to dancers who had left the industry some time ago enabled me to examine the extent to which they felt they had adapted to life outside the dance world. This cross section of dancers from all stages of the career and transition would yield a greater understanding of the process in its entirety (through an understanding of their social norms and cultural beliefs) and consequently a greater understanding of the problems that dancers face in transition. Due to these specificities the following criteria were used in locating and recruiting dancers for the sample.

1/ Dancers in the sample were all adults that identified themselves as dancers.
2/ Dancers in the sample had all trained as dancers to a professional level.

3/ Dancers in the sample had encountered a period of employment as a freelance dancer even if this was not their main source of income. [27]

The sample was located using the snowballing technique. Initially this involved the use of the social networking site 'Facebook'. Whilst Zimmer (2010) warns about the ethical implications of using sites such as Facebook in research, the intention here was to contact the researcher's own personal network rather than use the personal information of people on the site. All of the researcher's contacts were emailed to ask if they themselves or anyone they knew would be interested in participating in the research. In addition 2 Facebook groups were contacted (Professional and Commercial Dancers and Dancers / Models Discussion Board) and the site managers agreed to the publication of a request for participants to be included on their group site. Unfortunately this was very unsuccessful and only led to two interviews. A third person called but she had not actually worked as a professional dancers and it became apparent towards the end of the conversation that she was expecting to get paid for participation, thinking that it was market research. Instead, I contacted friends who suggested other friends and word got round. In addition I contacted friends who were in West End shows who put me in touch with dancers from the shows and in one instance I went to talk to the entire cast of a show after their daily warm up, meeting people face to face in this way was far more fruitful.

The opportunity to conduct interviews in New York City (NYC) came relatively late in the process, it was not part of the initial proposal. It was felt that this data would add to, rather than detract from the initial data and provide a further, International dimension to the study. The emphasis on understanding the

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[27] Some dancers may not make a living as a dancer in that they may not have earned enough to sustain themselves from this source of income alone. Nevertheless they do not identify with any other occupation and take jobs that enable them to continue living as a dancer in terms of taking classes and attending auditions. In addition dancers may experience being both a company and a freelance dancer. None of the dancers interviewed had only worked in a company.

dancer's culture made this a particularly interesting development. Participants in NYC were again contacted through snowballing. I had three initial contacts, a musical director who is currently conducting on Broadway, a friend who used to work as a dancer in NYC but has since moved away and a friend who is a musical supervisor in NYC. I sent about 38 emails and completed 19 interviews as a result. Whilst being opportunistic in essence conducting interviews in NYC was a particularly attractive prospect as it is one of the few places that dancers gravitate to in order to gain employment. London, UK, Germany and NYC and LA in the USA are the main areas which offer employment opportunities to dancers and more importantly are the main hubs for auditions and agents.

The dancers themselves hailed from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds as well as a diverse range of geographical locations. I talked to dancers from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Canada, America, South Africa, Ethiopia, Germany, Switzerland and of course the UK and USA. The socio-economic background of the dancers ranged from refugees who had arrived in a country as a child with their parents having little or no financial means, to dancers from wealthy backgrounds who had led a relatively privileged life and gained a private education, some at elite institutions.

As a result of the diverse range of people contacted in order to find a sample the dancers interviewed were working in a range of settings theatre, musical theatre, television, pop videos and tours, cruise ships, cabaret, corporate events etc. (most freelance dancers will have experience in a number of these types of work) and some were not employed as dancers at the time of the interview but were auditioning and working in temporary positions elsewhere. For those who had already left the profession their new occupations were varied, working for events companies, casting agents, police force, pilates instructors, housewives, interior designers and some had more than one job.

The total sample consisted of 43 dancers. The breakdown in terms of gender and location at the time of interview are given below. However, dancers have been noted as being particularly mobile in the search of work and therefore the country in which the interview took place may not reflect their country of origin or the country in which training took place. Ijdens and Langenberg (2008) for example state that; "National borders mean very little to dancers, due to the very nature of their profession. Many dancers are employed for longer periods, in countries other than the one they were born in" (p.1).

	Male	Female	Total
New York USA	8	11	19
London UK	8	16	24

Table 2. Breakdown of participants by place of interview and gender

The ages of the dancers ranged between 21 and 44, a full list of dancers is given in Appendix D however age bands rather than actual ages are used in order to protect anonymity. Because transition is such a taboo subject some dancers were concerned that people (particularly agents) might find out that they were thinking about transition. They believe that this could disadvantage them in terms of gaining access to auditions if the agent thought that they were no longer fully committed to the career. Whilst there is no evidence to support this belief it is nevertheless strongly held. As dancers were revealing a great deal about their background and their life a couple of them were concerned that they might be identified, therefore in line with the ethical guidelines laid down by the University of Leicester and the British Psychological Society it was decided that age bands would allow an insight into the dancers' position within the career without compromising anonymity in any way. Exact ages could also be slightly misleading as dancers enter the career at various ages between 16 and 21 and therefore their relative exposure to working as a freelance professional cannot be assed by age alone.

The ratio of men to women to some degree reflects the industry in that there are a great deal more women than men in the profession, with women making up around 70% of the workforce (Ijdens and Langenberg, 2008). Whilst this study was not large enough to represent these numbers accurately, the greater number of female dancers reflects this disparity whilst incorporating the experiences of both genders (which can be quite different). As this is a qualitative rather than a quantitative study the fact that this is not a statistically accurate representation of the gender ratio in the profession is not considered to be detrimental to the research aims.

Whilst the dancers hailed from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds it was not possible to categorise them in any meaningful way. Firstly, it is notoriously difficult to define social class (Devine et al., 2005). What criteria should one use (parental income, accommodation, education, location)? Secondly as the dancers originated from various countries across the globe how do you compare the socio-economic backgrounds of those from countries as diverse as the UK, S. Africa and Malaysia? If you take parental income as an example a salary that might be considered poverty in the UK might be considered 'middle class' in Malaysia. Whilst it would have been interesting to have looked at this aspect of the demographic of the sample in more detail this was not the main focus of the thesis and therefore was not a priority in data collection. On a broad level however the dancers hailed from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. There were some dancers whose upbringing appeared to place them at either end of the socio-economic spectrum, the majority however were located somewhere in the middle.

The span of ages was deliberately sort in order to examine the ways in which transition is understood and experienced. A longitudinal study would have been ideal in that it would have traced the experiences of each individual through the process (Bryman, 2004). Practically though, this would take a number of years as many dancers oscillate between thinking that they are in transition and then gaining employment and therefore remaining in the profession, there is no pre-

determined time-scale. In addition, dancers may be forced to exit the profession at any stage due to injury. Again though, they may feel that they must exit the profession due to injury only to find themselves recovering fully and re-entering the profession (this occurred with two of the dancers interviewed). Such a protracted study is beyond the possibilities of a PhD but by asking dancers about their life as a dancer some of the potential drawbacks to this snapshot approach were addressed. In addition, the ethnographic element also helped in gaining an understanding of day-to-day rituals, beliefs and understandings.

Analysis

A thematic approach to analysis was used. This occurred mostly during the interview stage of the data collection but also on subsequent analysis of the data. Whilst it has been suggested that these stages of analysis are qualitatively distinctive (Bogden and Biklen, 1982) they are still recognised as part of an integrated process (Deegan, 2007; Smith, 2007; Brewer 2000). This is a humanistic approach to the ethnographic analysis in that it seeks to convey the meanings from within the group themselves in order to capture their reality (Brewer, 2000). It is therefore an approach that employs a subjective epistemology and an objective ontology (with the caveat of the subjectivity mentioned previously) in accordance with the aims and underlying philosophy of the research.

The literature informed the themes but as mentioned previously it was largely an interactive process of data gathering and related reading and research in the literature. As a theoretical framework was used this was not a grounded theory approach (as suggested by Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the pure sense although elements of this approach exist in terms of the process of analysis during data collection and gaining a 'saturation point'. As such, this approach is more closely aligned to what Blaikie calls the 'abductive research strategy' (Blaikie, 2000, p.25). This is an interpretivist approach in which the researcher

oscillates between the meanings contained in the 'lay accounts' or data and concepts provided in the social science literature. These categories and labels for different approaches are useful in locating the analysis process within the wider context of the study but it is also widely acknowledged that social science research exists in an imperfect (often messy) world and as such the process of research is not as clear cut and will often contain elements of different approaches (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Bryman, 2000; Atkinson et al. 2007; Mason 2006).

Emerging themes were noted some of which related to continuities in experience and others demonstrating difference in relation to gendered experiences or structural differences which were geographically specific (in training for example). The number of dancers interviewed was initially around 20. In line with the concept of theoretical saturation (Bryman 2004) there were no longer new themes emerging at this point. As mentioned, this study was not intended to be as inductive as the grounded theory approach but using the saturation of emerging themes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), as a gauge to the number of interviews that were necessary, proved very useful and this is an approach that is often used and advocated in ethnographic research (Becker and Faulkner, 2008). The reason that there are 24 dancers in the UK sample is simply because the interviews had been arranged prior to the realization that a saturation point had been reached. When the opportunity to conduct interviews in the USA arose, over 22 dancers from the UK had already been interviewed and therefore, although this data will not be analysed statistically, it was appropriate to conduct a similar number in the USA. These had to be arranged prior to my visit and were conducted over 9 days, in addition to meetings with organisations such as Career transitions for Dancers and Dance USA and as saturation point had been reached at around 20 in the UK it was hoped that this would be sufficient for any new themes or differences in themes for the USA sample. Two interviews in the UK were cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances and 3 in the USA were

cancelled for similar reasons, although one dancer met with me but then felt too unwell to proceed.

The use of NVivo to aid the organisation of the data (and thereby assist analysis) was contemplated and the researcher attended both basic and advanced courses. However, it became apparent that there were a number of drawbacks to this approach, firstly, it was very time consuming and as the transcription process takes time themes could not be recorded as they emerged as easily. Secondly, it creates a somewhat forced categorisation in which it would be possible to miss pertinent points or issues due to a change in language use by the participant. Thirdly, as the categories did not require clarification by a third party (ie. The analysis was conducted solely by the researcher) the advantage of being able to categories themes using tightly bound criteria was not necessary or particularly desirable for this particular project.

As Brewer notes, "Analysis can be defined as the process of bringing order to the data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories and descriptive units and looking for relationships between them" (Brewer, 2000 p. 105). In order operationalize this process an eclectic range of concepts and theoretical ideas were employed. This was necessary given the limited research available in the specific area of the study but it is also an approach that is widely used in ethnography (Atkinson et al. 2007; Bryman, 2000). Vary rarely are there clear distinctions between different approaches and as such this study falls in the messy borders of an interpretive and an ethnographic approach.

The approach taken and the methods used are designed to gain as a full an understanding of the dancer's transition as possible. The background data includes organisational information, reports, magazine articles, radio programmes, historical literature and information from relevant websites in addition to a review of a range of academic literature. The data used for analysis is predominantly from interviews but is supplemented with data from field notes

gathered whilst working legitimately in the field, in a similar way to the way that Becker (1963) gathered data for his study on dance musicians. The combination of these elements of the research were used to draw out the ways in which culture and identity are formed and reformed through interactions within the community and the industry as a whole. Through this process it is possible to gain an understanding of how values and beliefs are formed, held, maintained and negotiated and importantly how this then relates to the experience of transition. Social theory is used as a "tool to understand the world not a vehicle for intellectual enjoyment" (Castelles, 1997).

Ethical considerations

The ethics process required the identification of any ethical considerations. These initially concerned the use of 'Facebook' and the use of interview questions that could potentially upset participants. The former is a concern that is partly the result of the rapid technological advances that make communication and personal information more accessible (Zimmer 2010). These can be misunderstood, as the implications of using these resources have not yet been fully explored. The latter highlights the grey areas involved in ethical considerations. It is clearly unethical to deliberately upset participants when interviewing them, however, this can be unexpected both to the participant and the interviewer.

With regards to the use of 'Facebook' ethical considerations were discussed with members of the supervisory team, the ethics committee and members of staff from the wider university network. There was a sense of uncertainty from some of those with whom the issues were discussed but it appeared that there was less concern with actual ethical considerations for this study and a greater concern regarding the lack of guidelines in this area which leaves people with a sense of not knowing what they're supposed to do. In a highly bureaucratic organization such as a University where protocols and guidelines have to be

followed with the risk of blame and threats of lawsuits, such guidelines become the norm and their absence clearly created unease. Nevertheless, my particular use of this media was not found to be potentially damaging as I was merely using it to ask friends if they would like to participate in much the same way as I might email them.

With regards to the interviews every effort was made to make participants feel comfortable and indeed there was a lot of laughter during interviews. However, as the interviews were discussing a particularly sensitive topic (transition) some dancers did become emotionally distressed during the interview. On these (2) occasions I ceased recording, made sure that the dancer was okay and asked if they wanted to stop the interview. Neither dancer wanted to stop (one had become overwhelmed when I asked her what the best thing about the job was) so I resumed the interview when they were ready. The feedback from the dancers (particularly those who became emotional) was wholly positive, they reflected on the interview as a positive experience and many commented on how it had 'made them think' about the profession and transition.

A participant who starts crying part way through an interview therefore may be doing so because this is the first opportunity they've had to think about their own thoughts and feelings on a given topic, as is the case for this study. According to BPS guidelines the correct procedure in such circumstances is to terminate the interview and leave. It is my opinion that such a reaction would have been unethical, as it would could have left the participants feeling alone and vulnerable. Terminating the interview was clearly necessary but leaving them in a state of distress may not be helpful and in this case it was certainly not desired by the participant. Furthermore there is an unspecified link given to crying and distress which has been debated (ESRC seminar on 'Identity' London, 2009). It is argued here that such a link is false. Being upset and crying is not necessarily a negative thing and sometimes it helps to talk about what is upsetting and why it is upsetting. The distress is there already, if talking about certain issues brings that

distress to the fore then at least it can be dealt with. I gave all the dancers information regarding the organisations that offered support (DCD in the UK or CTFD for the American dancers) at the conclusion of the interview and some have gone on to gain grants from the DCD in order to retrain. This also highlights the ways in which simply the act of doing social science research can have an impact on the very thing you are studying and this consequence can be desirable (Bourke, 2006).

In line with ethical guidelines and conventions drawn up by both the British Sociological Association and the British Psychological Society all of the dancers interviewed were given information regarding the study, were made fully aware of their rights to withdraw and gave their informed consent. My position as an insider could potentially have created a bias or a problem as I employ dancers when I am engaged in work as a choreographer. However, many of the dancers that I employ I have worked with over the years and as I was not discussing issues that would impact on their employment there was no sense of threat. As stated above, the dancers were happy to contribute and interested in the topic.

Gathering background data

The importance of the historical context has already been discussed but it was also apparent very early on in the study that background data was important in order to gain a full understanding of the field from which the study was drawn. Having been involved in the industry for so long it is easy to fool yourself that you know things that you have never directly been involved in or studied and make general knowledge claims that cannot be backed up. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the structures surrounding the dancer's lives and the problems that they face in transition I set out to speak to a number of organisations, Dancer's Career Development (DCD, UK based), Career Transitions for Dancers (CTFD, USA based), Equity (UK and USA), The British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM), Dance UK, the Council for Dance Education

and Training (CDET), the Imperial Society for the Teachers of Dancing (ISTD), The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), the International Dance Teachers Association (IDTA) and the British Ballet Organisation (BBO). I did not anticipate any difficulties, particularly with Equity (with whom I've been a member for 17yrs) and the ISTD (with whom I've been a member for 20yrs).

Wishing to establish the drop out ages and gender ratio of dancers throughout training, I contacted the main exam boards (ISTD, RAD, IDTA and BBO) via email. I asked if they could tell me how many students were participating in examinations at different levels, explaining the reason for my request. After repeated attempts to contact them it was made very clear that none were prepared to release the data. Instead, I obtained statistics from friends and colleagues who ran their own dancing schools. The DCD and BAPAM similarly did not respond to my emails. I did eventually secure a meeting with DCD and Since I've completed my research they have been exceptionally helpful. The CTD in New York City answered questions by email but the CDET cancelled the meeting. Equity in the UK and USA were not willing to release data. So, despite my links to the industry and affiliations with the organisations concerned I was met with a lot of fear and avoidance, particularly when mentioning that the research was for a PhD study. This meant that much of the background data that I obtained had to be gained from other sources. It was a very surprising response.

Being an 'insider' and reflexive awareness.

I am a trained dancer, starting from the relatively late age of 9 yrs old I quickly took to dance, found it extremely enjoyable and addictive and within a year I was attending classes 3-4 times a week plus weekends and holidays. I gained a place at a prestigious dance training college aged 16 and started working professionally in my second year aged 18. I completed my training at 19 and worked as a dancer, dance captain and later resident director on tour. I also gained my teaching qualifications and taught between contracts and as a staple

to sustain myself. Later I taught at professional training colleges and still give master classes. I have also worked as a choreographer for a number of years and continue with this work in and around London. In addition I still work as a dancer on the odd occasion that older dancers are required. However, I also work full time as a teaching fellow at the University of Leicester. This put me in a unique position with regards to this research.

Whilst some ethnographers run the risk of 'going native'[28] (Bryman, 2004) the researcher in this instance is native which raises a number of issues. One of the benefits of my 'insider' status (other than access to dancers and their world) is that I understood the meanings that they attach to language, behaviours and cultural practices. Language codes (see Becker, 1969) are one particular way in which groups can be misunderstood or misrepresented when their conversations or interactions are analysed through a different code system. This occurred previously when an academic had condemned the way that dance is taught by suggesting that the use of the word 'correction' in class served to elevate the teacher and prevented any two-way interaction between the student and teacher. This was seen as an archaic approach and detrimental to the dancer's mental health and ability to gain the most from tuition. However, what was misunderstood was the respect that students have for their teachers. A student is very happy to receive 'corrections' from the teacher and this does not prevent them from asking questions. Primarily this is because they want to learn and they cannot progress and perfect their performance without feedback from a knowledgeable source (the teacher). Dancers are driven to improve themselves and work to learn and understand technique and performance skills, practicing them and honing them for hours on end in a quest for perfection. Being given a 'correction' is seen very positively by dancers as it means that they can improve themselves and that the teacher saw that they were trying, noticed them and wanted to help them in their quest.

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[28] This is when the researcher starts to take on and become immersed in the cultural norms of the group they are studying.

By contrast a choreographer will give 'notes'. These are specific points at which the dancers may have strayed from the group either in their spacing, timing, arm or leg movement and on rare occasions it may also include technical points. The use of this term has never been questioned as it is quite neutral to most onlookers. However, to the dancer, whilst they expect to receive some notes receiving too many is seen as derogatory. Receiving notes means that you were probably not where you should have been or doing exactly what you should have been, when you should have been doing it. This not only impacts on the overall effectiveness of the piece (a sense of possibly letting the cast or company[29] down) but also means that you may not be used again by that choreographer as they feel you are not fitting in with their style or capable of adapting to different groups of dancers. This has implications for future employment. So, to take these two relatively mundane words and interpret them through a different frame of reference is to completely misunderstand what they actually mean to the dancer. Having access to this language code therefore provides a greater insight and understanding of the group from their own perspective.

Of course the dilemma here is between being so close to the community (one of them in fact) that the researcher is unaware of their own assumptions and that same proximity giving rise to greater insights. My supervisor played a crucial role in making me question my own cultural assumptions and my upgrade was another useful source of feedback. As a result of this I incorporated questions about the socio-economic background of the dancers and their peers, which proved very interesting, as discussed in the next chapter. Some assumptions were further highlighted and questioned when talking to dancers from other countries. For example, I had always understood that non-classical dancers would have to transition between 31 and 35 at the latest, with most leaving in their mid to late 20's (Wallach,1998). However, when talking to dancers who had

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[29] As part of the restricted code 'company' is the name given to a group of dancers working on a particular show.

worked extensively in Germany and the USA it transpired that this was only accurate for dancers in the UK and some dancers in the USA. However, dancers performing in musical theatre shows in the USA and Germany often continued into their early 40's.

Another issue was my status within the dance community. I was concerned that my position as a potential 'gate keeper' (in my capacity as choreographer) would affect the way in which dancers interacted with me. However, this concern was not born out perhaps because I was interviewing dancers who were already in work or who had already worked for me (and therefore new and trusted me) or lived in another country and were therefore unaffected. My position as a teacher also gave me a unique and well-rounded insight as I saw day to day the effects of the profession and training on the young dancers. This study did however, affect the way that I taught in that I tried to emphasize the importance of developing a sense of self that was not exclusively as a performer. I would listen to any other activities and academic achievements and praise these equally, I also emphasised transferrable skills such as team work and analysis, in addition to patience, tolerance, kindness and other social skills. I would not have done this so consciously (particularly in relation to skills) had I not been studying this topic.

The reflexivity of the study was also evident in that after interviewing dancers I told them about organisations such as the DCD. This led some to seek their advice and gain grants from them which enabled them to retrain, the very act of social science research thereby reflecting back on the situation. One dancer retrained as a make up artist and I subsequently hired her to provide make up for a pop video that I was choreographing.

I became aware of the ways in which I talked and behaved in light of the literature I read and how these words, thoughts and actions actively produced, reproduced and adapted the norms of the dancers' culture.

The pros of my insider status included access to the group I was studying, an in depth understanding of the dancers and their culture and as a result a greater understanding of the language they use. It was essential in understanding the

behaviours, rituals, beliefs, taboos, values and understanding of the dancers'
world as I had the same frame of reference. During interviews my insider status
was crucial in gaining trust and rapport, particularly given the dancers' sense of
difference. On the downside, as noted, it is possible that some things were so
embedded in my own tacit knowledge that I failed to notice them. There is also a
danger that I could imbue the data with my own agenda and in order to prevent
this I deliberately excluded my own experience. This of course does not prevent
subjectivity when analysing the data however this is arguably something that is
always evident to some degree (Silverman, 1993) and is not necessarily
undesirable (Alveson & Deetz, 2005).

On balance however, my insider status was more valuable than problematic, the
benefits certainly outweighed the disadvantages.

In addition to questioning my own assumptions, I wanted to ensure that the
research did not turn into an autoethnographic study. Although this is a well used
and often useful technique in research (Atkinson et al., 2007; Learmonth &
Humphreys, 2002) the aims of this thesis was to gain a broader perspective of
what transition means for freelance dancers more generally and in order to
prevent a focus on my own agenda and experiences, my personal experiences
(in terms of my memories of my career and feelings during transition) were not
included. There are principally two reasons for not taking an autoethnographic
approach. Firstly the aims of this study are to gain a better understanding of the
dancers' experience in transition a single account is therefore limiting. The other
aim was that the study would have some practical use for those working in the
industry, again an autoethnographic account would have little to offer the industry
as a whole by way of understanding the problems that face freelance dancers
more generally. In order to gain an insight into shared experiences it is necessary
to have a number of participants (Bryman, 2004). Secondly, this study is rooted
in an interpretivist approach as discussed previously. As such the ontological
foundation of this study is not purely subjective and therefore not suited to an
autoethnographic study (Brewer, 2002). Furthermore, an autoethnographic

approach would not have been allied to much of the literature which have informed this study, particularly the 'Chicago School' discussed in the previous chapters. Whilst autoethnographic approaches can provide interesting case studies and narratives (Learmonth & Humphreys, 2011; Brewer 2002) these do not concur with the aims or philosophical underpinning of this study

The ethnographic element, in line with the interpretivist approach, was therefore limited to my observations as a participant observer and data from interviews rather than my direct experiences as a dancer (Brewer, 2002).

The dynamic interactionsit perspective taken here views the dancers as individual sense-makers (Weick 1995) and stems from the assumption that while individuals shape their environment they, in turn, are shaped by it (Ashforth, 2001). In this context, the post modern perspective (as a relativist position) is not appropriate for this exploratory research. For example, in a study about (ballet) dancers injuries, Turner and Wainwright (2003) criticised approaches which define the body as text because they lose the meanings and understanding attached to the experience at both a personal and a social level. Furthermore there was clearly a need to include the social and cultural context in order to understand the meanings and therefore the problems of transition (see Adams, 2003).

An ontological wobble

Distancing myself from the group sufficiently enough to see my own assumptions has been problematic and at times has lead to some real inner struggles. As will be discussed in the analysis section, one of the main themes to emerge from the study was the dancer's sense of being different. This is acutely felt and is often evident through reference to 'normals'. As a dancer myself I feel that dancers are different from non-dancers, however researching this area made me reflect on what this actually means. In what way am I (are dancers) 'different' from others? What makes us different and how is that difference experienced? It is something that is felt to be innate, a fact that is taken for granted 'we just are'. When I

started to investigate this further I started looking at the social interactions within which this sense of self develops and examining the ways in which social structures, social interactions and individual experiences help to create this sense of difference as presented in the literature review. This is where the work of Becker (having been a musician himself) was particularly influential.

I then began to oscillate between thinking that there was an innate difference between dancers and non-dancers and thinking that this difference was actually a social construct and therefore there was no real difference. My ideas of what the 'reality' was, continually changed as I myself was wrestling with my own transition. At one moment I felt that dancers are innately different (after all, not everyone can physically or artistically be a dancer) and therefore I was investigating how this manifested itself through interactions. At the next moment I felt that dancers were not different at all but that I had just been immersed in an environment in which a group of us constructed ourselves as being different and therefore interpreted the world around us in that way.

This reflexive awareness lead to an understanding that my ontological wobble was only present because of my proximity to the topic. I found myself reflecting in on myself a great deal in order to find the questions that I would later ask interviewees. This questioning of my own assumptions was very helpful and led me to develop some useful questions that were thought provoking for both the dancers and myself.

As for the nature of reality, of course there is a reality that not everyone can be a dancer but not everyone wants to! The issue of whether or not, or to what extent, dancers are 'in reality' different, ended up being a moot point. The reality is that not everyone can be a dancer but the physical and artistic requirements have been socially constructed (this is shown in the following chapter tracing the socio-historic emergence of Western commercial dance). Similarly, the dancer's sense of difference is socially constructed but is reflected through wider social norms,

this has very real consequences that make their life very different from the norm. The reality that I am interested in is the reality, as the dancers themselves understand it. What are their experience, their reality and how do social processes shape it? However, the process of questioning and agonising over the questions was a very important one because it enabled me to take a different perspective and to some degree, step aside from my own immersion in the world. This is important not because it leads to some revelation about an 'objective' reality but because it enabled me to see the impact that my own frame of reference was having on the study and really made me think about and assess what it was that I was trying to achieve.

Chapter 5
Analysis: An Overview and Introduction

The analysis of the data revealed a number of inter-related and overlapping themes. In order to present these in a coherent way the analysis has been broken down into 4 main chapters. This chapter provides a brief overview of the main, universal themes that emerged, these primarily consist of the underlying values, beliefs and taboos that underpin the dancers' culture and identity. Following this the data is analysed chronologically in chapters 6 and 7. This approach was taken because there were no clear patterns found to facilitate a classification of the data in terms of differing experiences. By taking a more collective, biographical account the analysis seeks to trace the development of the dancers' cultural values and norms, tracing them back to early socialisation processes and investigating how they continue into the dancers' professional life. Whilst the previous chapter set the context for the dancers' world this analysis continues to examine the current processes within this world and how they influence the way that dancers think about themselves, the dance world and society as a whole. In addition to examining these universal themes chapters 6 and 7 also explore the ways in which some experiences differed for example with regards to gender and the structure of transition into work[30]. Chapter 8 then looks at the accumulative effect that these experiences have on transition and the way that transition is viewed during the dancers' career. The experiences in training and the profession provide a framework within which the experience of transition can be understood, giving a 'dancers' eye' view. The final section in this chapter goes on to discuss the implications of these findings for theoretical conceptualizations of transitions more generally.

Below is a representation of how the analysis chapters relate to each other and how they are presented in the following chapters.

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[30] Differences were found in the way that the transition from school to work was structured in the UK and the USA.
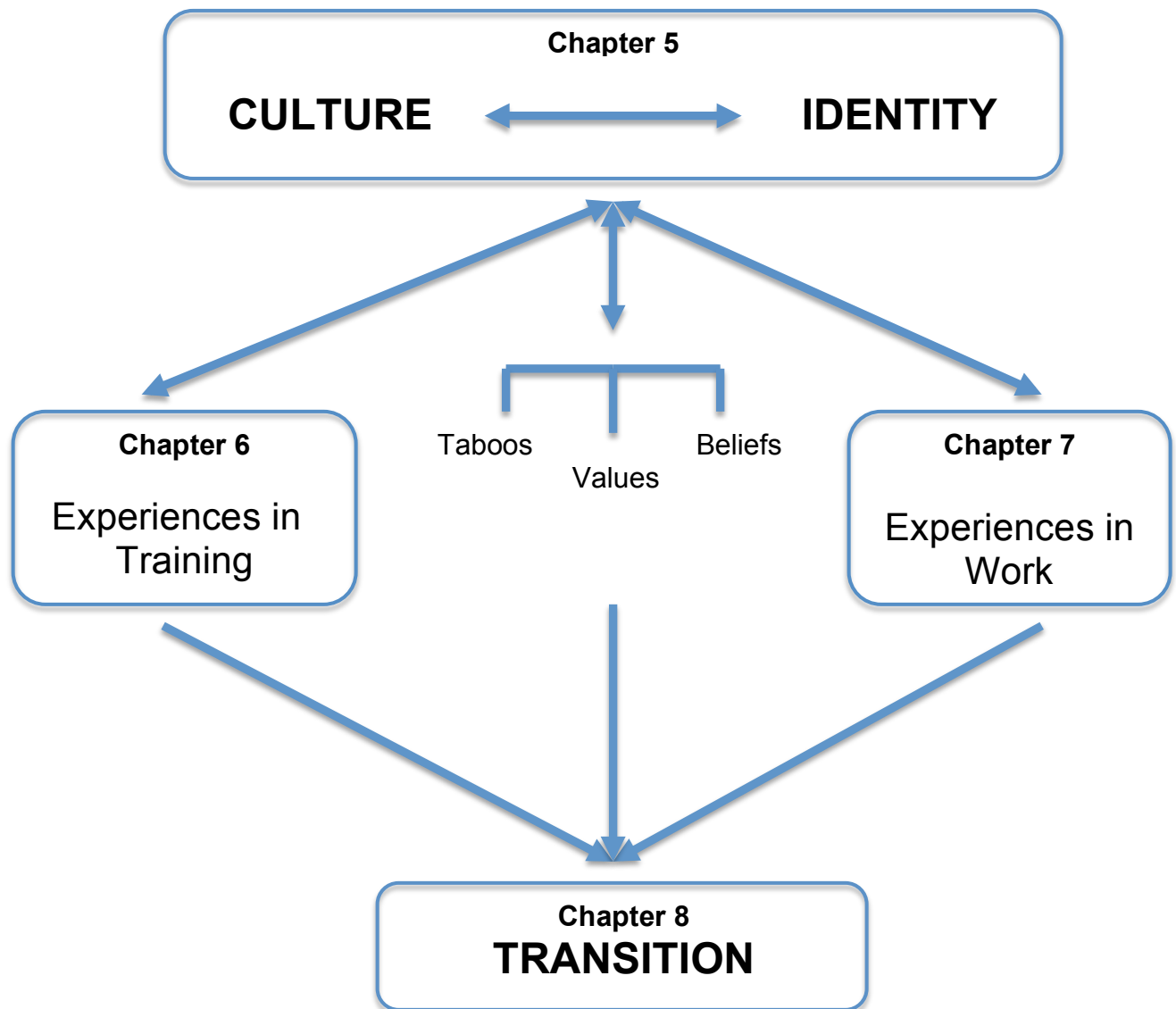
Figure 2 Representation of the way in which the analysis will be presented.

The Themes

What the data showed very clearly is that understanding the dancer's culture, the world within which the dancers experience life, is central to an understanding the problems that they face in transition. It's like they are living in a bubble contained within, but in many ways separate from, the world outside of dance. What the analysis revealed is that this bubble is created through cultural practices, core values and beliefs that are Universally understood by all dancers regardless of the National and class cultures from which they originate or the gender of the dancer. Whilst categories of nationality, class and gender are important, they are subsumed within the culture of dance. Unsurprisingly, this culture manifested itself in many complex ways, which is evident throughout the following chapters. A number of themes emerged, some were evident in the existing literature whilst others emerged from data alone. Whilst these themes were varied and interact in complex ways they can be reduced to three broad, interrelated areas. These are 1/ Connection and Difference – The ways in which dancers experience themselves as being connected to each other and different from those outside their 'world'. 2/ Emotional Attachment – The dancer's love of and passion for their art. 3/ Identity– The dancer's profound identification with their profession, to the point that it dominates the self-concept. Embedded within these themes are the cultural values, beliefs and 'norms' which are the foundations to the way in which the dancer perceives the world and their place in it. These will be taken in turn to provide an overview of themes and their importance in the following analysis.

Connection and Difference

The dancers had a strong sense of being different from those outside their 'world' of dance. This manifest itself in a number of ways throughout the interviews and field work and is a latent assumption that underpins much of the dancers' discourse. The difference will be shown to exist both in practical and less tangible, philosophically, metaphysical ways. The difference experienced by dancers is something that is also related to wider social norms. It is fundamental to the

dancer's culture because contained within it are various shared beliefs and norms that are not shared by those outside the group.

This difference is also something that connects and unites dancers. The values, beliefs and norms that they share bring them together in a 'like minded' community. They are connected by virtue of the incongruence between their values and norms and those of wider societal norms. Again this connection involves both practical and psychological aspects. Their connection includes the ways in which they view their profession, the training, their knowledge of the profession, the hours they work, the unpredictability of their work and shared beliefs and certain taboos.

Emotional Attachment

Dancers have an extremely strong emotional attachment to dance. They feel that their 'need' to dance (as they feel that this is beyond a mere desire) is innate. Dance is not viewed as a job but as a way of life and its importance overrides all other aspects of their life so that it is their main priority. The value of dance, the deep emotional connection to dance, and the associated value of being a dancer is therefore a collective cultural norm. It is linked to their sense of connection to each other by virtue of the shared nature and understanding of what it takes to be a dancer, with the latent understanding of a shared passion. With that comes a sense of committed relationships such as marriage 'getting in the way' of their ability to follow their dreams and a sense of denial when thinking about transition. Anything that threatens dance as priority is a subtle 'taboo' in that it is either frowned upon or ignored.

Identity

Perhaps unsurprisingly then the dancer's identification with dance and sense of self as a 'dancer' was striking and ever present. Dancing wasn't just something

they did, it was a part of themselves. This links the previous two themes in that it is a collective sense of self but is also felt to be something within them, an innate part of who they are, something that they have an intense emotional attachment to and something that distinguishes them from those outside their group. It is both a social and psychological sense of self that dominates the self-concept. The dancers' physical being is an integral part of their art form and this also ties them in to a sense of themselves as a dancer, particularly as they grow up learning the appropriate grooming rituals so that they 'look' like a dancer. Their identification with dance is rooted in childhood and by the time they become professionals their identification goes far beyond an identification with a profession, the dancer's culture and identity are thus inextricably linked. With this sense that they are profoundly connected to their art both physically and psychologically dance becomes more than what they do, it is fundamentally who they are.

Universality

Although there were some differences which emerged from the data (these are discussed as they occur in the analysis) it is the similarities and shared values, beliefs and understandings (culture) which were most striking. What is particularly interesting is that these shared cultural meanings emerge from such a diverse group. These themes permeated the interviews and fieldwork regardless of the dancers ethnicity, age, nationality, gender or socio-economic status. The dancers came from Nationalities as diverse as Ethiopia, Malaysia, Germany, S. Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, U.S.A., Sweden and UK. Some had led a relatively privileged life with a private education, whilst others were refugees with very little in the way of financial resources. The age range of those interviewed was between 22 and 43; the ethnographic element however included much younger and older dancers from children to a lady of 73. To find such unity across such a diverse group is quite staggering.

The themes presented above represent the backbone to the themes that emerged from the data. The next two chapters aim to show how these cultural values, beliefs and norms and the strong identification with dance develop through the dancers' experiences in training and then in the profession itself. The final analysis chapter will look at the implications of this for the dancers' transition away from the career.

Chapter 6
Experiences in Training: Early Socialisation

Introduction

This chapter explores how the processes of sociogenesis and psychogenesis operate at the level of the individual dancer but through their social interactions. It explores how dancers, from a young age, develop their connection to dance and to other dancers, their sense of difference from those outside and their sense of self as dancer through their experiences in training. It is through experiences in early training that dancers become ensconced in the cultural values and beliefs of the profession and come to embody the sense of dancer as self and crucially as different from their non-dancer peers and others outside the dance world. The two-way nature of this difference (in that dancers feel that they are not normal partly because wider social norms suggest that it is not normal) is explored through the use of Becker's (1969) notion of difference and culture discussed in Chapter 2. Throughout the chapter this growing sense of difference and awareness of their membership of a distinctive group of dancers is used to show how dancers develop an emotional commitment to the profession that forms a core element of their identity.

Section 1, deals with the early years showing how and why dancers start training, their memories and experiences of it and how this leads them see their abilities as innate and subsequently experience their work as a vocation. Section 2 explores the wider social context, the wider social and community networks through which the distinctive cultural norms of the dancer are created, re-created and reproduced and how these are then experienced and understood by the young dancer, building on the earlier foundations to create the distinctive sense of self. It demonstrates how the experience of these networks, starts to commit young people to dance and learn the appropriate values and behaviour. Through their family relationships and the necessary family involvement they become part

of a wider community of dancers and develop a sense of attachment to the dancing 'world'. At school this sense of identity as a dancer is reinforced through experiences of being different from their peers. Section 3 explores how the intensification of training, characteristic of the dancer's career deepens the sense of connection and difference polarising the self and other. This enhances their autonomy as they prioritise dance over a range of other 'conventional ' activities and behaviours of their peers in order to achieve their career objectives. This reinforces the centrality of dance to their core identity and commits them to a future in the profession. These social psychological processes are similar in both the UK and the USA. Section 4 extends the discussion of autonomy to show how they start to prepare themselves for the profession while still at school and how by this stage subsequent entry to the profession was a forgone conclusion as it was by now a core part of their identity. In some instances, this meant they were ready to go against parental wishes and dismiss pressures from others, such as career advisers, whom they see as not understanding their world. Section 5 then deals with the final stages of their training as they learn to support themselves as independent dancers and how this process differs between the UK and US.

Section 1. Laying the foundations for a dancer's identity

The process of building this identity starts at a very early age. This is especially true for female dancers who began dancing from as young as 2 years old with the majority starting between the ages of 2 and 4 and a few starting later (up to the age of 9). Those that started from 7 upwards considered themselves to be 'late starters' as commencing classes from 3 yrs is considered the norm. Male dancers tended to start later than their female counterparts. Whilst one or two male dancers started at a very young age (2-4) the majority started around 8 years although it was not unusual for men start later, between the ages of 10 and 17. The physical development of the two genders allied to the demands of the profession is considered by dance teachers to preclude most girls who start dancing in their teens from reaching professional standards. This is to do with the

way in which the muscles develop and rate of growth which affects flexibility. It is very difficult (but not impossible given a natural predisposition) for girls to gain the extreme flexibility required if they begin dancing later on in their physical development. As there is a great deal of emphasis on the physical strength of male dancers (and not so much emphasis on flexibility) within the profession, they can start later as boys gain muscle during puberty. The analysis revealed further explanations for the differences in starting age that are related to societal norms and these are discussed below.[31]

Many of the dancers couldn't remember why they had started dance classes because they were too young.

> *"It's just always been there like one of those things. I can't remember a time when I wasn't dancing." (Frank)*
>
> *"Um…performing in general started when I was really, really, really, little, basically when I was…you know could walk and talk I was dancing and singing". (Uma)*

For those that could remember, their reasons for commencing classes can be grouped into four main groups. For some it was because they expressed a desire to dance, but for others it was significant others that influenced them. These could be their parents, friends or experts who spotted their talent. These are not mutually exclusive, for example a dancer may come into contact with classes via a friend or sibling but then be 'spotted' by the teacher for showing potential. For all of them the result is the growth of a sense that their participation in dance was a result of an 'innate drive' and a sense that they were following a vocation.

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[31] It should of course be remembered that the desired attributes of dancers and gender differences are a product of the history of the profession as outlines in chapter 5.

"Inner" drive and Inspiration

We start with those who commenced dance classes because they wanted to, whether through an inner drive or because they were inspired to dance.

> *"I started dancing when I was three years old, it was in my local*
> *village at home I just said to my mum I want to go to ballet class,*
> *I want to go to this class. So she took me along to the class just*
> *to see how I liked it and then I just kept asking to go back again*
> *and again." (Nala)*

> *"It was watching Michael Jackson actually, he inspired me, he*
> *made me want to choose to do this and I think it was because he*
> *was a male role model that said "it's OK to perform, to sing, dance,*
> *act" because he was the all encompassing act of everything, he*
> *did everything. I think I was about 5 and we had the Thriller video.*
> *I remember I wasn't allowed to watch the scary bits but I could*
> *watch the dance routine. And my mum said I used to imitate him*
> *and try and do the moves. And then a band called Five Star came*
> *along - which not many people remember, but I know one of those*
> *was a Laines[32] boy actually, and they were another group that sort*
> *of did everything, they had the really slick dance routines and they*
> *all had the matching so they inspired me as well." (Ben)*

It is not uncommon for dancers to suggest that they asked to dance from a very young age as in the first quote. The extent to which this is 'truth', as opposed to a rehearsed and shared narrative (Cohen, 1989; Conway, 1990) might be contested as our memories from that age are not necessarily reliable. However, the important thing here is that this is the dancer's reality, it is their truth and it enables us to understand how strongly they feel their connection to dance.

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[32] Laines referrers to students who attended a particularly well respected professional performing arts colleges called Laine Theatre Arts.

Interestingly the male dancer felt that he needed some validation that it's 'OK' to sing, dance and act. There is already a sense that this is something that does not comply with societal norms and that male dancers are therefore different. This highlights the difference in gendered experiences, none of the girls felt the need to justify their desire to dance. Furthermore, it stresses that even from a young age the dancers had a sense of what societal norms dictated to be 'appropriate', normal or 'OK', wider social norms had an impact on their sense of self and how they saw themselves as 'different' in relation to those wider norms. Another point here is that some of the dancers refer to performing rather than dancing specifically. This is because freelance dancers tend to be trained in singing, dancing and acting (it's known in the industry as being a 'triple threat') in order to make themselves more employable. However, the terms dancing and performing were often used interchangeably.

Significant others – parents

A second reason for commencing dance classes is because their Mum took them and this was usually allied to a concern about a physical issue or behaviour. For example:

> *"I started dancing when I was about three um…mum sent me there because she thought I would be better like, to get discipline and things like that. I think I was naughty!" (Elle)*
> *"I guess sort of interestingly part of the reason I started dancing was because I was cross-eyed and my mom was afraid that my coordination was going to be off!" (Beth)*

These quotes are both from female dancers, there were no such quotes from male dancers. This is again probably due to wider societal norms and stereotypes which means that parents are less likely to think of taking boys to dance class in order to help with a physical issue or general discipline.

Significant others - friends

Thirdly, dancers started classes because their friends or siblings attended classes.

> *"I was three years old and my older sister already went to dance classes, and so they decided that that was a good thing for me to do as well." (Mia)*

> *"It was the summer session for college and I was taking elective classes and I was dating a woman who was interested in taking a dance class and so she sort of…in the midst of conversation we talked about going out to the clubs, and this and that. She was like well you should take this class with me and I am like…it was a modern dance class[33], I was like are you kidding! All of the stereotypes of being a male dancer I was very much beholden to and so she kind of cajoled me and said she would be there with me and you know in a room full of women in tights, how bad could it be? [Laughter] I said OK sure, sure, so…and um…honestly I think it was maybe a week or two and I was hooked." (Ike)*

Whilst this final quote is quite unique with regards to the perceived perks of attending classes other male dancers gave siblings as a reason for starting. The difference is that when this reason is given it is usually because they just started joining in and so the parents then took them along or a teacher spotted a talent rather than them starting class because a sibling or friend went as with the girls. The reference to wider social norms in terms of social stereotypes is very explicit in the last quote, he clearly needed some persuasion and felt that his masculinity should be justified and asserted (through the attraction of seeing women in leotards) in making the decision to attend.

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[33] In America modern dance is the equivalent to what we would term contemporary dance in the UK

Significant others - experts

Finally a couple of dancers were 'spotted' for having a particular talent. This was more common in the male population.

> *"I was seven and um…a group came to my local primary school um…and sort of…auditioned all the kids in the primary school to sort of give them a chance to dance. And that's what they were called – Chance to Dance, to give kids that otherwise wouldn't do it…they would want to get into ballet, and I kind of took to it from there really so it came to me… They told me that they were interested in me coming along to the recreation centre and just taking some classes. And I sort of convinced my mum to take me down and it just happened weekly and it started from there." (Mr White)*

It is evident from all of these quotes that the male dancers felt the pressure of wider societal norms and stereotypes. This may account for the fact that male dancers tend to start later than females and that there are far fewer male dancers in the industry. As suggested earlier, the parents of boys may not think of introducing their children to dance classes at a very young age, whether or not they would benefit from discipline or help with coordination. They would perhaps suggest a more 'masculine' hobby to help with such issues such as Karate. In the quote above Mr White had to 'convince' his Mum to take him, she was clearly not overly keen on the idea.

Building the self-concept: getting hooked

Part of this sense of an innate vocational calling is the feeling that they became 'hooked' and started to prioritize dance so that it comes to dominate the self-concept. Whilst a few dancers 'knew' that they wanted to dance 'for as long as they can remember', those that remembered a time when they didn't dance all spoke about how quickly they 'got hooked'.

"I just loved it straight away." (Anna)

"Although at five years old I don't think the training is really that vigorous! But you know I had a good time and I got hooked." (Beth)

"I just went once a week and of course I got hooked!" (Grace)

"I realised that it was something that made me tick" (Max)

"I just loved it, I couldn't get enough, I danced all the time" (Juliet)

Dance is then seen as something innate, within them, 'it made me tick', 'I got hooked' etc. The sense that their connection to dance comes from an inner emotional response was universal. The comment that they 'love' dance came through not as an 'I love chocolate' type of response but a genuine, heartfelt passion for the art.

This sense of innateness comes also from the awareness that not everyone has the ability to become a professional dancer[34]. When asking the dancers to identify when they realized they had the ability to become professionals, many of them struggled to find an answer. It seemed to be an internal process of realization, which constituted a gradual understanding through a developing tacit knowledge more allied to their desire to dance than their ability per se.

"I don't think it was necessarily oh I might be good enough, I think it was just a want, the want to do it. …Even once I got rejected or something I still wanted to do it…. I think I did know that I was good when I was younger. I think that…it's not necessarily an arrogance, loving yourself or anything but I think that you know…you know because you feel it when you are dancing." (Nala)

"I don't know what it was. It was just I was lucky to find the thing that I was good at right from a very young age. " (Freya)

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[34] However, as discussed in the previous chapter the abilities required to become a dancer are socially constructed.

Interestingly again, the realisation that dance was something that they not only enjoyed but were good at is remembered as being present from a very early age, which marks dancers out from the other occupations discussed previously[35]. Quite often and not surprisingly, the dance teachers played an important role in the realisation that they had a 'talent'.

> *"When I was seven my disco dancing teacher said to my mum I*
> *actually think she has got something here. You know I think she*
> *is a good dancer um…I think you should take her to a stage*
> *school that does ballet, tap, modern, you know the works. She*
> *saw something in me." (Anna)*

This provides external validation for their inner desire to dance. Unsurprisingly then, dance is presented as something that is associated with positive emotions, they enjoy it and they feel that it's something that they're good at and therefore something that gives them self worth.

In the quote above the tacit knowledge element of this dawning is evident when Nala says 'you know because you feel it'. Again this is something that is felt from within, an innate sense of dance as a part of you, highlighting the way in which the emotional connection links with the identification and sense of self, as Carl says.

> *"I think it's just always been in my blood". (Carl)*

A child may be a good dancer but this inner desire to pursue dance is implicit when dancers talk about dancing whether to me directly or each other. The training (as we'll see) is so intense that without this inner drive they would not reach the required standard, no matter how talented they were.

Building the self-concept: experiencing a vocational calling

The sense of innateness is closely related to the idea that the dancers were born to dance, that they had a vocational calling. The sense of having a vocational

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[35] Which is somewhat of a relief as to know you're going to be a good slaughterman from a young age would be considerably disturbing!

calling is something that emerged as a common theme throughout the interviews. Stacy stated:

> *"I do believe I was put on this earth to dance." (Stacy).*

Similarly Sylvie recalls when pestering her mum to allow her to attend dance classes aged 4.

> *"Yeah, I just wanted to. It was just a case of "mum, I want to be a dancer. Actually I don't remember why, I just remember wanting to be a dancer you know, one of those 'ever since you can remember' things." (Sylvie)*

Whilst it may not seem uncommon for little girls to want to become dancers these professionals remember it as a real burning desire and it is significant to them that they had felt if from a young age. Some dancers also remembered exploration in terms of extra curricular activities and hobbies during their early years but once they 'found' dance they remembered knowing very quickly that it was something that they had a passion for, For example, Clara says

> *"Then I think I did gymnastics when I was six or seven, um…and then my mum took me to modern and tap and that was it for me. I thought right this is what I want to do!" (Tilly)*

Clearly she remembers it not as something that she just enjoyed but something that she wanted to pursue, almost instantly. The ways in which dancers think about dance shapes their understanding of their experiences and what it means to be a dancer. The sense of having a vocational calling is not unique to dancers. Bolton also found a sense of vocational calling amongst the gynecological nurses that she studied (2005). The main difference here is that dancers have the feeling that this is what they were born to do from a very early age and it is an enduring feeling that remains with them throughout their training and career.

Pushy parents?

So strong is this inner drive that none (except one[36]) saw themselves as being pushed into it as a result of 'pushy parents'. All of the dancers stated categorically that they were never forced or cajoled into going to class. It is something that they wanted to do, it came from an inner drive and often they pestered their parents to allow them to attend classes (as we've seen in some of the quotes above). They unanimously distanced themselves from the idea that they had 'pushy' or 'stage' Mums although all of them acknowledged that such a stereotype exists.

> *"My Mother is the antithesis of a stage mother, she was never*
> *pushy like that, in fact, if she said it once she said it a thousand*
> *times. The minute you don't wanna do it just let me know*
> *because it costs so much money and takes so much time."*
> *(Lizza)*

> *"I was never forced to go, my parents weren't pushy, in fact*
> *they'd probably rather I said I didn't like it." (Ben)*

Again there is a gender difference here. As seen in the quotes above, some male dancers had less than enthusiastic parents where as the female dancers (on the whole) did not have these experiences. A more common experience generally was that of the dancers' parents (usually Mums) using their dance classes as a way to modify behaviour or ensure that they completed chores. This was never expressed as a malicious intent from the parents but was mentioned playfully and as an expression of their commitment to and love of dance.

> *"[laughing] It was the one thing that worked with me, my Mum*
> *would say, "if you don't tidy your room you're not going dancing"*
> *and it always worked!" (Juliet)*

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[36] This was a male dancer who was bribed (financially) by his Mum into attending his first class and then enjoyed it as he found it rewarding because it was "both physical and creative".

From an early age these dancers remembered prioritising dance or from the time they started if they started later. For these dancers, dance is clearly something that they value very highly and also something that they're good at and therefore provides them with self-esteem. Taken together the notions of dance as an inner drive (rather than obeying a parent's wishes) and as a priority over everything else (it's high value) has clear implications for the development of the self-concept in relation to dance. However, for such an identity to develop further it required continued participation in a set of wider social relationships that we examined historically in the discussion of the socio-genesis of dance.

Section 2. Sustaining and developing the dancers' identity: the experience of wider social networks; dance, family, community and school

As young people establish the foundations of their identity they are engaged in a network of relationships, shaped by the sociogenesis and psychogenesis of dance, that structure the further development of that identity. These relationships are centred not only around the world of dance, but also family and friends and crucially the world of the school. In this section we explore the impact of these relationships on the young dancer's sense of identity

From their participation in dance one of the dancers remembered feeling that part of her enjoyment was wearing the specific attire and being groomed in a particular way.

> *"I loved wearing the ballet shoes and the leotard and tights. And*
> *I loved the music, and I just loved how it made me feel." (Grace)*

What dancers wear for class is also something that makes them feel that they are doing something different. This can impact on young children particularly as it is a visual stimulus that is clearly identifiable and does not require complex cognitive processing (see Piaget, 1955, 1962; Donaldson, 1978 etc.).

In addition to the references made regarding dress, the respect that dancers have for each other and for the profession is something that the children have really noticed and taken on board at a conscious level. They reflect that these exams have not only taught them the technique required to be a dancer but also the self-discipline, respect and how to 'conduct' themselves as dancers, as professionals. They learn that this is the way that dancers behave and that when they are taking exams, they are dancers. This deliberate and desired accumulation of the cultural norms associated with dance has clear implications for identity. During exams they are expected not only to perform the required technical steps and demonstrate artistic ability, they must also look, dress and behave like dancers. Exams are one of the vehicles through which dancers begin to assimilate into the culture and begin to take the idea of what it means to be a dancer into the self-concept, the norms of the profession being absorbed by, and through compliance reinforced by, the individual. Unlike their contemporaries at school who are sheltered from the world of work, these young dancers are already understanding and adopting behaviours characteristic of the adult world.

The theme of connection and belonging are also evident here through their sense of being with their friends and sharing the experience. Even from this young age dance is seen as something special, respectful and importantly affects the way that they 'feel' when they are in a dance environment. This is one of the ways in which they come to feel 'different' in Becker's terms from the norm and become emotionally connected to dance. It is also an example of the related processes of sociogenesis and psychogenesis. The social, cultural norms surrounding the demands of the profession and the attire worn that currently characterise the profession generate the conditions under which the child develops its identity.

The wider dance community: the role of competitions

From their early years the young dancers become a part of the wider community of dance. For example they were often selected by teachers to attend competitions, festivals, shows, auditions, workshops, summer schools and to take exams. This meant dedicating a great deal of time to rehearsals and extra classes, required a great deal of commitment from dancers and families alike and created a sense of community as they met other like minded children from their own dancing school and from further afield.

> *"I think by about ten my dance teacher had decided I should go at least three times a week. And then…um…she put…its really bad actually, she called it special class, and then she put an extra class in for all her students that she though actually had quite a lot of potential." (Elle)*

> *"It was kind of anybody who was really serious about it that did private lessons. You had to go to private lessons to be able to learn your dance and everything else. So there were a handful of us at the school, but the school was quite big. It was over 400 students. So it was not something that everybody would get into." (Hannah)*

As mentioned in Chapter 1, competitions, grade examinations and shows are events through which these young dancers could assess their own achievements in relation to those of others (adding to their tacit knowledge and assessment of their abilities). Many of them would mention, quite incidentally, occasions on which they were selected for something or singled out, there was always an element of external validation and reinforcement. What is very clear from the data is an increase in the intensity of training at the age of around 10 years for those that were selected or identified as having particular potential. This gave the dancers a sense of being amongst a group that were 'special' (in that not everybody who trains can reach the standards required to be attend these events) and were more "serious" about dancing.

Competitions are also one of the vehicles through which young dancers become immersed in the social networks that revolve around dance training and related activities leading them to further identify with the profession and the art form through a mutual sense of belonging with others from outside their immediate dance school. These were also activities through which young dancers were learning more about the demands and norms of the adult world of dance. Many dancers attended competitive dance festivals or other dance competitions. These occur across the country in both the UK and the USA and involve a system whereby dancers compete at a local level then regional etc, etc until they reach a National final. Many of the dancers in the UK also competed in International competitions that attracted dancers from elsewhere in Europe. The experience and level of involvement and commitment required for these competitions was the same for dancers in both the UK and the USA.

> *"So then we just kind of started in these competition classes and then your life just…completely changes. So at the age of twelve I went from going to dance one night a week to going five nights a week and you know our summer vacations became not vacations anymore but work for a twelve year old. I was doing like twenty-five dances, and when I think back of all the things that we did…my mum and dad paid for it, and all the things that we had to memorise, and…it was just amazing… We travelled around all the time. We had like um…there were two semi finals a year and then a final that you go away for three weeks in the summer. And then two semi-finals you do like a weekend every year and so your competition class or your solos you just work up a bunch of routines and you just take them to compete. And that's just what I did and it just seemed like the norm to me."*
> *(Pearl)*

The commitment is clearly on behalf of the teachers, the parents and the children with extensive costs, travelling and huge amounts of preparation involved not just

to attend the event but for the rehearsals and training that led up to it. It is also clear that this was their life.

Family networks: prioritising dance within the family

Even within the family dance was being prioritised. As we can see this lifestyle became their norm:

> *"A lot of the holidays were taken up as going away and doing festivals and staying over. And it was a great life because there'd be loads of you, loads of families and my mum and dad were very close to a lot of them as well." (Xia)*

> *"My Mum was always fretting about costumes and fully involved on that side. But again that's the kind of thing, you know, it kind of completely takes over when it's kind of festival fortnight, that's what everything revolves around, you know." (Neo)*

These quotes demonstrate that this was a way of life rather than a hobby and it is all encompassing. Events such as these festivals and competitions bring the 'community' together and reinforce the sense of shared identity. Because the dancers are children and their dancing lives become so all encompassing, there is a high degree of family involvement, to the extent that the parents of the children also become close, reinforcing the strength of the community (see 1st quote above). It must also be remembered that emotions are high at these events in which the community supports those that are in need both practically and emotionally. For example the parents of all the children will help with transport, costumes, hair, make up or emotional support when there are disappointments as well as taking pride and finding joy when one of 'their own' is triumphant. Quite often they will also perform group dances in these competitions and again share in their successes and disappointments. These shared experiences bring the community together in an arena in which cultural norms of the profession are developed and passed on whilst also exposing the dancers to a wider dance community.

Once they become adults dancers reflect on these shared experiences and joke about 'tacky' festivals safe in the knowledge that a large majority of dancers will have experienced them. It becomes a point of conversation where memories of common experiences, specific to the profession are shared. Even those dancers that didn't attended festivals would however attend workshops, summer schools and other dance related events such as shows and specialist coaching. Again, this involved a great deal of family commitment and became all encompassing, dominating their lives.

> "It was a huge part of my parent's lives as well as mine, you
> know, doing it every weekend[37]. They had to kind of put their
> lives on hold for me." (Odette)

Parents from both the UK and the USA would get involved with the shows, helping out backstage, making props, scenery and costumes. Only two of all the dancers interviewed had parents who had been involved in dance in any way previously and neither of those had been professional dancers. This means that the parents were also learning about the profession (through the community) and took on some of the cultural values such as the priority of dance as we saw when Odette said that her parents put their lives 'on hold' for her [38]. Clearly the commitment is not purely individual (which is problematic for Erikson's notion of Identity Foreclosure) but that is not to say that parents were pushing their children to participate. In Lave and Wenger's terms this can be seen as a 'community of practice' (1999)

Generating a sense of connectedness

All of the respondents talked about the social nature of being a dancer. Some young dancers in the UK attended full-time theatre or dance training from around

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[37] She attended specialist training at the weekends that required her parents to travel over 100 miles with her for the day. Access to this training was by audition only.

[38] Unfortunately there is little scope to explore the parents' journey for this project but it raises some interesting questions for future studies.

the age of 11 so naturally were around like-minded kids[39]. The majority however went to state schools and attended dance classes outside of school hours. This did not lessen their sense of belonging as can be seen in Harry's experience on entering the world of theatre after successfully auditioning as a munchkin for a production of 'The Wizard of Oz' as a child.

> "so I went in and I did it, and I had such a great time and I met all these new people that…it was just a great group of people and I recognised the new sense of family among these people. I had friends from school, from grade school and stuff like that but not like this. You meet people that are just like you and they have similar interests, bonkers as you might say! We are all kind of crazy bonkers and I never found that in people before. So…I just got addicted and I just pursued it and didn't stop really. I just loved it." (Harry)

All of the dancers spoke about their training and experiences in dance and theatre with great enthusiasm. Above, we also see the ways in which themes of it being something that he 'loved' and was 'addicted' to, linked with the sharing of this feeling and this wonderful experience with others who felt the same way. The analogy of dance friends and colleagues as 'family' is a very common one and a recurring theme. It again highlights the depths to which the connection between the dancers is felt and here we see that the origins of this are often rooted in early experiences. The other common pattern is that this is seen in opposition to 'others', in this instance, friends who shared his passion versus friends from school. This realisation signals the start of his separation from other. Clearly from his earliest experiences Harry felt that the relationships with his school friends were different from those that he experienced with the friends he made on the show. This is not surprising given the heightened emotions that are associated with preparing for and performing in a show but one can see how this leads to a sense of feeling different from the 'norm'. Uma suggests that this emotional

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[39] These are generally private schools with a few exceptions (notably the Royal Ballet School) and scholarships providing financial assistance from various sources.

connection relates to both the nature of the art form and the sense of working collectively together towards a common goal.

> *"Well because you are sharing…even at a young age I don't think you can comprehend this…you are sharing the deepest part of yourself because it's art. Um…and I think that automatically makes you bond on a deeper level even if you are five, six and seven years old. You bond on a deeper level because you are…experiencing art together, you are opening up your heart to go deeper. I don't think that's necessarily like I said comprehended when I was very young but…also too there is a thing of team work. If you ask any football player it's the same exact thing, like you have…when you are in a team and you are striving for something together, you automatically have a brotherhood or a sisterhood with them. So that was a big part of my…social circle when I was little." (Uma)*

It is clear how deeply felt this connection is and how enduring. To say you are sharing 'the deepest part of yourself' is profound and whilst Uma articulated this particularly well this idea was implicit in other responses. Dancer's remember their sense of self being bound to their art from a young age. Dance is a vehicle for emotional expression and dancers therefore draw on inner feelings when performing. The dancer physically and emotionally embodies their art form.

As Harry suggested above, dancing is a social activity, dancers are generally taught in groups and many of the dancers looked back fondly on their early training as a fun, social experience.

> *"I didn't have Saturday morning cartoons because I was at the dance studio at nine until about four every day so…but…I loved it because they became my family, and my best friends." (Jane).*

Once again, there is a comparison here between what other 'normal' children were doing (watching cartoons) and what dancers were doing, why they did it

and the close connection felt between those who shared this activity. There is also a sense that sacrifices are made although this is done willingly.

Experience of school

In both countries the dancers faced a legal obligation to attend school, just as they were learning to prioritise dance. In negotiating these constraints the young people not only demonstrated their autonomy, but they also confront issues of dedication and difference which strengthens their sense of belonging to the dance world.

All the dancers talked of their dedication, drive and the intensity of their training. As we've seen already the intensity of training started at a young age for many of the dancers. By the time they reached the age of 10 or 12 these dancers reported high levels of involvement in dance, some to extremes.

> *"I'd get up at six to practice, go to school then go straight to*
> *dancing come home about nine and collapse … but I loved it,*
> *loved it, I just couldn't get enough." (Juliet)*

> *"It was pretty intense right away. Like from two and then when I*
> *was ten I was like there six days a week you know." (Wren)*

Again we can see how dance is prioritised and schoolwork is something that they fit in around dancing. In effect the dancers were at school full time and in training full time with dance classes and activities taking up evenings, weekends and holidays. This was common in both the UK and the USA where early training structures are very similar. Without this intensity of training they would not gain the required skills to go on to become professional dancers.

While going to school is something that everyone does, dancing is outside this 'norm' and within the dance community (be that within the local dance school or the wider dance community in competitions and shows) the dancers were already seeing themselves as different. As Anna expresses;

> *"Well I guess at school everyone…we had to go to school, you*
> *had no choice, where dancing it was a choice, it was something*
> *that we all wanted to do, we all loved doing, we all enjoyed*
> *doing." (Anna)*

A contrast is made between two distinct worlds here, dance and school, and the differences are highlighted in terms of dance being enjoyable whereas school was simply compulsory. The dance world is presented in a more positive tone, as something they wanted to do, loved doing and were dedicated to. This again has implications for their sense of belonging and identity as being 'different' from the norm. This difference is now beyond a mere feeling but is reflected in their behaviour.

From the data it also emerged that dancers identified more with the dancing world, they felt that it more accurately reflected their own sense of self and through this identification we can see how their self-concept becomes inextricably linked to dance and the dancers' culture. This was evident in Harry's quote above about being a 'munchkin' but came through very strongly in the data when dancers were asked whom they identified with whilst growing up.

> *"Definitely towards my dancing friends. Definitely …when I was*
> *at school I was always just thinking about going to dancing in the*
> *evening. We all went to different schools, there were only a*
> *couple of my dancing friends that were at my school with me and*
> *not necessarily in my class or year. Um…and we used to write*
> *each other letters at school that we would give to each other that*
> *evening. So it was constantly on my mind, dancing, and my*
> *dancing friends. Every Saturday we would dance all day*
> *Saturday, nine until about five and each week we would like go*
> *and stay at one of our…one of their houses and see whoever's*
> *mum would let you go and stay at their house that night. And we*
> *would all have sleepovers together so we spent a lot of time*
> *together out of dancing as well … Although there were only…a*

couple out of my group of dancing friends that actually went on to

do it professionally we all really enjoyed it and worked hard at it

and it was our lives from a young age." (Anna)[40]

The theme of dancing as a way of life (rather than a hobby) is again evident here and it permeated through the boundaries of the immediate dance environment. Again, we can also see the social nature and community that exists between families as parents take it turns to host the dancers. Interestingly, it is not just dancing that is constantly on her mind as a personal endeavour but also her dancing friends, those that shared her love of dance. The community is as important as the activity.

"I identified with the dancing, more so than with… like at school.

Definitely, the dancing, the whole package and the dancing

school thing was slightly, I 'spose more intense really, friendships

and things like that. You share a love of something." (Yildis)

Dancers: dedicated, different and connected

As the dancers' world includes a great deal of interaction and integration with dancers of all ages, the young dancers come to 'look up' to the older ones as role models. Even the male dancers, despite being in an overwhelming minority in dance classes (most stated that they were the only male or one of two), expressed the same sense of connection to those who danced, regardless of their sexuality.

"My best friend at school lived on a different cul-de-sac and it

was full of young families, and every night they would all be out

riding their bikes. I didn't have that. But that was just what I knew,

it didn't bother me. And then when I went to the dance school it

was predominantly girls as you can imagine, but....yeah I

---

[40] This quote brings to the fore the question of what happens to those who don't become professional dancers. As this research is focused on the career transitions of professionals it is outside the remit of the project, however, it raises interesting questions for further research.

suppose I connected with them a lot more, I had something more
in common with them. And it is a stereotype but it was true that a
lot of the lads at my school, my academic school, didn't
understand and didn't want to understand what I did as a
hobby…. So everybody knew I did it but it was never really
discussed or embraced, but it was acknowledged but quietly. So
I didn't chat about it and they didn't ask about it, and it was one
of those things that.... you know, like "don't mention the war" type
of thing, "we know you do it and you know you do it but...."
(Elijah)

What is interesting here is that his dancing is not discussed at school, giving him a very real sense that what he did was not 'normal' and even a little 'devious' (in Becker's terms, 1969). He expresses that the 'lads' at school didn't understand and didn't want to understand and therefore it became something that was 'brushed under the carpet' in school. This experience creates a real separation between the dance world and the 'normal' world and he certainly feels that it is the dance world that he identified with. At the same time he suggests that dancing every night rather than riding his bike like the other (normal) boys was normal for him 'it's just what I knew'. This idea of the dancer's life being different from the norm came through very strongly in the data. All the dancers made reference to it and remembered it that way from a young age. There were two distinct worlds and their world was the dance world.

We have seen the dedication and commitment that's required by the time the dancers reach 10 or so years old, so much so that dance and the 'normal' world become separated because for dancers, dance is the 'norm'. That's not to say however that the dancers never felt any conflict between these worlds as Elle's case suggests.

R: *"When I was about 10 it was four nights a week so then I*
        started missing out on being with my friends, and they were
        all like meeting each other to do stuff. And I was missing

> *out so I was like, I don't want to do it anymore. But I think I*
> *did about three weeks and then cried to my mum I have*
> *made a mistake. I want to go back … Because I think you*
> *forget when you are just tired and you are having to do*
> *homework as well as dancing. It all got on top of me a little*
> *bit…*
>
> I: *So what made you go back?*
> R: *I just missed it. I actually missed going to dance class*
> *everyday, and…as well I missed the girls that I went with as*
> *well because we had a bond that was different to school."*
> *(Elle)*

It should be noted that a story about actually leaving dance at this age is extremely rare, however it highlights a number of important points. Although Elle left because of 'missing out' on being with her school friends, being with her *dancing* friends was one of the things she missed and one of the reasons for her return. We can see how she was drawn back by her passion for dance, her desire to participate in it and her desire to be a part of the social network that she had left. Already she missed the 'bond' that she had with her dancing friends which again was differentiated from the relationships she had with school friends. The dance world incorporates many complex and inter-related aspects, even at this young age. Before they left school they had acquired many of the attitudes, beliefs and behavioural characteristics of professional dancers. It is little wonder then that when dancers are facing transition in their late twenties and early thirties they feel this loss of connection and bond even more acutely, this is explored further in Chapter 9.

Section 3. Getting Serious: The polarisation of self and other

Having established their identity as dancers before leaving school that identity starts to shape their decisions as they negotiate through their final years at school and prepare to enter the world of dancer as a full time career. It is a time

when the polarisation of self and other becomes manifest in their autonomy and ability to make their decisions regarding their future work.

Making choices

It was not uncommon to find that dancers were also good at particular sports whilst growing up. The dancers interviewed reported training to a high level in various other sports including Running (for the UK junior team), Gymnastics (1 dancer was training for the Olympic team) and horse riding among other athletic and team sports. However, once they reached their pre-teen years and the intensity of training was increasing, they were often faced with a dilemma:

> *"And then at eleven she said to me you need to make a choice to do the gymnastics or ballet because your body is going to be built in two different ways and you are eleven and you need to make the decision, do you want to be a ballet dancer? Or do you want to be a gymnast? (Hen)*

This choice, at such a young age, is seen as a career choice rather than just picking between two hobbies due to time or financial constraints. It is also a choice that they remembered making without hesitation. As seen above, the training by this age is quite intense and the development of muscles is a serious consideration if they stand a chance of becoming professional dancers. It also requires the dancers to think about their professional career despite their young age. Again this questions the usefulness of identity foreclosure as a concept for understanding the dancers' identity as it is not something that only occurs during adolescence.

This is also an age when some of the dancers (particularly in the UK, not as much in the USA) went to schools that specialize in performing arts such as Italia Conti, Tring Park, The Royal Ballet and Elmhurst. These schools provide an academic curriculum but include intense dance (and to some extent singing and acting) training alongside their academic studies. Dancers taking this route were in a minority with only 3 of those interviewed having attended a specialist school.

> *"I would wake up in the morning and I would do a ballet class*
> *and then I would have maths and then I would do a jazz class,*
> *and then I had science. I found myself sat in maths class wearing*
> *a leotard and you know cotton socks so…! They were very*
> *intertwined like that. So yeah it was quite hectic there but then in*
> *sixth form I would do my 'A' levels during the day, maybe two*
> *classes in the morning and then after lunch I would have three*
> *one and a half hour classes back to back." (Mr White)*

One would expect that this environment would foster a stronger connection to the dancer's culture than those pursuing dance as an extra curricula activity. However, this did not seem to have any effect, perhaps because attending a separate academic school provided a comparison. One thing that those attending dance outside of school were aware of was that many of their dancing friends did not go on to pursue a career in dance and they often felt that those who did were more 'serious' about dance and often distinguished between those who danced as a hobby and those who were going to pursue it as a career. This was not judged but merely observed as a difference.

We have seen that dancers made sacrifices in order to pursue their passion (however willingly). These sacrifices were most keenly felt in early adolescence with added pressures of peers and academic work as we saw previously when dancers were trying to fit homework around their training schedule and noticed that their friends were socialising more. This was implicit or explicit in many of the dancers comments' but prioritising dance was often, by this stage, felt to be an investment. For example:

> *"Yeah. So I think you start off with once a week in class and then once you*
> *get up the grades then you go to twice a week. And then coming closer to*
> *exam time you do it three times a week or something like that. And then*
> *you do the same with any class you take, so you do that with ballet and*
> *then when I started Modern.... the truth was I didn't really have school*
> *friends, because straight after school I would be at dance school. But the*

problem....well in some ways a bit of a unique situation because the people I was dancing with, they weren't doing it professionally, my intention was always to do it professionally, so I always invested far more time. For them it was good fun." (Sylvie)

Here we see that there is a distinction between recreational and professional intentions and in order to work towards being a professional you had to put in the hours and work hard.

The sense of difference from 'normal' children and identification with dancers has already been highlighted but by the time the dancers became teenagers this was often even more keenly felt. As Iris said;

> *"In middle school, I thought I had like these good friends and what not and once I got to high school they were just really fake and I was like euph I don't wanna hang out with them anyway. It's like what are you all about? I was like, that's not me, you know I'm not a into the boy scene or she said that. It wasn't me"*
> *(Iris)*

There is an inevitable overlap between culture and identity but this quote shows how the sense of self had already taken on the taboo of relationships so that 'the boy scene', wasn't *her*. There is also a sense that her school friends were less mature, this came through quite often in the data, with non-dancers being seen as less focused and comparatively immature.

> *"Friends at school were going out and getting drunk at the park, or going to the roller disco or something I was you know the one who was like oh no I can't come I am going dancing. So…I am like…on a Saturday night if I was going out it would be with my dancing friends… You would understand kind of what you know…what you were doing you know and why…dancing was so important. I just got on with them better as well. I didn't want to go out and…and really socialise. I enjoyed socialising whilst doing you know what I liked to do which was dancing… I knew*

> *what I wanted to do whereas everyone at school was just kind of*
> *plodding along and doing what they were told." (Kim)*

Again the connection to people within the community who 'understand' is important to her. The sense of being different and that school peers did not understand what they did, why they do it or who they are again being a shared experience. The difference wasn't always seen as negative but it was often felt that they didn't really 'get it' and by default didn't understand them as people. Dance comes first but choosing to dance rather than 'socialise' with people from school is not a sacrifice, it's a preference and as she states, attending dance classes was socialising. We can see how the dedication and immersion in the dance world has existed for so long (in terms of their lifespan at this point) that it is internalized as their 'norm'. As such there is a dual nature to their sense of difference. Not only do they feel different from others but in the same way that they felt they are not understood, they too are unable to understand (and therefore relate to in any meaningful) their school peers. This mutual sense of difference through their respective, contrasting, cultural norms is reflective of Becker's work discussed previously (1969).

> *"Kids at school would just hang out and I was like oh no I am*
> *going dancing and they would be like oh! I couldn't understand*
> *why people didn't have something they really enjoyed doing.*
> *That they wanted to do after school, they were always like shall*
> *we go shopping, or shall we get the bus to I don't know*
> *somewhere. Whereas I was like oh no I can't bye! I do*
> *remember that. I couldn't understand why people*
> *couldn't…weren't feeling like…I don't know I was so passionate*
> *about dancing I couldn't understand why people weren't*
> *passionate about something. (Pearl)*

As this sense of being different is present from such an early age it is not surprising that it then becomes an issue in transition. The feeling that they were more focused as teenagers than their school peers was another common experience. This focus and determination is what leads some writers to draw on

the concept of 'identity foreclosure' (Erikson) as an explanation. What we see here is that these are not just individuals who are just fixated but that the connection to dance is part of their sense of belonging to a different group. However, the teenage years are a time when many of the 'recreational' students (those without the inner drive and passion) drop out, as Nala observes.

> *"The classes got smaller as you worked your way up, especially as you go into your teens more, once you got into your teenage years everybody else had other things taking over their lives. They wanted to socialise more, go out with their friends, or their school work was taking over." (Nala)*

Entering the world of work while at school

All of the dancers I spoke to were involved in shows at either an amateur, semi-professional or professional level from an early age which meant that they were exposed to the industry and given a sense of what was involved in the career. Knowing how to prepare in rehearsals, how to groom themselves for stage, adapting to costumes and new spaces and dealing with anything that might go wrong was a complete given. They often reported looking up to the professionals that they worked with, as Grace remembers.

> *"I joined another really good school and they kind of had contracts to do panto every single year, like our professional panto in ****. So I did that right from, I think I was about seven, through to 18 when I left. So it was something that, you know, it was always something to aspire to and I think that helps. Like having some kind of professional insight, so you can kind of get a true idea of what you're getting yourself into [laughs]. It's not the same, but it's you know, it's an idea of what you're aiming for. … it was something that I definitely pushed to do. And like cos I did panto every year, I had to write personally to the Head to ask for the time off. And in the end it was just agreed that I… Cos I*

> *used to have like almost a month off like in total with rehearsals*
>
> *and the shows and everything." (Grace)*

The tension between school and dancing, particularly in the teenage years is again present and it is evident from this that she was engaging in something that was different and separates her from her school peers. She was in fact engaged in professional dance contracts. A more extreme case of this was Luke's experience as he wasn't just away from school for a month over Christmas but had a more extensive job working in theatre from a relatively young age:

> *"Then I went to secondary school at 11 and I did another stint of*
>
> *Jolson again and then I did Bugsy Malone at the Queen's*
>
> *Theatre, and that was amazing because that was like 50 of us*
>
> *every night, and that was incredible… So that was like a year*
>
> *long process before we went into town (London's 'West End').*
>
> *And that was really, really amazing. And obviously, you know, I*
>
> *was growing, I was going through the change then, which was*
>
> *really cool like to be around guys and girls that were all more or*
>
> *less the same age. But my school, the secondary school that I*
>
> *went to, they didn't really take kindly to me missing so much. I*
>
> *think obviously you know they're preparing you for your GCSEs*
>
> *and so on but I didn't feel like I was slacking, I was quite good at*
>
> *sports and I think they wanted me more as an athlete. And I*
>
> *didn't really like sports, I didn't really....although I was good as*
>
> *some stuff, you know, like track and field and stuff and basketball,*
>
> *I didn't really like it, I was just.... I loved performing and I don't*
>
> *think they really wanted to see that, they just saw academic or*
>
> *athlete or something that they thought would progress." (Luke)*

Luke had an absolute passion for what he was doing, that he felt more comfortable going through puberty with people that he felt were like him and finally that the outside world (school) didn't understand any of this but had it's own agenda. The thing that connects him to the performing at both an individual and a social level is the very same thing that separates him from other and this

now operates on a very practical level. He is already keeping different hours from his school peers and is absorbed in a world that they do not comprehend. This creates a lot of tension between what he felt the school thought was best for him, what he was 'good' at in school and his passion, what he wanted to do. A key element of this is the formative age at which this process is taking place. Like many dancers at that age he identified with others who shared his passion and values. School and sports were not his priorities. He was already immersed in a different world with different cultural values and norms. In some respects this is reflective of Lave and Wenger's (1999) concept of 'peripheral participation' although it goes beyond the concept of becoming part of a group through social practices due the element of a shared passion and the all-encompassing fundamental nature of the connection which is felt both deeply within ones self and also, implicitly, shared with others.

Section 4. Moving On

Not surprisingly by the time these dancers reach adolescence there is no question in their minds as to what they want to do in terms of work and career plans, they knew. Beth comments;

> *"I remember um…about nine years old deciding that whatever it took I was going to become a professional dancer! And I feel like I had a good idea of what it took I mean I remember…throughout my pre teen and teen years, really feeling like I couldn't work hard enough and I really had a strong work ethic." (Beth)*

Again, the pride in the work involved in order to become a professional dancer is evident here, worn as a badge of honour, alongside the knowledge of the level and intensity of training involved. Dancers rarely talk about why they dance or why they chose to dance professionally. As discussed in the previous chapter this tacit knowledge is bound in cultural values and beliefs. However, I was working with some dancers who had asked me about my research and they then

began to talk about it. The comments they made revealed a further element of the tacit understanding of what it means to be a dancer.

> D1   *"You don't choose to be a dancer, you just are one, you're*
> *born to do it, I think"*
>
> D2   *"It's just in you, you don't just decide to do it one day, you*
> *just know that's what you're going to do"*
>
> D1   *" I don't remember thinking about it, it was just what I did"*
>
> D3   *"I think it's like that for most dancers it's just in you."*

There is clearly a strong sense that the desire to dance is innate and beyond their control. Similarly being a dancer is not a career choice but fundamentally a part of who you are as a person. In addition to raising questions with regard to the concept of identity foreclosure it also raises questions about more modern concepts of identity that conceptualise it as transient, ever changing and no longer rooted in a sense of community or history[41] (Beck, 2000) that are discussed in chapter 10.

All the dancers interviewed suggested that they saw the continuation of their dance training to a professional level and their subsequent transition into the profession as a 'natural progression'. For them it was a clear cut, linear transition. Most did not contemplate any other career. When asked if she had considered any other options Babs replied:

> *"Being that young [16] god no that never it was like this is what I*
> *want to do this is what I want to do. I never thought that I would*
> *ever do anything else, you know when you're like, it never*
> *crossed my mind to think of doing anything else that was what I*
> *loved and what I wanted to do......" (Babs)*

Having said that, some dancers did consider other options but these were usually at the behest of parents and did not ultimately dissuade them from their goal.

> *"I think it's always been in my blood. I did my A level when I was*
> *16 to 18 and didn't know what to do …..but deep down I always*

---

[41] As discussed in Chapter 2 pt 1

knew that I wanted to go to dance college or stage school and do
all that. …. Um ..I think it was because of my dad basically and I,
I was worried about what they thought cos I, I think they think
that dancing's not a proper job is it. I think my dad wanted me to
go into the Navy or the Army, or do something proper (laughter).
(Carl)

Get a proper job!

The idea that dancing is not a 'proper' job and therefore not a suitable career choice came up time and again and adds to the feeling that dancers are different in a very concrete sense. This was often expressed through parental concern for their future with the knowledge that dance is an unstable occupation. However, as we've seen dancers did not feel that it was necessarily a 'choice' and were not concerned about how they would cope financially.

"When it got to me taking my GCSEs and I said look I really want
to go for dance schools my dad was against it because I went to
a grammar school and he said look you could do your 'A' levels,
you could go on to university. But I said if I go to university I am
just going to study dance because I am not interested in anything
else. And he said…I think my dad said well I am not going to pay
for the auditions. I said well I will pay for them myself. And I
have always had part-time work since I was thirteen, so I did, I
paid for them myself and my mum said look you can't stop her,
she is really determined. Um…and then they were fully behind
me you know." (Clara)

The tenacious attitude of dancers with regards to pursuing a career in dance was again universal, all of the dancers interviewed were adamant that they would pursue a career in dance by the time they reached adolescence and were focused, determined and blinkered in that endeavour. The culture and identification are so strong by this point. Dance had become such an integral part of themselves that dance as a part of who they are and dance as an occupational

identity are indistinguishable. This emerged in the data through shared experiences among dancers with regards to the careers advisors that they encountered at school. Many dancers from both the UK and the USA have similar stories about their experiences, for example Neo recalled:

> *"I found they kind of almost didn't like get it. Because it's such a completely different.....it's a different type of thing, it's a different kind of world almost. I remember....you know, I suppose I was sixth form age, to do with whether I would need like UCAS points or things to be able to go on and I had to explain.... it's not quite like that, you know, you have an audition, it's completely different."*

Already the dancers feel that their world is not understood by those outside and that there was little knowledge about their preferred career. On the other hand, having trained and having been immersed in the culture for so long these dancers already knew a great deal about being a professional dancer and what that entailed. Often dancers had watched the older ones that they looked up to in their dance school go on to train professionally. It was very common for the older dancers to help their teachers with younger classes, which not only added to the sense of community but also exposed the younger dancers to the older ones who had continued with their dance training and whom they respected. This then influenced and inspired them as they saw these dancers progress and gave them information and advice about further training and becoming a professional dancer.

> *"There was a group of seniors when I was like thirteen or something who were all amazing to me and a couple of those were ones who went off to performing arts colleges and then I think once I had seen them do it I sort of…I knew that…I didn't know if it was possible for me, but I knew that that was an option."*
> *(Nala)*

This knowledge meant that they often really did know and understand the profession in more depth than the careers advisors they encountered. However, even when they received good advice about thinking ahead or planning for

alternatives in case of injury, at that age the dancers were unwilling to take this on board. Possibly because they felt that the people talking to them did not understand their world or their passion but more obviously, this was taken personally. The way in which dancers felt this advice to be a personal insult via a denigration of their chosen career and an attack on their abilities, demonstrates the strength of their identification with dance and sense of otherness.

> *"She said to me [she adopts a condescending tone] "Maybe you*
> *could do a course in learning to be a teacher and you could*
> *teach dance" [voice returns] and you know when you're just*
> *like… (laughs), I remember getting up and saying "I'm sorry but*
> *you really haven't got a clue about dance" and walked out…*
> *(laughs)." (Isadora)*

Isadora is obviously receiving good advice given the finite nature of the profession but in there is a clash of cultures and without an understanding of the dancers' culture, this advice is completely dismissed and even considered insulting. It is interesting to note also that teaching dance is not considered as an option or a progression of the career. Teaching is not dancing. Obviously this resistance to thinking about alternatives has implications for transition however it is to be remembered that these young dancers are yet to embark on their first career so asking them to think about what they will do in around 16 years time (their entire lifetime away) is quite a big ask and not something that you would normally ask a 16 year old to consider.

The Next Step: entering dance careers in the UK and USA

Up to this point the structure for dance training is the same in the USA as it is in the UK. Dancers attend private studios outside of school hours and participate in numerous and varied dance activities across the country. The structure for training in dance post 16 – 18 years however differs greatly in the two countries. For dancers in the UK the next step in becoming a professional dancer is to attend one of the professional performing arts college. Dancers will aim to go to these specialist, vocational colleges at either 16 after GCSEs or 18 after 'A'

levels. Gaining a place at these colleges is by audition only and whilst there are a limited number of government 'awards' to help those in particular need and some scholarships available from the individual colleges, the majority of parents will have to find the fees. The majority of the dancers interviewed however had received a significant amount of financial support in one form or another. In recent decades dancers have had the opportunity to study for a degree in dance at University level but this is not considered to be suitable training in the industry and therefore very, very few dancers who take this route ever become professional dancers. The private sector has very close links to the industry with many colleges having their own agency attached. There is also a hierarchy in terms of the standing of these private colleges within the industry, in much the same way that there is a hierarchy with regards to academic institutions.

Almost all of the dancers interviewed in the UK had attended one of the top 4 colleges. Competition for places in these colleges is high. One such college had 7,000 applicants for 70 places in 2010 and the fees are very high so for many it's a case of obtaining a scholarship, sponsorship or other financial help.

> *"I think by the age of sixteen I was so bursting to be doing it full-time everyday that I couldn't have waited any longer! And not everyone can get that far, it's an achievement… I ended up auditioning for seven colleges in the end. So um…there was a lot of up and down the country, a lot of hard work for my mum as well. But um…I got into all the colleges and um…it was a waiting game for scholarships really because I knew that I couldn't go unless I got some funding. So that was quite a traumatic kind of few months waiting to find out"[42] (Nala)*

There is an understanding that obtaining a place at one of these colleges is an achievement in itself and the knowledge that 'not everyone can do it' gives the dancers a sense of being special or exceptional in some way, certainly of battling

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[42] Again, this begs the question of what happens to those whose hopes are dashed at this point, unfortunately this is outside the remit of this thesis.

against the odds. It is something that they have worked hard for, for many years, and are proud to have achieved with clear implications for identity and self-worth. The training at these colleges is intense but again, whilst they acknowledge how hard the training was they are proud to have worked that hard and also greatly enjoyed the experience, it is not spoken of as a toil or negative element.

> *"But training wise, you know, it was a lot more competitive.*
> *When it came to college summer shows it was competitive cos*
> *you have to audition to be in a number, you don't just get put in it*
> *because you're this age group. You know, you have to audition*
> *and you have to be the best, so it is very different, but it's great*
> *cos you learnt kind of how you have to fight through and stuff like*
> *that… Obviously it's a lot more full-on cos you're there Monday to*
> *Friday from I think it was quarter-past eight in the morning until*
> *six at night. So it's constant. It's one class after another. But it*
> *was brilliant, you know, I loved all of that. I loved doing it*
> *constantly. I never once felt bored of it." (Ria)*

There is a clear understanding that the training they receive not only trains them physically but also prepares them in other ways for the rigours and psychological strains of the profession, the idea that you have to 'fight through' for example. Whilst Ria talks of the competitive nature of training (again reflecting the career) all of the dancers also spoke of the support, camaraderie and lasting friendships that they made during this time.

> *"I live in *******, so I had to go and move to London and live on*
> *my own. So that was quite daunting. But luckily there's a place.*
> *right opposite the college and everyone that had moved to*
> *London from somewhere else basically stayed there. There was*
> *the odd few that found a flat or whatever somewhere else, but*
> *most of us were there together. So kind of we went through the*
> *experience together and we all had our down days when we*
> *missed home and stuff like that. But yeah we were all there for*
> *each other. So it was kind of again I'd gone from the dance*

school community to having my whole life, that kind of family

there." (Zena)

Again we see the analogy of family, a sense of kinship. This is an experience that is shared by a group of dancers who have a common goal, a passion and share cultural values and beliefs. At the same time they are all living away from home for the first time at a relatively young age (16-18) and sharing intense, emotional experiences creating a strong bond.

In the U.S.A. dancers finish their compulsory education at around 18 years old. At this point dancers took one of two routes. Some went to 'college' (this is more akin to a University in the UK) to study performing arts or dance, similarly a few went to one of the elite conservatoires such as Julliard in New York. Other dancers left home and went to live in either New York (NYC) or Los Angeles (LA) in order to gain further training at the private, independent dance studios. New York and Los Angeles are hubs for dancers in the same way that London is in the UK. This is where there are a lot of independent studios, there is a concentration of shows and dance companies and it is where the majority of auditions are held. For the dancers who travelled to NYC or LA they then faced the dilemma of trying to continue their training at these independent studios whilst paying for classes and supporting themselves financially. In order to do this many of them took an 'internship' at one of the studios. This meant working in an office in exchange for free classes. Other dancers obtained an 'apprenticeship' with one of the independent dance companies (such as Alvin Ailey). Again, this meant that their classes were paid for but they were not paid to perform. Regardless, they still had to live so they would take a further job in order to pay for their living expenses. Effectively they were working two jobs in addition to their training.

"It was crazy I mean I would go…I worked as a waiter so I would

have class say from like…three classes in a row, an hour and a

half each starting at nine a.m. and then we would have rep

rehearsal, and then I would literally still sweating put on like my

shirt and tie, and run like maybe twenty-five blocks to a
restaurant and wait tables for like late at night." (Adrian)

For these dancers the training went alongside the profession so they were working professionally for dance companies (albeit without payment), whilst training and auditioning. This required an immense amount of work and dedication on behalf of the dancer and again demonstrates the determination involved in pursuing their goals. However, despite the differences in the way that dancers entered the profession, the culture and identification with it remained universal.

This group of individuals have worked hard and battled the odds in order to become professional dancers. Not everyone has the combination of the physical ability, artistic flair and passion that drives the endless hours of training and practicing. The pain and toil of all of this work is remembered and endured with fondness because the dancers feel that it is something that comes from within them, because they have the support of each other (despite the competitions) and it is something that they are passionate about and proud of.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how their experiences have led to an internalisation of the cultural values and beliefs so that their identity as a dancer dominates the self-concept. We have also seen how Becker's (1969) sense of difference emerges through their experiences both within their 'dancers' world and externally as they interact with the world outside. This is a two-way process that is mutually reinforcing. The dancers feel different in part because they feel a connection to others who share their difference and in part because their experiences with the wider social environment reinforces this due to the cultural clash. This becomes linked to the way in which dance is central to their sense of self. For example, when they are told that dance is not a 'proper' job this is felt to be a slur on them personally as the thing that they are passionate about and

completely committed to. In this way we can see how the social and the individual are intricately intertwined as suggested through Elias' concepts of socio-genesis and psychogenesis discussed in chapter 1. This dual process is a continuum of cultural norms, embedded within wider societal norms that have developed through the historical emergence and establishment of the art form. The training that is now required is as a direct result of the way in which the art form developed, particularly as it became more dependant upon commercial support. This training however is now a rite of passage requiring dedication, commitment, tenacity, determination, ability and passion. This has led to a process of early socialisation that simultaneously connects dancers to each other whilst separating them from those outside their group.

It is also a process through which the dancer acquires many of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of professional dancers. In this respect it is a very different experience of the world compared to their fellow pupils in school. For many of their contemporaries, their knowledge of the adult world is limited to that conveyed through the school curriculum, while their school and social activities separate them from the world of the adult and their fantasies bare little connection to the realities of their eventual working life. For these young dancers, the opposite is the case, their training and participation in shows and competitions integrate them with the world of the adult dancer, their knowledge of the demands of the adult world is accurate and up-to-date as socially they are in contact with the world of dance while their fantasies are often integrated (if slightly idealised) with the reality of their future work. There is little wonder then that these young people, far from experiencing the transition in terms of Elias's reality shock experience (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2006) it as just one further step in the realisation of their dream. However, as we shall see in Chapter 9 the very reasons why the transition to work is experienced as relatively smooth are the same reasons why the transition out is highly problematic.

Chapter 7
Experiences in Work

Introduction

This chapter builds on the themes of culture, identity, connection and difference discussed in the previous two chapters, mapping their development through the dancers' experiences in the career. This is presented under 4 broad headings 1/ Making it against the odds – This section looks at the process of gaining employment and the social and psychological issues that this raises. 2/ Different boundaries - this section discusses the everyday experiences of work and the ways in which 'norms' in the dancers' working environment differ from wider, perceived social 'norms' surrounding work in general. 3/ Working to get work – this section deals with the periods of time that dancers are not working, their experiences of work outside the profession, their need to continue their training and maintain contacts and the impact that this has on them and their sense of belonging in the community. The final section 4/ looks at the overall demographic of dancers including their socio-economic status. In the interviews this was discussed in terms of the dancers 'background' and this particular area yielded some interesting insights. Other, demographic differences that emerged from the data are also discussed in this chapter. These included differences in experience between genders, the disparity in income between the USA and the UK and the way in which the expected ages of transition differed from country to country.

Section 1. Making it against the odds

The transition from training to work is not simple in that it's not a case of dancers finishing their training and then entering the job market. As such there is no point of origin for their transition into work. As we've seen in the previous chapter many dancers perform in professional, semi-professional and school shows as children

and young adults. In addition, dancers in the UK often perform in professional productions whilst still in training at professional colleges and in the USA dancers often continue their training whilst performing in productions and auditioning. Dancers in the USA who attended a University or Conservatoire would also be involved in productions both as part of their training and also sometimes during holidays. Whilst these may not all be paid the dancers have all had extensive experience of working in the industry prior to entering the labour market. In addition, they are fully immersed in the dancer's culture, having taken on the core values and beliefs. The transition into 'work' is not therefore seen in terms of a 'shock' as suggested by Elias (in Goodwin and O'Connor 2006) but is much more aligned to the kind of 'linear' transitions discussed in the literature review.

> *"I was lucky to get quite a lot of performance experience whilst I was at college with doing kind of external jobs and such like. So I did some TV work, and in my second and third year did pantomime at Christmas. And so you'd kind of go out and you'd work with professional choreographers and kind of work in the actual industry." (Neo)*

That's not to say that dancers didn't face problems in terms of the life that they faced as freelance dancers, having to make ends meet, but actually performing the work and the demands of the profession were not the problem. The only way in which the dancers felt unprepared was in their abilities and knowledge of work that they could do when they were not performing, bearing in mind that any such work must fit around auditions and continued training.

> *"You know…they don't really help you out in the way of you know…you think of the jobs you could do in between if you got four months off …like promo stuff and that. You know they don't guide you in that sort of way at all. I think you need to kind of know what sort of jobs you could do just to pass the time." (Kim)*

Whilst some young dancers entering the labour market may not have fully experienced what it is like to be a professional freelance dancer, they have a

good idea of what this entails and are fearless in pursuing their goals. This was most evident when talking to dancers from the USA who moved to either NYC or LA in order to pursue their career.

> *"It scared my parents and my teachers, and professors more*
> *than it scared me because I just…I knew there was no stopping*
> *me come hell or high water…..when you are that young, you are*
> *invincible and you don't…you don't even think twice about it if its*
> *something you really want. And I have always really wanted it so*
> *that probably accumulated throughout too. Like my drive*
> *accumulated so when it actually came to it, I was just like a*
> *steam train you know? Unable to stop me!" (Questa)*

> *"Like I moved out here for one thing - the love of dance. I didn't*
> *think about salary, retirement, insurance, I didn't think about any*
> *of those things. I love dancing; this is the centre of the dance*
> *universe, that's where I am going!" (Adrian)*

As we can see money and importantly their future is not a consideration, it is the love of dance that drives them. Questa suggests that this drive is something that accumulates so that by the time they are ready to enter the profession they are almost possessed by their drive and will to succeed and become professional dancers. This again demonstrates both the level of personal investment and the priority of dance over everything else that developed in the early years. This was consistent across all dancers, many dancers were well aware that they would make very little money as a dancer but this was not part of their motivation.

> *"When you were younger and you wanted to be a ballerina and*
> *everybody says "oh yeah, you don't make money", "OK I'm quite*
> *happy, I'll be in a bedsit with no food and I'll still be happy".*
> *(Sylvie)*

The reality of this and the way in which financial security gradually becomes more important to dancers is discussed in a later section, the point here is that it is not a concern when entering the profession and that dancers are aware that

they will not make their fortune from dancing. Some of the dancers, on both sides of the Atlantic, never actually made the bulk of their money from dancing so were never able to make a living from dancing alone but nevertheless they identified themselves as dancers. This again shows the strength of the identification and reinforces the dancers' belief that dancing is not just a job or a career but it is more of a calling, fundamentally defining who they are and how they live. As many dancers stated it is a 'lifestyle' or 'way of life'.

> *"I think we have a very different way of life, I think that if you take up dancing as a career then it's definitely a way of life." (Nala)*

> *"We don't delineate between work and home because it kind of gets blurred in a way. So that…dancing is you" (Grace)*

The dancers' 'way of life' is again seen in terms of difference, it is not the 'norm'. It is also evident that this blurring of work and life is felt to be an integral and defining part of the person 'dancing is you'. This differentiates the profession from many other professions in which the work and home domains are seen as very separate. There is also a real sense of pride in being a dancer and a sense of making it against the odds, this has obvious implications for identity, self-worth and transition, which is discussed in the next chapter. Dancers are keenly aware that not everyone is able to have a career in dance, even if they have made it through the training. This is heightened when entering the labour market where supply greatly outstrips demand.

> *"It's like, we're the outliers. That means people who have really made it against the odds. Of the thousands of people that tried to make it we're one of the few … like only 1 or 2 % actually get to do this for a living, you know?" (Velma)*

> *"I also like it because the odds of success are very slim. I like feeling that I have achieved a certain level of success you know against all the odds. I sort of like that." (Ben)*

We can see that there is a real sense of achievement, being able to say that they are working as dancers gives them a sense of self-worth in line with their cultural values. Again though this is accompanied by a sense of difference, which is evident when Velma says 'we're outliers', outliers are not 'normal'. So there is also an underlying sense that they are special for having achieved something extraordinary and for being 'different'. Being different is a very positive aspect of their identity as emerged in other studies of occupational difference such as the slaughtermen (Crowdy and Ackroyd, 1990), musicians (Becker, 1969) and gynaecological nurses (Bolton, 2005) discussed in Chapter 2.

The linearity of the transition into the career could be challenged in objective terms. For example, how linear is such a transition when it can take years to enter the profession? This of course is a matter of perspective, focus and ontological assumptions. This study is focused on 'reality' as emanating from the experiences of the individuals involved rather than an 'objective' reality in terms of employment statistics. As such the transition is experienced as linear in that the self is already immersed in the profession and the culture in work is aligned with the culture in training.

When entering the labour market many dancers also witnessed their peers 'dropping out' as they struggled to find work in the industry.

> "Oh there is only about four of us in my year[43] still working…I
> think most people…there are groups of people I suppose that
> finished college and just didn't work, or didn't want to work, and
> kind of decided actually I don't really want to do that and did
> something else with the qualifications they had got from college
> or whatever. Um…and then there were some that worked
> maybe a couple of jobs and then…sort of just didn't…didn't carry
> on, or…yeah. I think its weird really, that's why I kind of count
> myself really, really lucky like. Most…a couple of close friends

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[43] There were around 80 students in his year at college.

from college are now like teachers, and…primary school
teachers, not even teaching dance or anything." (Max)

> R: *But I do know quite a lot of people have given up and I*
>   *don't see that many people from my year at college at all.*
> I: *And that's only five years in.*
> R: *Yeah. I know. Literally disappeared. (Iris)*

Dancers of all ages could only think of a handful of students from their year that were working. A fair number (especially but not exclusively the older dancers) stated that there was nobody from their year still working as a dancer. This compounds their sense of making it against the odds, not only have they completed the training but they have continued in the profession and found employment.[44]

Interestingly, once they depart from the community they 'literally disappear'. Here it is evident that those who are not dancing are no longer a part of the community, they become outsiders. This is evident even in Max's quote where he has maintained contact with his close friends who have left the industry. This experience, seeing that not all your peers are working gives further credence to their sense of being 'lucky' and successful, against the odds. Departure from the community means to those remaining that they are no longer engaged in the activities of the community and therefore friendships are not as close as those within it.

Structure and self

Accessing jobs is very convoluted in the industry but there are 3 main routes to employment; 1/ obtain an agent 2/ attend an open audition 3/ through your personal networks. To take the first, obtaining an agent isn't as straightforward as it sounds. There are two type of agents 'sole' agents or 'managers' which, as the

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[44] Due to the focus on transitions away from the profession this study does not include those who have dropped out or were forced out.

name suggests is one agent through which all work is booked and all commission paid[45] (although there is limited flexibility) and general dance agents who do not require any exclusivity. It is not always easy to get on agency books. For sole agents and managers, the more contacts and the more highly regarded the agent is, the more experience they require before taking you on. Access to these agents is often via the credits on your CV and / or an invitation for them to see you in a show. The second type of agent has open books, this means that they will have many more dancers on their books but as there are thousands of dancers looking for work they tend to hold auditions for their books once a year. These tend to deal with the commercial (pop and corporate) end of the market but also send dancers for auditions as ensemble. All of these agents require some previous experience, (in the UK they will also require training from a reputable college) but entry is by audition only. The agents all work in a similar way, they answer calls from casting agents or production companies that specify the type of dancer they require (look, height, hair colour etc) and then send the appropriate dancers to a 'private audition'. A 'private' audition is differentiated from an 'open' audition which is the second route into employment.

The open audition, which is known as the 'cattle market' in the industry is where an audition is advertised in the trade paper 'the stage' or through one of the many websites or forums for dancers. This will usually result in a massive number of dancers attending, particularly if the audition is for a Broadway or West End musical or pop star. Dancers are usually required to attend 'registration' early in the day, during which time their name is taken and they are given a time at which they are to return and audition. If registration for an open audition commences at 10am dancers will be queuing from around 6.30 or 7am. The auditions will go on all day until around 5pm and many dancers will be turned away as it's a first come, first served basis (hence the hours of queuing). If they are selected through an open audition they will then attend the 'private'

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[45] In the UK this between 12% and 20% of their wages, in the USA it's 10% for agents and 15%-20% for managers, most theatre dancers have both.

auditions with the dancers who are attending via an agent. There will then be numerous elimination rounds and after between 3 and 6 auditions they may get the job. There are all sorts of reasons why there are so many auditions (particularly in theatre) usually relating to whether or not the corresponding cast member is actually leaving or has renegotiated their contract.

The final way to gain employment is through the dancer's own network. Jobs obtained in this way are usually one off, corporate events although some films (especially Bollywood films), smaller theatre jobs and small company projects are also cast in this way. Even when dancers audition for jobs it is accepted and acknowledged that this is more likely to occur if you are known to the auditioning panel. The dancers' network is therefore crucial in gaining employment.

> *"I think having a lot of connections is almost more important…I*
> *don't think many people get jobs at auditions anymore you*
> *know? Not unless they have already made a connection."*
> *(Brittany)*

All of the dancers interviewed had experience of both open and private auditions. It is this experience of auditioning with many, many other candidates that leads the dancer to an understanding that they have battled the odds and really achieved something in getting that job.

> *"That's an amazing feeling when you go oh my god I have*
> *managed to beat all those people to that job." (Questa)*

Again this gives dancers a real feeling of positive self-worth. However, the experience of auditioning also reinforces the sense of difference as dancers are very aware that this selection process is not the norm in wider society. On Broadway (New York) 'open' or 'cattle' calls are compulsory for all productions whether or not they are hiring dancers at that time due to union regulations. There is therefore an understanding in both countries that nobody ever really gets selected from them but there's an off chance and hundreds of dancers attend in hope and because it's an opportunity to 'be seen' by casting directors,

musical directors and directors. Of course, in reality they are not remembered when the panel see so many dancers in one day.

> *"Why do I come to a cattle market to try and get a job and…you have no answer but for some reason you keep doing it. It's not normal! I mean who…I know there are interviews and things but you would never actually…they would never be as brutal as to go get out of the room you are rubbish which we get! Like when they do that horrible thing of going OK so these are the people we are going to be calling back. Its not that you are not very good, it's the way that you look." (Lizza)*

> *"It is ridiculous, no other job would you ever have to virtually kick people out of the way to pick up a skipping rope to practice to skip. You know like…it was literally ridiculous yesterday. Like…he would be like [imitates American accent here] OK now just put the ropes down. OK. Next group. Go! And everyone would be like legging it for a skipping rope and it's like what am I doing? …this is ridiculous but we all do it." (Elle)*

Again a sense of difference in Becker's sense (1969) is evident here. The norms of the profession are at odds with the wider social norms and the dancers are acutely aware of this.

Dancers do feel that there is an element of 'luck' to gaining employment and there is an understanding that you need to be in the 'right place at the right time'. This of course does not mean that those who work most consistently are not highly respected but it is acknowledged.

> *"I got to Germany and I was really lucky, straight away." (Suzie)*

> *"On my first job I was really lucky. I was given first cover for the lead and second cover for the second lead girl." (Ria)*

The knowledge that there is an element of being in the right place at the right time comes gradually and is more evident in dancers who have been in the industry for a while or who have been dance captains[46] and therefore been party to the selection process. Dancers are selected as much on how they look and therefore how they will fit into the director and choreographer's 'vision' as for their dance ability. This is evident in Lizza's quote above, 'its not that you are not very good, it's the way that you look'. One dancer told me how she demonstrates this when teaching in colleges. She breaks the class into small groups and then picks some from each group, eliminating each time until she has 3 or 4 dancers left. She then asks the class why they were selected. Although they can see that these dancers are not necessarily 'the best' dancers there first response is often that they must be the best. After a while she reveals the process "they're all between 5'6" and 5'8" and blonde" she tells them. "It's so they understand and are prepared" she tells me. Gaining employment for the way you look is a given in the industry, it stems from (and is continually influenced by) the complex processes of sociogenesis and psychogenesis discussed in the previous analysis of dance history. However, for the dancers, knowing that appearance is key does not prevent dancers from taking rejection in auditions personally.

> *"The lowest is…for me I would say is…when there is a job you really, really want and you have auditioned and you got right down to the end, and you have paid so much money to travel to and from, so much effort has gone in, and then you don't get it, and you were so close, or they say you know you are next on the list. I think that…that's like the low of the low because no matter how much they say to you we loved you, we thought you were great, but we are just going to go with something different, we are going to go with something else, no matter how much they*

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[46] This is the term used to describe dancers who are given responsibility for 'cleaning' the dances and maintaining standards. Ensuring that dancers are consistent in their movements as directed by the choreographer, that they keep their spacing on the stage and they also have some responsibilities for teaching the choreography to new dancers.

say that to you, you think well what was wrong with me? What did I do wrong?" (Kim)

"That's the bad side of it, is being, you know, auditioning and not only is it your what you love doing, it's also what pays your bills and you don't get that job and the feeling is really… can be really, really soul destroying I think if you've worked that hard and people turn round and just go you're too short, and that's what stops you getting that job, or you know, or you don't get any reason and you go away thinking and you try and analyse the whole audition over and over again until you can make sense of it, and you try and make sense of it because no one will help you make sense of why you didn't get a job. And that's quite… it's a personal rejection. And people say don't take things personally. It's hard to in this business when you are, you're self-employed and you are your business. So how can you not take something personally? You know. And having been on the other side when people are auditioning and hearing what people say about those people, they're not pretty enough, you know. If people found out those sort of things, you'd be like urgh. It would be awful, you know, if people were honest with you, cos that would be really even worse." (Darcy)

"And it's not like…a defective toy that can be sent back to the factory, it is you and when somebody says…you know 80% of the time no to your product, you are like but this is my heart and my soul. I am bleeding for you! They are like no, no thanks!" (Wren)

Clearly, dance is a part of the self-concept at this point and as such being judged and rejected is taken to the core and is difficult to deal with, as Kim (above) suggests when she says 'what is wrong with me?' They feel it as a personal

failing 'you know it was down to you' and emotionally it is difficult to deal with, 'it can kind of tear you apart', 'I'm bleeding for you', it's 'soul destroying'. This happens despite the knowledge that it may not be that their dancing is inadequate. However, as the second quote suggests the 'truth' regarding why they didn't get the job might actually be just as hurtful and just as personal, having this knowledge is therefore of little comfort. At the end of the day it is them, whether it is their physical appearance or dance ability they feel that *they* personally are being rejected. Auditioning is rarely seen as a positive aspect of the profession but rather the antithesis of performing.

> *"It's an absolute rollercoaster and it's the good times and it's when you are in a contract that keeps you going through the dark times." (Gary)*

> *"I could go to that audition on Monday and maybe get cut, or hear a couple of days later that people are going back in again and I am not. My spirits will be…destroyed again you know." (Pearl)*

The feeling that the career is a mix of intense highs and equally intense lows is universally shared but again gives this impression of a drug like addiction. The second quote also highlights the way in which dancers are often not told if they have not been 'recalled' or if they haven't got the job, they find out through the network by virtue of the fact that others have been successful. This means that they may be waiting for 'that' call for days before they discover that they have been 'cut'. The idea that her spirits will be destroyed is echoed in the sense that you have to be very strong to withstand these rejections. As one dancer said:

> *"People pick you up and let you down a lot in this business. You have to be very thick skinned." (Joe).*

The third quote above is very explicit about the feeling of being judged. It is very common for dancers to contrast their own experiences with those that they perceive to be the 'norm' as with the Uma's comment, however, what's also interesting is that this contrast relates to how the dancer's sense of self is

wrapped up in their profession, their physical self is their tool, their trade, their profession, their life and themselves, 'I am my product'. It is difficult therefore not to take the rejection to the core of the self. Of course, as we've seen, the flip side of this is that being accepted is euphoric and is a huge boost to their sense of self and their self-worth.

Unsurprisingly, every dancer suggested that dealing with rejection was the toughest part of being a dancer. It wasn't uncommon for dancers to wait quite some time to get a job. A few didn't work for the first three years that they were out of college but during this time they were attending numerous auditions and facing repeated rejection. Odette was one such dancer.

> *"I got down for loads of those things and I was always so close*
> *and then you get the phone call, you didn't get it, or you're on*
> *hold or the job's been panned, or you know, and it's like oh. And*
> *I was so close to giving in and I actually did say the last time I*
> *auditioned for Starlight, I said this is the last time I'm doing this*
> *because I can't keep going through it, because I wanted to do*
> *the job so badly." (Odette)*

It is clearly a very tough and competitive industry. Uma gives this as the reason why so many drop out, even after training professionally.

> *"People drop out of the business because it so friggin' hard."*
> *(Uma)*

During these lows, dancers rely on their community, which provides an important support network. Despite the intense competition and the fact that these dancers will often be competing in the same audition for the same job, there is a real sense of mutual respect.

> R: *"Like she said there are definitely hard times. You know*
>   *tough times and you are like…"*
> I: *"And what is it that…that pushes you through those times,*
>   *what is it that makes you keep going and not go 'do you*
>   *know what?"*

> R2:   "Oh camaraderie and knowing that so many of your other
>   friends are in those dark times too. You know what I mean
>   like there are so many unemployed super talented people."
>   (Frank)

Here it is the knowledge that lots of talented, well-respected dancers are also out of work that softens the blow. They are 'in it together' in a sense although they are competing for the same jobs. Some dancers did suggest that it's difficult not to feel some resentment when their friends and peers seem to be getting lots of job offers whilst they are struggling themselves but there is also a sense that this goes in cycles and they are there for each other with a mutual understanding of the experience. Other support networks such as family are also important.

> R: "I just remember ringing my mum crying, going I don't
>   know…what am I doing? Have I made the right decision
>   and bless them they would get such an earful! [Laughter] I
>   don't think I could do it if I was a parent. It's just up and
>   down all the time constantly. One minute you are happy,
>   one minute you are sad, then you think you are good, then
>   you think you are crap and yeah…
>
> I: So…and that doesn't put you off?
>
> R: Uh…no not really because you kind of…you realise if you
>   want to do it you have to live with that. Its part of the life
>   and you have just got to get on with it otherwise…if you
>   can't kind of get over it you need to think about maybe not
>   doing it because you can't spend your whole life dwelling
>   on it you have just got to let it go." (Kim)

The importance and strength of the social network within and through which their identity has developed and their understanding of their world shaped, is evident here. The duality of the sense of self as different from the norm is perpetuated and strengthened through these experiences so it is those that are within the dancers' world that can understand and provide appropriate support. This again

demonstrates the processes of psychogenesis and sociogenesis in action. The self being constructed and supported within a specific set of cultural norms that are related to the wider social environment, developed over time.

The 'lows' and the somewhat brutal process of auditioning are clearly integral to the profession and something that you must endure and manage emotionally in order to be a professional dancer. It is a wonder that any dancers continue to put themselves through this. We've seen that it's the 'highs' that see them through but it is also their sheer determination and passion that leads them to make it against the odds. Again, there are few professions that require such tenacity but the integral nature of dance to the self means that they continue despite the knocks and obstacles.

> *"And so I think it just…I don't know, something inside of me said I just want to do this, I want to do this." (Tilly)*

> R: *"I think its like something inside…I guess its like tenacity, you have got to persevere, you have got to keep going. I know I couldn't do anything else so therefore my option is just keep going! [Laughter]*
>
> I: *What do you mean you can't do anything else?*
>
> R: *Well I couldn't…not necessarily I couldn't do anything else, but I couldn't not be doing this." (Nala)*

Gender matters

The data also revealed a gender difference with reference to the experiences of auditioning, which dancers of both genders, in both countries, acknowledged. These differences centre around the demographic of the industry which is very similar in both countries. Although exact figures could not be obtained it was clear that there were a great deal more female dancers than male dancers in the industry. Dancers estimated the ratio to be around 100 females to every 5 males, which mirrors the ratio at colleges. The lack of opportunities for women stems

from the fact that many of the dancing jobs require an equal number of men and women (although some jobs require all female or all male casts). The obvious consequence of this is that many of the female dancers experienced longer periods without work and found it harder to obtain work. Freya, being a dance captain, witnesses and helps with selection in auditions and as such has first hand experience of the effects of the disparity.

> *"It's frustrating, especially from my point of view. I've been in what, two sets of auditions now for the show and the standard that you expect from the girls and the standard that you expect from the boys is… I mean there are some brilliant boys and generally we get really good boys in, but there are occasions when you have to take a boy because he looks right and he's not as good and no way would you accept a girl at that standard, but unfortunately that's how it goes." (Freya)*

> *"It's a lot different for the girls, obviously the girls do struggle a lot more." (Neo)*

> *"I was fortunate enough being a boy, which is kind of, you know, we're lucky that we have dance on our side, with numbers..."(Gary)*

Again we can see from the first quote that there is an emphasis on 'looks' that overrides ability or talent. However, coupled with that is the fact that are fewer male dancers and therefore finding work is less problematic and the standard required is not always as high as it is for females.

Section 2. Different boundaries

Gaining employment as a freelance dancer clearly differs from 'normal' selection processes and is another reason why dancers don't feel that they are part of the 'normal' world. Once they gain employment there are many other aspects of the

job that separate them and make them feel detached from the normality, finding their own 'norms' in their own world. These range from the hours that they work, behaviour during working hours, the physicality, tactile nature and intimacy of the work and the physical space:

> *"I mean the best thing about it is…its like this little…its its own*
> *little world, like normally I get here like at seven-thirty, just when*
> *the audience is all lined up and five hundred people are crowding*
> *around and I just pressed a little button on the door and*
> *disappeared behind a poster, and come inside this whole*
> *different world" (Adrian)*

We see a separation from the 'normal' as a connection with the dance world. This is expressed in terms of the physical space but it is also clearly expressed as 'a whole different world', which is only available to a few. Backstage in a theatre is especially designed to be mysterious in that the audience should not be aware of the process and preparation of the show. This would be like a magician revealing how the illusions work. In theatre you are creating an illusion, transporting the audience to a different place for a short while and dancers / performers are part of this deception. In order to create that they enter a world which is only understood and accessed by them. The sense of difference is therefore deliberate from both sides. We can really see how Becker's notions of 'otherness' as a two way process plays out here.

When working as a dancer the dancer's working hours will vary greatly. During rehearsals they are likely to be working from 10 am until 6 pm 6 days per week and they may then also be doing a show in the evening. If they are not, they will be returning home to consolidate their learning in preparation for rehearsals the following day. Once they begin performing in the show they will be doing some rehearsals during the day (usually from about lunch time onwards) but at the latest they will be starting at around 5.30 pm because they attend warm up and have to prepare their make up and costumes prior to the show at 7.30. Most of the shows in the UK schedule 8 performances a week between

Monday and Saturday, although it is more common now that shows also open on Sundays and pantomimes will have around 10 performances a week. In the USA it is far more common to have shows on Sundays with Mondays off. During 'technical rehearsals' dancers can be working for up to 12 hours a day. Commercial jobs vary too, again rehearsals are generally between 10 am and 6 pm but shoots for videos and films can be anything up to 22 hours. One off performances such as awards ceremonies are also a long day as rehearsals will often take place in the day prior to the evening performance.

Already we can see that this is not conducive to socializing with people outside the industry as most people will be finishing work as dancers begin. Dancers will then finish around 10.30 or 11.00 pm. They will be on a high and looking to go out and socialize at this time or go home and wind down before retiring to bed in the early hours of the morning. In addition, working at the weekends means that they are unable to attend many social events such as weddings and birthdays as these tend to be arranged at the weekend when most people are available.

"We work different hours so…we have a different way of life don't we to a lot of people." (Iris)

"I mean its total…social suicide isn't it." (Zena)

"We work weekends, we work at night, and then after a show everybody…especially if you are on tour or something everyone goes out and you get this kind of family. And you get to know people in a way that you wouldn't necessarily if you were just working in an office nine to five with them. You are all partying together, you are sweating together, you know being grabbed in places you didn't even know existed and you are glad for it because it means you didn't get dropped!" (Juliet)

Again we see the reference to a different 'way of life' as a dancer and the sense of connection and family with those you're working with reinforcing the social

element of their identity developed in the early years. Juliet also makes the point that this is heightened on tour when performers are all in an unfamiliar place, away from family and friends, possibly in a foreign country where they don't speak the language. In this situation dancers are more likely to go out and socialize with others involved with the show (including musicians, technicians and stage management) as they would otherwise be returning to their hotel, digs or rented apartment alone which is less attractive than the prospect of going home as they would with a show in London. Again, this deepens their connection with each other. This time spent with colleagues is also seen as a valuable aspect of the profession.

> *"Because you are so dedicated you know it gets to a point, like I said at school we managed to keep our friends but you know when you do it as a profession you know you are that dedicated that you do want to meet people and that's how it works really as well. Meeting people in the profession and that's how you meet them by socialising so…" (Zena)*

The dancers' community clearly has many functions as a support network, as access to work and as a social network of like-minded people. This echoes with the time spent with people who 'share a passion' discussed in the previous chapter and is relevant to the work on Slaughtermen in which they were also seen to socialise almost exclusively within their community of people who 'understood' them (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990). Within this group norms are reinforced, experiences shared and relationships are formed. Time spent socialising is then seen as an investment. However, friendships with colleagues are seen in many ways to be transient.

> *"Even now as I work, you put all your time and energy into people in your contract and it's genuine, you genuinely like spending time, you know, I'll meet certain colleagues before work for coffee and go in, or I'll be sitting in a dressing room during the half, you know, and have a chat and having a lovely old time. But the minute the year's done they disappear. And it's not because*

> *it's superficial, it was meant at the time, I did genuinely want to*
> *spend a coffee with you before warm-up, but I think there is that*
> *mutual understanding in our industry that you do drift in and out,*
> *and it doesn't mean that you have been false or anything, it's just*
> *the way you are. Because we are creatures of....we adapt very,*
> *very quickly because we have to." (Elle)*

Here we can see that dancers are constantly making new friends as they work in different contracts. After a while in the profession they find that, even when they are on a contract where they don't know anyone personally, they always have mutual friends. This again adds to the strength and importance of the community and network of dancers. It enables them to adapt very quickly, in addition to reinforcing their sense of connection to each other.

As suggested in Juliet's quote above, what is normal in the dancer's working environment is not normal in other industries. For example, dancers undress in front of each other in the dressing room or by the side of the stage and make physical contact with each other through dancing closely with others.

> *"We always say like the guys slapping girls arses…we have to*
> *get changed with the boys in…in Rock You I mean no other job*
> *would you sit there and watch girls get their tits out. I mean it's a*
> *straight man's dream! Like…we just… you have to form quite a*
> *good bond with your cast because you…it's kind of touchy*
> *feely… And then I am stood in there in my underwear for one of*
> *the dance numbers, like we wear little hot pants, stockings, and a*
> *bra so…the guys are like…that's normally what they would see in*
> *a sexual situation. But to them its like boring, you are in your bra*
> *and knickers again! Boring!" (Elle)*

Elle's example here shows how different behaviour is in the workplace. Men 'slapping girls arses' would be considered sexual harassment in any other industry but here it's just light hearted banter. This is accepted by both sexes and the sexual orientation of the male is considered irrelevant. There are certainly

some similarities between this and the study of the Slaughtermen (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990) in which the humour is viewed from outside the culture (or with a different cultural perspective) as gruesome. That's not to say that there are no boundaries and whilst it happens a great deal, technicians staring at girls when they have a quick change is not tolerated and overtly sexual behaviour would also not be tolerated, the point is that the boundaries and norms are very different. What is also interesting is that it's normal for male dancers to see female dancers undressing, undressed or wearing attire that would (in other cultures) be reserved for the bedroom, these costumes are their work clothes and getting in and out of them is just part of the job. This situation and repeated shared experiences 'bonds' or connects the cast and the unusual becomes the norm and mundane, social norms are reinterpreted in light of the profession and the sense of self adjusts accordingly (for example they accept that their attire is required for the job and not a reflection of the individual and also that their values and norms are different). Importantly, she again contrasts this experience with what would 'normally' happen demonstrating the strength of both the sense of connection and difference. In the following quotes dancers expand on how experiences as a professional dancer further develop and reinforce this sense of connection and difference.

> *"The minute you are on stage; there is something about the chemistry of being on stage that everyone bonds quite quickly." (Kim)*

> *"We are very physical people as well and I think that you are very…you sort of form bonds with people very quickly and very easily. (Pearl)*

> *"… its different because the experience of that kind of trust you have to have in that group, that kind of intimacy that you share, you are sweating, you are naked, you are changing, I mean the*

> *boundaries are, well, not many, or any other jobs do you*
> *experience that." (Tilly)*

There is a great deal of trust involved on a number of levels. Physically, this is especially stark when performing lifts and partner work in which a wrong move by either party could easily result in injury. There is also an element of trust in that there is a strong sense of teamwork in a show whereby someone who takes a lot of time off or does not put in the same effort affects the quality of the production. There is a tacit understanding about the amount of time that is deemed appropriate to take off and going beyond an acceptable norm leads to resentment within a cast as they must work collectively to have a good show that they all take pride in. As such dancers don't always take time off when they perhaps should as nobody wants to gain a bad reputation and their future employment (in such a small industry) relies on their current performance. Furthermore, everyone is personally invested in the show by virtue of their physical self being visibly and openly present on stage but also their professional reputation being linked to the quality of the production. The sense of difference is clearly linked to the way in which 'normal' boundaries expected in the workplace are usurped. Many organisations work hard to gain a fraction of this level of commitment. The dancer's freelance status is another factor that contributes to this sense of difference.

> *"I think we see things, things matter to us or are more important*
> *to us…. and vice versa, they [normal people] see things as being*
> *important but we don't see them as being important and I think*
> *that makes us very different…we're night time people and we're*
> *contract people whereas other people might have nine to five*
> *jobs, they can book when they're gonna have a week off work for*
> *a holiday." (Daniel)*

Here, freelance dancers are seen as different not only for the odd hours they keep and the differences in boundaries but for the unpredictable nature of their freelance status. Professional freelance dancers often espouse the mantra "a day not working is a day not earning". This applies less when they are in a long

running show where they will have access to contracts that last for 11 months to a year and will receive benefits such as holidays and holiday pay, however these jobs are not the norm and do not last longer than a year, so all dancers experience periods when there is no secure employment. When in between these jobs and working freelance they are constantly either working (outside the profession), attending auditions in order to (hopefully) gain employment or working to maintain their physical abilities, keep their photographs up to date and keeping contact with relevant agents and networks. They therefore feel obliged to take every opportunity to work as a dancer, reinforcing and reinforced by dance as priority.

> *"I think it is a different mentality as well isn't it, I don't know, I think we have to be so focused in what we're doing and I think it kind of.... I mean we tend to talk about the normal jobs as being something other than what we do, but it's not normal is it to put yourself through that much pain and go "yeah I loved it"." (Neo)*

Importantly, this quote recognizes a disparity in the values of dancers and 'normals'. The value of dance, the dedication, commitment to it, working constantly in order to pursue the career and the joy of it can appear irrational given that it causes both physical and psychological pain. Their freelance status also means that there was a lack of security in their employment and financial status and this was keenly felt although ameliorated through their connection to dance.

> *"It's exciting as well because obviously it never gets boring but…it can be quite unsettling because you don't necessarily have a set income coming into you. You don't know where you are going to get your money from, but also it's like the job satisfaction as well." (Freya)*

Working conditions

All the dancers had also felt at some point that the treatment that they had received whilst being employed as a dancers was less favourable than it might

have been had they been working in any other industry. The first example below is when a dancer in a West End theatre had a trap door dropped on her head. She continued until the interval when she felt so dizzy that she was sent to hospital. She later found that the company had docked an entire sick day for her absence in the second half of the show.

> *"I had this whole row with my company manager about it*
> *because I said I think it's atrocious because you see on TV*
> *claims for you, if you have had an accident at work, surely I can*
> *sue you for smashing it on my head. And she was like well you*
> *will have a job because you have got no lasting damage! And I*
> *was just a bit like…in no other job would you get treated this*
> *badly." (Elle)*

> *"Like any other department besides performers you can take a lot*
> *more time off if you need to. Like the band they can go oh it's a*
> *sunny day today and they can just like have a sub come in. The*
> *same with wardrobe or anything you know? We are like the*
> *draw; we don't have that type of flexibility. It's not like we are*
> *paid extra to make up for that, or appreciated." (Adrian)*

Again, there is a comparison with other jobs, even those within the same industry. The implication here being that other jobs offer more favourable conditions, this dissatisfaction with working conditions was more prevalent with dancers who had greater experience. The impact of this for transition is discussed in the following chapter.

We saw in the previous discussion regarding auditions that looks also play an important part in the labour market for this industry. Dancers regularly faced rejection on the basis of their age, weight, height, skin colour, hair colour, or just 'look'. For this reason dancers shared an insecurity about their looks. There were a number of stories in relation to humiliating experiences.

"I remember goin' on this job once and we're about to go on

stage, I was so excited, and we had to do this show girl

number y'know, bikini and feathers. Well, as I say I'm just goin'

on, when like the boss came over to me and grabbed my side

and said [she puts on a threatening, deep voice], "I didn't see this

at the audition" ….I was mortified, everyone just looked at me, I

don't remember even going on stage, I was so upset." (Isadora)

Many of the dancers made reference to the emphasis on looks and commented on the unfairness and insecurity felt as a result. For female dancers this was often linked to their size or weight and many dancers had been asked to lose weight for a job. Again this was often compared to other jobs in which this would not be tolerated.

Geographical differences

Three main differences in the experiences of employment in the USA and the UK were identified. Firstly, dancers in the USA often moved between NYC and LA in the search for work. The preference for one location over the other centred around a preference for the type of work that was available in each location[47]. Secondly, dancers working in musical theatre were paid substantially less (less than half) in the UK compared with their counterparts in the USA despite the fact that they were doing exactly the same job (this is discussed in the following section and finally, the expected age that dancers would transition out of the profession was younger in the UK than in the USA. This is again ingrained in the industry and the culture and these issues are discussed further in the following section. The need for dancers to work in order to gain employment was however a Universal theme and it is to this aspect of the career that we now turn.

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[47] Dancers who are interested in performing in theatre gravitate to NYC whilst dancers who want to perform in the pop industry tend to migrate to LA.

Section 3. Working to get work

The difficulties facing freelance dancers were the same in the USA as in the UK in terms of the constant search for work, the work that has to be done in order to get work, the work that needs to be done to pay their bills and the need to maintain their body and standard through taking classes which they must fund themselves when not working as a dancer. The problems in maintaining themselves between jobs (i.e. finding work to pay rent and maintaining their bodies) were the same in the USA and the UK as the structure of the industry is the same in both countries. They also face similar barriers to gaining employment between dance contracts as they still needed to be available to attend auditions and classes. Some dancers were fortunate enough to work for relatives who were very accommodating when they needed to take time to attend auditions but most dancers have to juggle employment and auditions which led to a diverse range of work experience outside the industry.

> I: *Have you had to do any other jobs in between like to supplement your income?*
>
> R: *Yeah definitely! There is a lot of that, a lot of…I am always laughing, saying I have got a hundred different jobs! I do teaching assistant work in a primary school, I go in and help minding the kids, I have done…odd dancing jobs, obviously that's brilliant. Also I have done some really awful jobs as well I have done like shop girl work, and like um…really awful promo jobs, leafleting, and…*
>
> I: *What is so bad about those?*
>
> R: *It's just degrading. Its…you hear comments like people think that's all your capable of and realistically its like you have trained in something that's really quite highly skilled and very difficult. And also I have probably got the intellectual capacity to do a lot of other amazing jobs and if I had of trained in that area…but I didn't. I ended up doing*

> *leafleting and all those sorts of things that look like you*
>
> *haven't got any skills and really you have! It's a pretty*
>
> *painful experience." (Nala)*

Promotional work was a popular 'fill in' job for many female dancers because they're hired for a limited time and therefore jobs can be slotted in when they're available. Advertising agencies like to employ dancers in these jobs as they tend to be outgoing, slim, attractive and can present themselves well so they often advertise in trade newspapers and websites. However, it is universally disliked.

> *"I have done…little bits of promotional work that destroyed*
>
> *my soul! I can't really do it. Um… Like giving out cereal*
>
> *bars, things like that and its just…it breaks your heart you*
>
> *know? It actually breaks your heart, you think god…you*
>
> *know, I know I am a talented dancer and I am here doing*
>
> *this! (Anna)*

Whilst many dancers engaged in this type of work for the money and convenience, it clearly lowers their self-worth and is certainly a means to an end. Other dancers engaged with more traditional types of employment but there is always a tension between a commitment to the job, the expected working hours and being able to attend auditions and engage in work as a performer.

> *"I started working in retail and trying to take class when I could,*
>
> *auditioning which was…hard. Like juggling like your work*
>
> *schedule, like my thing was always like dance comes first. I am*
>
> *a dancer and that…the other jobs just paid the bills and you*
>
> *know I would much rather you know skip work to go to an*
>
> *audition and then try to rearrange my schedule. And uh…some*
>
> *employers didn't really understand that. So I ended up quitting a*
>
> *couple of jobs but I was like working overnight like in a clothing*
>
> *store from eleven to five a.m. And then we would have to … if*
>
> *there was an audition I would like go home, take a power nap, go*
>
> *and do an audition, and I was also teaching in ***** and *****. It*
>
> *was a lot." (Frank)*

Again, dance takes priority and the dancer is prepared to work difficult and unsociable hours in order to pay the bills whilst also pursue his career by attending auditions. As dance is his world his unwillingness to work the hours he is given and the employer not being happy with this is seen as the employer not being understanding, rather than him being unwilling to commit to the job. Dance is the centre of their universe and therefore they find it difficult to relate to those who cannot understand that. Ben's case is similar:

> *"Christmas time in the second year you get the chance to do like*
> *a pantomime of working professionally while you're still at college*
> *- which is quite cool. But Marks and Spencers wouldn't let me*
> *have the time off. So I said "well I'm doing it, so you can either*
> *fire me or I'll leave". So I had to leave and then I came back and*
> *worked in a jewelry shop and they've been excellent. I mean the*
> *Owner used to be a ballet teacher. She's so amazing, I mean I*
> *have phoned up and said "oh my God I've got an audition today"*
> *and she's like "right, not a problem, take the day off" so it's been*
> *great. And they said to me "you know, when you've finished*
> *working you come back to us, you're more than welcome". So*
> *yeah it's good to have that so that I'm not going to be starving,*
> *I'm going to have work if I need to go back there. So they've*
> *been great." (Ben)*

Ben clearly benefitted from an employer who was a former dancer and therefore understood the demands of the job and was willing and able to work around his other commitments. Not all the dancers were able to do this and some found themselves trapped in a situation where they felt that the need to earn outweighed their need to attend auditions although this led to emotional problems and inner conflict.

> *"The problem was that I didn't work as much as I could have or*
> *other people did so that's why I was working all these other jobs*
> *and sometimes, to be able to maintain my rent, I would have to*
> *go to the job instead of an audition. I mean it's just frustrating, it*

makes you feel like what am I doing? That young I feel like you

still believe in yourself, you know what I mean, or I did. Um…and

I was just kind of like…I know that I am great at what I do, why

am I not doing it? Why am I doing this?" (Mia)

In the previous section we heard how dancers' saw their peers 'drop out', this need to earn a living could be one of the reasons why this happens, along the lines of Becker's concept of 'side bets'[48] (1960). The scope of this study prevented the inclusion of dancers who had ended up leaving due to financial problems or a reliance on an alternative income but this would be an interesting future project. However, many of the dancers spoke of the financial hardship that they suffered whilst in between contracts.

"Like…let's see well I taught dance class in New Jersey, I

worked…I toured with the Dance Convention as their

assistant, that was kind of cool. I hostessed at a restaurant,

I Go-Go danced, I worked at a Burlesque Club, like all this

random stuff. Um…you know there are definitely dark

times where you live in a studio apartment, with three other

people, and like I overdrafted on my credit card once

because I bought an apple with it because I had no money.

(Wren)

Dancers from both countries used their network to find other dancers with whom they could share accommodation. Previously, we saw how the dancers' community and networks also aided in finding employment as a dancer. It became apparent through the data that this applied to 'in between' work as well. Once dancers connected to the freelance community this network provided more

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[48] Side bets refers to people (specifically musicians) who take employment in order to earn some money and then come to rely on this income to maintain their standard of living. What started as a temporary financial fix then ends up being their primary employment.

opportunities with access to and information regarding employment opportunities that didn't interfere with their commitments as a dancer.

> *"When people are unemployed you put out the feelers and "hey*
> *do you need a teacher? Do you need a coach?" Whatever!"*
> *(Uma)*

The importance of networks was the same for all dancers. In addition to providing opportunities it also reinforces a culture in which dance is the priority. The culture is so strong that it is apparently unaffected by lengthy periods of time when they will be meeting many non-dancers and experiencing a variety of jobs outside the dance world. A recent 'craze' sweeping dancers in theatre shows is a network marketing company that sells cosmetics and skin care products. What was interesting about listening to a 'presentation' given by a dancer about this new 'opportunity' was that at no point did she or any of the other dancers suggest that this would be a useful investment in terms of giving them an opportunity to earn money when they could no longer perform. The emphasis was firmly on something to keep them going in between (with claims that £2,000 per month was easily achievable). It was said that this would replace their current income but there was no mention of transition at all. This is consistent with the taboo status of transition which is explored further in the following chapter.

Career Progression and Control

Other similarities between the experiences of dancers in both countries surround issues of career progression and control. As the systems are essentially the same in the UK and the USA (dancers are reliant upon agents in order to get auditions and work) the dancers felt that they had very little (or no) control over their career.

> *"I just think you have no control over it at all really. All you can*
> *do is go to auditions and perform as best as you can, you know."*
> *(Ria)*

In terms of career progression the responses varied, whilst some dancers felt that they had a strong sense of progression this was often not entirely born out by their career trajectory. For example they might have been playing a lead or be dance captain in one contract and then be in the ensemble[49] for the next. For dancers on the commercial circuit each job varied greatly in terms of their exposure (whether or not they had solos), the status of the show or event and their pay so defining progression was problematic.

> *"Whereas in other industries like if you have made a really good name for yourself you will automatically get promotions and then you will move up the ladder. It just doesn't work like that, we get up to the top and then we get brought back down, then up to the top, and get brought back down." (Max)*

> *"There are people in the room like ***** ******; he has done every original cast you can possibly think of, like virtually kicking people out of the way to get a skipping rope! [Laughter] This dude is so highly classed in his career like everybody knows who he is, everybody would want his career but yet he is still in the room having to kick someone out of the way to get a skipping rope. It's like…this is ridiculous but we all do it." (Elle)*

Again there is a comparison with other industries but with no real experience of life within those industries so this presumption is based on a kind of stereotypical view of the world of work outside of dance. In the same way that a non-dancer might assume that the 'better' dancer will always get the job, this is indicative of the two-way nature of difference. There is however a sense that the lack of pay rises, promotions or other incentives, requiring dancers to perpetually start from scratch with every job becomes wearing after a time and this is discussed further in the next chapter. However, once dancers reach a certain status level they aim

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[49] Ensemble is the term used to refer to the chorus, the singers and dancers that make up the bulk of the numbers but do not sing solo.

to stay there although they realise that this may not be possible as it greatly limits their opportunities.

> *"I have got to a dance captain point there is…I am at a certain standard now where hopefully like I got dance captain on 'Oh What a Night' because I had been dance captain on Grease so that's kind of a credit that should keep me at a certain standard now. Um…but I wouldn't dismiss being ensemble again if it meant being in a show again now." (Anna)*

Musical theatre dancers on both sides of the Atlantic felt that they had to put themselves out of work in order to progress to another level. It was felt that in order to be considered for a 'role' they would need to turn down any offers of ensemble work to demonstrate their commitment to gaining employment at the next level. Whilst this contrasts to the way in which career progression would be viewed within an organisation as these types of progressions do not exist the dancers felt that there was a sense of progression but it was entirely up to them to make these progressions, it wasn't something that was structured in any way but a decision that they had to take.

> *"I have just now started to own that control because I feel like nobody is going to work harder for me than me. So I am starting to own that control, and…for the first time I wish I had learnt it sooner but I'm refining my path and saying no to certain jobs." (Uma)*

> *"I am finding this time around since I am choosing to say no to Broadway ensembles and that's been a shift that's been really, really hard because I am choosing to be uncomfortable but for a higher reward. It's been a lot harder work this time around to stay above the slight depressions of not performing and not living your life like a normal person, not having security, and health insurance you know. That's why I am turning to things like yoga,*

and…just taking care of myself, keep my mental sanity,

meditating, like all that stuff. And it doesn't come naturally to me,

I have to like force myself to do it but I tell you what like my … it's

invaluable to have to do that especially when I am unemployed.

(Iris)

Again, the problems of unemployment are pressing, particularly with reference to the lack of financial security and health insurance and the psychological impact that this has on the dancer[50]. Iris suggests that this is more difficult when dancers are choosing to put themselves in this position in the hope of career progression. We can see again how this act of sacrifice for their career leads to a great sense of achievement and of making it against the odds, if it pays off.

Another aspect of the work that is performed in order to get work is maintaining communication and relationships within the dancer's network itself and with agents. This takes a lot of time, effort and money in that photographs need to be kept up to date and regular phone calls made. They also need to keep themselves in good shape physically so that they are able to perform well in auditions, as Nala Explains:

"That's what people need to learn at college, that its not just

about the teachers being hard on you, you have really got to

have self determination because once you leave its up to you to

get to class. If you can't afford the class its up to you to sort of

make the most of what you have got at home, your own

resources. You don't really need anything to…practice…you

know exercise or practice dances. You don't need much more

than a small amount of space. It's definitely about self-motivation

and making stuff happen. It's maintaining the skills that you know

you have trained all those years for." (Nala)

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[50] There is a wealth of research on the problems associated with unemployment however as this is not the focus of the research they have not been explored here.

It is interesting that she thinks that this isn't something that people necessarily take on board during training. Again though it is the need for tenacity and resourcefulness that is highlighted. For other dancers, classes (when they could afford to attend) had a spiritual aspect to it in addition to the physical benefits gained.

> *"Class is like its own religion to me, that's its own chance to like*
> *really connect to your body and get it ready to do the work."*
> *(Zena)*

This description of class links back to the spiritual ways in which the 'love' of dance was expressed previously. Dance has many functions in the dancers' world and many expressed that it not only connected them to their community but also helped them to stay emotionally balanced.

The unpredictable nature of their freelance status leads them to feel obliged to take every opportunity and fearful of missing opportunities, reinforcing and reinforced by dance as priority.

> *" It's a struggle. My calendar is like my boss I have to do what it*
> *says and I can only take on as much as it says I can. It makes*
> *it…you know often times I am working seven days a week. The*
> *unions are created to keep people healthy, ten hour spans and*
> *having a minimum of ten hours from the time you are done with*
> *your day to the next day. Those things do not apply to me at all."*
> *(Beth)*

This type of schedule and set of employment circumstances again puts them outside the 'normal' range as Beth suggested above in relation to 'normal' working hours etc. For dancers in the USA there was a particular issue with health insurance as this was only available through contracts on Broadway and diminished soon after their employment ended leaving them feeling very vulnerable. It was noticeable that the older dancers were getting frustrated with the pay and general conditions of employment and recruitment. Constantly having to audition with 18 year olds, not having their previous credits outwardly

acknowledged, not having pay rises in line with their experiences etc. The pay itself was something that is seen to have deteriorated over the years.

> *"I think you could earn a lot more when I left college cos like the*
> *standard of living and everything's all gone up now but our*
> *wages and things have all gone lower. Lots of people on the*
> *commercial circuit, like in the 1990's would go to Germany and*
> *just go from one job, to another, to another all these TV jobs and*
> *they'd just get thousands and thousands of pounds and they*
> *could you know, buy their own place a flat and everything. They*
> *were quite comfortable, but as the time's gone on it's got worse I*
> *think pay wise and everyone just wants people to do something*
> *for nothing now." (Carl)*

> *"They'll say, sorry this isn't paid but you will get to appear on TV.*
> *And you just think…because obviously when we first started*
> *doing the commercial scene it was good paying money, and the*
> *contracts were well paid. I mean it's got to the point where I can*
> *be paid more for standing around giving leaflets out, which is*
> *ludicrous." (Yildis)*

Dancers felt that the industry structure exploited the abundance, passion and eagerness of dancers to work and this is an issue in the industry as many companies (particularly big record labels) are now getting dancers to work for free. The claim is that they will get to work with a named artist or choreographer and that this will give them a good credit on their CV. Of course, if they can get dancers for free, why pay for them? In addition the regulations regarding agencies have dropped which means anyone can be an agent, there are growing number of agents and they are undercutting each other to get the work.

> *"Well everybody loses out because the agencies instead of*
> *working together, they are all in competition and they are all*
> *slagging each other off. The dancers just get paid less and less*

money, if they get paid at all. There was like something on ITV1

called Everybody Dance Now and they paid like the six main

dancers £250 and then they had two hundred dancers in the

background learning all these routines and had a couple of days

rehearsal and they didn't pay any of them. I set up a page on

Facebook, so now if anything kicks off or people are ripping us

off, or people aren't paying you, we kind of talk about it. Because

otherwise we are just out on our own and there is no way of

being a sort of community looking out for each other." (Mr White)

The power of the dance community and sense of camaraderie is again invoked in the need for dancers to 'look out for each other'. Dancers are covered by the actors union 'Equity' but it is not seen as a particularly strong or powerful presence. The problem is that there are hundreds of dancers graduating every year for a very limited number of jobs. Dancers also felt that money is not discussed enough in the colleges so they have no idea what they are worth on the open market. In addition, UK dancers are taught that it is unprofessional to discuss your contract with any persons other than your agent and your employer.

"I think like at college and when you're on training, there's very

little discussed about money. Like I kind of came into the

business not having a clue what earning potentials were out

there at different levels, and I think that's something that adds to

the fear of it. Cos you're going for these jobs, but you actually

don't know… and that's where you can get taken for a ride. Like

Spirit[51], you know, you go how could I have worked for £150 a

week. But you want to work

and I think that's the difference is I absolutely love working."

(Freya)

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[51] Spirit of the Dance is a production company that tours shows, it is notorious in the dance community for the terrible standards and ways that it treats dancers. The owner recently appeared on 'secret millionaire'.

Socio-psychological conflict

There is therefore a tension between their love and priority of dance and their need to be paid a living wage and not to be exploited. Furthermore, freelance dancers often had to wait a great deal of time before they received payment for the work they'd done.

> *"I have done some great jobs like for 'Take That' recently, but you*
> *end up waiting so long to be paid, its so frustrating. You know*
> *they have millions and millions and millions with a successful*
> *record company that could pay. You know I am waiting for*
> *money from them still now." (Anna)*

The disparity between incomes in the USA and UK (as mentioned above) was also acknowledged and understood on both sides of the Atlantic, as one American dancer commented:

> *"Nobody wants to go over there and work! Everyone is always*
> *like wouldn't it be fun to go and work in London? Yeah. But the*
> *pay is shit! [Laughter]" (Nancy)*

This meant that some of the dancers in the UK were struggling to make a living. The high cost of living means that they had to take on additional work in order to have a living wage. Dancers in the USA were constantly trying to find ways of obtaining health insurance in an insecure job market and when they did gain employment in the big Broadway shows they had less holiday time than their UK counterparts. Dancers gradually become dissatisfied with the low wages and their inability to increase their earnings. Their frustration was often exacerbated by theatre companies publishing huge profits:

> *"I think as I get older and the more shows I do, I think money is*
> *quite an important part. As much as people say it's not, I think*
> *essentially as an ensemble member or a swing or whoever in a*
> *show, compared to the rates in other countries like the US, you*
> *know, an ensemble member in the US is on like £1,800 whereas*
> *my basic wage in Fame was like £320 and.... And they plaster it*

all over the Stage[52]. You know there was a massive article I remember reading and they [Wicked][53] said, "they gross £800,000 in a week. And you kind of go "but my pay cheque is a drop in the ocean to that" you know that's what they get in a week and....and it just doesn't add up at all. And you have to manage everything with how much you get paid. Like as I'm getting older I feel like I've got a mortgage and I feel like I've got a car, and all these things that I have wanted for my entire life I'm like....you know, struggling to try and keep it together. And it is difficult and it really annoys me that we, as performers, are not given the gratitude financially that we deserve. I don't think it's right. A normal person who is not a performer, naturally they think "oh my God" you know, whenever you say you're performing they go "oh I bet you're on a fat wage aren't you" and you're like "no, I'm barely...." … I teach as well, a lot of people have two jobs to try and make ends meet. And I'm not saying that I'm totally deprived but in order to have the lifestyle that I would like and feel comfortable and financially secure, I feel like I need to have another job to make me happy, you know." (Sylvie)

" It's taken me nine years to earn the money that I am on now which is not bad at all and it's easily liveable, and it's fine. Um…but you know its just that thing I suppose of…every other job you know you get your pay rise every…well not so much at the moment, but your pay rise every year, you get promotion, this, that and the other and it doesn't work that way in what we do unfortunately." (Max)

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[52] 'The Stage' is the main trade newspaper.
[53] This is a musical show in London's West End

So, as performers get older, move out of student accommodation or their family homes they realise that the money they are earning is not enough to sustain a comfortable lifestyle in an expensive city such as London. Their future also becomes a concern and they wonder about how they will sustain themselves. The dancers' union Equity was mentioned in these discussions about parity in pay but it was felt that they were very limited in their resources, efforts and strength. It was also felt that a recent drive that had been hailed as a successful negotiation in raising the dancers' minimum wage in the West End had backfired as it had included many duties that dancers used to increase their income. This resulted in many dancers taking a pay cut as a result. The union was not therefore seen as an effective organisation in protecting pay and other employment rights. The other discussions in this area centred around the cost and time involved in training to be a dancer and how this was not reflected in their wages when they finally began working as a dancer. By contrast, dancers on Broadway can afford to sustain a family life on a chorus wage, as Adrian explains:

> *"A lot of the gay guys they are happy you know…renting a studio*
> *in Chelsea their whole life. They don't have a wife that needs*
> *taking care of and a six month old daughter, it's a very expensive*
> *city but we don't make terrible money on Broadway." (Adrian)*

Dancers always reiterate that money is not their primary motivation but this was especially evident in younger dancers who had not yet contemplated getting a mortgage or thought about their financial future.

> *"Oh I am definitely not a dancer because of the money; it doesn't*
> *really give you much money at all! [Laughter] But there is so*
> *much more enjoyment out of…your career than the money.*
> *There is so much more to it than that. I am really proud, I am*
> *very proud to be a dancer. I think that all the dancers in the*
> *industry have got to stick together a little bit because it can be a*
> *really tough career to be in. There are certainly perks to the job*

> *as well, you know the highs are really high and the lows are*
>
> *pretty low." (Babs)*

The dancer's network and need to 'stick together' for support is evident, the dancers' community again provides strength for the tough times. When sitting with a group of dancers recently, whose show was about to close rendering most of them unemployed, their humour centred around poverty and unemployment in relation to their status as a dancer. Humour is often used a mechanism for coping with uncertainty and this is something that a number of them were facing.

Another difference that emerged between the UK and the USA was the age at which they expected their career to end. Dancers in the UK assumed that their career would end sooner (late 20s to early 30s) than dancers in the USA (mid 30s to early 40s). There was also some disparity according to the type of dancing work that they were predominantly employed in. Dancers who worked in musical theatre tended to have relatively greater longevity. The ageism in the UK became very apparent when talking to a Musical Director (who is a gatekeeper in the sense that he has some say over who is hired and who is not). He stated that the original Broadway cast of 'Wicked' looked ridiculous because they were all between their late 20s and early 40s. When I spoke to the Musical Director in the USA he stated that they preferred more mature dancers with experience as they had a better working attitude and were less likely to be off with injury. Suzie who had been working in Germany but came to England to work, noticed this disparity in the expected age of performers.

> *"I've found England....the industry here is a lot younger. I moved*
>
> *over here when I was 28 and in Germany I was working with 35*
>
> *year olds and it was totally fine, but here, I came over and*
>
> *everyone was quite young and they'd just graduated from college*
>
> *- because I was obviously in auditions with all the college*
>
> *leavers[54]. I was feeling like such a grandma and oh my God,*
>
> *what am I doing here, I need to maybe quit because this is not*

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[54] These would be 19 and 20 year old dancers.

cool and you have to put your age down. And I'd promised
myself I'd never lie about my age, because I think a lot of people
do lie about their age and I think there are a lot of people out
there that are still working that are actually older than what
people think they are but they're too scared to say. I did struggle
with that because people would be like "really, oh my gosh,
you're 28" when I first came over here and I was like "oh my gosh
is that a really bad thing". I think most people quit when they're
about 25/26 because their bodies pack up or because they've
stopped getting the work. So it's actually a positive thing that I'm
still going I think." (Suzie)

There are a number of issues that are raised within this quote that bring to the fore the tacit knowledge that dancers in the UK have regarding the appropriate age for dancers. Firstly, she states that at 28 she felt quite young as a dancer in Germany but described herself as a 'Grandma' in comparison to the dancers 'on the circuit' in the UK, particularly in auditions for commercial jobs. Secondly, this feeling led her to consider transition as she was suddenly thrust into a culture and environment in which dancers leave (as she states later) in their mid twenties and this wasn't something she had previously considered. Thirdly, she highlights the pressure that this environment creates in terms of dancers lying about their age on their CV as they are afraid that it will have a negative impact on their job prospects when they are auditioning with much younger dancers. From the previous discussion with the Musical Director it seems that these fears are not unfounded. As Odette (25) stated:

"in this business, you know, you get older quicker I think."
(Odette)

In the USA the age at which you become 'old' was different.

"I guess if I had to think of the age I would say probably…late
thirties is when it happens over here. I mean for musicals not for
the ballet world or anything, but...definitely for musicals, but it

depends on what you want to do, I mean I know some girls that
are into their forties, they have had two kids, and that are working
on Broadway to this day. Um…others have chosen a completely
different path you know? I think it gets harder; it gets harder if
you want to have kids." (Tilly)

There is quite a difference in the age at which dancers expect to transition out but there is a commonality in that many of the female dancers from both sides of the Atlantic talked about the way in which their decision to start a family would affect their desire to continue in the profession. Although they knew that it was possible to continue a career with children they felt that it was rare and that they would have to make considerable sacrifices in terms of being there for their children. This was not something that they wanted to do and they felt that the unsociable hours were not conducive to good parenting, there was a sense that their priorities would change.

There was also the idea that dancers didn't want to outstay their welcome in the profession and many of the dancers had stories of dancers who had become bitter about the profession and resentful of the younger talent.

"I don't want to be one of those...like the really old one in all the
jobs she is still going, she is thirty-six, she really needs to hang
up her shoes! Do you know what I mean? So um…yeah it's a
kind of…and I didn't question that I just thought well that's
because you know your body has to be young, and you have
to…you need to look young, and I didn't really question it
because its unquestioned, it's a given." (Beth)

It is very poignant when she says that the need to end the career is unquestioned. This acknowledges a deep understanding that the career must end at a relatively young age and yet this is something that is not discussed openly and that dancers are reluctant to prepare for psychologically.

Section 4. Social background

As a final point of interest, I asked the dancers to tell me what background their peers were from. This was to ascertain whether or not the experience of other dancers regarding the diversity of dancers' socio-economic status and nationality matched my own. What was interesting is that I had to rephrase the question as most dancers would automatically refer to the dance background of their peers rather than their socio-economic status.

> I: *Would you say that the dancers that you know, are they*
> *from the same sort of background as you or are they quite*
> *diverse?*
>
> R: *"Um…well…yeah I mean there are some from the same*
> *background but a lot now as well with the street dance, I*
> *mean when we first started um everyone was trained in*
> *everything but these days it's a bit different on the*
> *commercial circuit. What I have noticed is um…a lot*
> *of…street dancers aren't trained the same it's like when we*
> *were at college you had to be classically trained. But*
> *um…but yeah…I have worked with a lot of girls that aren't."*
> *(Zena)*

This was a common response as the dancers' world revolves around dance so everything is seen in relation to it. But even when the dancer understood the question in terms of upbringing and socio-economic status they still ended up talking about the same background in terms of the dancers' community.

> I: *Would you say that people that you know, your sort of*
> *friends, from anywhere, not just from college, but you know,*
> *from the industry, would you say that they're all from a very*
> *similar background to you, a similar kind of upbringing,*
> *similar financial positions?*

> R: *"Yeah, generally. There's obviously some exceptions to*
> *that. I think Jane's upbringing was probably very different to*
> *my upbringing. Although maybe not… I don't know. I mean*
> *she's got a very different life to me now[55] [laughs]. Say no*
> *more. I think relatively yeah I'm in the same circle as the*
> *people who probably were brought up with the same*
> *modest backgrounds. The same sort of competitions and*
> *stuff, you know, dancing school stuff and things like that.*
> *Generally because you're in that circle, to meet those*
> *people." (Darcy)*

Clarifying the question did not seem to help in terms of the conversation being related back to dance and dance training. As this exert from my conversation with Carl shows:

> I: *And were they sort of, of a similar um sort of background to*
> *you? With regards to sort of, you know class, or were they*
> *sort of a mix of people?*
> R: *"Erm, a mixture I'd say, I was definitely more passionate*
> *about it than they were and I was a bit more competitive,*
> *like I'd … you know, I was a bit of a perfectionist and I used*
> *to like put the work in and I think I was more, with them it*
> *was more of hobby but I used to enjoy the competitions and*
> *travelling around and stuff so... and I put a lot more effort*
> *in .." (Carl)*

Clearly, this is still interpreted in terms of his dedication to the profession during training rather than the socio-economic status of his peers. However, those dancers that did answer this question suggested that there was a great deal of diversity and indeed this was often seen as a positive aspect of the career and the art form in that it brought people together from different cultures, faiths,

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[55] She is making reference to a dancer who has become very wealthy through marriage.

sexualities, nationalities and socio-economic status through their common passion. Certainly, the group of dancers interviewed for this study and those I met in the field were incredibly diverse.

Given this diversity it is interesting that they have a common culture that unites them. Their social network and broader relationships are embedded in dance from a young age and strengthened through their experiences both within the dance world and beyond. This in turn strengthens their shared identity as a dancer.

Conclusions

Given the lack of research in the careers of freelance dancers this chapter introduces how the themes of the emotional connection to dance, connection and difference and identity are developed and strengthened throughout the dancers' experiences in the career including the tensions that present themselves as their careers unfold. This chapter has explored the way in which the self is immersed in the profession and how the difficulty in obtaining work and the intense highs and lows experienced as a result affect the individual. The importance of the dance community is evident in the many functions it has including gaining employment in and outside the profession, finding accommodation, providing support, help, advice and solidarity. Other cultural values and taboos such as the priority of dance and the taboo of transition are also reinforced during these experiences. These experiences then provide the social context in which the self is already immersed, leading to a transition that is felt to be linear in psychological terms but as a result of complex social processes that begin in training.

The issue of the dancers' background was also explored and although freelance dancers are a diverse group in terms of socio-economic status, nationality, race and sexuality the all-encompassing nature of the dance 'world' meant that it was

difficult to get them to talk about this in non-dance terms. What is interesting about this however is that despite their varied origins, they all shared the same basic dance culture in terms of values, beliefs and taboos and they therefore had a shared identity. The other occupations with strong cultures that have been referred to were by contrast geographically specific (Ackroyd and Crowdy's study of Slaughtermen (1990) and Bolton's study of nurses (2005)).

The main differences highlighted were the disparity in pay between theatre dancers in the UK's West End and the USA's Broadway, the difference between the expected age of transition in the UK and other countries and the difference in the experiences of gaining employment as a male versus a female dancer. The implications of these experiences and the socially embedded nature of the self for transition are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 8
The Transition out

Introduction

Whereas the socialisation of dancers into the profession followed a linear path the transition out is very protracted, with no clear end point and no moment of transition. This makes the transition very confusing and difficult to handle psychologically, presenting as it does an intense sense of threat to the self. This is explained through the loss of community support the dancers have previously experienced as they start to exit from the occupational culture of dance, leading them to experience psychological problems. Central to this is the loss of identity a phenomenon that both psychological theories of identity foreclosure and sociological theories of identity find difficult to explain. The process of transition continues as the dancers learn to adapt to a different culture, that of the 'normals', this is experienced as a painful process as they lose the sense of purpose and self that had defined them as dancers for so long. The extent to which they must necessarily shed this identity is explored.

The focus of this chapter is on understanding the dancers' experience of the process. The disorientation that accompanies it is analysed through Elias's concept of the shock hypothesis. However for these dancers the 'reality' shock that Elias describes is experienced not through the transition into work but through the transition out, as the dancers struggle to acquire a new identity while still retaining elements of what had hitherto been their core sense of self.

Section 1. What Transition?

One of the distinctive features of the dancers transition is that there is no one moment of transition into or out of the occupation and neither are there rituals,

such as initiation rites or retirement parties to symbolise the change of status. We saw in the previous chapters that although the transition into the career is messy in objective terms (i.e. dancers face periods of uncertainty and may not be employed as dancers for some time after leaving full-time training), psychologically this group have already invested in their identity as a dancer and have no problem adjusting to working life as a dancer, having been embedded in the culture and community for a long period of time. For the transition out of the career they may face similar experiences objectively, for example increasingly long periods of unemployment as a dancer and working in a variety of other jobs in the interim, but psychologically this is a much more difficult challenge. This is because the identity that previously sustained them is increasingly under threat, a threat that is exacerbated precisely because there is no way of knowing which is their last job and thereby no firm 'destination' point[56]. This is illustrated in the following interchange.

> I: so at the moment you are thinking that maybe it's all alright
>   and you will be…there is a possibility of getting another
>   job?
>
> R: Well that carrot is dangling in front of me again because I
>   have been recalled for a show that I would love to do and
>   it's in London.
>
> I: You were saying that that's kind of lifted your spirits again?
>
> R: It has lifted my spirits again but then I could go to that
>   audition on Monday and maybe get cut, or hear a couple of
>   days later that people are going back in again and I am not.
>   My spirits will be…destroyed again you know. (Anna)

Although freelance dancers are aware that the career is finite there is still uncertainty as to when the career is actually over. None of the dancers interviewed had a clear cut end to their career as a dancer, although this does

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[56] This of course depends up on the criteria by which destination is conceptualized and the underlying ontological assumptions that this brings as discussed previously.

occur sometimes (but rarely) due to injury. Two of them came close, one dancer was unable to regain a visa so went back to her home country, worked as a dancer and a teacher for a while and then returned to England never to dance again, in her words, she went 'cold turkey'. The other, said that she 'cut off' and left dancing to work as an agent, although in reality she went back and performed after officially retiring. All of the other dancers found themselves in limbo for some time, usually years. During this time they were working sporadically and were concerned for their future[57], struggling with many issues relating to finances, starting a family etc. Thus despite the finite nature of the career, the final moment, the origin of the transition is very unclear and the transition itself is difficult to define both practically and conceptually due to the lack of origin or destination[58].

The gradual process of extraction from the profession generates a huge amount of uncertainty and anxiety. Dancers may feel that they are coping well with the transition and feeling good about a new path that they are pursuing only to find a few days later that they are back in a place of uncertainty and despair.

> *"It's a real rollercoaster, you are up one day thinking 'I can do this, it's fine, I had a great time and now I'm moving on' and then the next day you're in utter turmoil and you can't imagine never performing again, it breaks your heart." (Juliet)*

This sense of an emotional rollercoaster is a common one. The impact that the emotional connection to the profession has for transition is clear here in that the loss is unimaginable and deeply painful. As dancers get older they start to wonder whether they are facing an end to their career and this leads to a confusing array of emotions. The very thought of transition is emotionally traumatic.

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[57] It is a common misconception that dancers often become dance teachers and that there is therefore continuity in their career. Not only is it rare for dancers to become dance teachers but those that do, do not consider this to be related to their dance career, rather it is a departure from it. This is discussed below in the section on identity.

[58] This characteristic is shared with the transition into work.

> *"It's not an airy - fairy thought anymore [career transition]…I don't*
> *know where I am…..You just feel like you're at a dead end, and*
> *you feel like, is this the end? Is this the transition?….. I have a*
> *day when I'm really depressed and I think, you know, this is it,*
> *this is the end…..I don't ever think I'm crap, maybe I do think I'm*
> *crap. I don't know, it's the weirdest, I can't even put it into words*
> *that you sort of think, you can't see yourself doing any other job,*
> *you think you're not good enough anymore". (Darcy)*

There is a real turmoil that stems from the link between dance and identity. This is evident when she says "you can't see yourself doing any other job". As we've seen, the experiences in training and in work, from aspirations to achievements have led to a concept of the self that is inextricably tied to life as a dancer. Dance is not just an occupation it is way of life and they feel that it defines them as a person. This inevitably leads to an emotional loss of identity when facing transition. This uncertainty regarding their ability to continue dancing also leads the dancers to question their self-worth "you think you're not good enough anymore". As we have seen, being good as a dancer, the sense of achievement and self worth that this has given them then has consequences when their career is in decline. In addition there is a sense of disorientation "I don't know where I am" and a finality that surpasses just the end of a job "this is the end". The difference of course between dancers and many other occupations (including nurses, slaughtermen and musicians) is that dancers, having developed their sense of self as a dancer from a young age must leave the profession at a relatively young age. For the majority of dancers the experience is one of complete disorientation that cannot be explained in terms of the practical aspects of transition alone. As we've seen the freelance dancers' life is demarcated by job insecurity and uncertainty yet the end of this way of life brings further turmoil rather than relief, as one would expect (see for example Loughlin and Barling, 2001).

With transition being a cultural taboo conversations surrounding it were often

slightly ambiguous with two contrasting perspectives given in the same conversation.1/ a practical, rational, cognitive understanding that transition would be a reality at some point and 2/ a personal and emotional response to the transition as a threatening and distressing thought. Darcy illustrates this very well. She starts by discussing a time in her career when she had a potentially career threatening injury;

> *"I thought the whole world was coming apart. There were no words, I was devastated. It's something I've done all my life. It felt like my leg had been chopped off…That's [dancing] my reason for being on the planet....I didn't know what to do, you feel lost." (Darcy)*

This demonstrates the emotional turmoil she was going through dancing was her reason for being on the planet and she believed that reason had gone. However, she goes on to say:

> *"You're not as rational, I mean when you've done a few years in the business and you've become a bit bitter and twisted (laughs) [before] you're not rational, whereas now I'd be more rational about it and go, oh well, right, this is what I'm gonna have to do then..and I've also prepared now for that…". (Darcy)*

Here she demonstrates that she understands the process more and gives examples of preparations made. However when asked if this would make the transition easier she replies;

> *"On paper yeah (laughs)…rationally, bank account wise, being adult about it, being mature, having other things to focus on yes. But I think in my heart, it would be the letting go….I don't know how I'd do that, how I'd cope." (Darcy)*

There is clearly a level of denial due to the threat of transition to the sense of self. The emotional connection to dance that we have seen develop from a young age is problematic for the process of transition. These aspects of transition are explored in more detail in the section on 'loss of identity'.

Section 2. Loss of community and culture

The exit of the dancer from the occupational culture is a protracted process made more difficult because of the all-encompassing nature of the dance community and the culture it sustains. The previous chapters demonstrated how the socialisation of dancers and their experiences in the profession lead them to develop a strong culture which is internalised. We have also seen how dancers end up socializing with those from within the industry and those with whom they share their cultural ideals from a very young age. This becomes self-reinforcing through structural factors as in childhood and adolescence there is no time to socialize outside their group and when working in the profession their hours preclude them from socializing outside their group. Furthermore, their sense of difference leads them to prefer socialising with those who are like-minded.

The centrality of the dancers' culture and the all-encompassing nature of dance and the life-style of the dancer means that even the thought of leaving it can be seen as traumatic. Dance has always been their priority, we have seen how this cultural value becomes a socio-psychological glue within the community, and so the prospect of leaving is very daunting. In this way, dance cannot be viewed as a conventional occupation and similarly the dancers identity is not merely an occupational 'badge' that can be changed without considerable turmoil because it is deeply embedded within the dancers' sense of self. The depth of personal attachment is evident in the quote below from a dancer who had not danced for over 3 years.

> I: *Do you think you'll ever perform again?*
>
> R: *I never say never, because I'm leaving the door open. To shut the door I think would be very hard for me.*
>
> I: *And why do you think that is primarily?*
>
> R: *I just think it's all I've ever known. It's like saying goodbye to your mum or something. It's all you've ever known. (Yildis)*

The world of dance and performing is not strictly all they've ever known as we've seen, dancers occupy a range of work roles during their career in order to sustain themselves, however, their connection is to dance so the experience is that this is all they've known.

Given the fear of the final exit it is not surprising that dancers develop mechanisms that prevent them thinking about it, even for those in the later stages of their career. Often when asking younger dancers (early - mid twenties) about leaving the profession they would suggest that it wasn't something that they'd thought about or would talk about provisions they would make in the future such as learning massage or fitness training. Transition is such a cultural taboo in the dance world that it is very difficult to get them to really think about what it would be like. In order to make the prospect more 'real' I asked them to imagine what it would be like to say something other than 'dancer' when asked what they do. This is a common response:

> R: *I don't want to think about it really. It's hard.*
>
> I: *Why don't you want to think about it?*
>
> R: *Because I don't know what I would do.*
>
> I: *Is it a painful thought?*
>
> R: *Yeah. Yeah. To think that I wouldn't be doing…I wouldn't*
>   *be getting that much love and enjoyment out of it anymore*
>   *is difficult to come to terms with. I think that's just the way I*
>   *feel about it now at this stage, I am sure I will feel differently*
>   *about it at that age, when I am thinking about giving it up.*
>   *(Mia)*

There is a prevailing idea that there will come a time when they no longer want to dance and the problem with this denial as part of their culture is that, as we've seen, it doesn't ever happen. Even those in the later stages of their career find thinking about the transition difficult.

> *"It's a hard thing to think about [transition] because I don't want to*
> *leave the business yet. I feel like I want to dance for another*

> *couple of years before I finish and have a baby hopefully, that*
> *type of thing. I don't feel like I want to stop yet but if the*
> *opportunities aren't there for me anymore then I have to bow out."*
> *(Anna)*

The taboo of relationships and the act of having children signifying the end of the career (as mentioned in previous chapters) is clearly evident here. There is also confusion regarding the extent to which the opportunities may or may not emerge, this is something that is beyond the dancers' immediate locus of control[59]. There are aspects of their career, as they physically age and broader societal expectations such as starting a family begin to intrude, that trigger thoughts about the end of the career, but the belief that they will 'know' when the time has come means that they do not have to actively consider it until such time that it is made apparent to them.

The reality of the inevitable transition out cannot be ignored forever and when this becomes unavoidable it generates an intense sense of loss. Those who are facing it (such as those from the quotes above) understand that they will have to face the loss at some point. However, at that later stage it is much like the idea of losing a family member, we know that it will inevitably happen at some point but we don't want to think about how we would cope with it, for dancers the loss of their career is dealt with in a similar fashion. Younger dancers seem to spend a good number of years in denial. Even if they appear to be taking steps to secure future employment in a different career there is a superficiality to it and this highlights the rational / emotional divide when contemplating transition.

> *"When I was in one of the shows I did think about and I took a*
> *massage course and I did think that it would be another string to*
> *my bow if I was out of work or whatever. I think yeah, I thought*
> *about it in terms of being able to do something else but*

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[59] The locus of self control and the extent to which a persons 'adaptability' plays a part in dealing with issues of transition on an individual level is discussed elsewhere in the literature for example Fouad and Bynner, (2008).

emotionally I didn't really think about it, it was going through the
motions really" (Darcy)

Some dancers did start to miss a sense of 'normality' with regards to working hours and this gave the impression that they were getting ready for transition, however, for those that had experienced transition they suggested that such thoughts did not help. They thought they were prepared for it and practically they have made good preparations in terms of taking courses, re-skilling, thinking about what they would move on to, practically seeking out knowledge and skill required for the world of 'normals' but emotionally the transition was still an enormous wrench. For those who knew that their age was starting to count against them the very thought of leaving the profession is seen as a threat.

> *"Um…it would kill my heart and soul not to be able to do what I*
> *know for a fact I am on this earth to do. I think that's what it*
> *comes down to". (Uma)*

> *I: And how do you think it will feel to kind of move out of*
> *   performing completely?*
> *R: I think it will be like…like your best friend dying or*
> *   something do you know what I mean? (Adrian)*

Here again, the idea that dance is an innate calling is present as is the emotional connection that dancers have to dance. To 'kill' ones heart and soul is a very strong, visceral response. The inevitable link between culture and identity is evident here too as we've seen the feeling that dance is innate is in part developed through socialisation processes that have a structural and psychological element (sociogenesis and psychogenesis in action). Both of these dancers were in the latter stages of their careers and had contemplated the prospect of transition, the second having gained some qualifications and taken steps to secure his financial future. However, this does not alleviate the extent to which dance is experienced as a fundamental part of who they are.

For the older dancers looking back they highlighted a number of difficulties and threats to their sense of self. One of these is a loss of a sense of direction in life, a fear of what will fill the 'gap' that they experience when they could no longer perform. The following quote comes from a dancer who left the profession 15 years ago.

> *"I'm settled now, but it still comes every now and then, this bout of helplessness because you....it's not helplessness, it's direction, for the longest time you've had direction – right. And then suddenly you have no direction and you just have absolutely no idea what to do. And whilst you may say "yeah I've got to channel it" but the question is where, and why, you know, because passion is exactly what it is - passion - you can't....you can't make passion for something, either you have it or you don't. So do I have the same passion for **** no. I enjoy it, but I don't....I didn't have a vision and I don't envision myself this great big *****[60], you don't have that drive like with dancing." (Syvie)*

We have seen how the dancers' passion for dance is a great motivating force throughout their careers the implications of this for transition is that when they are forced to change direction they feel 'lost' without direction or drive.

A second sense of loss is that of the companionship and culture of dancers. For those who had not danced professionally for a period of years they often felt the loss of the community and their sense of connection to the community very strongly.

> *"I miss the community, I miss the sense of family and I miss being silly for absolutely no reason, I miss that." (Lizza)*

> *"I really miss like being with the girls, just chatting and laughing and that y'know?" (Babs)*

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[60] The name of her current occupation is not given in order to protect her identity.

The social aspect is clearly missed, as is the wider connection to the community and we see here how the sense of family that has prevailed throughout the dancers' training and career is sorely missed. Again these dancers mention the unique sense of humour, the silliness and they feel unfavourably judged for this outside of their community. Looking back to the comments made by dancers in the profession speaking of those who had left there was a sense that they just 'disappear' when they are no longer a part of the community, this is obviously felt by those exiting.

> *"I mean one of the hard thing is that people forget you, you know,*
> *quite easily" (Darcy)*

The dancers community, sense of connection, shared cultural values and sense of humour are felt as a great loss in transition. This suggests a greater psychological problem than just the loss of identity as suggested by the application of Erikson's theory of identity foreclosure (1969)[61]. The loss of the cultural bond and connection to other dancers was keenly felt.

> *"you all know that you've been through hard times and you've*
> *been through pain, you're feet killing you and you've been*
> *through blisters and all sorts to get to where you are so you all*
> *feel on a similar sort of plain, you do feel comfortable with people.*
> *I miss that…." (Grace).*

Dance was also something that kept the dancers physically fit. Having been so acutely aware of their bodies from a young age they found the loss of muscle tone, flexibility and strength was also distressing. Many ex – dancers will joke about how little they can do in comparison now and at the same time they will say that they find it depressing. Keeping in shape wasn't a chore for them it was just always part of the job, you take company warm up and it includes strength and flexibility training so it doesn't require extra time or effort. However the loss of these attributes was symptomatic of a move away from the profession and

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[61] The application of this theory to the career transitions of dancers is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

there was an underlying feeling that without those attributes you are not a dancer. This of course has implications for identity. We saw from the quotes of the dancers' experiences that they felt they are dancers because it is their physical self that is their product and that needs to be maintained in order to gain employment. To lose the physical attributes that make them a dancer is to lose a part of themselves, they become physically normal.

Dancers also mentioned the sense of intimacy, trust and the strong emotional bond between dancers that is characteristic of their culture, being experienced as an important loss. We have seen how physical and emotional boundaries are different for dancers working in the industry with dancers commenting on aspects of the profession including the kinship like connections made with their colleagues, physicality of the profession and the different boundaries experienced in terms of undressing etc. This is again something that makes the profession special and different and it is something that is missed:

> *"It's different because the experience of that kind of trust you*
> *have to have in that group, that kind of intimacy that you share,*
> *you are sweating, you are naked, you are changing, I mean the*
> *boundaries like are…and…not many…or any other jobs do you*
> *experience that. So how do you match that? How do you*
> *compare? How do you relate to people that haven't experienced*
> *that?" (Velma)*

Clearly this is more than a sense of loss, a bereavement, it's a fundamental feeling that they genuinely don't know how to relate to people who have not shared these experiences, people outside of their group. In addition there is the reality that whatever they do for living after dancing they will not experience that level of intimacy and trust with work colleagues. This issue is discussed further in the section 'becoming normal'.

Another significant loss is that of status. This is directly related to the previous discussion on culture and community as the status of being a dancer is

understood, validated and internalised through and within this community and their culture. We have seen how important dance is to dancers and therefore *being* a dancer is held in very high regard. Again, this elevation of status within the community and culture is not unusual, it was seen in the other studies mentioned (for example Boulton, 2005; Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990). However, again, the issue with dancers is that they have to leave their profession at a time when those in other professions are establishing themselves. This loss of status also relates to the sense of difference that dancers feel, those outside their profession don't necessarily value dance as an occupation which further alienates them. This sense of loss explains why many dancers have difficulty in 'letting go'. Babs for example said that she had tried a number of different alternatives including taking a course to teach aerobics. Despite achieving the highest possible marks on the course she did not pursue it as an alternative career as she didn't get the same enjoyment and she found the people involved very competitive and "bitchy". She had also thought of other alternatives but could not get as enthusiastic about these options.

As we've seen, the culmination of these experiences during the prolonged transition is more than just a threat to self-esteem it is a loss of identity.

> *"I have identified myself in performing ever since I can remember,*
> *I don't know who I am without it, I'm lost." (Eli)*

The comment that they're lost and no longer have a sense of who they are is common and was reiterated by all of those who had contemplated transition through necessity.[62] There is an overwhelming sense of disorientation; their identity has been so immersed in dance that leaving the profession leaves them bereft of a sense of themselves. The sense that dance is innate further exacerbates this.

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[62] Contemplating transition prior to it becoming a reality was not taken as seriously. This is discussed further below.

> *"I know for a fact that this is what I was put on this earth to do.*
>
> *I don't know what it is but it isn't a job. You do it because you*
>
> *need to do it, you can't live without it, it's like breathing." (Hen)*

Here again we see how the culmination of the sense of dance as a lifestyle and an inner desire has obvious consequences for their experience of transition. In addition this clearly shows that identity for dancers goes far beyond an occupational identity, cutting to the core of their sense of self.

It is not surprising that they feel so lost given the years of socialisation and experience that have led to identify so strongly with their profession. Clearly, the argument that such strong identities are no longer evident due to the erosion of community and the transient nature of work (discussed in chapter 2) is not relevant to dancers. Their employment, as we've seen, is very unstable and yet the sense of community is very strong and their identity is inextricably linked to their profession. This was evident even when they had ostensibly left the profession.

> *"Yeah,….. it's like even today they said to me 'what do you do for*
>
> *a living?' and I just straight away went "oh I'm a dancer" and I*
>
> *don't dance anymore I mean I don't really ..d'ya know what I*
>
> *mean, I dance around the house but it's like I can't really bear to*
>
> *say …if I do write pilates teacher it's at the end of the list". (Xia)*

Xia writes this as a dancer who hasn't danced for a few years. She couldn't even bring herself to say that she was no longer a professional in the interview. This theme was explored further through a discussion with a group of ex-dancers about what they missed. As they were female dancers there was a great deal of conversation around whether or not having children filled the 'void' left by dance. It was decided that it did fleetingly but ultimately nothing could really replace dance and that if you expected it to then 'letting go' would be almost impossible. Indeed, so strong is their identity that the Dancers' Career Development refers to all former dancers as dancers in their communication. They suggest that in counselling dancers it is often important to enable them to identify themselves as

dancers that do something else for a living because their identity as a dancer is so central to their core concept. As we've seen dancers believe that being a dancer is an innate gift and a fundamental part of who they are.

So strong is the identity that it also structures the emotions and without it emotional problems are encountered. This was touched on in the previous chapter but many dancers often realised when facing transition that dancing had been an emotional release for them, a way of expressing themselves emotionally and without it they didn't know how to deal with their emotions.

> *"When I stopped dancing I was…so emotional, and I didn't have that outlet to release my frustrations. I was a mess, I started reading all types of like self help books, and I started reading law of attraction books, and I started working with the life coach because I needed to put my life back together. I didn't know how to deal with emotional situations without going to ballet. I would get into a fight with a friend, or my boyfriend whatever, and I would just go to class and it would be fine. Literally I would forget why I was upset. Really! I would really forget and I would be like what was that I don't know, it doesn't bother me now! That would be it. As an adult I can look back and say that is exactly what was going on, that is how I got through puberty, and boyfriends, and friends, and relationships, that is exactly how I did it, was through dance…. I started learning meditation, how to deal with my stress levels, how to not get stressed about things, because I noticed that I was very different when I stopped dancing, very different." (Velma)*

Dance is such an integral part of the dancer's life that it performs a variety of functions. The dancer's sense of self and their life as a dancer are inextricably intertwined through years of socialisation in training and in the profession. As a result the loss of one inevitably leads to the loss of both.

> *"As they say, in our career it's a shorter life. And it's true because*
> *we get the feeling earlier than old people at ninety who have to*
> *go in a home, have to let go of their life. I think that's when they*
> *get the same feelings we get, we're letting go of our life". (Darcy)*

Darcy obviously doesn't think of transition as retiring from dance or even a step through her life, it is more fundamental than that, she sees it as letting go of her life. This is a powerful analogy. There is also a sense that there is nothing more after dance, certainly nothing of significance. As mentioned previously transition is a touchy subject and initial responses were generally "I try not think about it" or "I just take each day as it comes", contributing to the taboo nature of the subject. The quote above provides a strong reminder that dancing for these people is something that has been their life for a long time, often as long as they can remember.

> *"I can't remember not dancing, I was too young, It's just*
> *something I've always done, I think when it's something you've*
> *always done you just feel like you should still be doing it, all the*
> *time….you can't expect, it's like eating and breathing,…..you*
> *know when you're like..(laughs) .. It's something you've always*
> *done, you've always remembered you've done". (Clara)*

Clara's comparison to dance as being like eating and breathing suggest that it's fundamental to her being, something that keeps her alive. This has been evident throughout the data and analysis, the emotional connection to dance and the way in which it is embedded in the individual's identity means that transition away from the career has a devastating emotional impact.

We have seen in the previous chapter that dancers face various frustrations in their working life and this leads to a dichotomy when discussing transitions. The two sides of transition reflect the feelings of most of the dancers. On the one side there's the poor pay, poor working conditions, working with inexperienced people, focus on looks, disadvantages mentioned earlier regarding freelance work in relation to holidays, sick pay, healthcare etc. These were all frustrations which in

a sense became more important as commitments to mortgages etc. came to the fore. However the emotional and personal aspects of the career were still problematic and psychologically all the practical preparations did not help the sense of loss and depression. So there was an external, desire or need to leave the profession in tension with an internal, emotional need to stay in it, which is clearly linked to identity and self-worth.

Section 3. Becoming normal

Not only does leaving the world of dance involve a loss of support for the identity from the wider community and an acute threat to the sense of self, but while coming to terms with this the dancer has also to negotiate an new sense of self-worth and a new identity in a world in which behaviour is governed by new values, attitudes and norms.

The phenomena of what Becker terms 'deviant' groups developing a strong set of values and norms that distanced them from societal norms is well established in the literature. However, the dancers are different from the musicians studied by Becker (1969) in two respects. Firstly, because dancers develop this sense of difference from their early socialisation through experiences while training as a dancer. Secondly, because the career is relatively short they are forced to leave their profession in from their late twenties, whereas the musicians studied by Becker could continue in their career throughout their lifetime. Therefore musicians are not obliged to integrate into wider society however, dancers are forced to. They have to leave their world of dance and become 'normals' if they are to continue to earn a living.

Initially there is the practical problem of securing training for a new career. This is especially problematic in the UK where dancers are paid less than the USA precluding them for training for some occupations.

"I looked on the internet, like…even…because I enjoy hair, I even looked at a Toni and Guy course to like work in the store, like work in their salon as a hairdresser. And it was something like seven grand the course, and I thought well where on earth would I get that money from? So like…and to work…to be a make-up artist or whatever for TV or you know shows whatever, models, you need courses for that as well. It all costs money so I don't know how you are supposed to find a different career and train in something new if you have to pay for these courses when you are not working. It's kind of impossible." (Anna)

The lack of financial resources for re-training meant that some dancers had to hold down two jobs simultaneously as they prepared to enter a new career. This is the experience of one dancer from the States:

I: *So you are doing double duty at the moment are you, so you are working as a producer and doing the show?*

R: *Yeah. The weekends are hard for me um…because I can't really accomplish any of my business objectives when I am here for four shows, two shows on Saturday and two shows on Sunday.*

I: *So it's a seven day week for you?*

R: *Oh yeah! Always!*

I: *That's tough!*

R: *It beats working in a coal mine! I mean there are worse things I could be doing. But I don't know what it will be like when I don't dance anymore. Already…I haven't taken class for about six years or something, I miss it but I don't really do anything about it. I have still got to do a little singing and dancing here, I don't have any costume changes, it doesn't kill my body so…um…we do a lot of sitting in these chairs when we are not dancing in this production. So…I am just like thinking through all the*

> *business stuff I have to take care of in the dark you know?*
> *And then get up and do a number so…it's sort of like…a*
> *fair balance right now. In some ways its…it's both a liability*
> *as well as an asset because I feel like I am fighting two*
> *wars with one arm tied behind my back. You know what I*
> *mean like all the actors I am competing against are solely*
> *focused on acting and dancing, and singing, and all the*
> *producers I am competing with are just focused on*
> *producing. (Adrian)*

Dancers, particularly in the UK, face a problem in terms of gaining funding to retrain. As freelance dancers rarely choose their time of departure they often find themselves with no money and no work. In addition they encounter further barriers in the form of employers' perceptions of them as an outsider group. In the same way that many of them are unaware of the outside world, they now find themselves in a situation in which their skills are neither understood nor valued by those on the outside.

> *"Well, I sent my CV out to for lots of different things but it doesn't*
> *matter how much you try to show about team working and*
> *determination and attention to detail and communication all they see*
> *is that you were dancer and it doesn't mean anything to them."*
> *(Margot)*

As a dancer there is a sense that employers cannot see how their training and experience can relate to other workplaces, dancers feel that all the employers see is that they "jumped up and down for a living"! As one dancer reported:

> *"I went for a job for American Express, and they took one look at*
> *my CV and said no you are not going to do a serious job like this."*
> *(Leroy)*

Outside the world of work, as dancers moved into new social circles there are further problems. Some experienced a sense of exclusion through their ignorance of the new norms. Many of the female dancers had gone on to have

children so their new circle of friends often included groups of other new mothers. One would expect this to give them common ground for inclusion into a new group, however, the dancers expressed how different they felt from this group:

> *"I just don't know how to be around them, how to act, how to behave. You know, I'll say something that I think is funny and I'll look around and nothing! And I feel so weird it's like I can't be myself so I don't know how to be. I don't know how to be normal."*
> *(Darcy)*

When they talked about motherhood they found that their interaction could be somewhat superficial. When female ex dancers talked about motherhood they spoke about how this gave them a new circle of friends but that they weren't "ready for that":

> *"It isn't the same as your dancing friends, you don't have anything in common with them except motherhood. With your dancing friends you all just have lots in common and you know what each other know and you can just chat." (Babs)*

Throughout the dancers' training and career they have felt divorced from the 'normal' world and we have seen how this is continually reinforced by external 'norms' that define dancers as different. Inevitably this sense of difference has implications for transition into the 'normal' world. As we see from the quotes above dancers don't feel that they can be 'themselves' because they feel they are not understood by those in the normal world and they don't know how to behave, act or think in the way that 'normal' people do (as they perceive them from an 'outsider' perspective). As Darcy says, they don't know how to be normal.

This could be very stressful. Two of the dancers had gone on to move in wealthy circles and spoke about the reaction of people in those circles to their profession:

> Babs: *"They really don't understand."*
> Sylvie: *"No they were all in really high profile jobs before their*
> *children"*

> Babs: "Yes like banking or high profile PR and when you say you
> were a dancer they say "oh like in a club, is that how you
> met?" They just don't understand, there's no point trying to
> explain they don't understand".

This effective downgrading of their achievements as dancers led both of them to stop telling people about their professional lives. This not only means that they feel the need to deny a huge part of their lives and themselves but it also acts as a loss of status and they felt devalued. In their career they were well respected in the dance world but outside this achievement is not acknowledged or respected. This led them to comment that it made the sense of loss of community even more acute. This experience again demonstrates the duality of difference as it is felt by dancers. They feel different from within but this is also reflected and reinforced through experiences with those outside the profession. After 15 years with no connection to dance whatsoever Sylvie commented:

> "I'm just starting to feel normal now, like when I see people on
> Strictly come dancing I can empathise with them now [laughs].
> But, I still miss having that drive you know?" (Sylvie)

Clearly, although she feels that she can identify with non-dancers she still misses dance 15 years on. It has taken 15 years for her to feel any connection to those outside the dance world and this comes with the caveat that she doesn't tell people that she was a dancer. She went on to say that she had hoped that her children would fill the gap left by dance but they didn't, all the dancers of both genders said that there was a deep loss associated and a difficulty in adjusting to life outside the dance world. Babs spoke of some dancers who were in their 40s and 50s who still hoped that they would be able to return to dance even though they knew that this was not a realistic endeavour.

We can see then that dancers have difficulty in adjusting to 'normal' life. This world is so different from theirs and there are clear areas in which there is a clash in values and beliefs between the dancer's culture and that of wider society. This

can be seen through the core themes that have been traced through these chapters. For example the priority and status of dance, for dancers this is everything and yet those outside the profession do not necessarily see dance as such a divine occupation. Dancers feel 'addicted' to dance and don't find the same 'rush' from activities in the 'normal' world. Even the dancers' sense of humour is felt to be different and unique and physical and personal boundaries are very different in the dancers' working environment. This latter point picks up on the work of (Wulff, 2008) in which dancers behaviour was seen as bizarre to those outside the industry, it was felt that they often over-stepped the social norms of personal space. This is not surprising having seen the intimate nature of the profession. We have seen how this has led dancers to feel alienated when faced with the social norms outside of their culture, the cultural clashes become quite stark. In this respect the experience of dancers as an outside group bears similarities to the 'deviant' groups studied by Becker (1963), but rarely do such members of deviant groups have to make this same transition to the 'normals' in the way that dancers do.

The other interesting facet here is that unlike the communities and occupations that developed this sense of difference in previous studies (Slaughtermen, Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Gynaecological nurses, Boulton, 2005) dancers come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and their culture, practices and norms are not geographically specific. The way that dancers experience their culture, their identity as a dancer and the sense of difference is nevertheless universal.

Conclusion. Understanding the dancers experience, the 'shock hypothesis' revisited.

Originally Elias developed the shock hypotheses to explain the experience of young people entering the world of work for the first time. He argued that as they

moved from their childhood world of dependence on family, with little direct knowledge of the adult world of work and with a social life that separated them from the world of adults, they would experience what he termed a "reality shock" as the entered the world of work. This is because there they would encounter what were to them new relationships and dependencies which they would have to adjust to and which were at variance with their previous experience of the world as children[63]. (Note this is elaborated in Goodwin and O'Connor 2006).

For dancers the situation is very different. As we saw in Chapter 7, from a very early age the child is exposed to the world of dance. Dance teachers have a direct knowledge of the world of dance, the dance shows and competitions they enter expose them at an early age the realities of the adult world of the dancer, to the process of being judged, to learning how to handle the disappointment of failing to win and also to the attitudes and beliefs of the adult world of dance. Even their fantasies are rooted in the reality of dance as they strive to realise their ambition of performing as professional dancers, for them their fantasy of becoming a performer and the reality of work merge seamlessly together. Unlike their counterparts at school, who will not enter the world of work until much later, these young people already know their destination and indeed their experience of school is one learning how to negotiate their way through it without compromising their preparation for the world of dance. By the age of around 10 they already experience a sense of connection to their world of dance and the corollary, a sense of difference from their fellow pupils. They already have one foot in the realities of the world of work. Later their experience of dance school brings them even closer to the realities of the world of the professional dancer. What the shock hypotheses teaches us about the dancing profession, is almost uniquely, the preparation for it brings the child and adult world close together at an early age. It is this experience that structures their sense of self and their identity.

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[63] This is elaborated on in Goodwin and O'Connor (2006)

While their socialisation process makes the linear transition into work relatively smooth, the very conditions that enable that experience to take place itself lays the seeds for a troubled transition out the profession. The initial congruence between reality and fantasy, the fact that these dancers have achieved their fantasies reinforces the strong emotional attachment they have developed to dance, while the culture of the dancers world supports their core sense of self and their very identity. As we have seen their transition out threatens this identity as their support from the dance community and culture slips away. So profound is the threat of leaving the world of dance to their sense of identity that dancers have developed mechanisms to prevent them from even thinking about it.

Moreover, within the world of dance there is little room to learn about the world of 'normals'. Even those who try to obtain knowledge about alternative careers often report that these are superficial attempts. As the dancers social world is focussed on interaction with other dancers they are isolated socially from the normals in mainstream society. As a result their knowledge of the world of 'normals' is minimal. Having developed a strong and stable identity as dancers there is little wonder that, as this chapter has demonstrated, the dancers experience the transition as a 'reality shock' to use Elias's term. As Elias suggested the shock " may have a variety of forms which may sometimes be sudden and biting and sometimes slowly coming over the years ending in a final shock of recognition that there will never be anything else but that, .." (quoted in Goodwin and O'Conner, 2006, p 169). But unlike Elias's initial hypothesis, this is not a situation of young people in the relatively early stages of the process of identity formation, these are mature adults with many years experience of the world of work and a profound sense of their own identity.

They do not understand the world outside of their domain and entry into it is frightening and fraught with uncertainty and there is always a draw towards the profession and a desire to stay as we've seen with the various analogies of dance being like a drug and dancers getting 'hooked' from a young age. This

draw is still strong despite the way in which they may have become dissatisfied with the structure of the profession and the way they are treated as demonstrated in the previous chapter.

While the concept of a reality shock provides a precise description of the sense of disorientation that the dancers encounter, the provision of more direct knowledge of the world of the normals may help mitigate the impact but is not a solution to the problems that dancers face. What is at the centre of this disorientation is the gradual loss of identity, of the sense of self and the achievements that helped create it over the years. The transformation of the core identity is not something that can be achieved overnight, rather it is a process that takes years and as some of those who had been out of dance for two decades suggest it is not something that can be completely discarded, dancing always remains part of their identity. The transition out is therefore a very difficult period in the dancers' life in which they face numerous challenges both practically, socially and psychologically. There is no clearly defined start of end to the process, no linear route, rather what may be termed a zone of transition which the dancers negotiate and which is explored in more theoretical terms in the next chapter.

Chapter 9
Implications for theory and practice

Introduction

As this is an interdisciplinary study the implications of this research for theory fall into three broad categories which form three of the sections in this chapter. The first relates to issues of identity and how identity is shaped within a particular socio-historic setting. As we've seen this research questions the ways in which identity loss has been conceptualised in previous literature regarding the career transitions of dancers and sports professionals. Secondly, the case of freelance dancers questions the universality of the prevailing conceptualisation of transitions. Whilst not negating the importance of these issues for many transitions it questions the universality of concepts and theories of transitions that contain an underlying three-stage model and the emphasis on socio-economic status. In this section other ways of conceptualising transitions are explored with a focus on foregrounding culture. Thirdly, there is a brief look at how this three-stage model has led to the notion of 'successful' transitions and examines the usefulness of such a concept in light of this research and transitions more generally. Section 4 concludes the chapter with an examination of the implications of the theoretical approach advocated here for practice.

Section 1. Identity

Loss of identity is one of the core problems associated with dancers' career transitions according to the current literature, (Lavalee and Wylleman, 2000; Patton and Ryan, 2000, Leach, 1997), relevant organisations (DCD, IOTPD) and the analysis presented here. The current literature has explained this in terms of Erikson's concept of 'identity foreclosure' (1956) suggesting that dancers face identity problems in transition because they fixate on their identity as a dancer to

the exclusion of all other possibilities during their adolescent years. It is evident from the analysis here that dancers do indeed have an early and enduring identification with dance, however it is also evident that this cannot be explained in terms of an individual fixation that is an unhealthy response to the adolescent task of adulthood (Erikson, 1956). There is clearly a more complex set of issues linked to the dancer's environment, socialisation into the profession, the historical development of the profession and the dancers' cultural practices and norms vis a vis those of society more generally. As the analysis shows, the dancers' identity as a dancer is developed well before the adolescent years through early processes of socialisation. From the interrelated nature of the themes presented in the analysis it is also evident that the dancer's culture is bound very tightly to their sense of self. The values and beliefs inherent within the dancers' culture and the sense of difference, like that suggested by Becker (1969), is aligned with personal values that feel instinctively central to the dancer's core sense of self.

This connection between the dancer's identity and their culture is clearly problematic for concepts such as 'identity foreclosure' (Erikson 1956). The 'fixation' on dance to the exclusion of all other possible identities does not come from within the individual in isolation and a causal link cannot therefore be made in terms of a lack of exploration into alternative identities during adolescence. It is developed through an interaction between the individual and their social environment, both immediately within the dance community and through wider social norms. To reduce the dancer's sense of identity to an individual choice is to ignore the 'world' in which the dancer inhabits and through which they understand and interpret their experiences. In this 'world' the dancers don't have a choice, many dancers felt that dance had chosen them.

This leads to a further problem related to the use of the concept of identity foreclosure, namely that, if one utilises this concept, the solution to easing problems in transition lies in encouraging greater exploration of alternative identities in adolescence. Indeed this has been suggested by writers such as

Lavalee (2000), Patterson and Ryan (2000) and (Leach, 1997). As we have seen from the data and analysis this is not a realistic solution given the way in which the young dancer's sense of self is embedded in the social norms of the profession, which are historically rooted. By the time these dancers reach adolescence dance is already an integral part of their identity and they are focused and driven to pursue a career in dance. Adolescence is a time when they are very focused on gaining entry into the profession, dancers work very hard at this stage, increasing the intensity of their training significantly. The historical development of the profession explored in chapter 5 showed that the requirements of the profession demand youthful bodies that can withstand extreme stress, therefore the training starts at a young age. Getting them to look at alternatives with any seriousness at this crucial point in their training is therefore an unrealistic endeavour. As we've seen, entering the career is a natural progression for them in the sense that they have a great deal of experience already, have internalised the values of the profession and as a result feel different and distanced from wider societal norms that conflict with their own values and experiences.

Writers such as Lavalee (2000), Patton and Ryan (2000) and Buckroyd (2000) go on to suggest that the adolescent task is postponed until transition away from the career. Again, the logic of this conclusion is evident in the data in that it is at this point that dancers are forced to re-examine their sense of self and are forced to consider alternatives when they contemplate transition. However again these logical conclusions, derived from the use of identity foreclosure in understanding career transitions, create an over simplistic and individualistic perspective, down playing the fundamental impact of dance on identity. The data instead suggests that dancers will always feel connected to dance and therefore any future changes in identity will incorporate rather than replace this sense of self. For example the 80 year old woman who wrote "Terpsichore unites all have been under her spell", (Paquet-Nesson, 2010) she has obviously not danced professionally in many years but her identity remains rooted in dance and she

still feels that connected to other dancers of any age, gender and Nationality. Dance is not therefore a problem of identity that needs to be fixed or solved but a greater depth of understanding gives us insights into the problems relating to identity that dancers face in transition and how they might be tackled, understood and alleviated. These practical issues are discussed later in this chapter.

Other concepts of identity are equally problematic in terms of their usefulness in understanding the impact of transition on the dancers' identity. The dancers' identity is not an occupational badge or one of a number of transient identities in a changing world in which identities are worn and changed like clothes (Elliott and Du Gay, 2009) to display a different aspect of the self. If this were the case transition would not be as problematic and traumatic for those facing it. Whilst this concept might be useful for understanding identities in some spheres and circumstances it is not a universal phenomenon as it ignores the strength and enduring nature of the dancers' identification with dance, the cultural norms and the social milieu.

The dancers' shared sense of identity is a powerful force that prevails in the dancers' environment. The sense of community and belonging in which this shared identity is embedded is very strong. Thus, the assertion of theorists such as Young (2009), Bauman (1998), Hobsbawn (1996) and Castells (1997) that there is a lack of community in today's global society and therefore identity becomes the search to belong, is questioned here. This is certainly not the case for dancers. Furthermore the universality of Beck (1992 & 2000) and Bauman's (1998) assertion that occupations no longer provide a meaningful source of identity is also questioned. They argue that a lack of identification with work is the result of labour market changes that have resulted in a more transient and insecure working environment. They go on to state that an increase in non-standard forms of work prevents strong working communities from emerging, preventing the development of a collective sense of self through belonging to a particular working community. However, we have seen that the freelance dancer

experiences transient employment in non-standard work and various short-term contracts throughout their career yet their sense of community is very strong. Their nomadic lifestyle and varying geographical locations and origins do not negatively impact on their collective sense of community, connection to each other and identification with dance. It is therefore not the type of work that someone is engaged with but rather what that work means to the individual. The freelance dancer lives with non-standard and erratic work opportunities and yet this does not mean that they are not fully committed to the work nor that there is a lack of identification with their work practices. However other forms of non-standard work, engaged in when not working as a dancer (for example promotional work) is not valued and therefore is not intrinsic to the sense of self but rather seen as a means to and end or even actively avoided due to the stigma associated with such work. The dancer's world provides a very powerful environment in which the occupation and the individual become inextricably linked. Dancers enter into this world and becoming immersed in the culture, from a young age. As some ex-professionals and professionally trained dancers turn to teaching and aim to give the highest quality and most 'professional' training that they can offer, the cycle continues and a new generation of dancers find themselves 'hooked' and 'addicted'. In this way the interaction between the individual, the dance culture in which they are immersed and the structures within which they operate continue to develop and reproduce through experiences in both training and work.

Section 2 Reconceptualising transitions

School to work transitions revisited

The literature review on transitions in chapter 3 demonstrated the importance of seeing transitions in their wider social context noting that individual responses result from the interaction between the individual and the social as presented in the data analysis. Recent debates surrounding the extent to which transitions are indivualised or structured have reached a similar conclusion. However, authors

such as Furlong (2010) and Goodwin and O'Connor (2010) have posited that the change in emphasis from structural to individual factors in shaping transitions is a perception that reflects the prevailing discourse and theoretical paradigm of the era in which the distinctions were made rather than an actual shift in the way that transitions are experienced.

Related to this debate is a discussion surrounding the extent to which school to work transitions are either linear and relatively unproblematic or more complex and protracted. This has and is often still attributed to historical factors, the notion that school to work transitions used to be quite linear and straight forward but due to historical changes in the labour market and economic transformations, such as the decline of manufacturing and extractive industries, transitions have become more complex and less predictable (Furlong et al 2003, Roberts et al 1987, France 2007).[64] From both the literature and the research presented here it is clear that both forms of transition can co-exist within the same time frame. As demonstrated through the data analysis dancers experience both linear and protracted transitions, the former in entering the profession and the latter in exiting. The distinction is therefore clearly valid and useful although not historically bound.

Previous studies of school to work transitions have emphasized the importance of socio-economic status in shaping the experience and opportunities available in school to work transitions (Ashton and Field, 1976; Furlong, 2007, 2009, 2010; Heinz, 2010; Roberts, 2010). Within this research access to academic credentials is seen as an important factor in shaping transitions from school to work and yet this again does not reflect the dancers' experiences. They are in fact very nonchalant about the attainment of academic credentials as they are not valued and are deemed largely irrelevant in the dance profession. We have seen that dancers not only emanate from a range of socio-economic

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[64] This position was repeatedly presented at a conference on transitions sponsored by the International Sociological Association in Tampa Florida, Jan 2012.

backgrounds but also from a diverse range of geographical locations from across the globe. Despite this their experiences of transition both into and out of the profession are remarkably consistent. This also questions the universality of the notion that transitions have become less predictable (Furlong et al 2003, Roberts et al, 1987, France 2007). The predictability appears to be related to the dominant culture in the individual's life. While at an aggregate national level these findings are not going challenge the importance of class or socio-economic status in structuring the experience of most school to work transitions, they do raise questions about the usefulness of the underlying three stage model that we have traditionally used to conceptualise the process. If we are to extend our knowledge of the transition process in general we need models that will explain the experiences of groups such as the dancers as well as those following a more 'conventional' route.

Beyond the 3 stage model

The early work on the transition in the 1960, 70s led to a conceptualisation of transitions as structured three stage sequence of events starting with school, then a period of transition and finishing with a "successful" entry into work. Later wider economic transformations led to breaks in transition due to unemployment, further training, part-time employment and so on. References were made to non-linear transitions and extended transitions and the extent to which these varying paths through the three stages are historically based has been widely discussed (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005, Furlong, 2009) but underlying stages remain the same. Current work for example by Edvardsson and Jungert (2010) in Sweden and Lui and Nuyrn (2011), in Australia all use the same three stage model. School experiences are seen as preparing the young person for the transition, transition processes and still link the school experience to the eventual outcomes, and the end state of the transition still takes the form of stable or adult employment.

While not trying to negate the importance of this basic three stage model in furthering our understanding of the majority of transitions the experience of dancers is one where this model does not fit. For them there is no break in the process at the end of their education, after which their successes in acquiring credentials shapes subsequent experience in a new world of work. Their entry into the job starts in some cases before they enter school, their experience of education/training is that of work. From a young age they are socialised into a strong culture in which the transition from school to work is experienced as a continuation of their life and their lifestyle. Credentials and socio-economic status do not give an indication of their path and indeed are largely irrelevant to their process of transition. So, whilst the three stage model and emphasis on socio-economic status and credentials is clearly important for the majority of school to work transitions, there are clearly some groups for which this conceptualisation is not useful.

An alternative way to conceptualize transitions is to think of them in terms of the culture and meaning that the individual has internalised and how this relates to the culture into which they are entering. As suggested in chapter 3, the term culture is used here to highlight core values and beliefs. The important similarities between Becker's (1969) use of the term culture and that used here is the way in which it demonstrates tension for those in sub-cultures that do not conform to wider social norms. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is another source for understanding the all-encompassing culture that dancers encounter but for reasons discussed earlier this does not accord with the dancers' experience. The use of the term 'culture' here then is more aligned to Elias' concept of 'figurations' in that it incorporates the mutual interdependence of the self and the social world. For Elias figurations encompassed a range of social influences from all aspects of life and emphasises the processes by which they are mutually influential through time (Elias, 1970). The term culture is therefore

used to link and understand how the individual or transitional[65] subject negotiates any transition through their own set of core beliefs, values and understandings, and how problems ensue when these values conflict with wider societal values and norms.

Foregrounding culture in this way provides an alternative way of conceptualizing transitions whilst going some way to consolidate existing notions of transitions as either linear or protracted that currently appear to conflict. Conceptualizing transitions in this way suggests that a transition requires the individual to adapt from one set of cultural understandings and core beliefs to another. If we revisit the 3 stage model outlined in chapter 3 but substitute 'state' for 'culture' the model now looks like this.
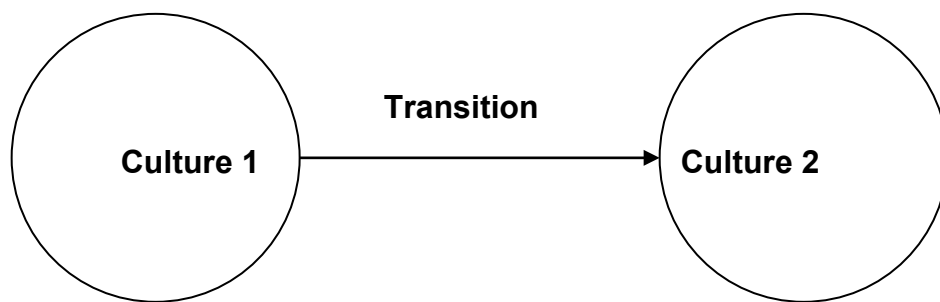
Figure 3 Revised three-stage model of transitions

Using the concept of culture allows the emphasis to shift from socio-economic factors as the central force in shaping the experience of transitions to cultural values. For example, if a person has cultural values which differ greatly from those that they are transitioning in to they are likely to experience disorientation and in Elias' terms 'shock' as suggested by dancers transitioning away from the profession. However, we have also seen that transitions are not linear as the transition line suggests but can be complex and protracted. Indeed the dancers'

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[65] Transitions can apply at any level of analysis, individual, group, organization, nation etc., therefore the subject of transition will vary according to the context.

transition out of the profession has been shown to be very problematic. It is therefore proposed that in such cases transition should be conceptualised in a less simplistic manner and the concept of a zone of transition is proposed to reflect the varied nature of this complexity.

The Transitional Zone

The process of transition itself has been described in various ways. The transitions of athletes have been described as being like a river with quiet sections and rapids (Lavalee, 2000) and France (2007) has described school to work transitions and transitions into adulthood as long and winding paths that can double back on themselves. However, such analogies of transitions suggest that there is an end state even if the journey is considered to be individual and protracted.

By contrast Nicholson (1990) suggests that transitions are cyclical. As an occupational psychologist his theory was developed as a counter point to linear theories that assume a 'steady state'. His 'transitional cycle' consists of four stages, preparation, encounter, adjustment and stabilization. Whilst these stages are not separated by neat boundaries they are seen as being distinctive, although any given transition may also include an element of 'back tracking'. Despite moving away from a linear approach this theory still suggests that transitions are ordered and that there is a sequence or natural progression with an end point. This cycle may be more applicable to transitions in which there is a minimal amount of cultural shift required.

The career transitions of dancers however, as we've seen, are much less predictable, with different people having different experiences but all suggesting that movement through the zone of transition can be in any direction with some dancers never actually reaching an end point as such. We have seen that dancers experiencing career transition have reported a readiness to move out of

the profession one day and yet the next day they are in the depths of despair and cannot imagine doing anything else (DCD, promotional material, Buckroyd 2000, Leach1997). They suggest that this is like taking one step forward only to find that you're four steps back.

In light of these types of experience the career transition for dancers is more analogous to a game of snakes and ladders in which one can find oneself up a ladder one minute and down a snake the next. It is also possible with such an analogy to suggest that some people may remain in the game and never reach an end point. For this reason it is suggested that rather than representing transitions as a line, (See figure 3) it would be more helpful to suggest a 'zone of transition' a space in which transitions are negotiated without the implication that they will be or should be completed (see Figure 4).
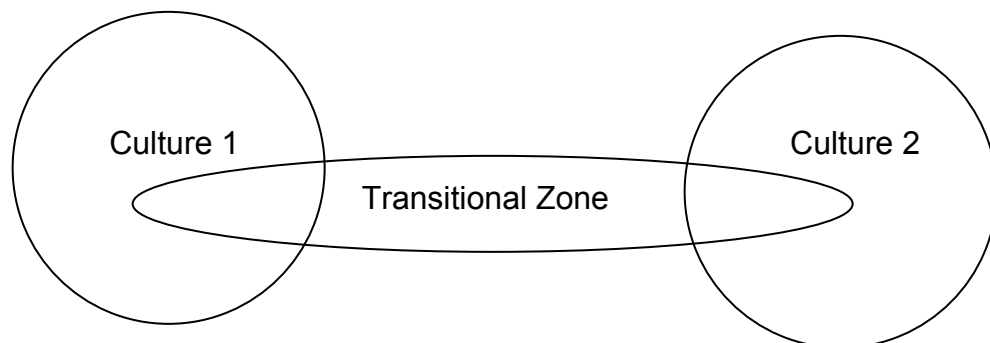
Figure 4 The Zone of Transition

The term 'zone of transition' is used to emphasize the messy space that the individual occupies whilst trying to reconcile or negotiate different or even conflicting cultures and it is here that issues of identity and shock (Elias in Goodwin and O'Connor, 2006) are experienced as they are tied to cultural understandings, core values and beliefs. This visual representation demonstrates how the long, protracted and uncertain education to employment transitions

discussed in current literature might also occur, allowing for multiple ways of negotiating the space.

One advantage to conceptualizing transitions in this way is that it allows for different experiences of transitions to co-exist within the same time frame and is not historically bound or affected by changes in the labour market per se. The individual takes their core beliefs and understandings with them to the new culture and if the culture that an individual is transitioning into differs greatly or is in conflict with the individual's previous culture (core values, beliefs and understandings) then the transition will clearly be very difficult. The individual will be trying to understand their new social environment using different and possibly contradictory beliefs and understandings about that environment. These types of transitions are evident in early projects such as the young workers project in relation to those who experience downward social mobility (Ashton and Field 1976, p.115). In more recent literature, the example of young men in Sheffield outlined by France (2007) who have built up a certain set of beliefs and values around work and masculinity which contrasts to the values and beliefs of the organizations which may employ them is another example. Similarly, McDowell (2004) study which showed that despite parents wanting the male working class children to find employment that differed from the norm in their particular geographical area the children wanted to pursue the same occupation as their fathers due to the cultural values and meanings associated with masculinity. Again, it is the strength of the prevailing and dominant culture that influences the transition.

All these examples have a central theme of socio-economic status as a guiding force but class systems contain core beliefs and values and it is where there is clash in these that problems occur. Hence, the problems of downward mobility for those in the Young Workers Project and the problems relating to conflicting cultural values and beliefs around masculinity in the latter example. In the same

vein we have seen how the cultural mismatch experienced by dancers affects their transition away from the career.

By contrast, if the two cultures (that which the individual is transitioning from and to) are closely aligned or overlap in terms of the core values and beliefs, the transition will be comparatively straightforward and linear as it will be easier for the transitional subject or individual to interpret their surroundings in terms of their current core values, beliefs and understandings. This is illustrated in figure 5 below.
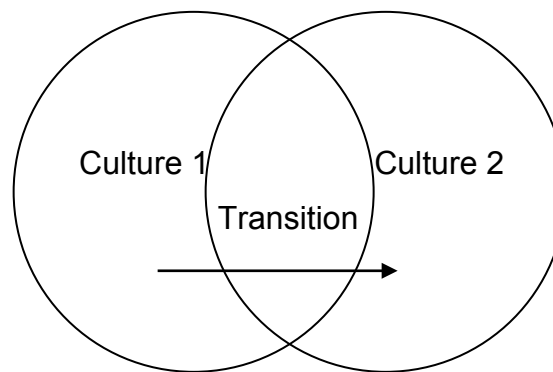
Figure 5 Cultural overlap – linear transitions

Examples of this type of transition would include the traditional, 'relatively standardized and homogenous' transitions described by Furlong and Cartmel (2007), the majority of transitions described by Ashton and Field (1976) and the ways in which many working class men in steel working and mining communities experienced transitions (McDowell, 2002).

Ashton and Field (1976) for example describe how the majority of young people experienced continuity through their families, communities and schools leading to a relatively unproblematic transition. Indeed it is the strength of these community

based, collective values and beliefs that leads the young men mentioned above to pursue the careers of their fathers rather than seek alternatives. For dancers this is indicative of their transition from school to work in that their early socialisation that is embedded in core cultural values and beliefs leads to a relatively unproblematic transition from training to work. The cultural norms of the young dancer and the profession are almost identical and therefore the experience in psychological terms is linear.

Foregrounding culture in this way, in order to reconceptualise transitions, enables the existing literature to be consolidated and reconciled. The concept of culture as it is used here allows for aspects of agency or individual differences to occur without polarizing structure or agency as underlying drivers as is suggested in the individualisation debates[66]. Such an interdisciplinary approach allows us to move away from a dichotomous view of structure and agency and instead examine the intricate ways in which the inter-relationship between the two creates a symbiosis. Drawing on both psychology and sociology it suggests that it is the interaction and processes inherent between the two, making each a part of the other, which shapes the ways in which transitions are experienced. Such an approach is not new (See Ashton and Field, 1976; Heinz, 1999 for examples) but in operationalizing Elias' concepts of sociogenesis and psychogenesis this study emphasises the ways in which self and other interact, shaping experiences (see Elias 1970, 1978).

There are clearly wider structural constraints that will also impact upon the ways in which transitions are experienced. As mentioned previously Furlong and Cartmel (2007) and France (2007) have all suggested that social structures, especially class are very influential forces. These forces can act as constraints on opportunities but the way that an individual makes sense of and understands these constraints and opportunities will be heavily influenced by the core values and beliefs developed in the culture from which they are emerging.

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[66] See Furlong, 2010; Heinz, 2010; Roberts 2010.

So, now perhaps it is time to stop seeking a universal theory that can deal with all school to work transitions and endlessly debating the extent to which transitions are socially constructed or individually created. A more productive approach may be to think about transitions in the way advocated here that allows for differences in experiences based on the ways in which the individual is embedded in particular practices and interdependent social and structural relationships.

Section 3. "Successful" transitions

This research also questions the use of another conceptually misleading term, that of a 'successful' transition. As discussed early work on transitions in the 1960, 70s led to a conceptualisation of transitions as a structured three stage sequence of events starting with school, then a period of transition and finishing with "successful" entry into work. Current work for example by Edvardsson and Jungert (2010) in Sweden and Lui and Nuyrn (2011), in Australia all use the same three stage model ending in stable or adult employment. Some writers in discussing dancers' career transitions also speak in these terms. Buckroyd (2000) for example talks about making a 'successful' transition and discusses how this can be achieved. As we have seen not only is it difficult to define a start and end point but it is not at all clear how one would define 'success' in dancers' transitions into or out of the profession. What is the measure of success? Objectively in terms of a new job? The amount of money they earn? The status of their new job / occupation? As we have seen previously many of these measures are meaningless to dancers, dance has the highest status due its value within their culture regardless of the low pay or validation in labour market or society at large. Some dancers did not make the majority of their money from dance on entering the labour market. Does this mean that their transition in unsuccessful because they were doing other things or successful because they were sustaining themselves whilst working to gain employment in their chosen field? Perhaps then it should be measured in more socio-psychological terms such as how well they adjust to their new environment, take on a new

occupational identity or accept the loss of their previous occupation? Again, this is very difficult to determine, would this mean that a dancer who still identifies themselves as a dancer but one that now has a different occupation is 'unsuccessful' in transition but one that does not identify themselves as a dancer but still grieves for the loss 'successful'? The older lady who suggest that all dancers are united by their love of dance, she clearly has retained the cultural values of a dancer, does that mean she is unsuccessful in transitioning away and if there is no destination point then how do you even contemplate 'success'? This would mean that transitions into the profession were largely successful whilst those out of the profession would be almost universally unsuccessful. When the value systems for those within the profession are so different from those outside who decides what is truly valuable? This is the same for the workers in the follow up to the Young Workers in which Goodwin and O'Connor revisited some of the original participants. One machinist had been forced to leave the factory due to closure decades before but kept parts of the machine in his garage and continued to work on it and identify with his previous career despite having stable employment subsequently (Goodwin and O'Connor 2005). To impose a measure of 'success' based on one set of values to a group who do not share those values is meaningless. The concept itself is therefore unhelpful in the study of transitions unless there is a reason for looking at a particular measure of success from a particular value system.

While not trying to negate the importance of this basic three stage model in furthering our understanding of the majority of transitions the experience of dancers is one where this model does not fit. For them there is no break in the process at the end of their education, after which their successes in acquiring credentials shapes subsequent experience in a new world of work. Their entry into the job starts in some cases before they enter school, their experience of education/training is that of work. From a young age they are socialised into a strong culture in which the transition from school to work is experienced as a continuation of their life and their lifestyle. Credentials and socio-economic status

do not give an indication of their path and indeed are largely irrelevant to their process of transition. So, whilst the three stage model and emphasis on socio-economic status and credentials is clearly important for the majority of school to work transitions, there are some groups for which this conceptualisation is not useful. Any meaningful theoretical approach to school to work transitions that seeks to be universal needs to encompass both sets of experiences.

This chapter proposes the foregrounding of culture in furthering our understanding of transitions and highlighting the way in which individual experience is embedded in social understanding. The notion that linear and protracted transitions are historically bound is questioned and instead it is proposed that the two can coexist within the same time frame. Using the concept of culture the experience of transition can be understood through the strength, depth and alignment of dominant cultures and the way that the individual negotiates a move between them.

Section 4. Practical implications and recommendations

A number of practical implications have emerged from this research reflecting the nature of the research question which is both practical and theoretical.
In chapter 7 we saw how the idea of identity foreclosure has emerged from the study of athletes (and been related to dancers at a theoretical level) as the reason for the problems of transition. However, this narrow focus has lead to suggested solutions that focus on the trainer. The idea being that if the trainer doesn't push the training so much the individual will have greater scope to explore other options. However, if we take the argument that the similarities are enough to make a comparison between the two it is clear from the data and analysis above that the trainer is not solely responsible for the focus on one career. The individual feels a need and an inner drive that is bound in social relationships within a wider community. It seems that we must accept the

dancers need to fulfil their ambitions whilst being supportive in giving them tools and help in dealing with the consequences that this has for transition.

Like elite athletes the reality is that not everyone can be a dancer but that doesn't mean that they should necessarily feel so different from their peers. There are arguably many professions which are not available to anyone, that require certain abilities or qualities that the majority of the population do not poses. Inflexibility in the school system does not help to support these children. Being results driven they are expected to perform (academically or athletically) for the school and this system means a very rigid attendance structure which, as we've seen from the dancers' experiences, does not feed in well to professional engagements. A more flexible system would allow students to gain valuable work experience in different areas and this would not then be perceived as something that was exceptional or different. The dancers clearly felt alienated through their interactions with this system. This focuses a different lens, instead of it being a problem that the individual must overcome because their behaviour is abnormal (as Identity foreclosure would suggest) this broader perspective leads to the conclusion that it is an interaction between the individual and their environment that leads to these difficulties and making dance less abnormal would therefore make the process less restrictive thereby alleviating some of the difficulties in transitioning out.

This is similar to Elias' work on young workers and his argument that they are not exposed enough to the adult working world when attending school. His argument is that schools by definition are institutions designed for children and adolescents and as such do not prepare them for the world of work. Perhaps a more flexible system in which children were encouraged to explore the adult world of work would service individuals, schools and industry more effectively. Recent work by Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2011) suggests that educational policies are not effectively developing the skills that young people need in the global economy and large multi-national organisations are looking to develop skills from within. If

young adults are growing up with this access to skills development through more flexible arrangements between schools and industries the skills 'gap' may be reduced. In addition children from less privileged backgrounds would have access to and an understanding of the world of work.

There is also a need for dance training facilities at every level to recognise and celebrate the successes of graduates beyond their dancing careers. The cultural values within the group are focused solely on success in the field of dance which is to be expected. However, one way to start broadening this value system rendering transition less problematic to the sense of self, is to actively value the achievements of those that work beyond their dancing career, giving the young generation a further set of aspirations and actively embracing transition rather than ignoring it and treating it as a taboo. Furthermore there is a need for greater links between the dance / performing arts industries and those further afield so that there is a greater understanding and awareness of the many transferrable skills that dancers have developed. If these skills were acknowledged and valued by wider industry dancers would have fewer difficulties finding appropriate employment after their professional dance careers. The solutions therefore need to be two-fold, from with the dance community in terms of changing attitudes towards transition and in wider society in understanding the great contribution and valuable skills that these people have to offer.

There are other practical problems which have been highlighted before by the relevant organisations dealing with dancers transitions and these have certainly been reflected in the data from this study. For example, dancers face financial difficulties in terms of re-training. The poor wages (particularly for UK dancers) means that they cannot afford to retrain which leaves only relatively low skilled jobs available to them, despite their years of training and experience. Whilst organisations such as the DCD and CTfD do provide some grants for retraining their funds are limited and dancers have to compete for financial support. There is clearly a need for funding in terms of retraining so that dancers can make the

most of their existing skills. Many dancers do find employment of some kind but government support for retraining would be a relatively low cost, potentially high gain (in terms of future tax revenue) investment for governments.[67] Another solution would be to ensure that the production companies pay into a fund for the retraining of dancers. This is already the case for many large dance companies which largely fund organisations such as the DCD which means that these dancers have access to counselling and help with retraining. If private production companies also contributed this much needed support could be extended to the wider dance population.

Related to this is the problem of dancers' wages particularly in the UK. It is shocking that dancers in the USA earn more than double that of their UK peers for doing the same job for the same company. Whilst there are other issues here including the costs incurred in leasing theatres and the price of theatre tickets the disparity is huge and should be addressed. There is clearly no difference in the calibre of the dancers themselves. Furthermore there is an industry debate surrounding the extent to which experience is valued over youth and the problems inherent in an ageist industry.

These practical implications highlight the ways in which theory and practice are not in fact two separate entities but are inevitably and necessarily intertwined. To quote an eminent professor, "there's nothing as practical as a good theory" (professor D. Ashton in personal correspondence).

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[67] There are some governments particularly in parts of Western Europe that do provide this type of support for dancers enabling them to retrain and enter back in to the labour market at a higher skill level.

Chapter 10
Conclusions

This study set out to gain a better understanding of the career transitions of freelance dancers and why they are so problematic, through an in depth analysis of their experiences. It was found that the problems that dancers face are connected to their socialisation into the profession. Furthermore, it was found that the way that the profession operates itself, in terms of the cultural values and norms as well as the training structures are crucial to understanding the experiences of these dancers particularly when this is put in the context of wider societal norms. The dancers' world was placed within it's socio-historic context so that the development of the prevailing values and norms could be understood along with the way in which these norms have diverged from conventional norms surrounding work. Elias' concepts of sociogenesis and psychogenesis were used to understand both the historic foundations and the continuing mutual interdependence and evolution of the individual and the social. Following this it was evident that previous literature highlighting the individual nature of the problems inherent in transition, by suggesting that problems stemmed from identity foreclosure (Erikson, 1959), had ignored the significance of the social environment. Becker's concept of culture was used to provide a more detailed account of how the individual's experience is embedded within certain cultural norms. Furthermore, this concept provided a more in-depth understanding of the problems that arise when the cultural and social norms within a particular group are at odds with those in society more generally as is the case for dancers. They feel deeply connected to each other and significantly different from others outside their world.

The demands of the profession and the early exposure to and immersion in training lead dancers to develop an early and enduring identification with the profession that is taken to the core of the self-concept. Coupled with this is a

sense of alienation from wider societal norms that often conflict with the cultural norms and values shared by the dancers. It is therefore through experiences in school, training and work that dancers come to feel different from others outside of their community and it is this sense of connection to dance difference from those outside the community that creates such huge challenges for dancers in transition. Dancers face various problems in transition including loss of identity, loss of community, depression, anxiety, helplessness, loss of self-esteem and loss of status. This study has demonstrated that the problems facing dancers in career transitions cannot be attributed simply to a loss of identity due to individual decision making during adolescence, it is far more complex. The loss of their community and their sense of difference from society at large means that they face entering a world which they do not understand, where they don't feel 'normal' and which does not really understand them. This mutual lack of understanding creates problems for transition that confound the issues of identity that clearly also exist. This study has found that an understanding of the dancers' world view is vital if we are to aid them in the transition process or to suggest useful interventions in alleviating some of the issues that dancers face.

What is remarkable about the findings here is the way in which the norms, values and sense of self as a dancer are shared despite the vast differences in geographical location and socio-economic status. The connection and sense of difference was found to be fundamentally the same regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, race or geographical location. Culture is often seen as a product of a close (or relatively close) geographical community yet these cultural values and even a collective sense of self is shared despite the dancers emerging from very different geographical locations. As a result the concept of culture was used to gain an understanding of dancers' transitions both into and away from the profession. The foregrounding of culture in understanding transitions was then used to suggest a more general theoretical model of transitions, consolidating existing theoretical ideas and combining them to provide an alternative way of conceptualising transitions.

Other Findings

Contrary to previous studies (Leach, 1997 for example) this study found that freelance dancers vary in the age at which they exit according to the country they are living in. This is context specific relating to the way in which dancers are viewed by the industry in a particular country. Dancers in the UK were expected to transition out earlier than there counterparts in Germany and the USA sometimes by as much as 10 years. In addition, dancers in the USA earned at least double (sometimes almost triple) the amount that their UK counterparts whilst performing the exact same job.

Like other surveys this research found that dancers' face financial difficulties in transitioning away from the profession which makes re-training difficult. There is also a need to provide more communication between the dance (performing arts) world and the labour market more generally as the culture gap between the two means that dancers are often not fully aware of the transferable skills that they poses and even when they are these are not always recognised by employers.

Limitations

There a number of limitations to this study, these include the following; Firstly as mentioned previously this is the analysis of one researcher and due to the nature of qualitative research another researcher may have seen slightly different patterns and themes. However, this does not negate the importance of the findings within the chosen research paradigm. Secondly, this is just one population of dancers and one should be careful about generalising this to other populations such as company dancers, although the results indicate that the culture would be much the same. The DCD commented that they believed that freelance dancers had an easier time of it because they were used to standing on their own two feet, dealing with tax etc. and therefore were not institutionalised in the same way as their company counterparts. However, the

crux of the problem lies in the core sense of belonging, connection and difference and this is universal. It can be seen in the biographies and memoires of dancers from dance companies. For example Marie Paquet-Nesson in her memoirs 'Ballet to the Corps' remembers

> *"I had slogged through each school day year after year until the afternoon bell set me free. Free to tear out the building to my ballet school to be with my friends. And now I was excused from attending a long ceremony at a school for which I cared nothing, with black-caped and gowned students with whom I had little in common. I was giddy with my good-fortune…. Maybe it was because there was parity among us in talent and achievement, our friendships were knitted closely through mutual ambition and insecurity." (Paquet-Nesson, 2009)*

There may however be other groups such as street dancers that could be investigated further in order to ascertain congruency. Thirdly, freelance dancers are clearly not a majority group and therefore there a limitations regarding the generalizability of the study, furthermore, the sample size, whilst in keeping with the chosen methods was small in relation to the population size. However, despite dancers being a small group in occupational terms the performing arts is a growth area in the economy and therefore the results are not insignificant.

In terms of the study itself, it was not possible to access many male dancers who had transitioned out of the profession so the ones that were consulted may not be representative of the population as a whole. Indeed, being a qualitative study it is acknowledged that numerical representation was not sought.
Secondly it could be argued that by speaking only to dancer in NYC and not LA that the experiences expressed are not fully representative, however, many of the dancers had worked in both LA and NYC and as this is a fairly nomadic group this was not seen as important as interviewing dancers in the two different continents. Thirdly this is a snapshot. Although this is ameliorated to some extent by virtue of the age range interviewed a longitudinal study would yield some

interesting results by following dancers through the process of transition. Given the uncertain and prolonged nature of transition it was not possible to execute this type of study for a PhD. It is however interesting that the connection and sense of difference felt by dancers was the same regardless of age, gender, geographical origin etc.

Contribution to the field and future research

Despite these various limitations this study has made a contribution to our existing knowledge and theoretical understanding of transitions more generally. The atypical and unique case of freelance dancers provides a different perspective from which transitions can be explored as detailed in the previous chapter.

An unexpected outcome of the research is the contribution it has also made to other areas of transition literature such as youth transitions. Whilst the research set out to examine career transition the biographical nature of the data (in order to trace the roots of the dancers' culture through early training) shed light on the experiences of transitions from school to work for this atypical group. As the youth transitions of this group have not been systematically studied previously, this provides a unique contribution to the literature. The school to work transition of dancers does not fall into the categories that youth transitions research generally focus on, namely NEETs and those who take the 'conventional' higher education route (Roberts, 2010). Roberts and others (such as Ballantine, 2012, Simon and Van Houtte, 2012) have also pointed to the focus on qualifications or 'credentialism' in such research. It is evident here that dancers have little regard for government sanctioned qualifications and indeed these are irrelevant to their experience of transition into work and yet they are highly trained, highly skilled workers. Their contribution to the economy is not insignificant as the arts and entertainment industry is one of the few growth industries in the current economic climate, at least in the UK (Patterson, Office for National Statistics, 2012). For this group the social norms, at either end of the duality of the system as defined by Roberts, which form the basis of much public policy are irrelevant. There are

other groups for whom credentialism is also seen as irrelevant, from those in professional sports to the those in service industries such as those in Roberts' study (2010 p.33).

As such this study provides a unique insight into one of the 'missing middle' groups and we see that their transition from school to work is linear in respect of the psychological transition even if structurally it can be anything but. These dancers are highly trained and exceptionally focused, to the point of being obsessive about their career aims. The early exposure to the profession in their early life not only contributes to their understanding of and difficulty with transitioning out of the profession but also prepares them with a deep and complex understanding of the profession prior to entering it. This is a unique position for young people to be in. As we can see from the model presented, the dancers experience of a linear transition into the profession does not concur with the more protracted experiences often referred to in youth or school to work transition research (Roberts, 2010, Furlong et al. 2003, MacDonald et al. 2001). Through this unique group it was possible to develop a new model and provide a new way of thinking about transitions that encompasses the variety of experiences encountered by young people in society as a whole.

Further research could look at the ways in which other professionals face similar difficulties in their transitions, particularly in sports where early training is often essential and the career equally short-lived. Indeed, this research raises a number of questions for future research. In terms of gender, is there a difference in the way that transitions are experienced depending upon gender, although this wasn't found neither was it sought. What happens to those who are not able to become professional dancers? What is the impact on families who have children who require this level of commitment? How does this research relate to others who rely on non-standard work practices? Is it possible or desirable to have a work-life balance if one is a dancer and if not what are the implications for mother/ fatherhood? What about other people who face career changes? Does the model presented work for other transitions such as organisational change,

the experiences of people who emigrate to another country, other similar fields of work etc? It would also be interesting to compare transitions from other countries to see how government funding can help with retraining and how this might impact on transition. Other issues around transferable skills and the attitude of employers regarding the employment of dancers would also yield interesting insights from the other side of the coin.

With the London 2012 Olympic games over and soldiers returning from Afghanistan there is a need for a greater awareness and understanding of the problems facing those who are forced to transition away from their profession at a relatively young age and a need to appreciate what these dedicated, people have to offer in the future.

APPENDIX A

Correct grooming in examinations in accordance with regulations from the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

Barres must be placed parallel to, and close to either the left or right hand wall of the studio. All candidates should be placed in one line on the barre in numerical order.

Primary

Girls – Regulation leotard with chiffon skirt, pink ballet socks, pink satin ballet shoes tied with ribbons. Hair groomed in an appropriate classical style.

Boys – White cap-sleeved leotard, black or navy blue dance shorts, white ballet socks, white shoes with white elastic. Hair combed neatly off the face.

Grade 1 – 4

Girls – Regulations leotard with matching belt, pink ballet socks or pink ballet tights, pink satin ballet shoes tied with ribbons. Hair as above.

Boys – White cap-sleeved leotard, black dance shorts or tights, white socks worn over tights, white leather ballet shoes with white elastic.

Grade 5-6

Girls – Black thin strapped leotard, pink ballet tights, pink satin ballet shoes tied with ribbon. Pink satin pointe shoes with ribbons for grade 6.

Boys – White cap-sleeved or sleeveless leotard, black tights, white socks worn over tights, white leather ballet shoes with white elastic.

Majors

Girls – Black thin strapped leotard with optional short, wrap round chiffon skirt, pink ballet tights, pink satin ballet shoes or soft blocks (compulsory for adv 1 and above) tied with ribbons. Pink satin pointe shoes with ribbons.

Boys – Black or navy blue sleeveless unitard or black or white sleeveless or cap-sleeved leotard with black tights, white socks worn over the tights, white leather ballet shoes with ribbons.

Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD)

Appendix B
Interview Questions / themes

1/ **Why did you start dancing?**

What age did they start?
What training did they receive?
How intense was the training?
With whom did they feel they identified?
(ie was a sense of belonging and group identification tied to locality and economic
status or 'shared biographies' which are not tied to these elements).

2/ **Did you feel a sense of being different and if so in what ways?**
(Gain some clarification on this, how is similarity and difference described, at what
age was it felt?)

3/ **When/ how did you decide to take up dancing as a career?**

4/ **What were your experiences at college?**
Did they socialize with people outside the college environment?
Whilst at college did you think about what you might pursue following a dance
career?

5**/ How did you find the move from college to work?**
Did they feel they were prepared, did they encounter any problems?

6 / **What were/ are your experiences in the profession?**
Have you / did you find it easy to get work?
What did you do supplement your income?

6/ **When did you first start thinking about an alternative career?**
(Or have you thought about it depending on the participant's position)

7/ **Did you encounter any problems leaving the profession?**
What kinds of problems, why they felt they had the problems)

8/ **How did you cope with these problems?**
Did you seek any help from anywhere?

9/ **What are your experiences since leaving the profession?**

Appendix C

Letter to participants / Consent form

Dear

I am PhD student at the University of Leicester and I would like to invite you to participate in some academic research that I'm conducting. The research is about the careers of freelance dancers and how they think and feel about moving on from dance into another career. Participation will take the form of an interview that will take about 45 minutes to an hour, this will be recorded in order to obtain an accurate record. Interviews will be conducted over the phone or face to face at your convenience. The interview is very informal and will ask you to talk openly and honestly about how you came to start dancing, your experiences whilst in training and working and how you would, do or have felt about leaving the profession. Participation is completely confidential and anonymous, should any of your data be used it will be done so under a pseudonym.

Should you choose to participate you can withdraw at any time, before, during or after the interview. You can ask for the recording equipment to be turned off and refuse to answer questions at any time. You are welcome to look over transcripts of your interview to ensure that the data is accurate and you will have full access to the results.
Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the project or myself or if you wish to voice any concerns. If you feel that you'd like to withdraw at a later stage please call me and we can discuss the use of your data, as only selected pieces of your interview would be used.

My details are: My supervisor is:
Heidi Ashton   Dr John Goodwin
CLMS - University of Leicester   CLMS – University of Leicester
7-9 Salisbury Road   7-9 Salisbury Road
Leicester   Leicester
LE1 7QR   LE2 7QR
Tel: 0116 252 5940   Email: jdg3@le.ac.uk
Mob:07768954090
Email: hsa8@le.ac.uk

For your information, there is an organization known as the DCD (Dancers Career Development) who provide practical, emotional and financial support and advice with links to various training and job opportunities. If you have found yourself affected by any of the issues raised in the interview or if you are looking for guidance and information please don't hesitate to contact them and speak to Anja. Of course you are also free to ask questions throughout the interview.

Appendix D

Dancers' ages, gender and country of interview (not origin) by pseudonym

Pseudonym	M / F	NYC / UK	Age
Neo	M	UK	25-30
Adrian	M	NYC	35-40
Ben	M	UK	25-30
Carl	M	UK	30-35
Daniel	M	NYC	35-40
Anna	F	UK	30-35
Beth	F	NYC	25-30
Mr White	M	UK	25-30
Clara	F	UK	35-40
Babs	F	NYC	40+
Sylvie	F	UK	40+
Elle	F	UK	30-35
Eli	M	NYC	25-30
Freya	F	UK	25-30
Grace	F	UK	25-30
Hen	F	NYC	35-40
Frank	M	NYC	20-25
Iris	F	NYC	35-40
Jane	F	UK	25-30
Kim	F	UK	30-35
Max	M	UK	25-30
Liza	F	NYC	35-40
Gary	M	UK	35-40
Mia	F	NYC	20-25
Nala	F	UK	20-25
Odette	F	UK	25-30
Pearl	F	NYC	20-25
Harry	M	NYC	30-35
Ike	M	NYC	40 +
Questa	F	NYC	25-30
Ria	F	UK	25-30
Suzie	F	UK	30-35
Joe	M	UK	25-30
Tilly	F	NYC	35-40
Darcy	F	UK	40+

Kyle	M	NYC	35-30
Leroy	M	NYC	40+
Velma	F	NYC	35-40
Wren	F	NYC	20-25
Xia	F	UK	30-35
Yildis	F	UK	25-30
Luke	M	UK	25-30
Zena	F	UK	35-40
Uma	F	NYC	35-40

M= 16   UK = 24   M = 8   F= 16
F = 27   USA = 19   M = 8   F= 11

N = 43

APPENDIX E

Examples of Marking Schemes for Imperial Ballet Syllabi (omitting grades 4-6)

Grades 1, 2 & 3

TECHNIQUE	MARKS (MAX)
Barre	10
Port de Bras throughout the examination	10
Adage	10
Allegro	10
Co-ordination of movement	10
Unit Total	50
PRESENTATION, MUSICALITY AND RESPONSE	
Dance/ Variation	10
Performance/ Artistry	10
Rhythmic Awareness and quality of Movement	10
Sense of Timing and Music Section	10
Response to free work, syllabus knowledge and theory	10
Unit Total	50
TOTAL	100

Intermediate, Advanced 1 & Advanced 2 (Vocational Graded Examinations)

TECHNIQUE	MARKS (MAX)
Barre and Centre Practice	10
Port de Bras throughout the examination	10
Adage	10
Pirouettes	10
Allegro	10
Batterie	10
Pointe work / boys virtuosity	10
Unit Total	70
PRESENTATION, MUSICALITY AND RESPONSE	
Variation	10
Artistry and Musicality	10
Approach to free work, syllabus knowledge and theory	10
Unit Total	30
TOTAL	100

Examples of Marking Schemes for Modern Theatre Dance (omitting grades 3-6)

Grades 1 & 2

TECHNIQUE	MARKS (MAX)
Poise and Stance	10
Body Control and co-ordination	10
Line and Precision	10
Use of Space	10
Unit Total	40
RHYTHM	
Rhythm Section	10
Quality of Movement & Musical Interpretation	10
Unit Total	20
PRESENTATION, RESPONSE & SYLLABUS KNOWLEDGE	
Response and knowledge of Syllabus	10
Sense of Performance	10
Set Amalgamation	10
Dance	10
Unit Total	40
TOTAL	100

Intermediate, Advanced 1 & Advanced 2 (Vocational Graded Examinations)

TECHNIQUE	MARKS (MAX)
Limbering	10
Line and Style	10
Dance Movements	10
Use of Space	10
Unit Total	40
RHYTHM	
Rhythm	10
Response and Syllabus Knowledge	10
Unit Total	20
PRESENTATION, RESPONSE & SYLLABUS KNOWLEDGE	
Quality of Performance	10
Sense of Performance	10
Set Amalgamation	10
Dance	10
Unit Total	40
TOTAL	100

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