



A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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COMMUNITY-BASED CREATIVE DANCE  
FOR ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR  
FEELINGS OF SOCIAL WELLBEING

SUE OLIVER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY

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In memory of my parents  
Peter and Esther Brotherstone

## Abstract

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The thesis contextualises creative dance as art in a community setting. The participants were teenage members of a community-run creative dance company. The aim was to explore any links young people make between their creative dance experience in a community class and their feelings of social well-being.

The literature gives a brief historical overview of dance as a performing art and of the nature of aesthetics and creativity. It considers the art of dance as a form of communication, and the conditions for creativity to flourish. It looks at Bourdieu's (2005) theory of 'habitus' and 'field' in understanding the social experience which the dancers derived through creative dance. Consideration is given to theories and accounts of adolescent development and how community interaction can affect the dancers' feelings of social wellbeing.

The methodological approach is hermeneutic phenomenology, with influences from ethnomethodology and social constructionism. The ontological principle is that personal meaning is socially constructed. Epistemologically the study is informed by the belief that knowledge is generated through the creative dance experience.

The main data collection method was semi-structured interviews with the dancers (n=10), supported by observation of dance classes (n=7; filmed: n=4), group discussions (n=3) and graffiti walls (n=8, completed by the dancers).

The data were organised and analysed thematically using a method of presentation inspired by Bourdieu's concept of a 'social trajectory' - a lifetime journey of social encounters - offering headings under which the data were loosely organised. Selected observations are presented on DVD. The responses suggested a dance 'journey' from preparation to performance, which allowed further organisation of data. The emergent themes included the dancers' motivation for dancing, their feelings about the creative process, experiences of social interaction and of taking control of one's own identity, through all the stages of experimenting with movement, refining the dances and performing.

The main findings are: the dancers attached importance to company membership because it offered a means to clarifying self-identity through physical and artistic endeavour; the creative dance context gave them freedom to explore their movement capabilities and to interact socially, and thus gave them a means of negotiating their 'habitus', i.e. adopting and adjusting social norms and values on their own terms. Performing was a celebration of achievement and confirmation of identity as a dancer.

The study contributes to the understanding of how adolescents make sense of their identity in their social context through their creative dance experience and how that influences their feelings of social wellbeing.

Keywords: adolescents, community, creative dance, social wellbeing

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## **Glossary**

I offer the following descriptions of key terms in this study, not as definitive meanings but as a way for the reader to understand how I have used them.

Creative dance: non-syllabus dance as art, in which participants compose their own dances, using a variety of stimuli such as music, dance techniques (e.g. contemporary dance), emotions and personal experiences.

Community: the social field of the dancers which is largely contained within the geographical area where the study was carried out, i.e. the institutions which shape them socially, e.g. family and school, and individuals with whom they interact e.g. peers at school and in the dance class.

Community dance: dance which takes place outside the formal education sector, including social and syllabus-based dance, as well as creative dance.

Culture: the factors influencing the lifestyle of the majority of residents in the area where the study was carried out. These reflect the geography and history of the area and fulfil their material, spiritual, aesthetic and artistic needs.

Habitus (Bourdieu 2005): the layer of internalised norms and values which both protect and restrict the individual within their own community.

Social wellbeing: distinct from physical health and wellbeing, and extending beyond mental or emotional wellbeing, to include the dancers' perception of their social relationships; recognised by engagement with the creative dance process, co-operation and interaction with peers and the dancers' feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence which they were willing to share with me for the purpose of the research.

## **Clarification of Reference**

To ensure the anonymity of the local authority in which the research was conducted, the references to documents produced by it, which I have quoted, are incomplete in the Reference Section.

### 1.1 The background to the research

My background in community-based creative dance spans over twenty years of teaching and choreographing community groups of all ages. A school teacher by profession, I made the transition to community arts as a result of my contact with a thoroughly inspiring and original-thinking community project worker who shook me out of my safe, professional groove with restricted creative vision, by inviting me to embrace a community art form which was still in embryonic form in the UK at that time, at least compared with the USA. Over the years, I have observed the potential of creative dance for challenging dancers to explore their own facility for creativity and push their boundaries to new dimensions, giving them cause to re-evaluate their own self-image and confidence.

This research emanates from my M.Phil. thesis (2004) on creative dance for children aged between eight and twelve, which revealed such classes to be a source of 'fun'. This aroused my curiosity as to the identity of the feel-good factor which can be derived from creative dance, and how it can contribute to the feeling of wellbeing which participants take back into the community. As matters of community wellbeing have gained prominence in the media and Scottish cultural policy, the time seemed right to explore the concept in more depth. At the inception of this piece of research, The Scottish Parliament Minister for Education and Young People endorsed the findings of the Report of the Physical Education Review Group (June 2004) that "a healthy lifestyle supports physical, social and emotional wellbeing" (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2004), and Voluntary Arts Network (2004) reminds readers of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts ... (and) the development of our personality and the maintaining of our personal dignity is dependent upon involvement in the community in which we live ... These things so vital to our well being are thus totally dependent on having cultural rights ... (Voluntary Arts Network, Article 27 December 2004)

The term encompasses physical and mental wellbeing inasmuch as they contribute to a general sense of positive or negative feelings about oneself in one's social and cultural environment. On a personal level, self image and self esteem may be enhanced by 'social capital', a term defined by Harris and Hastings (2006) among others, as the extent of one's social network and relationships. These can be evaluated in terms of effective interaction and the sense of belonging which an individual might feel in her/his community. The resulting social awareness of self as a functioning being in society is an indicator of social wellbeing, and may be manifested, in the case of my research, through the medium of creative dance. The work of Bourdieu (1993, 2003, 2005) underpins the formation of my model of the concept, in determining how one perceives oneself in the immediate social circle as well as in the wider community. From personal and professional experience, I do not perceive social wellbeing as a static state, but one which is being constantly shaped by the people and circumstances in which we find ourselves, and it therefore causes the individual to engage in a reflexive process of making judgements about the position he / she occupies in relation to these other factors.

In this thesis, as a development from my previous work with younger children, I focus on how teenage participants in a community-based creative dance company perceive their art form as a means of experiencing social wellbeing, encompassing the various factors found in these sources, and how it might influence their lives outwith the dance class. This new study highlights culture and community-based dance as art and their implications for social wellbeing, in a way which my M.Phil. study did not. Moreover, it is an explorative study, requiring a very different methodology to gain the depth of understanding which I sought.

My intention in this chapter is to give the reader a glimpse of the stages I have encountered in the course of conducting and writing up this thesis. Firstly I describe the principles of government provision for community arts including dance and how that led to my decision to undertake my study. I then describe the nature of the company, its membership and its purpose. Theories from sociology and anthropology which have influenced the direction of my research are acknowledged. Of these, Bourdieu (1990, 1993, 2005) has had the most significant impact in shaping my work. I have included a synopsis of the chapters to give readers an understanding of how the research 'story' unfolds. Recognising the breadth of

interpretations which can be applied to the main terms, “creative dance”, “community” and “wellbeing”, one of the first tasks was to compile a glossary clarifying the way they have been applied to this study. I have included it later in this chapter.

## **1.2 Setting the Scene**

### **1.2.1 The Political Context**

The current framework for provision of community-based creative dance has been shaped by the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) which has had a dedicated dance department since 2000. Dance currently has a smaller slice of their budget than any of the other arts but it still maintains its commitment to community dance through its ‘Dance Artists in Residence’ programme and its funding of professional touring companies who teach in the communities where they are performing. SAC believe that this will best enable them to meet their aims for dance:

- Ensuring that people all over Scotland have the chance to enjoy and experience dance;
- Ensuring that people of all ages and abilities have the opportunity to learn and participate in dance ... (Scottish Arts Council 2008)

At the time of writing, the present Culture Minister in the Scottish Parliament has increased arts funding in the belief that

a cultural education can help young and older people alike to achieve their potential and maximise their creativity. (Scottish Executive 2008: 10)

The trend being advocated in the Draft Culture (Scotland) Bill (2006) was for arts provision to be a devolved responsibility of local government with support from voluntary bodies. Fiona Campbell, Chief Officer of Voluntary Arts Scotland, notes that this was an ideal opportunity for individuals to seize the initiative in solving their own problems in arts and cultural matters instead of waiting for others to act:

...culture resides at the level of the individual. With cultural rights hopefully enshrined in Scottish legislation, each citizen of Scotland will be further enabled to take responsibility for their own creative expression, supported by their government. (Campbell 2005: 19)

The bill was formulated as a result of the Scottish Executive (2006) Report, "Scotland's Culture", the result of three years' collaboration of the Cultural Commission, group of individuals appointed by the Scottish Executive in 2003 on grounds of their relevance to the arts and cultural sectors in Scotland.

### 1.2.2 The Starting-Point for the Study

Against this background a community dance company, to which I refer as Southern Youth Dance, came into existence. It was first instigated many years prior to my study by a council-employed project worker to give young people the opportunity to create and perform their own dances for the experience of exercising their creative potential and the feeling of achievement they gained from performing. This was community 'dance as art', as recognised by Smith-Autard (1994: 43-45), to include aesthetic and cultural education. By the time my research took place, there were other creative dance classes available to children and teenagers in the area, and Southern Youth Dance had evolved into a more specialised, performance-led company, for which potential members had to audition. Success, however, was achieved not only on grounds of dance ability but also on attitude and motivation so the ethos of accessibility for all was not totally abandoned. The aim was not to make it elite, even if it were sometimes perceived that way. Instead, the aim was to steer the dancers towards their full potential as creative dance artists and performers. Through selective membership there was greater parity in their dancing ability, which enabled their teacher to stretch their technical and creative powers. I wanted to find out what this process meant to them as individuals – how it made them feel to be members of the group, to be inspired by their engagement with the physicality of dance to create their own dances and perform them. I was keen to learn whether and how it contributed to their feelings of wellbeing. However, this was not about their physical health. In view of my own area of specialism (teaching and community dance, with a sociology background), it was appropriate to concentrate on *social* wellbeing, rather than *physical* health and wellbeing. I use the

word 'social', to encompass non-physical aspects of their lives which might affect their creative output and social interaction, including the dancers' emotions and self-confidence. This is primarily a sociocultural study, the aim being:

**To explore links young people make between their creative dance experience in a community class, and feelings of social wellbeing.**

In this way, I aim to fill a perceived gap in existing knowledge of the field. I have found phenomenological research pertaining to professional dancers' perceptions of self (e.g. Thomas 2003; Tate 2007) and feelings of 'flow', defined by Csikszentmihalyi (2002) as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (p.4), which enhances emotional wellbeing. I have found research concerning identity, peer relations and self-image among young people (e.g. Critien and Ollis 2006) but have been unable to find research about how young dancers can learn about themselves through creative dance and how that contributes to their personal feelings of social wellbeing in a wider context. I believe that my study complements the existing research by giving insight into how the adolescent dancers who participated used the dance experience to help mould their self-image and enhance their self-confidence in a way which impinges on their lives beyond the confines of the class.

### 1.2.3 Creative Dance

Creative dance in this context is not syllabus-based. My definition is consistent with those of educational documents, such as those of SOED (1992) and Development Education Association (September 2006), which define it as it applies to the formal education context, and also as it is commonly defined, in my experience, by dance artists working in communities. My use of the term excludes social dance, e.g. ballroom or disco dancing, which, arguably, are expressive of particular cultural aesthetics and are performed for reasons of interacting with other people in one's social network. Also excluded are ethnic and historical dance forms, except where they might provide the stimulus for the development of dance as art, as with the 'Webdance' project, conceived and reported by Karkou et al (2008).



In my experience, the terms 'creative dance' and 'community dance' are often treated as being synonymous in current vocational dance journals. Houston (2005: 170), for example, quotes sources in "Animated", the journal of the Foundation for Community Dance (FCD), who speak of the "transforming" powers of 'community dance', implying that this refers to creative dance as opposed to other technique-based dance opportunities. Yet there is a rich history of social, technique-based dance in communities all over Scotland, as documented by Henderson (1980) and Casciani (1994). While possibly all types of community dance may be beneficial to the people who participate in them, the acts of creating dance and sharing the outcome of the effort are portrayed by FCD in Houston's article to be the root of a potentially life-enhancing experience.

In the course of the study, I aim to isolate the unique properties of creative dance as opposed to other art forms for promoting social wellbeing. These include the physical engagement of the dancers with the creative task, raising their awareness of the embodied experience and how it makes them feel about themselves as creative artists and as players in the social context of the class. The label 'creative dance', in my study, differs from Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMP) (Karkou and Sanderson 2001) in that its focus is creating art and not at all to do with entering into a therapist – client relationship. Any therapeutic benefit that the dancers might claim to feel is coincidental.

Creative dance, as I have used it, is art inasmuch as its creators have no functional intention for it other than to perform it as art, in keeping with the definitions of dance as art offered by Langer (1953) and Best (1985) among others. It is not subject to the judgement of any regulatory body. It is sufficient that the dancers, being the artists, consider it art. They might borrow from any dance genre in the creation of their dances, and they will not necessarily perform in front of an audience other than their peers. In the case of the dance classes in this study, the greatest influences were contemporary and hip-hop, and occasionally a more traditional form if it fitted with the stimulus for the dance and if the dancer/choreographer had experience of it and could incorporate it safely. The teacher's role was to extend and refine the dancers' movement vocabulary and to ensure safe practice without restricting creativity. Each dance is a complete entity, a unique piece of art.

The study explores the participants' creative dance experience through description and interpretation of their feelings about their dancing in relation to their functioning as social beings. It seeks to achieve a deeper understanding of these experiences. The underlying assumption is that personal meaning is socially constructed (the ontological principle), and that is informed by the belief that knowledge is generated through the dance experience (the epistemological position). The participants and researcher are involved - the participants as dancers in the company and co-researchers to a certain degree, and the researcher as participant observer.

#### 1.2.4 The Participants and the Class

My research is based on a group of adolescent community dancers, most of whom had successfully auditioned to be members of a council-funded dance company, which I will call Southern Youth Dance, and for whom permission had been gained to take part in the study. Their ages ranged from "almost thirteen" (the response given by some of the younger members, to the question of how old they were) to nineteen years. At the time of data collection, the group comprised twenty teenage girls (there were boys formerly, and have been since). They met once a week in council-owned premises in the county town, and were taught by Council's Dance Artist in Residence. The group performed two or three times a year, either in the local council-run theatre or in community and school halls. Their dance work was broadly contemporary and hip-hop in nature, and was also influenced by tutors from guest companies performing locally, who sometimes taught parts of their repertoire to the group. While often associated with the dancer, Martha Graham, who was a pioneer of American modern dance, 'contemporary' dance literally means 'dance of our time'. It encompasses many different techniques founded by dance artists who have strived to break away from convention and invent a new form of dance. The chronological development of dance art includes classical ballet, modern and post-modern dance, 'new' and modernist dance (Mackrell 1992; Anderson 1997). All are highly codified dance forms.

Some of the Southern Youth Dancers attended other dance classes, mainly ballet and highland dancing, and some took part in extra-curricular dance at school, but for a significant number, Southern Youth Dance was their only dance experience. In

addition to this dance class, most members of the group participated in sports, predominantly hockey, but also football, and in the summer, tennis and athletics.

I use the term, 'class' with caution because it suggests a didactic teaching situation with limited scope for individual creativity, which one would expect in a technique class like ballet or jazz dance. However, the dancers themselves had no issue with calling these sessions 'classes' because they were indeed learning, sometimes directly from their teacher, Diane, at other times from peers, and, importantly for this type of class, through experimenting with their own personal range of movement.

The dancers had the opportunity to create their own dances as they gained experience in various techniques, predominantly contemporary dance. These young people had chosen dance as their creative medium as opposed to drama, music or visual art, all of which were available in the community. The group was unique inasmuch as similar groups exist in other local authority areas, but their catchment areas are not necessarily similar to this one culturally. Likewise, there are other adolescents' creative dance groups within the local authority area, but membership was by free choice, not by audition. Members might bring a different agenda to participation in these classes, other than their love of creative dance, e.g. more immediate social influences, location and time of classes. By contrast, Southern Youth Dance members travelled from all over the local authority area to meet at a central location.

### 1.2.5 The Community and Culture

I use the term, 'community' mainly in a social sense, but the socially-determined community in my study also happens to be a geographically bound one: it is a rural area within commuting distance of Edinburgh, the capital city and main centre for arts in south-east Scotland, including the home of Dance Base, the National Centre for Dance in Scotland. Definitions of 'community' are addressed in Chapter 2. The community's diverse relief, location and principle modes of employment ensure that it has a broad social spectrum represented in its population. The class at the centre of the study could also be considered as a section of Scotland's dance community in general, but that is of secondary importance to the community in which the dancers live and where they have their support structure, i.e. Bourdieu's (1990) concept of

'field'. This is the seat of the cultural influences to which they are subject through school or work and social interaction.

Kirkwood (1990) comments on the human desire for "organic community", enabling people to seek

social wholeness, and mutuality and inter-relatedness, as opposed to the alienated, fragmented, antagonistic social world of daily experience. (Kirkwood 1990: 148)

Echoing this apparent need to interweave self and community, Adkins (2004: 196) acknowledges the "transposable character" of Bourdieu's subjective 'habitus' and objective 'field' in accounting for how people adjust to social change in their communities – using critical reflexivity to shape their perception of their place in a community.

What binds the people in a community together is a common culture (Eisner 2002). Two opposing views of culture are:

- a) that it is the structure of shared values, beliefs and behaviour which unites a group of people (Csikszentmihalyi 2002), and
- b) that it refers to highly valued objects and outcomes of specialist knowledge, beyond that which is necessary for everyday living, e.g. 'high' arts (Frow 1995), and Bourdieu's (1993) concept of 'cultural capital'.

For my purpose, I refer to 'culture' as the main determinants of lifestyle of the majority of the residents in the area studied, which fulfil their material, spiritual and emotional needs and are, broadly speaking, met within the social frameworks which equate to Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'field'. These lifestyle factors include elements which are rooted in the geographical and historical features of the area, as well as societal and global influences conveyed through social networks and mass media. Thomas (2003) adopts the constructionist view that culture is a major force in shaping and conditioning the body, with reference to Bourdieu and Foucault among others.

### 1.3 Theoretical Underpinning

A major influence in my research has been the work of Bourdieu (1993, 2005), inasmuch as his concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' have underpinned the study and I have used his concept of 'social trajectory' as a model to shape it as I will explain in Chapter 3. The idea of life being a journey full of social encounters resonated with the adoption of the community dance class as a microcosm of the social milieu, where interaction and shared experiences of creating art are the key to forming relationships and learning about oneself through the physicality of dance. Just as social circumstances condition the individual to think and act in a particular way, some dance classes could reinforce the conditioning, but this creative dance class offers the dancers the opportunity to escape restrictive influences and experiment with the fruits of their own imagination. Whether, and to what extent, they take the opportunity, will be discussed in the findings of this thesis (see Chapter 4). My study aims to shed light on how this personal input in a socially interactive environment promotes a sense of wellbeing and achievement en route to identifying what makes it satisfying for the dancers. Csikszentmihalyi (2002:25) examines the positive emotional experience as a "phenomenological model of consciousness based on information theory", where consciousness is "self-directed" (2002:23). For example, the response to hunger is to eat, but he maintains that this is genetic programming to ensure the survival of the species. The development of consciousness, he believes, enables human beings to have reflexive thoughts which they can manipulate, and see themselves as social beings co-existing with others. One can extrapolate from that, that the need to experience enjoyment and feel good about oneself socially is also necessary for the survival of individuals in society, and that the experience has implications for feelings of social wellbeing?

Cultural conditioning of the body has taken place in response to human needs, probably since human beings became social animals. Williams and Bendelow (1998: 11-16) comment on the treatment of the body in a historical context, with reference to the work of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and others contributing to the understanding of how the body has been perceived, and physically influenced by conditions imposed upon it by society, in response to life style in an industrial age. These accounts which Williams and Bendelow (1998) give, present a picture of bodies shaped, and minds trapped, by social and economic restraints in an

industrial age, where human labour was cheap. The states of physical and spiritual being among the working class were estranged by the demands of the dominant capitalists, and their aesthetic needs were not recognised. For Weber, the dominant 'Protestant ethic' severely limited the development of the notion of any aesthetic pursuit and leisure time, and coupled with the spirit of capitalism, ensured the reinforcement of cultural asceticism for the working classes at least, in industrial society. By contrast, Laban celebrated the wide range of movement used by the rural peasantry, in his accounts of folk dance on his "dance farm" (1976: 90), while later, in England, he studied and documented the movement patterns of industrial workers (1976), which bore greater resemblance to Weber's vision of restrictive, capitalist-dominated work routine. Even emotions, Williams and Bendelow (1998: 15) state, were subject to positivist forces, in an age when science was flourishing.

Anthropologists such as Royce (1980) and Polhemus (1998) document the importance of behaviour learned through imitation in the human socialisation process. The sociological significance of movement observation is that it produces socially conditioned interpretations. My research seeks to understand how dancers respond to the creative tasks set by their teacher, and whether it modifies their perception of themselves and their social integration in the community, given that they are conditioned by their social environment. The study is informed by the principles of phenomenology, as founded by Husserl (1931, 1970), and developed in its hermeneutic form by Heidegger (1971, 1996). The word, 'hermeneutics', from Hermes the messenger in Greek mythology (Sandywell 1998: 6), conveys the sense of responsibility for accurate interpretation of information, where that is couched in individuals' modes of expression. The researcher – the 'messenger' between respondents and potential readers – has to acknowledge the shared basis for understanding. Where that basis depends on shared experience and intuition, the researcher is responsible for declaring her/his interests, as they colour the meaning being conveyed. 'Interpretation' is a key word: Gadamer (1975) asserts that meaning emerges through interpretation: inevitably there is a degree of subjectivity about it. McNamara (1999) believes that it is this subjectivity which makes the art of dance such a suitable subject for hermeneutic phenomenological study.

On analysis, the data will reveal the extent to which the habitus of the dancers coincide or differ. Having equal opportunity does not preclude the possibility of differing peer group aspirations, irrespective of the dancers' expectations, and this could limit, or enhance, ultimate achievement. Bourdieu, as Fowler (2000: 33,34) explains, considered a person's habitus, i.e. "social positioning" to be predetermined, whereas Fowler herself quotes examples where this is not the case, e.g. where male/female stereotypes are broken in our society. It is not the purpose of my thesis to explore the conditions which bring about the interchangeability (or otherwise) of one's habitus, but only to bear it in mind when examining the data, noting whether, and to what extent, factors outside the dance class restrict or facilitate the freedom of creative thinking and action.

In addition to influencing one's destiny in terms of aspirations, habitus affects economic security, according to Reay (2000) and hence creates the conditions for emotional wellbeing to flourish or not. Matters of economic security were beyond the scope of this research, but I sought to understand the dancers' perceptions of their own social positioning, shaped at least partly by the level of encouragement they receive from their peers and families. Remembering that support structure, I could understand more about their emotional wellbeing, and hoped to be able to reach informed conclusions about their social wellbeing.

#### **1.4 Overview of Chapters**

Chapter 2, the literature review, has five sections. The first concerns the production of dance as art, as opposed to any other dance form, e.g. social or ethnic. I have outlined some main points of historical development in contemporary dance and addressed its progression from an elitist, to an accessible art form, and its significance as a spectator art as well as a performing art in popular culture. I have included some important issues concerning the concepts of art and aesthetics with reference to Best (1985) and McFee (1999). Dance art as a form of communication recognises the acceptance of embodied knowledge as an alternative form of 'text', which hints at a post-structuralist understanding of how information can be transmitted. It is argued that the case for non-verbal communication is well entrenched in all forms of dance art, with special significance for it in community contexts. The cognitive processes of turning a stimulus into a dance output are

considered, as is the place of the emotional content in dance. Finally, the conditions which give rise to creativity are reviewed, starting with the cognitive aspect, with reference to Best (1985, 1999), Gardner (1993, 1999) and Robinson (2001) among others, linking with the previous section, and progressing to the social conditions which allow creativity to flourish. Relevant recent research is reviewed.

The subsequent sections in Chapter 2 look at the place of dance art as a personal and social activity as described below.

Bourdieu's (1993, 2005) concepts of 'habitus', 'field' and 'social trajectory' are of paramount importance to the study. The terms are defined and investigated for their propensity to impose restrictions on an individual's ability to shape their own self-image. A major premise in the research is that given the chance to explore individual creativity, one is empowered to influence one's own habitus, i.e. to negotiate the terms of social compliance within parameters defined by family, the community and society in general. The idea of life following a social trajectory, or pathway, as one proceeds through life seemed an ideal model for framing the data.

A section is devoted to adolescent development and the factors which influence it with reference to Damon and Hart (1991), Gardner (1993, 1999) and Moshman (1999) among others. These include how constructs of self are formed through acquisition of positive and negative self-esteem, and interdependence and social interaction with peers. The role of community interaction and belonging is discussed in relation to how it affects self-image and confidence. Factors contributing to feelings of wellbeing are discussed with particular reference to the work of Beecher (2005) and Harris and Hastings (2005). Current research is also examined for relevance. Finally in Chapter 2, I discuss the ways in which individuals can take control of how they project themselves in their community (or communities) to the benefit of their sense of social wellbeing.

Chapter 3 describes my ontological position, my relationship with the research topic and the factors which combine to justify my chosen methodology. Everyone's individual opinion, feelings and attitudes are relevant, but all individuals belong to social groups – no-one normally exists in isolation, so individual perceptions are moulded by social encounters and give the individual a social identity (Augustinos



and Walker 1995). Thus the idea of a totally relativist position is unsustainable – members of a given community are all subject to the same social conditioning which modifies how they think and act. These restrictions therefore limit the choice of acceptable behaviour. This limiting factor is discussed in Chapter 3. Social representation therefore, as described by Augoustinos and Walker (1995) accounts for the feelings that arise from group membership. My approach to data analysis is described, based on the work of Bourdieu (2005), whose concept of a ‘social trajectory’ became a key one for providing a way of viewing the data in relation to my research aim. Issues of ethics and establishing trustworthiness are also discussed.

The findings and discussion were the topics of Chapter 4, in which I interpreted the data in the Bourdieu-inspired framework. My own prior knowledge of the subject helped to shape my approach and allowed me to reach a depth of understanding which I believe would have been unattainable without it.

My final chapter is an opportunity to reflect on the research process and how my study aim has been realised. I also consider the implications of the study for future application to community-based creative dance classes and suggest areas of possible further research.

## **1.5 Using the First Person**

The language we use in qualitative research has to be equally accessible by researcher, participants and readers. Empathy and shared understanding are of paramount importance if there is to be any value in the research, especially in this case where the methodology is influenced by the work of Gadamer (1975), whose central premise for hermeneutic phenomenology lies in the importance of language (be it spoken, written or movement vocabulary) to interpret and communicate meaning.

The use of the first person in many types of qualitative research studies is widely accepted (e.g. Parviainen 1999, Etherington 2004). As a reflexive researcher, I was immersed in the process along with the participants, unlike a quantitative, detached researcher. The subject matter, creative dance, is my specialist discipline and what

I learned from the participants enriched my understanding of the art. Likewise my experience of creative dance inevitably coloured my perception of what the participants told me and showed me in their dances, as explained in Chapter 3. My presence in the dance classes was by negotiation, so at all times I felt that the status of researcher and that of dancer were equal and that my purpose and methods were as transparent as possible. As Etherington (2004) explains it,

Feminist research approaches ... lower the barrier between researcher and researched, and allow both sides to be seen and understood for who they were and what influenced them. This meant that researchers had to take responsibility for their views, using the first person pronoun, 'I', thus losing the security of the anonymous third person ... (Etherington 2004:27)

Writing in the first person therefore brought me closer to the phenomenon I was studying.

## **1.6 Summary**

To this point, I have described my background in creative dance and outlined the political and community structure within which my research takes place. I have explained why I felt compelled to do the research, and how I could best approach the task. Bourdieu's (1990, 1993, 2005) influence has been acknowledged in this respect. Moreover, my own position as an informed participant observer is acknowledged as being a vital component in defining my methodology. My outline of the chapters is intended to show the thread of development to the reader and while this piece of research is inevitably finite, it ends with pointers for the future.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, echoes the stages which guide the thesis as a whole.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

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### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the main themes regarding dance as an artistic and aesthetic experience and its potential role in the development of young people in our western society. Under the subheadings, I consider the nature of dance as art in our culture, how cultural influences impinge upon the body, how we use it and what it says about us as people. I look at the role which adolescent development plays in personal understanding and social interaction, and to what extent an individual can take responsibility for her / his own experience of wellbeing. I also look at some recent debates on the interface between individual and society, as experienced somatically through the art of dance. Consequently, the subsections are:

- Dance as art
- Moulding the social body
- Adolescent development
- Interaction in the community
- Taking charge of social wellbeing.

I looked for comparable research in dance, arts and education journals, and conducted online searches through thesis indexes to find how other researchers had tackled such subjective topics as understanding individual experience of art and creativity, and how the art context contributes to a greater sense of self identity and fulfilment. Additionally, I consulted the websites of the policy-makers – international, national and local – to gain up-to-date information on current thinking behind the policies and their implementation. The following table outlines my search strategy for relevant articles and research papers. Where there was overlap in the articles yielded by different databases, e.g. with Medline, PsycINFO and the British Nursing Index, only one source is listed. Some of the articles listed in the former two were relevant to the Methodology, rather than the literature review.

Table 2.1: Literature Search Strategy

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| KEYWORDS AND PHRASES | Creative dance, community dance, contemporary dance, dance as art, dance, creative arts, community arts, arts, community, social, social capital, society, Bourdieu, habitus, adolescent (-ce), identity, self-esteem, fulfilment, social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, wellbeing, physicality in dance, kinaesthetics |
|----------------------|--|

Relevant keywords were selected from the list as search terms for each database.

| DATABASES                                       | JOURNALS                                    | ARTICLES / THESES   |
|---|---|---|
| Index of Theses                                 |   | Williams, S. (1989)<br>Beecher, O. (2005)                     |
| Sociological Abstracts                          | Journal of Youth Studies                    | Riley, S. and Cahill, S. (2005)                               |
| Arts and Humanities Citation Index              | Dance Research                              | Thomas, H. (2001)<br>Morris, G. (2001)                        |
|   | British Journal of Aesthetics               | Carr, D. (1997)   |
|   | Dance Research Journal                      | Stinson, S. (1997)<br>Welsh, T. (1999)<br>Edsall, M.E. (2005) |
|   | Contemporary Theatre Review                 | Alderson, E. (1997)   |
| International Bibliography of Theatre and Dance | Journal of Aesthetics                       | Fleming, M. (2006)  |
|   | Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy   | Engel (2008b)   |
|   | Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society | Foreman-Wernet, L. and Dervin, B. (2005)                      |
|   | Contemporary Theatre Review                 | Okwori, J. Z. (2002)  |
|   | The Drama Review                            | Harding, F. (1999)  |
| British Humanities Index                        | British Journal of Sociology                | Prior, N. (2000)  |
|   | British Journal of Sociology of Education   | Hughes, C. (2007)   |
| British Nursing Index                           | Qualitative Health Research                 | Smith, S. and Lloyd, R. (2006)<br>Morse, J. (1999)            |

|  |                             |  |
|--|-----------------------------|--|
| PsycINFO   |                             | Tate (2007)  |
| British Education Index  | Research in Drama Education | Roper, B. and Davis, D. (2000)   |
|  | Educational Researcher      | Barone, T. (2001)  |
|  | Community Education         | Shue, L.L. and Beck, C.S. (2001)   |
|  | Children and Society        | Cockburn, T. (2007)  |
|  | Research in Dance Education | Karkou, V. and Sanderson, P. (2000)<br>Bannon F. (2004)<br>Best, D. (2004)<br>Hefferon, K. and Ollis, S. (2006)<br>Minton, S. (2007)<br>Doughty et al (2008) |
| World Wide Web search engine (Google)                            |                             | UNESCO<br>Scottish Parliament<br>Scottish Executive<br>__ Council<br>Wright (1998)<br>Reynolds et al (2008)<br>McKechnie et al (2008)                        |
| Queen Margaret University Learning Resource Centre <i>I-Link</i> |                             | Gordon and Grant (1997)<br>Ness, S. (2004) In:<br>Thomas, H. and Ahmed, J. (eds).<br>Adams, G.; Berzonsky, M.D.(eds) (2003)                                  |
| Queen Margaret University Learning Resource Centre <i>ebrary</i> | Journal of Dance Education  | Giguere, M. (2006)<br>Lobel, E. and Brodie, J. 2006<br>Beghetto and Kaufman 2007   |
| Forum: Qualitative Social Research (electronic journal)          |                             | Day, E. (2002)<br>Engel, L. (2008a)  |

Not all items were found through online databases. I subscribe to some of the sources personally (Research in Dance Education, Dance UK News and Animated), while other journals were known to me and easily available on the library shelves, e.g. Sociology and the British Journal of Sociology, so only a sample of those consulted appears in the table. I used various university library web pages to

explore holdings of relevant theses and dissertations. At the time of writing, many of these have been altered or made exclusive to password holders.

## **2.2 Dance as art**

In this section, I refer to some significant developments in dance as art since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which have shaped the form it takes in community programmes. I also visit the debate about the difference between art and aesthetics and I discuss dance as a means of communication. The section is concluded with some thought as to what conditions are necessary to stimulate creativity in dance.

### **2.2.1 The development of dance as art, and implications for community-based creative dance**

Dance as art in a community policy context in Scotland has only raised its profile in the past three decades approximately, since the publication of the Alexander Report (1977), which overhauled community education. In my experience, most community dance which falls into the category of 'dance as art' adopts the contemporary dance idiom, avoiding highly codified techniques and so increasing accessibility by a greater number of people. In my experience, much of the inspiration for it comes from touring dance companies and artists.

Williams (1989), Anderson (1997), Rowell (2000) and Oliver (2004), among others, address the historical developments in dance as a performance art in twentieth century UK, which have shaped contemporary dance and influenced its adoption by community dance groups.

Williams (1989) discusses the twentieth century trends in performance dance, which gave dancers an increasingly wide choice of techniques, allowing individual creativity, personal experimentation and expressivity an increasing degree of freedom, manifesting themselves in the various contemporary techniques of the present day. Like Anderson (1997), she traces a line of development of the modern dance movement from Isadora Duncan, via the Denishawn school, to Martha Graham, Mary Wigman, Merce Cunningham, and the postmodernists of the 1960s

e.g. Yvonne Rainer, Meredith Monk and Trisha Brown. Her description resonates with Thomas's view (2001: 32) that, whereas dance in the nineteenth century was "feminised", with ballerinas in classical mode enjoying elite status, dance in the twentieth century became "feminist", where a wide range of choreographers and dancers such as those mentioned above, claimed the right to have their techniques taken seriously as art. These were radical departures from the set movement repertoire classical ballet, introducing new movement vocabulary, new artistic demands on the performers and sometimes new performance sites: these included novel or more intimate spaces such as studios where the audience sat around the perimeter. Minimalist sets replaced the sumptuous scenery of the romantic ballets, and costumes in some cases took the place of the abandoned pointe shoes as an integral part of the dance, for example, in Martha Graham's "Lamentation" (1930). Graham (1993) writes:

*Lamentation*, my dance of 1930, is a solo piece in which I wear a long tube of material to indicate the tragedy that obsesses the body, the ability to stretch inside your own skin, to witness and test the perimeters and boundaries of grief, which is honorable and universal. (Graham 1993: 117)

In the 1960s, Butoh emerged in Japan as a response to the shadowy remnants of World War II, which still haunted the national psyche (Anderson 1997; Grau and Jordan 2000), with movement stripped to its essence, often contorted and exaggerated.

Following these modern and postmodern trendsetters of the pre-1970s era, there emerged the 'New Dance' phenomenon of the 1970s (Mackrell 1992; Anderson 1997). Mirroring the changes in the dance scene elsewhere in the world, in the UK it was enabled by the (English) Arts Council's adoption of a more liberal approach to funding, which spawned a proliferation of dance projects led by members of "a rebellious younger generation" (Anderson 1997: 267), anxious to communicate social and political issues through their choreography.

Rowell (2000) links the concept of community dance with the New Dance movement of the 1970s, which emanated from a dissatisfaction with 'imported'

models of dance: its dancers were politically aware and seeking a form of expression which dealt with contemporary British issues. This was the period when community education was remodelled, so that by the 1980s, this new contemporary dance began to permeate the barriers of the establishment and manifest itself through community policy. Speaking of a dance group called X6, she writes:

There was a social and political emphasis from the beginning, so far as subject-matter was concerned, but also in terms of audience involvement and the use of small intimate performance spaces. Of primary importance was the journal they began, in 1977, also called *New Dance*, which encouraged the airing of concerns and debate about the nature of the art form. The community dance thrust sprang from their work in the 1980s in which important links were forged between the concerns and needs of different groups within the community and the profession. (Rowell 2000: 195)

Steve Paxton's 'contact improvisation' (Mackrell 1992) gained a level of popularity in the 1970s which has been sustained to the present day (Dance Base 2008) as a way of exploring how the body can act and react, through dance, to contact with others. It can be a useful starting-point for choreography.

The 1980s saw the burgeoning growth of the 'New Dance' movement, described by Mackrell (1992) as "an alternative way of looking at dance and an attempt to free it from certain constrictions" (p.55). The work of eminent choreographers at that time, e.g. Robert North, Siobhan Davies, Ian Spink, Michael Clark and Laurie Booth, asked new questions and placed new demands on their dancers' minds and bodies (Mackrell 1992). I would add that they also placed new demands on their audiences' powers of perception – and in Clark's case, the audiences' level of tolerance as he challenged their sensibility and even provoked outrage, as when he included nudity in his piece, "Because We Must" 1997 (Mackrell 1992; Anderson 1997).

Meantime in Germany, the dance form, Tanztheater, rose to prominence (Anderson 1997). As a form of dramatic dance, it demands the emotional involvement of the dancers: expressivity is at its heart. Among its proponents is Pina Bausch, who tackles such subjects as "sexual warfare, lust for power, loneliness, frustration (and)



dread” (Anderson 1997: 280) in her dances, sometimes arousing anger and disgust in her audiences. This was a challenging time in the history of dance as art: the dancers were not aiming to entertain their audiences but to provoke them into confronting some of their darkest thoughts and fears.

It was as a dance audience member during this period that I first had the impression of the dance reaching out beyond the proscenium arch to communicate with the audience more powerfully than I had experienced before, whether the performance was in a large city theatre or a small provincial venue. There was a sense of dance echoing a (western) cultural change, which resonates with Williams (1989) observation that dance became an

agent for social change and transmitter of values and heritage, and as a definer of territories, race, nationality, status and social divisions (thus confirming) the centrality of dance to socio-cultural knowledge.” (Williams 1989:353, 354)

She writes of the role which culture plays in determining movement, quoting Polhemus (1978), recognising it as learned behaviour and culture-bound. Polhemus presents the body as an expressive cultural symbol, and a “proxemic phenomenon” (1989: 57), functioning in a given space for a specific purpose. By the same token, there must be room for the body’s symbolism to evolve, in tune with cultural changes. Thomas’s (2003) observation that the body is “treated as a symbol of society” (p.70) resonates with that view. An interesting point of debate is how the performing art of dance mirrors how the body is regarded in society. Perhaps that has some bearing on why dance as art in community education has grown in popularity since the 1970s to its current level (Brinson 1993, Oliver 2004); in Scotland all the major cities have community dance centres and local authorities include it in their community education provision. It is also significant that, in my experience, touring dance companies are invited to teach classes in schools and communities, giving them the opportunity (unwittingly or not) to condition young dancers to their style of dance and cultivate potential audiences.

In Oliver (2004) I address a number of issues concerning the identity of dance as a creative art form rather than a purely aesthetic pastime. Various theorists, including

Redfern (1983), Best (1985, 1999), Carr (1997), McFee (1992), Fraleigh (1999) and Desmond (1997) agree that 'intention' is a necessary factor in identifying dance as art being distinct from other movement forms, building their theoretical stance on the work of Langer (1953). This differentiates dance as art from any spontaneous movement which might be labelled 'dance', for example in the expression, 'dance for joy', denoting a reaction to some positive stimulus. In Oliver (2004:131) I explore the idea of shared understanding of dance, especially creative dance in the context of the research, acknowledging the subjectivity in experiencing and perceiving it, which results in a complex model of what the phenomenon might be. Each 'percipient' - to use Langer's (1953) term – views it from a unique perspective as Merleau-Ponty (2000) points out, and in comparing these perceptions we become aware of the differences in our understanding. As in Gadamer's (1975) view, our understanding is shaped by our personal history. In my current research, I am looking beyond the dancers' understanding of dance as art, and asking them to be more reflective and intuitive about how they perceive it to influence them as social beings.

The uniqueness of dance as art lies in the fact that the instrument which creates it, is also the medium which is manipulated into a creation, and, further, is the embodiment of the thoughts which led to final creation (Best 1985). Thus it differs from sculpture and painting, which have an external end product, although live music and singing, like dance, are not wholly detachable from the bodily instrument which creates them. One could also argue that the outcome of drama is inseparable from the actor, but dance differs from drama in terms of the degree of abstraction from reality, though both have the capacity to push the body into physical realms beyond its socially acquired movement repertoire. The possible exception to this position is some of the minimalist dance movement of the 1960s' postmodern era (Banes 1994; Anderson 1997), when choreographers such as Yvonne Rainer, Twyla Tharp and Trisha Brown, products of the Judson Dance Theater, experimented with dance which was stripped down to the most basic movements, such as walking and running (Tharp 1972).

McFee (1992) elaborates on the unique feature of dance as a performing art, commenting on its ephemeral nature: it has to be performed in order for it to exist, but at the instant of performing, it ceases to exist. It has been; it is past; it is only a

memory, which may or may not portray it accurately and does not necessarily match another observer's, or performer's, perception or memory of it. The form and quality of the memory depends on the observer's or performer's experience: the performer's memory might be carried in neural pathways, but, as Carr (1997) suggests, the observer's memory will depend on her / his ability to understand the abstracted nature of dance. That task might arguably be easier with drama, which perhaps can be more closely related to lived experience, so is more likely to be within the realms of the observer's experience. Merleau-Ponty (2000) makes the same observation about music: the sounds and rhythms are carried in our memory after the performance. However, memory becomes corrupted over time.

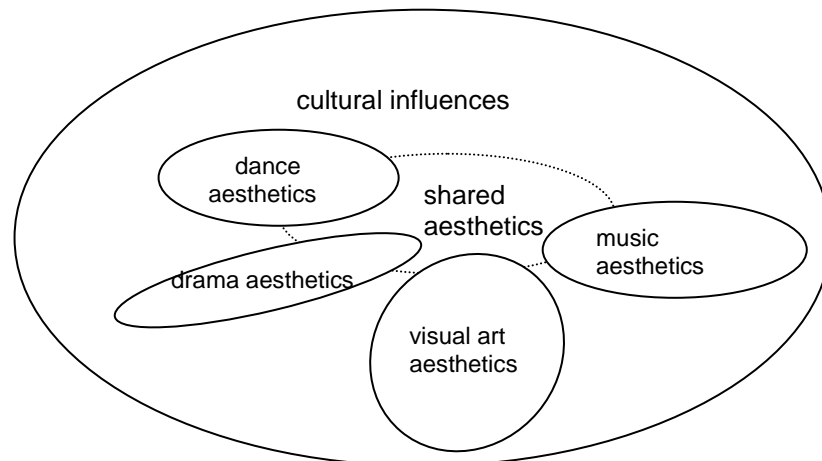
### 2.2.2 The nature of art and aesthetic understanding

Haley (2007: 117) makes the point that the production of "art for art's sake" is a concept of the developed world, where art is separated from everyday life, while developing nations integrate art much more readily into life routine and events. This modern, western model of dance as art is reiterated by Bourdieu (2005), in agreement with Langer (1952), Best (1985), Sheets (1966) and McFee (1992) – it has "no need of being useful" (Bourdieu 2005: 295). The emergence of art as an abstract entity, he believes, is a criterion of a "cultivated people" (2005: 295) who adopt it as a form of knowledge, so that the existence of art becomes a measure of a civilisation which can support artists as creators in a designated and exclusive role. The aesthetic appeal of an object or experience might have nothing to do with its function (Best 1985). An object of art is created to be just that, and might have no practical function other than to engage the percipient in the cognitive experience of beholding it. It will have "significant form" (Langer 1953: 24) as well as aesthetic properties, and will have been created for that purpose. Parviainen (1998: 86) agrees that, by stripping away references to context (e.g. cultural or religious), a work of art can be viewed in its "pure" state, irrespective of its relevance or purpose in life. Hence a symphony, a painting, or a dance performance can be considered a work of art (whether one likes them or not), while a sunset, or the taste of a fine wine have aesthetic properties but are not works of art, as they exist for another reason. A dance has both aesthetic and artistic content and seeks to engage the percipient actively in an empathic experience when watching the dancer(s).

A further distinction between the two concepts is Best's (2004: 161) position, that "an object of *artistic* as opposed to *aesthetic* interest is ... that it can have a subject matter." It tells the consumer something about the subject it is portraying which will enhance his/her world view irrespective of whether (s)he likes it, whereas aesthetics represent a background of culturally determined core values. For example, while the aesthetic appreciation of natural phenomena, e.g. waterfalls, sunsets, etc, might be universally positive because they occur across the world, the aesthetic appreciation of a painting, a play or a dance hinges on the cultural perspective of the percipient.

Furthermore, Best (2004) argues that there can be no common criteria for judging the aesthetic content of the different arts. Each art form has its own distinct aesthetic, so that they cannot be judged against each other: one cannot compare the aesthetic quality of a play with the aesthetic quality of a dance. The underpinning factor is the culture in which they occur, which determines the acceptable framework of aesthetics which shape them. Diagrammatically, the relationship between art forms based on their aesthetics, in Best's terms, can be illustrated thus:

Figure 2.1: The relationship between arts and aesthetics, with reference to Best (2004)



Aesthetic qualities are perceived from within a cultural framework. The 'shared aesthetic' element equates to acquired 'taste' inculcated through exposure but each art form also has its own aesthetic properties, distinct from cultural conditioning.

In an educational context, Simpson (1985) considers aesthetics as the wider field, within which arts education delivers the “productive skills” (1985: 276). He claims that aesthetic properties are what give the arts their uniqueness, and, in contrast to Best (1985), that aesthetics need to be actively nurtured. Smith-Autard (1994) agrees. According to her aesthetics enable the individual to make sense of his/her world. Simpson (1985) and Koopman (2005) believe aesthetic perception is a valuable human asset, giving individuals the freedom to appreciate and value experiences, ideally without judgement by anyone else. However both authors question the transferability of skills cultivated through aesthetic and arts education, to other domains of formal and informal education. Simpson’s (1985) reservations are on the grounds that the concept of aesthetic perception becomes meaningless if applied too liberally, and Koopman’s (2005) are based on lack of empirical evidence for claims that skills acquired through the arts are readily transferable to other curricular areas, e.g. does visual art really improve reading skills? Dimitriadis (2007:13) raises the same question, noting that, while there is research which establishes a “ ‘correlation’ between arts and learning, (it is difficult to prove a) ‘causal’ relationship”, despite claims, e.g. by Greene (1980: 7), who accepts arts as “integral to the development of persons ...”.

Wadsworth Hervey (2000: 72) describes aesthetics as “the discriminating appreciation of qualities reflected in form”, a definition which allows one to appreciate something without necessarily liking it. This surely justifies the concept as a type of intelligence in its own right, as Gardner (1999) does. Aesthetic intelligence is ascribed value by Gardner as being an integral part of the human state. Huitt (2004) supports this with reference to Maslow’s (1987) “hierarchy of needs”, where aesthetic understanding is listed as part of human beings’ cognitive functions which are to transcend the basic state of physiological and social needs (e.g. health, family, safety) and reach a state of self-actualisation or fulfilment.

Wadsworth Hervey concurs with Royce (1980) and Polhemus (1989) that aesthetic sense is culturally specific, derived from repeated exposure and resulting in conditioning. In this way, even basic intuition becomes a suspect yardstick with which to make a value judgement about art. Aesthetic sensibility can be exploited, demonstrating the link between aesthetic manipulation and power. Williams and

Bendelow (1998) make reference to aesthetic preferences in human appearance underpinning the ideals of Nazi Germany, and further, how art can be exploited as a political device:

Art ... is central to an embodied sociology. Not only does art, in its manifold forms, reflect and reinforce dominant beliefs and ideologies within the broader body/politic, it also constitutes a key site of (embodied) 'resistance' to prevailing modes of discourse with their 'normalising' assumptions. In these and many other respects, the boundaries between art and social theory, science and morality, begin to blur if not collapse ... Indeed, it is this emphasis on 'embodied praxis' (i.e. performance art) and 'visual narratives' (i.e. autobiographical art) that ... provides an important counterweight to the predominantly textual forms of representation within sociology to date... (R)eason is no longer prioritised over emotion, and new ways of 'being', 'seeing' and 'relating' to the world ... evolve. (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 205, 206)

It is significant to note that just prior to World War II, the modern dancer, Maria Wiegman, pioneer of *Ausdruckstanz* (expressive dance) as a theatre art, left Germany and metamorphosed as Mary Wigman, (Jeschke and Vettermann 2000: 57) in the USA, where she continued to develop her art.

Wigman's experience is further confirmation that aesthetic intelligence is culturally derived and can be manipulated, and that is significant in the understanding of dance.

Fleming (2006: 54) acknowledges the "intrinsic rewards" existing in arts education. Referring to formal education, he agrees that, while the emphasis might be on understanding a work of art, the percipients' feelings play a part in the understanding, and they are evoked by the expressive qualities of the art. He uses the term, "aesthetic knowing" to bridge the gap between an objective idea of 'understanding', and the subjective feelings of the observer. Community education in his experience, starts from an overview of the community, and seeks to reach inwards to the individuals. I take issue with the idea of 'understanding' being objective: in terms of Gadamer (1975), understanding is built on the observer's pre-understanding and so must be based on subjectivity.

Fleming adopts Best's (1985) distinction between (naturally occurring) aesthetics and (intentionally made) art, believing that it allows the 'humanity' in art to be recognised. It is made by human beings and experienced by human beings. Shusterman (2006: 2) concurs, putting the human body at the centre of his discourse on the interdisciplinary field of "somaesthetics", which encompasses the cognitive, cultural and biological factors which make a body into an interactive human being. We are, he believes, both subject and object in our existence: we feel effects on us and we can cause effects beyond our own bodies. Thus a dancer is inseparable from the dance: the dance is an object and has maybe been composed by someone else, but the dancer brings it into existence. Without the dancer, the dance is a concept in the creator's mind. With the dancer, it is visible, expressive and communicable to a potentially infinite number of other people. In this, Fleming's views coincide with my own and are fundamental to understanding how 'self' as dancer and communicator helps to shape self-image, so promoting understanding and self-confidence – at least when the experience of dancing is a positive one.

### 2.2.3 Dance as communication

Robinson (2001) states that the process and the outcome of any art are not necessarily dependent on oral or written language for communication, nor are they necessarily sequential in development:

Pictures give the whole pattern of ideas simultaneously.  
In these forms we can express thoughts that do not fit  
the structures of words.

(Robinson 2001: 122)

Eisner (2002: 37) also endorses this view of art as being an alternative type of text to be 'read', i.e. engaged with on a cognitive level, and scrutinised for meaning in its shadows, cadences or movement patterns, depending on the art form. Greenland (2000: 43) agrees, asserting that dance itself is a language – "the language of pure movement". She makes the case for greater use of dance in settings catering for those with impaired ability to communicate verbally – not as a therapy, but as a shared basis for communication.

Dances are entities which have significant form: they have structure as well as aesthetic content. They have meaning, which their creators attempt to convey to the observers. They have been created through cognitive engagement with physical skill, for the purpose of communicating meaning to a third party. This communication can only be successful if the observers have some knowledge of the dancers' cultural background, and that there has to be a shared understanding, or at least a willingness to reach out and learn, before any meaningful exchange of ideas, values and learning can take place. Meaning is not universal, but is specific to culture (Polhemus 1998; Royce 2000). Someone from outside the cultural context could *enjoy* a performance, without *understanding* it. Cohen Bull (1997) endorses that belief, when she states:

... only experience in the world will turn (a) person into a specific dancer whose movement embodies meanings both sensible and intelligible to her audience. And while a spectator may be alert to experiences of movement and receptive to the most foreign of choreographies, only a spectator familiar with the cultural references and frameworks of that choreography can respond on many levels simultaneously that correspond to the intentions of the creators. (Cohen Bull 1997 p.270)

In Oliver (2004), I endorse the point that its success depends on the dancer's and observer's shared 'vocabulary' or understanding of dance. Wright (1998) supports this in his recognition of cultural significance of body constructs. We absorb cultural constructs into our bodies and communicate them in performance. Performing is an opportunity for self-reflection on those constructs as well as for communicating them to others. Debate exists over the extent to which the dance experience can be communicated: Best's statement that "you can never know what anyone else is feeling" (1999:106) could be qualified by the observation that "all communication is dependent on normatively-derived assumptions of common experience" (Oliver, 2004:132). A performance observed by another dancer might elicit a reaction at a kinaesthetic level, whereas the same performance watched by someone with no dance background might still be enjoyable (or not), but on a different level, depending on the unique life experiences of the observer. Curl (2005: 59) believes that one can "imaginatively empathise" (2005: 59) with the dancer's body and become highly sensitised to the tensions and interactions set up by a number of dancers in a performance. His "imaginative approach" to understanding dance



allows for a level of total absorption on the part of the observer, which enables her/him to experience the dance kinaesthetically through empathy with the dancer.

The problem arising from Curl's view is similar to the point Best makes, in the discussion of shared understanding of experience. How closely can the observer empathise with the dancer if (s)he has never felt the lifts, extensions, spins etc., which (s)he sees in the performance? In the absence of mutual experience, the imaginative approach to understanding a dance could result in misinterpretation of the choreographer's intention (or the dancer's intention if (s)he has had input into the creation). This debate is the subject of ongoing research by Reynolds et al (2008) in the UK and McKechnie et al (2008) in Australia.

No conversation can take place if there is no shared 'language' but no learning can take place if those having the conversation have exactly the same knowledge and understanding as each other (Smith-Autard 1994; Oliver 2004). The margin of difference is where learning and communication can occur. Gadamer (1975) stresses the importance of spoken language as the "universal medium in which understanding (and interpretation) occurs" (p. 389) though this does not account for the diversity of spoken languages. Even where dancer and observer have a common language, there is scope for different interpretations: Smith-Autard (1994) addresses the limitations of spoken language as applied to dance. She notes that to label a movement is insufficient: an arabesque, for example, can be described as "linear, balanced, flowing, angular, curving ..." (1994: 34). The name alone conveys nothing of the qualities, which can only be learned through bodily experience. Learning to bridge this gap in language and physical experience is part of the dance class process.

Having established the need for a common basis for communication, I turn to the aesthetic content of expression emanating from the dancer, through the dance. In Oliver (2004:139), I refer to Franko's (1996: 75,76) view of Classical Expression Theory, where, in his interpretation, impression relates to the sensory stimulus, which precipitates an emotional response, and subsequent expressive output, i.e.

stimulus → impression → expression

Using this model, one can glean an understanding of how a dance can be composed: the stimulus might be external to the composer, or entrenched in their corporeal experience; the composer brings it to the surface of cognitive and emotional experience where it can be manipulated into a dance form, and then it is danced. The implicit meaning can then become a shared experience between dancer and spectator, enabling the spectator to appreciate the dance (Smith-Autard 1994: 29). The inclusion of a cognitive component is supported by Kingsbury (2002:13), who argues that the ability to recognise an emotion depends on a cognitive process, based on the model:

$$\text{emotion} = \text{feeling} + \text{cognition}$$

She acknowledges 'feeling' as a more basic sensation, e.g. sadness or fear, which would elicit a direct response, possibly tears or flight, whereas emotion is the cognisance of that feeling, not the direct experience. The expression of emotion is refined and abstracted in the creation of classical forms of dance as art, as in Langer's (1953) comment on "The Dying Swan":

No-one, to my knowledge, has ever maintained that Pavlova's rendering of slowly ebbing life in the "Dying Swan" was most successful when she actually felt faint and sick. (Langer 1953 p.177)

Thus a dancer can perform a sad dance without feeling sad, and the audience can perceive it as being sad because it evokes a memory of how they felt when they were sad – a lived experience. Other dance forms celebrate expressivity, and demand that the dancers live the experience e.g. the German 'Tanztheater' which counts Pina Bausch as one of its proponents (Anderson 1997; Grau and Jordan 2000). In Scotland, contemporary dance companies such as Xfactor, produce work which challenges dancers and spectators alike to engage in emotions surrounding states such as death (Xfactor: "The Dearly Departed" 2001) and gender identity (Xfactor: "Query" 2009). In Scotland, dance artist Anna Krzystek looks at movements and her immediate environment in microscopic detail, e.g. in her work, "Figure This" (2009), which aims to "observe the figure more closely, unveiling newly found aspects of her presence" (Dance Base 2009). A characteristic of her work is

that she invites the audience into her world, to focus closely on the minutiae of the physical and emotional state.

In my present research, this attention to emotional content is an important consideration because the developmental stage of these teenagers could affect the dances they create: the objective distance between their personal feelings, and the emotions their dances evoke (the expression of the feeling) could be less than that of the mature observer, in this case, myself, the researcher, merely by virtue of my age and life experience compared to theirs. The dancers in my study have a smaller reservoir of personal experience of recognising and dealing with feelings. This does not mean that they have any less depth of feeling than an adult, but that they are just on the threshold of Piaget's (1970) stage of 'formal operations' where they become able to manipulate and express ideas and feelings beyond their immediate concrete experience. Fraleigh's statement (1999) that dance is not just an act (i.e. a physical movement), but also involves thought, contains meaning, and has aesthetic properties in its delivery, supports the notion that human experience is a requirement in the understanding of dance. By definition, creative dance employs cognitive as well as physical skills to achieve the end result, as discussed by Gardner (1999) and Robinson (2001), but these are tempered by social experience.

Gadamer (1975), stresses the reflective nature of the word 'understanding', while also maintaining the need to apply it in a practical way: we understand a message because it is within our frame of experience; we can agree on the meaning of the message, (but that is different from agreeing *with* it), and so we can convey it accurately. There is obviously a significant responsibility on the part of the researcher, to be truly representative. Returning to a corporeal context, Gardner (1999), Robinson (2001) and Eisner (2002), all agree that communication does not necessarily have to be in words. Chappell (2007) also makes the distinction between "verbal language-based ways of knowing, and physical, embodied ways of knowing." Williams and Bendelow (1998: 209) take a different approach, using the Möbius<sup>1</sup> strip as a metaphor for the body-mind relationship, as demonstrated in dance: the meaning is embodied, and, as Isadora Duncan observed,

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<sup>1</sup> A strip (of paper, for example) made into a perpetual loop by putting in a twist before joining the ends, resulting in a seamless transition from one side of the strip to the other.

If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it. (Royce 1980: 55)

In Williams and Bendelow's (1998) view, therefore, it is futile to separate cognitive and embodied knowledge.

To sum up, movement in its abstracted form, as dance, is an eloquent communicator. In the case of dance as art, the movement and meaning are inseparable, in the same way that music or visual art are the embodiment of their meaning. This observation raises the question of whether a message conveyed through one medium can actually be exactly the same if conveyed through another. The essential meaning might remain the same, but certain nuances are likely to alter, in the same way that two people can tell the same story, but their choice of words might alter the way it is perceived by a third party. Therefore, in the course of conducting research, the responsibility for authentic representation of individuals' responses weighs heavily on the researcher. As Foucault (1994: 405) explains, "it is a question of the modifications of the subject by the very exercise of discourse." As stated earlier, the crux of the matter is the interpretation.

#### 2.2.4 Conditions for Creativity

Esquivel and Hodes (2003) describe creativity as a person's ability to produce original ideas irrespective of the discipline, e.g. art or science, and they recognise that its development is influenced by social and cultural factors as much as genetic heritage. Everyone has specific talents but the main criterion of creativity is how one uses them. In their view, indicators of creativity include curiosity, flexibility in dealing with situations, high motivation, assertiveness and positive self-image. Robinson (2001) adds to the list by including the ability to create problems as well as solve them. Sternberg (2006) views creativity as an amalgam of personal attributes:

... creativity requires a confluence of six distinct but interrelated resources: intellectual abilities, knowledge, styles of thinking, personality, motivation, and environment. Although levels of these resources are sources of individual differences, often the decision to use the resources is the more important source of individual differences.

(Sternberg 2006: 6)

McFee (1992) believes that creativity cannot be measured but its outcome can be judged. There has to be an outcome – an original product at the end of the creative process (Robinson 2001; Best 1999). In my previous creative dance research (Oliver 2004) I adopted a working definition of creativity in art as being the means of making a piece of art collaboratively or alone, and that withstood comparison with other creative dance teachers at that time. The finished article (the dance) was evidence of creative effort, and it was a piece of art. My position was consistent with Langer (1953) and Best (1985), discussed in Section 2.2.2.

It does raise the question, however, of who makes the judgement about whether something is creative art or not. Gardner (1999) and Robinson (2001) agree that value judgement is shaped by personal experience and societal attitudes. Nothing is created in a cultural vacuum. Gardner (1999) notes that the quality and efficacy of a work is judged by the “field, a set of individuals or institutions that judge the quality of works produced in the culture” (1999: 118). Eisner (2002) also questions the existence of any “intrinsic value” (2002: 30) in art, believing that views depend on the sociocultural perspective of the consumers. Robinson (2001) agrees that a creation might be unique and valuable in one social context because of its purpose in that setting. The creation of visual art is valued in affluent sectors of western society, for example, in a way which it would not be in an area where the provision of basic needs creates what Robinson (2001: 133) calls the “framework for creativity”: we might view a painting positively or negatively, but still recognise it as a work of art. In another culture, the same painting might only be valued for the materials used in making it, e.g. a flat board with a raised edge. The conditions for creativity in the two settings differ widely.

My understanding of creative dance is more than just expressive dance, although experimentation with expressivity would be a natural precursor. The dancer has to experiment with her / his own physicality and emotion in order to select and refine the raw movement material into a dance. In my view, the product is as important as the process in creating dance art. Sefton-Green (2000), Craft (2005) and Chappell (2007) would not agree. For them, the process is as important, or not more so, than the product.

On the question of how people acquire creativity, these three authors agree that the creatively gifted are not born, but are taught and nurtured through a holistic process of interaction, dialogue and reflexivity – a “cultural model of creativity” (Sefton-Green (2000: 200). Writing from a formal education perspective, Smith-Autard (2000) believes that the creative process facilitates the accrual of knowledge, skills and understanding of dance as art. This fits with my own experience of teaching creative movement to young children in formal and community education, encouraging them to become receptive to new ideas with which they can play, and in the course of time, use them and manipulate them like building materials to make their own dance art. Thomas (2003: 71) writes about “dance transform(ing) everyday movements into its own contexts” and that is the starting-point for children. Through careful nurturing, they acquire the confidence as well as the physical skills to be creative.

A very different example of everyday movement being used as the basis of dance is the early minimalist postmodern dance of the 1960s (Banes 1994). The choreographers adopted some of the most mundane movements, e.g. sitting down or climbing a staircase, and elevated them to the status of art – judged by their admiring public. Critics asked where the creativity was in these dances. The creators, however, believed that by isolating and decontextualising these movements, they were presenting them as art and inviting the audience to focus on the pure movement instead of its functionality (Mackrell 1992, Banes 1994, Anderson 1997). Classical ballet, it could be argued, has little to do with everyday movement except that it concerns shifting weight across space, yet in my experience, few people have a problem identifying it as a creative art. Whether they like it or not is a matter of subjective opinion.

Gardner (1999: 117) makes a distinction between “Big C” and “Little C” creativity, producing ‘high’ arts (i.e. elitist arts) and populist arts respectively, but he is not specific about who judges them or what criteria are used. In my study, I have made the assumption that what is often perceived as ‘high arts’ inform the populist arts and provide the fuel for community artists’ aspirations. What both levels have in common is that they are products of creativity. More appropriate to the context of community art is the notion of ‘mini-c creativity’ (Beghetto and Kaufman 2007), pertaining to the feeling of achievement enjoyed by a participant who feels he/she

has done his/her best. Gardner (1999) acknowledges the creative component of intelligence on the grounds that creativity is the key to pushing boundaries to a new level of understanding and acceptance. In 'Creating Minds', Gardner (1993) uses the example of Martha Graham as a creative icon whose purpose in dancing was to express feelings which, she believed, could not be separated from movement.

(S)he never embraced movement for its own sake. She always related motion to feelings experienced, to feelings she wished to express. (Gardner 1993: 299)

Gardner's account portrays her as a creator and performer, whose creativity was deeply embodied. It was as much a subjective, experiential process as an objective, detached instrument for making a piece of art. One wonders if she – or the other pioneers of the modern dance movement – would have made as much impact if they had not had central roles as performing dancers; if they created their works of art only with other people dancing. What level of creativity, on Gardner's scale (above), would they achieve? How essential is it, to have first-hand experience of the movement internally (emotionally, proprioceptively and kinaesthetically) and externally (spatially, through the physical senses), to create dance? And if it is judged as essential, does that mean that a severely disabled person cannot compose dance? I would argue that as long as they have an image in their mind and a means to communicate it, and have had the kinaesthetic experience perhaps before becoming disabled, they can create dances for other people to perform. In that scenario, creating becomes dependent on the movement memory so is still a case of body-mind connectedness driving the creative impulse.

On reflection, my earlier (Oliver 2004) definition of creativity in art fails to encompass the influences of culture and social encounter as well as cognition, which create the context and the motive for the creative act. Appreciation and understanding of *what* is created is enhanced by considering *how* and *why* it is created. The references in this section (Gardner 1999, Robinson 2001, Sternberg 2006, for example) demonstrate the interdependence of all of these factors in facilitating and recognising creativity.

### 2.2.5 Recent Research

The relevance of the following studies to mine, is their interpretive approaches to gaining understanding of participants' learning experiences, addressing factors such

as cognitive functions relating to creativity, and cultural factors which influenced the way they worked.

An overview of the methods employed in the selected studies is in the following table:



Table 2.2: Recent Research – Dance as Art

| Author                | Methodological approach   | Sample  | Data collection methods   | Key findings   |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Minton (2007)         | Ethnographic descriptive/ interpretive                                | High school students (n = 11)                                       | observation (video-recorded), questionnaires, student discussion and the teacher's lesson plans | students took ownership of their created dances; their reports of self-discovery and enjoyment in dance-making (as far as Minton could ensure authenticity of their responses) supported existing literature.  |
| Bannon (2004)         | phenomenology informed by grounded theory – an exploration of methods | Vocational dance students (n = 24)                                  | “creative interviewing” (Bannon 2004:29) with open-ended questions                              | One definition of ‘truth’ can be a consensus of understanding between researcher and participants at a given point in time. Researchers of aesthetic topics require to be creative in their choice of methods. |
| Giguere (2006)        | hermeneutic phenomenology   | School pupils aged 10-12 years (n = approx. 100)                    | observation, semi-structured interviews, group discussion                                       | Similar cognitive strategies were found in dance-making and poetry-writing.  |
| Tate (2007)           | Heuristics and phenomenology  | Professional actors, theatre directors and stage designers (n = 13) | Observation, semi-structured interviews   | Participants described the experience of being creative as one which engages emotions with the physical being. Peak creativity was a transcendental experience which enriched their lives.                     |
| Reynolds et al (2008) | qualitative, audience research into kinaesthetic learning             | Audience members (small, undisclosed number)                        | interviews and focus group discussion   | Audiences are active, not passive spectators (ongoing study).  |

(i) The general trend in dance and education research is towards a feminist perspective (e.g. Engel 2008a) whereby researchers tend to situate themselves within the frame as participant observers and invite the participants to share their thoughts and feelings. Probably as a consequence of Minton's (2007) background as a quantitative researcher, she writes in the third person and she refers to herself as an "outside observer" (2007: 110) in her study of a series of school-based creative dance classes for middle school pupils in the USA, although she reports that she did interact with the pupils when the teacher asked her to do so. Her previous research applied statistical measures to the relationships, between a) dance class participation and self-esteem, and b) dance class participation and creative thinking, using standardised tests and a control group of non-dancers.

By contrast, for this study, Minton (2007) adopted a qualitative approach, generating description from ethnographic and case study methods to clarify some immeasurable properties of the creative process such as what the dance-making process meant to individual students. Observation alone was insufficient to reveal what the students experienced but greater insight was gained from questionnaires, notably that they felt they were learning the extent of their own creative talents and that the experience of creating dances gave them a sense of freedom and individuality, and a channel for "self-expression" (2007: 116). Minton (2007:115) comments that the students "were communicating in a democratic way" and engaged in discussion about choreographic matters. She also comments on their body language and facial expressions, inferring from these, how positive or negative the students were feeling about the tasks in which they were engaged.

One might wonder why Minton (2007) did not use interviews to gather her data. Perhaps the study would have been enriched by comparing and contrasting interview data with the questionnaire results and observation. What people say they are doing or thinking can be so different from what they are actually doing or thinking (the latter being impossible to determine accurately). In fairness, studying the dance-making experience was only half of her mission; the other half concerned the class content and syllabus, which accommodated greater objectivity.

The key findings include that the students found their engagement in the dance-making process increased their self-esteem because they felt their opinions were valued and they experienced ownership of the dance. However, Minton did not attempt to extrapolate what influence this might have had on their lives outwith the class. In this way, her study differs from mine.

Minton's study provides an interesting contrast to the following research reports.

(ii) Bannon's paper (2004) puts the debate about the identity and value of creativity into a practical frame. Her research explored the relevance of phenomenology as a methodology for learning about dancers' creative thoughts.

Her participants viewed nine dance works on video and were encouraged to select one to discuss in detail. Drawing on the work of Eisner (1998) among others, she recognised the need for creativity on the part of the researcher, to enable the identification of creative responses of the participants in a qualitative study. She used a fusion of "phenomenological, interpretivist, feminist, qualitative, naturalistic methods of inquiry" (Bannon 2004: 27) to discover the unique, rather than the shared, responses of her participants. Viewing herself as a co-participant, she could utilise her own reflexivity in interpretation of the findings, implying a hermeneutic dimension to it. She employed the principle of "creative interviewing" (Denzin 1989: 102), an open-ended approach, to overcome the limitations of an imposed interview structure, and let the process evolve. In contrast to Gadamer (1975), she remained alert to the limitations of the spoken language, as identified by Smith-Autard (1994) in subsection 2.2.3 (above) namely that words alone are insufficient to describe an experience or perception adequately, and so there is a tendency to ignore what cannot be articulated verbally. Words are often only a close approximation of the ideas we wish to convey. The need for alternative means of communication in addition to speech becomes apparent, especially for an art form like dance, as Duncan's remark (Royce 1980) suggests, i.e. that dance and spoken language are not necessarily interchangeable. Bannon had to rely on the spoken words of her respondents but was at least able to give them a free reign in describing their dance experiences.

Bannon does not claim to have discovered a solution to the challenge of finding an adequate method of describing creative thought processes, but she has highlighted the need for researchers to remain open-minded about the research process in dance, to establish “coherence and validity” (Bannon 2004: 39) and to do justice to the uniqueness of the experience. The relevance of her research to mine is the discussion potentially arising from how far dance movement can be considered an eloquent instrument of communication and how meaningful it can be to anyone who does not know the ‘language’. Furthermore, in the case of a creative art, the question arises as to how the new and original ideas (evidence of creativity as defined by Esquivel and Hodes (2003) can be adequately shared. This thought recalls Smith-Autard’s (1994) position on the degree of shared knowledge required between communicator (in this case, dancer) and audience, namely that there must be some overlap.

(iii) Giguere (2006) conducted a hermeneutic phenomenological research project into whether children have similar experiences when creating dance as when creating poetry, the link between the two being the role of cognition and how symbolic knowledge can be manifested verbally. She used Gardner’s (1993) definition of cognition as “thinking and reasoning” (2006: 44). The children were of elementary school age (U.S.A.) and Giguere had initially proposed to conduct individual interviews, but abandoned that approach in favour of group discussions when she saw how much more at ease the children were in groups, and consequently how much more data they would elicit when chatting among trusted peers than when isolated with the researcher. The children were required to be introspective, to identify the processes they went through in their poetry-writing and dance-making. The questions prompted them to search their feelings and sources of inspiration when composing poetry or dance and to articulate them verbally. The strategies employed in each creative task were labelled “tools for thinking” ((2006: 44) and Giguere sought similarities between the two tasks. Emergent commonalities included observation of the stimulus, the use of empathy with the stimulus, recognising patterns in it, and forming one’s own patterns in light of the experience. Predictably, ‘body thinking’ was one tool for thinking which was exclusive to creating dance. The children reported that making dances was fun; it heightened their awareness of how their bodies were moving and what it felt like.

This concurs with Stinson's (1997) finding that, in her study of adolescents dancing, the physical challenge was at least as rewarding as the social interaction. Likewise, my own research (Oliver 2004) concluded that younger dancers responded well to the body-mind commitment of creating dance and labelled it 'fun', as did some of my adolescent participants in this current study.

Giguere's findings led her to support the idea that the creative processes in different disciplines are fundamentally the same and so should enhance each other. This challenges the findings of Simpson (1985), Koopman (2005) and Dimitriadis (2007) who concluded that the skills employed in arts are not necessarily transferable to other areas of the curriculum and any correlation between them might be spurious. Giguere, however, justifies her conclusion by breaking down the creative activity into stages of problem-solving, thus drawing a parallel between logical and artistic constructs in comprehending the problem, applying strategies, monitoring the outcome and making necessary adjustments. She uses her findings to assert that dance education, as a link between body and mind, is justifiable in the curriculum as a means, not just of stimulating "body in motion" but also "mind in motion" (2006: 47). Her use of group discussion where participants were more relaxed, compares with my own experience as researcher.

Through group discussion and asking questions which probe deeply into the feelings of the participants ("What are you thinking about ...?", "How does it feel ...?"), Giguere demonstrated the efficacy of hermeneutic phenomenology to delve deeply into young people's understanding of how creative thought can be harnessed to produce mind-body learning. After thematic analysis of the data, the physicality of creative dance was shown to have much in common with the composition of poetry.

(iv) Tate's (2007) doctoral dissertation uses phenomenology to explore the nature and significance of creativity as a lived experience in the context of drama. Her study of creativity among professional actors sought to explore the assumption that creativity as an essential part of being human. Tate seeks to clarify how actors' creativity in improvisation affects their feelings about the production of a play in professional theatre. She identifies the characteristics of the creative person (2007: 22) and establishes the positive connection between creativity and cognitive skills with reference to relevant literature. She justifies her criteria for creativity – novelty

and appropriateness, seeking the views of professional theatre artists to support her.

Tate recognises the existence of “the creative press” (2007: 58) which equates to Bourdieu’s concept of ‘field’ – the controlling forces which limit the extent that one can stray beyond accepted norms in any society – and also explores the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in examining why people desire to be creative. She frames her study in what she refers to as “the four P’s of Creativity” (2007: 72) – Person, Process, Product and Press, and uses them to find an answer to the question, “What’s it like?” (2007: 89) to explore the feelings and experiences of the actors when they are challenging their creativity in improvisation sessions. She recognises the multiplicity of the concept of creativity and that individuals will attach different levels of importance to the facets of their concept of it.

Tate uses the metaphor of nested layers, like Russian dolls, to describe her case study, where the ‘nest’, or main concept, is the lived experience of creativity. Within the nest are the theatre company, the artmaking process, and the individual people involved – actors, designers, director and costume maker – who are represented as having equal status. The researcher herself had a long-standing professional relationship with the company which inevitably imbued her interpretation of what she witnessed. The appropriateness of language to describe an experience is one of the problems Tate addresses, stating that the creation of new ideas inevitably require new language to describe them adequately, and even if new words can be found, they are “not the thing itself, merely the next best thing to the thing itself” (2007: 43), which seems like a justification for having multiple instruments of data collection. This raises the points which I have already addressed, regarding shared meanings (Smith-Autard 1994; Oliver 2004) and gaps in understanding which are bridged by the medium for learning (in this case, dance).

Using interview responses, Tate examines in detail the experiences of three key participants - the director, the designer and an actor – as they progress from non-creative, functional input to the creative input. They move along identified continua, for example, analysis-synthesis, practical-aesthetic, craft-art, constraint-freedom, embodied-disembodied. In articulating the creative journey they have undergone, they refer to their experiences of “*feeling, purposing* (meaning) and *knowing*” (2007:

102) (Tate's italics) which form the basis of their experience. This model has some aspects in common with my research which also seeks to follow a creative (dance) journey, but with the added dimension of the social journey, too. In the process of learning about their own physical abilities and acquiring the dance skills with which to create their dances, my dancers were searching for personal meaning in what they were doing, by exploring their feelings and their reaction to the social interaction. Like Tate's performers, they were becoming aware of themselves as subjective beings in the art process – they were getting to know themselves a little better along the way.

(v) Kinaesthetic learning is the subject of research being conducted at the time of writing by Reynolds et al (2008), regarding how an audience can empathise kinaesthetically with dancers onstage. The central premise is that audiences can experience the physical feeling of movement by watching the dancers, without moving their bodies. They build on existing neurophysiological research into synaptic responses of viewers watching movements, which shows that they are more likely to respond neurologically if they themselves have already acquired the skills which they are watching. They are already conditioned.

Reynolds et al (2008) apply this to dance by conducting qualitative research into how dance can evoke kinaesthetic empathy in audiences and to what extent sound accompaniment influences audience members' responses. Their research differs from other audience studies by starting from the premise that audiences are active, not passive, spectators and each member has his/her own history of cultural experience which modifies perception. By selecting a small sample and collecting data through interviews and focus groups, they have aimed to reach individual responses to the viewing experience. Where the audiences were children, the researchers asked them to respond to performances by drawing pictures as a way to elicit discussion later. With adult audiences, they emphasised the 'sharing' nature of the research by treating the participants as co-researchers. Reflexivity has been a fundamental requirement for the researchers as they sought to understand the audience members perceptions in light of their own experiences of observing dance. A parallel study by McKechnie et al (2008: 2) looked at "sympathetic kinesthesia" (*sic*) from a neurological position, experienced by professional dancers watching a dance performance. Their audience of dancers reported the enjoyment they derived

from sharing the feeling and meaning with the performers kinaesthetically – they could feel the movement and the emotional content as they watched the performance. Their findings agree with Reynolds et al (2008) that prior knowledge strengthened the connection which audiences felt with performers.

#### 2.2.6 Summary of Research

These five studies address a number of issues relating to my research, namely the nature of artistic experience, communication other than in spoken language, the role of creativity in learning, intrinsic rewards and extrinsic pressures. They shed light on the process of how individuals can acquire self-knowledge through the creative process, although they represent different education contexts (school and professional classes). Fleming also makes the distinction between formal and community education in relation to their focus. Each one therefore gave me the benefit of their sharply focused content and collectively mirrored some of the main aspects of mine. They also provided a point of deflection for my study, which developed on a different tangent to explore beyond self-knowledge and self-esteem by relating these constructs to a wider social background. Where Bannon's and Tate's participants were already professional adults with well defined self-concepts, Minton's, Fleming's and Giguere's were in secondary schools. All of them therefore had restrictions in terms of their expressivity, Bannon's and Tate's being bound by the social conventions of adulthood and professionalism, and Minton's, Fleming's and Giguere's because they were subject to educational restrictions, e.g. a syllabus, as well as peer pressure.

My study transcends the restrictions of school and adulthood, though not peer pressure. It encourages the participants to think beyond the studio walls, and consider how their creativity through dance can alter their self-perception and how it affects their relationships with others. It endeavours to find out whether and how much they question the cultural values that bind them.



## 2.3 Moulding the Social Body

### 2.3.1 The influence of Pierre Bourdieu (2005): 'habitus' and 'field'

This study is informed by Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'field', and how far the participants can shape their own personal identity within these concepts.

Thomas (2003: 57) notes that Bourdieu is one of many theorists, including Durkheim, to have used the term, 'habitus', but, arguably, he gave the concept greater prominence than the others in his social theory. Bourdieu's model of 'habitus' is not a state which is passively received through social forces, but is experienced as the result of constant exchanges between the individual and the people who compose her/his habitus and field, as described by Adkins (2004: 193). Neither interpretation portrays a static state: one finds oneself operating in numerous fields, which have varying degrees of overlap. The view of the individual being an active agent in the process of moulding the body socially, differs from that described by Foucault (1980: 198) as a "docile body", which Thomas (2003: 48) explains is the result of pressure to conform to an ideal type, exerted by social institutions such as schools and places of work. Bourdieu's model suggests that the habitus is a supportive network with the "socially informed" (Smith 2002: 126) body at the centre, while Foucault's model points to an oppressive force controlling the body. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is described by Fowler (2000: 33) as "social positioning", a status which Foucault would argue is predetermined from historical and scientific sources of experience. Robbins (2000: 187) adopts a modified view, to the effect that we can shift our habitus, or at least parts of it, as we gain life experience and education. Moreover, Morris (2001) comments that "(h)ow we move influences how we think and feel how others think and feel" (2001: 56,57), so that by interacting with others we cannot help but alter our habitus. We also accumulate understanding from living, and there is a parallel here between movement and shared understanding which links with my earlier section, "Dance as Communication". Consider, for instance, Robert North's ballet, "The Snowman", where the main character's costume conceals his face. How then can we tell how he is feeling when he is sad or happy, too hot or too cold? We can tell from his physical movements, which are part of our own personal history. We use our pre-

understanding (Gadamer 1975) to interpret what we see. This reflexive process is working at a kinaesthetic level to reaffirm “body knowledge” (Eisner 2002: 76,77).

Beecher (2005), in agreement with Sartre (1961) and Merleau-Ponty (2000), focused on “the lived experience of the body and the body as the expression of existence and consciousness” (Beecher 2005: 18). Its capacity for retaining emotional expressivity as part of its life history makes it an eloquent tool. This “lived experience” relates to Bourdieu’s (2005) concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘field’, which are central to this study. Adkins (2004) discusses how,

Bourdieu’s social theory locates the body as a fully fledged component of social action ... (E)mbodiment emerges as a key topic of investigation ... But Bourdieu’s body is never *only* a body in action. This is because, for Bourdieu, embodied action concerns sedimented or accumulated – but usually forgotten – history. (Adkins 2004: 14)

Our past, then, is etched on our physical, social and emotional being, whether we are aware of specific events or not. It affects the way we engage with others in our immediate and more distant environment.

Morris (2001) supports the idea put forward by Foster (1996), that the application of Bourdieu’s theory of the body and its expressivity, enables individuals to escape the constraints of verbal language in determining how their bodily self is portrayed in their lives. Bourdieu, she notes, believed in the idea of “understanding with one’s body” (2001: 57). The body itself is the point of interface with the world, not the words used to describe it, she argues. That ‘world’, or ‘field’, to use Bourdieu’s terminology, is described by Morris as something akin to a battlefield, where there is a “constant struggle between agents” (2001: 54) to shape the individual.

Foster (1996) endorses the idea of social experience being embodied in the dancers, rather than the dance *per se* fulfilling a social function beyond the class. The constant interplay between dance and social experience is typified, in Morris’s (2001) view, by Martha Graham in her later years, who struggled to transcend bourgeois values, while embracing the bourgeoisie as a source of revenue. For example, by including ballet technique in her modern dance method, she reached

larger audiences, but equally, the extended movement repertoire of the bodies in her company made them more eloquent – more able to communicate on their own terms. Both audience and dancers would feel comfortable with the encoded movements which they recognised, but would be challenged to understand new levels of abstraction and use of metaphor. Any learning experience alters us in some way; what Graham's dances embodied was a new experience to nudge the audience away from social conformity. Thus, in Bourdieu's view, habitus and field are not static positions: they are constantly changing, enabling us to adjust to new demands placed upon us by our ever-changing society. However, unlike Foucault, Bourdieu (in Callewaert 2006) believed that however flexible the social field is, it is underpinned by more deeply embedded principles which transcend the vagaries of cultural differences, whereas Foucault's (1972) structuralist view prevented him from acknowledging the existence of such independent principles, but rather that they are formed through discourse within social fields, "conditioned but not determined by external factors" (Callewaert 2006: 90).

Bourdieu (2005) recognises that our social existence lies, not fixed, but constantly shifting like a piece of flexible material, along the continua between the extremes of the underlying forces - "antinomies" (2005: 55) - which influence habitus and field: determinism – freedom, conditioning – creativity, conscious – unconscious, and individual – society. He suggests that they are basic, elemental, potentially immutable states: external influences try to pin down the habitus while the individual tries to transcend the controlling framework and manipulate his/her habitus. Bourdieu's antinomies are relevant in clarifying the purpose of his concept, 'habitus', as a social device for supporting, containing and protecting the individual, while allowing freedom to create within set parameters. It is not a fixed entity – it is subject to negotiation between the individual and society and in the case of movement, the individual acquires corporeal intelligence.

As the basis of the social 'field', these polarised concepts support and restrict the individual, who requires to negotiate his/her position in the immediate social environment as defined by the system of norms and values which apply to, and are applied by, the players in that environment. These factors contribute to shaping the habitus, described by Bourdieu as our state of embodied history, resulting from the constant interplay of social and cultural factors on our physical, emotional and mental being. They offer a means of understanding the network of forces which the

dancers negotiate in the course of their dance-making, and in turn, reflecting the process they perceive happening in their social lives outwith the class. The habitus, being a “product of (personal) history” (Bourdieu 2005: 54) is determined by past experiences. It is subjected to external forces, which, when internalised, enable the individual to function in a social world. Bourdieu believes that the process ensures continuity and stability in the social and the personal worlds, but avoids an oversimplified relationship of socially dictated norms and values being internalised by the individual. The extrinsic, determining elements are interpreted from an objectivist perspective, which is already modified by past events. Internal forces, which Bourdieu identifies as “free will” (2005: 55), ensure that the absorption of the external is an organic process, not a predetermined mechanistic one, and the outcome is new thought and understanding, which represent freedom for the individual within the limits of the habitus. The habitus, however, can accommodate new learning and alter its state accordingly, to enable the individual to reach new boundaries of experience.

Thomas’s assertion that “the body is treated as a symbol of society” (2003: 70) supports the idea of external forces beyond our control shaping our existence. Customs observed in different cultures are often unique and non-transferable, as Royce (2000), Polhemus (1998) and Blacking (2000) demonstrate. However, Bourdieu’s explanation of ‘habitus’ suggests that social conditioning is subject to individual interpretation and assimilation, so the effect must be modified in each person, serving to make each of us unique. It does not mean that we each have the capacity for totally novel “thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions” (2005: 55). As with the other polarities he identifies, our capacity for creative thought and deed are governed by our understanding of past experiences. We cannot fully escape the parameters of our cultural framework. We may, however, experience different social environments in our lives and internalise their mores, habits and cultural symbols. These, in turn, will modify our understanding of the world and increase our propensity for creative output.

According to Bourdieu, the individual is shaped *initially* through an unconscious process of socialisation, over which (s)he has no control. Social norms are internalised spontaneously, with no conscious will on the part of the subject, in the course of day-to-day living. Gradually, one gains greater awareness of the process

whereby the habitus takes control, forging “coherence and necessity out of accident and contingency” (2005:79). This enables one to adapt and cope with social and physical changes in one’s life. The process suggests a continuous dialectic swing between the unconscious and conscious states, probably throughout life, as the individual adapts, learns and implements new strategies to cope with the physical and social environment.

The interplay between the individual and society can be viewed as an “inside-out” or an “outside-in” process of education (Roper and Davis 2000: 218). The cognitivist approach, adopted by Gardner (1993) is an example of the former – again, Gardner’s notion of ‘pushing boundaries out’ is an appropriate one, where the individual constructs an understanding of the world through the conscious act of computing knowledge in the form of “images and representations” (Roper and Davis 2000: 219) gleaned from life experience. This view is influenced by the work of Kant (1958), Vygotsky (1986) and Chomsky (1975), especially where the acquisition of language is considered to be the main vehicle for cognition. Haley (2007) warns that favouring a “problem-based learning” approach to creativity in the way that education systems tend to do, roots cultural bias in society and stunts creative growth. The alternative, he suggests, is

... question-based learning. Here the premise is that we don’t know, and that we have to listen and learn from a situation before acting. This approach informs a constantly evolving notion of well-being, achieved as a dynamic creative process.  
(Haley 2007: 114)

The opposite, “outside-in” model is the social constructionist one favoured by Bruner (1996), influenced by Foucault and Durkheim, and championed by Beghetto and Kaufman (2007) in the promotion of their concept of popular art being of intrinsic importance to human beings. This is a behaviourist theory, where knowledge of the social world is gained through interaction and discourse. Bruner (1996) claims that the human mind is dependent on culture, for its healthy development.

The apparent conflict between these two models of human learning and socialisation, the ‘computational’ and ‘social’ minds, is resolved by means of the conceptual bridge of language, which is both a means to acquire culture, and a product of culture. Bourdieu’s view of the socialisation and culturalisation of

individuals also represents a midway point between these positions. On one hand, he recognises the subjective reaction of bodies to their social environment (2005: 60); on the other hand, he acknowledges the active, cognitive role of the habitus in learning from experience and adapting future behaviour accordingly. Vygotsky's (1986) work reflects Bourdieu's view. His anti-dualist model places the individual in a protective frame of social, cultural and historical influences in which he / she can negotiate, using language as the mediating tool. Language is acquired through social interaction and cognitive processes in his model, so that, as with Bourdieu's model, communication is a two-way process.

### **2.3.2 Bourdieu's concept of 'social trajectory'**

The social trajectory is defined by Bourdieu (2005: 258) as

the *series of positions* (Bourdieu's italics) successively occupied by the same agent or the same group of agents in successive spaces. .. It is in relation to the corresponding states of the structure of the field that *the meaning* and the social value of biographical events are determined ... Any social trajectory must be understood as a unique manner of travelling through social space, where the dispositions of the habitus are expressed ...

and various types of capital (e.g. economic, social and cultural) are accumulated. Bourdieu (2005: 259) describes it as a "unique manner of travelling through social space, where the dispositions of the habitus are expressed." The individual encounters personal and social experiences like landmarks along the route, and may or may not be responsible for the choices, but as (s)he progresses, the experiences help to shape his/her habitus. Bourdieu (2005) describes different trajectories which intersect to make a unique cultural experience, e.g. ascending or transversal depending on the successful (or otherwise) amassing of capital. The importance of the concept to this thesis is the acknowledgement of the number of choices open to an individual in mapping his/her way through cultural life, which shape identity and determine status in the chosen field. Bourdieu (2005) points out that the level of achievement is not necessarily correlated with one's own efforts but is equally dependent on other people and experiences encountered *en route*.

### 2.3.3 Bourdieu's theory: a caveat

Prior (2005) issues a cautionary note in applying Bourdieu's account of arts perception in society, because there are limitations to its relevance in our postmodern age. The "artistic gaze" or "pure gaze" (Bourdieu 2005: 125, 126) is no longer the exclusive property of an elite group who patronise the arts: everyone has a right of access to museums and galleries, and the performing arts are made as accessible as possible through community and education policies, so audiences are likely to comprise more diverse social representation nowadays. Hence accrual of cultural capital is within the grasp of a much greater proportion of the population. Artistic taste is cultivated by exposure to artistic sources, and few people escape the influence of the mass media in broadening their perception of the arts, although Prior (2005) does not deny that artistic exclusivity is still a divisive feature in society:

Membership of arts institutions, for instance, is clearly a form of cultural distinction for such groups, whose identities are embellished through participation in private previews, openings and other prestige events ... (Prior 2005: 129)

He wishes only to update Bourdieu's idea of social class as an indicator of artistic taste, validating breadth of artistic experience as a criterion of cultural capital:

... the taste for varied cultural styles and forms, from soap opera to opera, can itself be seen as a marker of cultural superiority and difference from more restricted tastes and therefore, another example of the persistence of relations between culture and social stratification. (Prior 2005: 129)

For Prior (2005), this shift in trends of arts consumption marks a transition from a modernist to a postmodernist perspective, where artistic preference – and therefore cultural capital - is less closely correlated to economic capital and is more to do with other limitations on the social 'field', e.g. factors of geography, immigration or investment. In Bourdieu's terms, the crucial factor in determining the relationship between society and the arts is the meeting point of the "history of the fields of production (and) the history of the social space as a whole" (2005: 256) and consequently how they affect each other.

### 2.3.4 Hermeneutic phenomenology and the creative body

The work of Sheets-Johnstone (1994), whose belief that a phenomenological study should be approached with no preconceptions about findings, was a starting-point for my quest to explore the relationship between the dancer and the dance. In her seminal text, "The Phenomenology of Dance" (Sheets, 1966), she states that

There is an experience, and the experience must be had in order to be described; the trick is to develop a method of description which takes nothing for granted, and which does not falsify or reduce the effect of the experience itself.

(Sheets 1966: 11)

She emphasises the immediacy of the lived experience, be it dance or any other phenomenon, whereby one cannot describe it until after one has experienced it, and thereafter, one's future knowledge of the phenomenon will be built on this experience.

However, in reality, our culture shapes our perceptions and we cannot separate ourselves from that experience (Thomas 2003), so that preconceived ideas are inevitable. Beecher (2005) explains how it is through the human body that we experience the world and establish a relationship with it. Context and past experience modify our understanding of it – the hermeneutic influence (Gadamer 1975). Bearing Williams and Bendelow's (1998) historical account in mind that it is also the instrument through which we express our social status and history, brings into question the modernist claim of the existence of a 'naturalistic' body, most commonly associated with Isadora Duncan and her contemporaries (Daly 1995) and the subsequent flourishing of the modern dance movement. How natural Duncan's dance movement was, is a matter of debate: borne out of her misgivings about the harmful effects of classical ballet on the body, it was modelled on her perception of how ancient Greek dancers might have moved, based on still images on pottery reliefs, and then recreated on her body, which, in turn, was subject to the social conditioning of the late Victorian era (Seroff 1972). From a phenomenological perspective, however, the experience of dancing Duncan's technique would be just as valid for her followers' exploration of their expressivity as current trends which influence community dancers in the modern world. There appears to be, in both of



these situations, a merging of what Husserl (1970) termed 'Körper' and 'Leib', the former referring to the physical body, and the latter the experiencing, interpreting mind of the dancer – the 'percipient', to use Langer's (1953) term.

The 'desirable' aspects of culture are identified and can be accounted for through the Foucauldian concept of "discourse", described by Kendal and Wickham (1999: 34-39) as extending beyond linguistic description and explanation of life events. The artistic material which the body creates is communicable visually and kinaesthetically: the visual component endorses Simmel's (nineteenth century) theory (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 15,16) on the importance of the eye as an instrument of interaction, while the kinaesthetic suggests an introspective glimpse Fowler (2000: 3). Dance is therefore a medium for learning: one can see it, copy it and feel it. Foucault (1994:81) also adopts the eye as a metaphor in describing the subjective process of learning about oneself (using the inner eye) and about the world one inhabits (using the outer eye). In a modern frame of reference, one can imagine instances when other senses such as touch and sound might be more valid vehicles for the learning process, but generally, through the senses, the body becomes a discursive instrument, through which we acquire and transmit information about our social condition and conditioning.

Constructing a possible interpretation of such human experience is the task of phenomenological research, according to Van Manen (1990). Adkins (2004) concurs, adding a hermeneutic element to the understanding of self in our changing world, whereby the 'percipient' – to use Langer's (1953) term – actively reflects on her/his own experience to make sense of the actions of the perceived. Thus the researcher encounters Heidegger's (1996) concept of being-in-the-world – a living, organic, unfolding experience which is unique and valid for every individual and interpreted in light of the percipient's own experience. This is the position adopted by McNamara (1999), which was another milestone for me in the formulation of this study as a hermeneutic phenomenological one. It is explained in more depth in Chapter 3.

To link this with the ontological principle of my study, I refer to Shapiro (1998), who expresses interest

in the way dancers make sense of their own existence; that is, how they reflect and interpret the existential dimensions of their lives as artists in contemporary society. (Shapiro 1998:106)

In common with Merleau-Ponty (2000), she believes that by delving deep into the mind of an individual, one can access their understanding of the world – an essentially phenomenological approach. Shapiro adopts a monistic approach, envisaging mind and body working in unison to achieve that comprehension.

### 2.3.5 Recent debate and research

The following studies dwell on the organic, introspective experience of dancers seeking self-awareness at both physiological and spiritual levels. They consider how such a deeply personal feeling can be beneficial to one’s functioning in the wider community: by paying attention to the details of her/his feelings in dance, a dancer can gain a clearer perception of her / his world. Their relevance to my study lies in their philosophical position, as shown in the following table:

Table 2.3: Current debate and research on Moulding the Social Body

| Author        | Methodological approach                                   | Sample  | Data collection methods                          | Key findings  |
|---------------|---|---|--|---|
| Clarke (2007) | Description and debate with reference to Heidegger (1971) | Participants in dance classes she has seen and taught: non-specific numbers | observation                                      | Reflections on mind-body unity and proprioception   |
| Engel (2008b) | phenomenology   | One dance – possibly the author herself                                     | Single case study, narrative in the first person | Reflection: the body is modified by aesthetic experience but can use its dynamism to transcend cultural restrictions. |

(i) Gill Clarke is a dance artist and Patron of Foundation for Community Dance. In an account of the “mindfulness” (2007: 35) of the dancing body, she laments, with reference to her own community-based creative dance experience, the modern tendency (in western society, at least) of over-exercising our analytical brains, in seeking fulfilment externally in our world, at the expense of introspection and greater understanding of how we function as intelligent, sentient beings in that world. Clarke believes that our inclination towards external goals harms our social relationships as well as our relationship with the physical world. She sees dance as a way of reuniting mind and body and understanding our place in our social and physical environment, in keeping with Heidegger’s (1996) concept of “being-in-the-world”. We are a part of it; we cannot exist in isolation from it. Clarke does not claim that dance in any form is a ‘cure-all’ for every dysfunctional relationship between people and the worlds they inhabit, but she does believe that dancers have much to offer as models of “embodied minds” and “mindful bodies” (2007: 6), honed through the process of dance.

Referring to her own childhood experiences of exploring her environment, Clarke acknowledges that the activity promotes intellectual development, especially dance in which the expression of the dancer is valued, and the dancer engages with the creative process. This total engagement of ‘self’, which she experienced as a child, is an example of Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) concept of ‘flow’, as a key to achieving happiness.

Perception is a means of learning about the world, which, Clarke claims, has been too often associated with passive absorption of information, whereas now there is ample neurological evidence that it involves active engagement with stimuli, and not necessarily only through vision. Referring to a West African culture, she describes how they esteem the “proprioceptive quality of balance”: the quality of their movement enhances their status in the community. Their cultural practice ascribes to the properties which underpin the philosophical beliefs of Husserl (1970) and Merleau-Ponty (2000), that we are inseparable from the world we inhabit, that we engage with it through a synthesis of mind and body, i.e. a holistic, anti-dualist model of our place in the world. Dancers are well placed to demonstrate this as I have explained with reference to Morris (2001) and Bourdieu (2005).

(ii) Engel (2008b) uses phenomenology to explore the experience of a dancer undergoing physical treatment to release tensions which were restricting movement. Over the course of the treatments, the dancer unleashed her thoughts and described the physical and emotional sensations of release – of being able to walk taller, swing her arms more freely and enjoy her new-found energy. She experienced greater sensitivity to her environment – the food she ate, the sounds she heard, the details of her world which she saw afresh - and described it all in a spontaneous, uninhibited way.

The point Engel makes is that we interface with our world through our bodies, and interact with it through movement. The quality of the dynamics we employ gives colour and depth to our experience, and shapes our understanding of ourselves. However, she recognises that “(m)ovement is anchored” by both personal repertoire and cultural framework although we are free to use our senses and cognition to interpret our world. Engel draws on the work of Merleau-Ponty (2000) to describe the link between what we do and see, and how we interpret the experience – our perceptions of the world. It presents an existential view of how the lived body can be receptive to, and modified by, aesthetic communication, and she believes it is as relevant to specialist forms of movement, e.g. sport or ballet, as it is to everyday experience of movement. Engel believes that the body’s “dynamic powers” (2008b: 115) enable it to be a very creative instrument when given the right conditions.

Inevitably there is the question of how an idiosyncratic account can benefit the field of knowledge, but Engel justifies it on the grounds of its depth. Her purpose in exploring the issue of the body’s creativity using phenomenology is to “stimulate dialogue” (2008b: 115) around the connection between body and mind and the experience of being-in-the-world. I believe there is much to learn from Engel’s work about how much one can extrapolate from a phenomenological study.

### 2.3.6 Summary of Recent Debate and Research

Both of these studies make reference to body-mind connectedness, the concept of a monistic philosophical position championed by Parviainen (1998) and Thomas (2003) among others to describe how we engage with our world, namely holistically. Engel’s deeply focused case study seeks to understand how body and mind working together allow creative energy to be released. This is where it resonates with my

study: the dancers in my research were experimenting with their movement repertoire, extending it within the safety of the class but feeling the immediacy of the lived experience. The experience allowed creativity to be nurtured. Although Clarke's is not a piece of evidence-based research, it is the result of self-reflection as a dancer and teacher and informal observation of, and feedback from, her class participants. She presents a broadly sweeping picture of her thoughts on the community-based creative dance she has taught, which contrasts with Engels' sensitive and introspective account, but both studies share with mine, the belief that the kinaesthetic experience of creative movement (by my definition, a prerequisite for creating dance) is the starting-point for greater understanding of self.

## 2.4 Adolescent Development

Two aspects of personal development emerge from the literature, which I view as particularly relevant to my study: a) the cognitive, and b) the social. The interplay of these two aspects is where the individual discovers his / her uniqueness as well as his / her need to conform.

### 2.4.1 The Cognitive Perspective

The cognitive view is based on stages of intellectual development which affect “learning, memory, language and reasoning” (Byrnes 2003: 228). The capacity to acquire language for communication facilitates these, so that knowledge and ideas can be exchanged over time and built upon through dialogue with others. Cognition-based theories (e.g. Piaget 1954, Gardner 1993) present an image of an objective ‘self’ making sense of his / her world in a rational manner.

There is evidence to suggest that as metacognitive insight is acquired, young adolescents become better able to make decisions which affect them (Byrnes 2003). This is facilitated at a neurological level and metacognitively by being able to cope with the assimilation of knowledge. Byrnes notes that prior to that stage, they

... start out as objectivists who usually assume that all knowledge is certain and can be learned quickly by observation. (Byrnes 2003: 239)

This corresponds to Piaget’s (1954) stage of Formal Operations, in which individuals acquire the capacity for abstract thought beyond the realms of his / her actual experience. (S)he can organise knowledge and think deductively, according to his theory of cognitive development (1954).

Building on Piaget’s theory which, Gardner (2006) points out, is outdated now, Gardner presents a much more complex model of the development of intelligence(s), whereby the range and acquisition of intelligence types is modified by social and environmental factors. He agrees with Piaget that in the teenage years, individuals acquire “more abstract forms of reasoning, of speculation, and of

dealing with the hypothetical and the theoretical” (p.132) but takes into account the effect of their widening social circle bringing new influences to be accommodated, and deeper introspection concurrent with physical changes. These factors influence cognitive development. In this way, Gardner provides a ‘stepping stone’ between cognitive and social theories of development, while maintaining his primarily cognitive position.

#### 2.4.2 The Social Perspective

The social origins of human development and their implications for cognition are championed by Vygotsky (1986). In his model, the purpose of communication is to promote social contact, from which the individual can assume agency in shaping her/his self identity. The self, as subject, can control his/her experience of community, and conform - or not - to the cultural milieu. Moshman (1999) agrees that adolescence is a social construct in western society rather than a physical or cognitive state of development. The subjective “I” is gaining control. Through dialogue, one can explore, refine and share the constructs which help to make sense of one’s world. Adolescence is a time of “peer-focused orientation” (Moshman 1999:5), when young people enter the first phase of adulthood. During this phase, they explore the issue of their own identity through self-reflection and comparison with their peers (Damon and Hart 1991; Moshman 1999; Raby 2007). Issues of conformity become important, and self-understanding follows as the subsequent sections of this chapter explain.

#### 2.4.3 Self-understanding in Childhood and Adolescence

Cognitive growth enables children to think in more abstract terms about factors affecting their sense of ‘being in the world’ – an essentially constructivist approach (Hartup 1996, Moshman 1999). Over time, Moshman adds (1999:88), their self-concepts are modified by cultural influences through the media, social interaction with peers and the consequent choices they make. The Foucauldian social constructionist view, favoured by Raby (2007), suggests that children’s social development is a passive process aimed at achieving an acceptable norm of adulthood as perceived by those with influence over them.

The middle ground is presented by Hartup (1996), influenced by Vygotskian theory of cognitive growth occurring in a social context. In Hartup's (1996) view, the process of learning through interaction gives rise to mutual understanding, which contributes to cognitive growth. On one hand, a person has to acquire communication skills before (s)he can learn from others and develop cognitively. On the other hand, (s)he has to have the cognitive skills to learn in order to acquire communication skills. Hartup believes that though much learning might arise from observation and imitation, it is also dependent on the acquisition of language, which can be manipulated to allow negotiation.

The role of culture in shaping self-understanding is consistent with Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a negotiated framework in which the individual can envisage him/herself in relation to other people who cast influence on the framework. Socialisation and cognition complement each other in the development of self-understanding.

The transition from an objective understanding of self in the world, characterised by the detached, passive 'me', to a subjective position of 'I' as active agent in 'my' world is presented by Damon and Hart (1991) as a point when the individual requires to have sufficient cognitive skill to enable introspection and reflective thinking. The individual can then assume some control over her/his identity and how (s)he perceives her/his place in society. This is consistent with Gardner's (1999) cognitive approach to acquiring social intelligence (p.21). Best (2007: 49) also stresses the importance of adopting a subjective perspective on one's life, where the individual is in control:

Subjectivity provides us with a sense of self and a site through which to make sense of our relation to the world... and identity is integral to this sense of self. ... we are constituted through shared, constructed, available subject positions with which we identify in order to give our unstable identities coherence ... Identity thus arises through identifications with (and against) other people, based on shared characteristics. Identifications arise from socially created categories that are occupied in concrete conditions and with material effects and consequences. Age can be seen as one such subject position.

(Best 2007: 49)

On this basis, it seems that acquiring this subjective position is part of the maturation process, and that it could possibly enhance self-understanding.



#### 2.4.4 Self-esteem

Moshman (1999:78) identifies five stages in gaining a sense of the value of individual identity, i.e. gaining self-esteem:

1. establishing self-other distinctions
2. establishing a behaviour style
3. establishing self as an individual defined in terms of a unique set of ideas or values
4. co-ordinating self-esteem
5. transforming the “labile self” – constantly modifying itself to improve self-image.

These are consistent with Hartup’s and Bourdieu’s images of the negotiated ‘self’ which uses new knowledge to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances. The self as a “rational agent” (Moshman 1999:80) is constructed, and empowers the adolescent to take increasing responsibility for his/her social development. This is consistent with Gardner’s (2006) acknowledgement that the widening social circle influences the adolescent’s cognitive growth: there is more pressure to develop laterally at a time when the academic system is demanding focused, linear growth. However, there is also a need to assert oneself as an individual despite affiliations to any given group, as Moshman’s (1998) first point on the above list testifies. The feeling of “distinctness” (Damon and Hart 1991:149) arises from the need to break from controlling influences and explore new social territory. They warn that the inability to break away can result in unhealthy development, as in anorexics who cannot escape a strong controlling factor, because it inhibits the formation of their self-concept: they cannot envisage or appreciate their own individuality, so their self-esteem suffers.

There is a fine line between desire to gain peer group approval and the need for autonomy and personal identity, and a stable, cohesive family can be one source of support at this turbulent time (Polivy et al 2003). Perhaps the breakdown of the nuclear family is a contributory factor in the number of teenagers who have difficulty in balancing family and social influences, consequently preventing them from moving forward as healthy individuals (mentally and physically). Flannery et al (2003) suggest that “(l)evels of social structure include individual, peer, family, situational, and community contexts (and that) each of those levels may contain

significant risk and protective factors ...” (p.515), recognising that apart from family functionality, other sources of support and influence in a young person’s life help her/him to cultivate a positive self-identity, secure in its habitus (Bourdieu 2005). My study focuses on one potential support structure for individuals in a community, and catches glimpses of other external influences from their social field.

#### 2.4.5 Relevant Research

The literature above indicates that conformity with peers is a strong influence in teenage lives at a time when they attach less value to family as a source of support. Positive peer relationships and positive self-identity reinforce each other, while the opposite is also likely to be true, creating pressure to conform. The following studies explore the extent to which acceptance by a peer group is valued by distinct groups of adolescents and helps to shape self-identity, hence their relevance to my research. The following table outlines them:

Table 2.4: Relevant research on Adolescent Development

| Author                  | Methodological approach | Sample                                 | Data collection methods  | Key findings  |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| Gordon and Grant (1997) | Qualitative survey      | Male and female adolescents (n = 1634) | Open-ended questionnaire | Factors affecting self-esteem identified (see lists in text)  |
| Riley and Cahill (2005) | Social constructionist  | Young women (n = 15)                   | Focus group discussion   | Individuals valued group membership, but status had to be judged ‘authentic’: group ethos as important as outward appearance. |

(i) Gordon and Grant (1997) undertook a survey of teenagers in Glasgow, aimed at discovering how they felt about a number of issues affecting their self-esteem. This was an open-ended questionnaire, completed by 1634 adolescents, male and female, of school age, which explored the factors which made them feel positively or negatively about themselves and their social and family experiences. The purpose of eliciting these insights into their emotional states was to provide a basis for co-

operation between agencies providing support for that age group. The authors found that positive feelings were derived from:

- helping others
- being helped and trusted by others
- having shared interests with others
- having interests outside school and family
- belonging to a social group (of peers)
- experiencing success
- having a supportive family
- having freedom to make own choices (having some control over own life)

Negative emotions were derived from:

- negative body image
- social rejection (leading to low confidence level, isolation and loneliness)
- having no-one prepared to help or support one
- having no-one to whom one could offer help or support (feeling worthless)
- having no shared interests
- pressures at school
- pressures at home
- pressure from peers
- restrictions on freedom.

The authors were able to glean detailed pictures of these young people's self-image, and, from that, their level of self-esteem. Their findings are consistent with those of Buhrmester (1998), Laursen (1998), Hartup (1998) and Moshman (1999). In common with these sources, they found gender differences in attitudes towards friendships: girls are more concerned than boys about peer approval, and form communal relationships which provide support. Boys are more likely than girls to form a friendship with someone who enhances their status. Both are capable of feeling negative about body image and about external forces which restrict their freedom. Both need a vehicle for self-expression and need to experience group identity (Gordon and Grant 1997; Laursen 1998).

Negative body image is one which is often associated with dance. Thomas (2003), Green (2004) and Hämäläinen (2004) agree that body image is an important factor in feelings of wellbeing in western society and conformity to some externally determined ideal can be a source of anxiety. Thomas (2003) agrees with Bourdieu (1984) that the body has become a type of "physical capital" (p. 56) which continues to evolve to meet the demands of society and class-consciousness, though no

longer in the way that Weber (2008) or Laban (1976) observed through physical labour. Its social construction now stems from our “consumer-oriented culture” (Thomas 2003: 23) which pressurises us to conform. It follows that inability to conform will impact negatively on the individual and conversely, that successful conformity promotes positive feelings.

Gordon and Grant (1997) found that the concept of ‘success’ was not just about winning or being the best at something, but about achieving new goals, pushing themselves to new limits and mastering new skills. Hartup (1998: 214) also notes how close relationships can have a positive effect on “task-mastery and creativity” through mutual support. Such relationships are founded on trust, which Etheridge Woodson (2007) found was a critical factor in bridging the gap between young people and youth workers in her community theatre project. Trust, being “a fragile thing that ultimately is multilayered” (2007: 294), can only be built up over time if it is to be enduring and reciprocal between community, the staff and the young people with whom they work. Stable relationships and trust, created in a consistent setting, can help to engender feelings of security.

The shared findings of these authors suggests that adolescents value social interaction, freedom of expression, the feeling of achievement, a clear self-identity and a significant degree of autonomy in their lives. Without them, they experience low self-esteem.

The provision of community-based activities, which can give them the chance to experience all these within a supportive framework and to celebrate success by performing, could be seen as highly advantageous to their functioning as social beings. As in my study, there is a need for these young people to find a outlet for self-expression in an environment with clear parameters to give them support and acknowledgement of their uniqueness as well as room to be individuals.

(ii) Riley and Cahill (2005), investigated the meaning and importance which young women in Glasgow attach to their tattoos and body piercings. This paper examines the feeling of belonging which these young women experience from their body art, and its impact on their self-esteem. The central premise is that the outer appearance reflects the inner self, and, given the symbolism of body art in historical and ethnic contexts, in this study it answers the need for a sense of identity, triggered by the

insecurity of modern, urban, industrial society. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital, they identified the acquisition of "subcultural capital" (2005: 266) as a goal sought by these recipients of body art. Gaining this subcultural capital required them to have the "knowledge and social skills" relevant to ensure successful interaction with other body art aficionados.

Fifteen young women between the ages of 16 and 31 were invited to attend one of two focus group sessions and, using discourse analysis, the authors sought to understand how the participants constructed their identity through membership of the subculture of body piercing protagonists. Mere membership of the group is seen to be insufficient: *authentic* membership was acquired through the reasons given for having body art. Those who had it done just for the sake of fashion and other light-hearted motives were not considered by the focus groups to be "cool" (2005: 275), and so lacked authenticity in their view. Authentic membership came from more deeply-held beliefs that body art demonstrated the individual's level of bravery and independence. These were regarded as positive and honourable attributes which justified membership of the subculture. The participants saw it as a means of breaking away from stereotyped notions of femininity, which, in their view, include "fragility, dependence and passivity" (2005: 266). Using a social constructionist approach, they came to the conclusion that, through actively choosing to have body art, they felt "empowered" (2005: 269), creative and independent.

The parallel between this study and mine lies in the search of a group of young people to find self identity, esteem and a sense of belonging, through an art form which they find aesthetically pleasing and fulfilling. Instead of having their art form displayed on the surface of their bodies, it became visible through the medium of movement. Their compositions, through practice, bore the hallmarks of a signature, as surely as if their names were tattooed on their skin. The dances were evidence of their individuality, but belonging to the group lent a sense of identity. Approval of the rest of the group was important and added authenticity to their feeling of membership. Identification of individuals outside the dance group are more problematic than that of the body art focus groups: outside the class, the dancers were less obvious, and the purpose of my study was to identify how they could use their class experience to shape their social interactions, thus making visible the effects of their chosen art. In this way, they could feel the sense of empowerment

and enhancement of self-esteem and identity, as did Riley and Cahill's body art recipients.

#### 2.4.6 Summary of Research

Overall, these studies (Gordon and Grant 1997; Riley and Cahill 2005) demonstrate how self-understanding, identity and esteem are essential ingredients of a happy adolescence and identify the factors which contribute to these states. Trust and the feeling of acceptance were important, and by acquiring the cultural capital which identified them as members of a group, their self-esteem was reinforced. To that extent, there are strong similarities between them and my study, but my aim was to reach further, to find out how the dancers felt this strengthened sense of self contributed to their sense of social wellbeing in their relationships beyond the confines of the dance class.

## 2.5 Interaction in the Community

### 2.5.1 Definitions of 'Community'

'Community' is a pivotal concept in my study. Whether it refers to a geographical area consisting of disparate individuals, or a scattered group united by a common interest, it can still be a device for political manipulation and control, just as much as a system of protection and promotion of members' interests. On a less cynical note, one should also recognise a sense of responsibility attached to the membership of either definition of the term: responsibility for ensuring continuity and consequently stability by upholding the (possibly) unwritten rules of membership.

Ames (2006) highlights the problem of identifying the true nature of the word 'community' in Wales, where she works, and where there is no direct translation of the word in the Welsh language.

Anglo-American urban ideology has become the standard by which everything is assessed and the only possible lens through which we are supposed to understand the world.

(Ames 2006: 16)

The closest equivalent words in Welsh actually translate as 'neighbourhood' and 'society', which, Ames points out, do not equate to exactly the same phenomenon as 'community', in the way it is understood by the majority of people. In seeking a definition, she raises the questions,

In what way can people living in the same place be said to be forming a single unit? Is there something more than a geography of chance connecting them to each other? Shouldn't there be some denotation of belonging? Some mention of responsibilities? (Ames 2006: 16)

She tells us that this feeling of responsibility for each other, of sharing and of bonds, is conveyed in various different Welsh words, depending on the circumstances being described. It is easy to imagine how these subtly different meanings could have evolved in a rural setting, in "close knit communities" (Harris and Hastings 2006: 30), where the inhabitants share mutual purpose in life and close

relationships, though not always close physical proximity. The same applies historically to the rural area where my research is set, but without the linguistic isolation. In a contemporary urban setting, the opposite situation can prevail, e.g. where next door neighbours can be estranged from each other because their social or professional paths do not cross. Harris and Hastings' study (2006: 30) reveal this "lack of social connections" to be a contributory factor to feelings of insecurity. Where people live, they found, impacts significantly on their choices of activities and patterns of social interaction, which are weakened by social mobility (Barone 2006).

### 2.5.2 Community dance experiences

Dances are, as Royce (1980: 7,8) explains, interlinked with the society in which they occur. The meaning changes if they are removed from their original context. She observed that "(d)ance can never meaningfully be divorced from culture" (1980: 219), which is true inasmuch as it can never be done in a cultural vacuum. Be it social dance or dance as art, it takes place in some physical and sociocultural environment, and is performed by people. Williams (1989) misquotes Royce's statement as "Dance can never meaningfully be divorced from *its* culture" (my italics), which gives the statement a very different meaning, implying that types of dance are culture-bound; that a dance cannot be performed outside its own cultural enclave. By that token, a Greek dance, for example, cannot meaningfully be danced by Scottish dancers and vice versa. In support of Williams' misquote, a Chinese dance teacher told members of a class in which I was participating, that no Chinese teacher would ever impart all of the cultural nuances of the dance to a non-Chinese class: he / she would always hold back something of the cultural essence to maintain the cultural purity and mystery. I would argue that it is probably impossible for someone from one culture to understand and reproduce faithfully the nuances of another culture in any art form, but that, by making the attempt, they can go some way towards bridging the cultural gap and establishing a basis for cultural exchange and learning. By contrast, "Passport Project", a programme run successfully in New York and showcased at an International Dance Congress (2006), endeavours to cross the cultural divide through dance as well as other art forms and claims an acceptable level of authenticity. For example, the delegates showed film of mixed ethnic classes performing Georgian dance taught by a Georgian teacher, and Indian dance taught by an Indian teacher to non-Indian



community dancers. They claimed a high degree of authenticity for the end result, and this was supported by a Serbian dancer from Los Angeles, who taught her native dance to second generation Serbian Americans along with non-Serbs. She claimed that there was no differentiation in the end result, between those with the cultural insight and those without. Further evidence of this was the fact that, at the same Dance Congress, dancers from Canada and The Netherlands performed Indian dance, and the fact that they were not of Indian origin did not detract from the authentic feel of the performances according to audience members, who applauded them warmly and commented favourably. Royce (1980) comments that

(p)erforming dances in another culture is also an excellent way of eliciting aesthetic judgments as those native to the tradition correct, criticize or praise your performance ... (but) one's own cultural biases tend to leak (into the performance) ... (Royce 1980:18)

Therefore she questions the purity while applauding the effort. I would add that, while the dance might be viewed as authentic by the audience, the experience of the dancer, who is from another culture, might differ from that of a dancer who is from that culture. On these grounds, I contend that Williams' version of Royce's statement, that "dance can never be divorced from *its* culture" (1989: 197) which might have been plausible in 1989, would not be applicable in 2006, whereas Royce's original statement does maintain credibility in my view.

Houston (2005) examines what community dance (especially creative dance) can realistically claim to offer participants, and, more basically, whether the assumption that change is good, is morally justifiable. Her scepticism is focused on claims that involvement in community activities is empowering for participants, and that the opposite, i.e. that non-participation is disempowering, is an equally suspect claim. Community participation could equally well lead to mass conditioning and manipulation of the population – a sentiment which resonates with Boal's (1979) position and Lomas (1998) regarding the arts in society – so we are left with the question of whether, in the context of community art, we are really any more than pawns in a political game. This resonates with Williams and Bendelow's (1998) explanation of how popular tastes were cultivated in Nazi Germany (p.21). In response to a statement emanating from the Foundation for Community Dance (FCD) conference on youth dance in 2000, Houston notes that empowerment is

perceived by some among the FCD, as deriving from active engagement in the process of creating:

Here it is believed that active participation – doing, making, sharing, watching, reflecting – is fundamental to the personal, social and artistic development of young people. Importantly, empowerment comes from the feeling of ownership of the process and product.

(Houston 2005: 170)

Referring to a specific local government dance initiative for young people in an English urban environment, Houston (2005: 169) suggests that it was not so much an empowering process, as one of *containing* a potentially rebellious section of the community. She also contends that whereas dancers might gain confidence from involvement in community dance, that does not necessarily equate to empowerment. In another project, for elderly people, she notes the project director's belief that "empowerment encompassed the notion of advocacy" (2005: 172), i.e. that the participants not only grew in confidence, but should be able to give voice to their sense of ownership and achievement in what they had created.

In contrast to Houston and Boal, Lomas (1999), a believer in empowerment through community dance, endorses the view that community-based creative dance has life-affirming properties which can impact in the long term on the dancers' lives, on the grounds that an individual's interaction with his /her own personal identity through dance will lead to individual empowerment, which in turn gives rise to community empowerment. One of the participants claimed that it had only been 'enabling' but not 'empowering'. This suggests an exaggeration and generalisation on the part of the providers who have to seek credibility with funders, but even those for whom dance is not empowering, have reason to be pleased with being 'enabled'.

At this point I refer back to my definitions of 'community dance' and 'creative dance' (Chapter 1 p.10). Community-based creative dance is a voluntary activity, making it different from creative dance in school, which might be an elective but is still a formal part of their education, which changes dancers' relationship with the creative process: there is some degree of compulsion to produce and perform, and there is a requirement for formal assessment. Some independent dance specialists manage to combine technique with creativity (Oliver 2004), maintaining a balance between purity of dance form in its historical context, and the needs of a modern

community. McConnell (2006) acknowledges this in relation to his own dance roots, which reflect the changes in demand of the clientele he seeks to serve. Covering both contemporary and traditional dance in his delivery, he observes that

... times are a-changing and the mobility of labour has created different scenarios both in terms of employment, career and what lies at the centre of geographic communities. But just as language needs to change to develop, dance also needs a perspective which informs us about where we exist in an historical timeframe. ... (T)he Indian word 'parampara' means literally 'one foot on the ground, one foot moving', and in this phrase I see huge potential for understanding our past while at the same time forging a dynamic future. (McConnell 2006 14,15)

This seems a very appropriate model of dance in the community – sensitive to its historical and geographical context, and responsive to changes in the population it serves.

### 2.5.3 Culture and policies in arts provision

Ness (2004: 124) states that “culture is embodied ... (In our actions) we participate in and reinforce culture, and we also create it,” reflecting Merleau-Ponty's (2000) and Bourdieu's (2005) belief that we contribute to our own cultural experience through subjectivity and intersubjectivity. We should therefore have responsibility for ensuring that culture is a positive influence in our lives. The opposite view is presented by Skeggs (2004: 78), writing about the “cultural intermediaries” who decide which cultural knowledge is of value to us.

Arguably, the two major influences in the shaping of our artistic leanings are education and the distribution of wealth in our society. Fowler's (2000: 3) view of state-intervention in culture, and how it is acquired (through exams), presents an elitist image of policy-making through the education system, consistent with Freire's (1972), criticism of the meritocratic society, which, he believed, presents the Western world as being exclusive and closed to anyone who does not fit the middle-class model of citizenship. Traditionally, the education system has been responsible for perpetuating social stratification: by reproducing the most successful groups in society - those which prize culture as a symbol of their status according to Fowler (2000: 11, 12) - education gives a value to culture and creates a cultural elite. The perpetuation happens thus: the success of the education system is

judged by the acquisition of qualifications, which, Fowler (2000: 14) claims, creates a climate of competition. In a competition, there are winners and losers, so, if culture is a product of education, some people are going to be excluded from the most highly valued forms of it. Educational achievements in that cultural climate become a commodity, to which not everyone can aspire. But who decides what aspects are to be valued? Usually it will be those who have 'won' in the education system. Boal (1979: 127) agrees that education can also be used as a coercive force. Superficially, at least, the aim of our current education system is to liberate through acquisition of knowledge and formation of attitude and opinion, coupled with the confidence to communicate these - Brinson's (1993) interpretation - although sceptics could still interpret this as *cultivation* of attitude and opinion through *manipulation*.

This view is endorsed by Williams and Bendelow (1998: 29) in their discussion of power and knowledge within western society and how these are assimilated in the history and experience which bodies acquire (Foucault 1994). Merleau-Ponty's (2000) and Bourdieu's (2005) models of people being proactive in acquiring culture have to be viewed against this historical background. In their view, people make choices about their cultural pursuits, although what is on offer to them might be determined by social conditioning. Whether they prefer football to rugby, disco-dancing to ballet, or darts to dressage, has much to do with the prevalent culture of their social field. Skeggs (2004: 86) believes that the working-class habitus is "shaped by necessity and resignation." She asks how members of that social stratus can escape their predestiny, experience "entitlement" – the right to own and shape their cultural habitus, and have it accepted by the wider social milieu. The makers of community policy, Skeggs (2004: 86) believes, have the power to grant this opportunity by enabling people to engage in conscious action within the framework of democracy. Influenced by Bourdieu, Cook (2000) believes that

everyone has the *right and capacity*, given the right social and educational conditions, to attain to the highest levels of cultivated experience (Cook 2000: 178)

provided that he/she can break free of the restraints imposed by the "socially dominant dilettantes of culture" (2000: 178). Such restraints include sponsorship of the arts, which enable those with financial power to influence the artistic exposure of

the masses. Oliver (2004) describes how, under the Arts and Businesses scheme, sponsors could potentially influence the artistic direction of a dance company, and even the appointment of specific dancers. One would expect that our education in a democracy such as the UK would equip us with sufficient artistic capital (Bourdieu 2005), to make informed choices about the art we wish to consume or to create, without “dumbing down” the populist choice (Cook 2000:178).

Boal (1979) presents a very cynical view of the role of the arts in an affective educational domain, moulding the populace into compliant consumers who do not realise that they are being manipulated, instead of empowered, for political ends. The arts can be political issues either as vote-winners at times of elections, or, as Boal (1979) demonstrates, they can be attempts at influencing public perception of society and their place in it. Tracing a broad historical perspective of theatre arts, from Aristotle to Machiavelli, Hegel and Brecht, Boal (1979) postulates how, historically, theatre was used as a device by the ruling classes to subjugate the masses. He notes (1979: 127) that even in the hands of ‘educators’, the arts can be a coercive force. The educators are as much agents of the system as liberators from it. They, themselves, are products of it.

Thomas (2003: 51) claims that

(p)ostmodern theories in the 1980s stressed the collapsing of the traditional binaries between high art and popular culture,

a position brought about by active artists and theorists like Brinson (1993), who, as a practitioner in the 1980s, strove to break down social barriers in the arts, through education. Oliver (2004) addresses Brinson’s justification of dance as cultural, personal and social education, delivered through both formal and informal channels of education. Central to his thesis is the belief that dance in these contexts enhances cultural awareness, social skills and personal identity.

The shifting sands of culture within society ensure that the needs, which management seek to meet (or manipulate), are constantly changing. Such influences as immigration policy, employment and consequent socio-economic status might alter the needs as perceived by managers and consumers alike, and will be reflected in the artistic climate. Harris, speaking for the Scottish Council

Foundation (SCF) at a conference, *Communities and Wellbeing in Scotland* (2006), uses the metaphor, “flocks of birds”, to describe the trends of population and cultural change, whereby people can migrate freely to different areas but tend to settle in homogeneous groups. Using that model, planners can “allow for unpredictability, encourage and enable, rather than control” people in communities. The aim of the model being promoted by the SCF is to

give communities a central role in the development of local and national measures to improve their health and wellbeing  
(Harris and Hastings 2006: 6)

In dance provision, this power shift has been manifested in more resources being made available for community projects (Scottish Arts Council 2004), giving people the choice to participate or not. Companies aim to remain relevant to the social issues of contemporary audiences, as well as the previously-mentioned funding concerns. For example, in recent years, Scottish Ballet has undergone a change of artistic direction to become what the Scottish Arts Council deem a more marketable product, more in tune with what, they perceive, today’s dance audiences wish to see.

Foucault (1994) observes that such changes are consistent with a post-structuralist view of society, where subjectivity has gained more credibility, and a more democratic approach to the arts prevails, at least superficially, among political decision-makers. The rights of individuals to express their views and interpret art according to their own codes of reference should be upheld. Foucault (1994: 449) suggests that “multiple transformations” of rationality should not be considered a threat to the accepted social order, but rather that there is room for many forms of social narrative to run concurrently; they do not have to run consecutively, as the structuralist view would maintain. Considering the arts as “social glue” as they were described by a conference delegate (*Communities and Wellbeing in Scotland*, Sept. 2006) is an over-simplified model, which fails to explain why, in my experience, community arts groups tend to consist of socially homogeneous members, and ethnic minorities are often poorly represented in them, at least in south-east Scotland, where this study takes place. Multiple narratives should have room to thrive in their own right. If the aim of an arts group is to promote a singular cultural identity, homogeneity might be inevitable, but if community policy aims to integrate minority groups, then diversity of culture, race, age, etc. should be accommodated.

Ideally, directives for community policy are drawn up by the Scottish Executive and interpreted by local authorities in ways which fit the needs of their populations. These are inevitably moulded by the political forces, which have power over the budget, and the community workers become the buffer zone between policy-enforcers and participants. They have the task of ensuring that the activities fit the needs of both parties. As Purcell (2001) explains,

Community workers often have to follow outcome driven social planning activities ...(being) employed by a bureaucracy, (and) whilst trying to promote an empowering agenda, require the ability to 'look both ways at the same time' ... (Purcell 2001: 17)

To give an example of the process, Francis (2001), who is a community keep-fit instructor, describes the process by which she reconciles the political directive with the personal needs of the participants. The females in her classes are typically lacking confidence and are low in self-esteem. Her employers had given her the task of addressing their needs for the benefit of community health within a given budget, but she had to interpret the task in a creative manner to encourage the participants in an activity in which they have previously failed. She is aware that the providers and the consumers have different agendas – the former being political and educational, the latter being personal – and she must mediate by negotiating the mutual ground between the two positions. The class is successful: she reports that both she and the participants find the process enjoyable. It would be interesting to know how much of the success was due to the physical nature of the activity – how much self-confidence did they gain through coming to terms with their own bodies in a safe but creative movement environment? How much difference did this make to their lives? Attempts to trace the author with a view to interviewing her, failed.

#### 2.5.4 Agents of cultural change: politics and mass media

If western society has created a cultural elite (Boal 1979) despite government and local policy to equalise access, how can consumers overcome this position of ethical stand-off? In community-based creative dance classes, the dancers potentially have the option to 'test the water' of acceptability and decide how far they want to push the boundaries, in keeping with Gardner's (1999) and Robinson's (2001) models of creativity. They are potentially free spirits, bound by the needs of conformity – how far do they *dare* to venture away from the safe parameters of

acceptability? A further challenge to their freedom of expression is, as Boal (1979) points out, that

(i)n our culture we are used to expressing everything through words, leaving the enormous expressive capabilities of the body in an underdeveloped state. (Boal 1979:130)

Even though Boal was writing from the perspective of a different culture, in a different era, his comment still resonates today. However we move, we are subject to comparison against normatively decided codes of conduct, by our fellow citizens. Behaviour outwith these parameters can only be approved within an appropriate setting, in this case a dance studio or a performance-dedicated space. The aim of creative dance in community classes in a contemporary setting is, I contend, to tap into the reserves of expressivity to which Boal refers, and to extend the application of that creativity and consequent feeling of achievement, out into the dancers' lives beyond the class.

This invites exploration of a postmodern image of culture and community. Purcell (2001:14) distances himself from the argument that postmodernist capitalism is the answer to the problems posed by modernist socialism, namely that the failure of technology-based mass production to bring about social equality in the nineteenth and early twentieth century could be corrected by the comparative freedom of choice, flexibility of life-style and the wider knowledge-base to which we have access through contemporary technology. He sees this postmodern age as being a disempowering one because of the fragmentation of society and growing inequality of wealth, health and education. The dialectic process between socialism and capitalism continues to operate.

Purcell (2001: 15) continues by aligning himself with such theorists as Lyotard (1984) and Foucault (1994), by questioning the use of "meta narratives" to explain the major trends apparent in the history of (western) society, for example, Marxism, Fascism and Christianity. Foucault rejects these on the grounds that they attempt to "impose an order on the inherently chaotic nature of life" (Purcell 2001:15). These belief systems, in Foucault's terms, suggest models of society where everything and everyone can be swept neatly into specific categories, whereas the reality is that our society is richly diverse, and those who resist categorisation are



arguably the most interesting subjects for study. However, Foucault (1998) sees these and other social systems as being the structures which have shaped human beings – they are sources of power and knowledge which determine our social existence.

Purcell blames globalisation for the fragmentation of our social experience, and, ironically, for the isolation which many experience. Yet, he says (2001), that the access which we have to global knowledge, could be very empowering for those at the margins of society, bringing them back into touch with the policy-makers. He explains:

If we applied this method to the UK government policy on social exclusion, we would gain more insight on exclusion from the perspective of marginal groups. We would realise that the proposed policy framework seeks to maintain the power of the mainstream institutions and develop a clearer understanding of the power relationships between government, institutions and excluded groups.

(Purcell 2001:16)

There are echoes here of the Foucauldian approach to understanding society by deconstructing before reconstructing.

The way we gain knowledge of society outwith our immediate experience is through various media, the most immediate being the spoken word and perhaps the furthest reaching being television and internet. The visual image received on screen is arguably more accessible and so more influential even than live performances or workshops, given the number of opportunities which the community dancers in this study have, to see live dance. These media, therefore, have substantial power over the consumers, having the opportunity to promote or ignore aspects of arts and culture. They can dictate the next trend in public consumption by creating a cultural hierarchy and then altering it when a shift of interest is detected. In other words, the mass media have the power to rout out cultural activities from the margins of society and promote them to centre stage, creating a cult following. A prime example of this in the media at the time of writing is a television series which has given renewed popularity to ballroom dancing, an activity which had been in decline for some three or four decades (Casciani 1994). Ironically, the very forces, which, arguably, caused its demise (the mass media), are launching it back into the

spotlight. In another example of media manipulation, Cook also makes the point that the Turner Prize for art is sponsored by Channel 4 television.

This perception of the power of the media to influence culture is echoed by Blain and Bernstein (2002: 227), who describes how the “fusion of culture and media culture has produced structural alteration right through the body of the cultural system”, so that mass media become “new technologies of ideological domination”. Likewise, he explains how this can also be a negative process, where antisocial attitudes and behaviour – culturally inferior trends - can be promoted, causing cultural degeneration.

### 2.5.5 Cultural Policy Organisations and arts provision

The rights of children to have access to artistic expression are enshrined in national and international policies, e.g. those of the UNICEF<sup>2</sup>, UNESCO<sup>3</sup>, national (UK) government and the Scottish Parliament. Each tier of policy-makers, from global to local, influences those below it, so that the ultimate beneficiaries are the people which the policies are designed to help. These will be considered under three subheadings:

- (i) International policies
- (ii) National policies and dance provision
- (iii) Local government policies and provision

#### (i) International Policies

UNESCO (2008) adopts a wide definition of the term, ‘culture’, including in it the arts, media and cultural heritage in general. Its overarching policy is to encourage and celebrate cultural diversity, which is highly relevant to multicultural UK, Scotland, including the area where my study was carried out. While enjoying our rights of access to cultural (including artistic) pursuits, the organisation stipulates that we also have a duty to develop our culture (The Declaration of the Principles of

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Organisation for Education, Science, Culture and Communications

International Cultural Co-operation, 1966, Article 1). This principle permeates the tiers of national and local government, to underpin policies at these levels.

UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child, states the right to freedom of expression "in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice" (1989: Article 13). It is interesting to note in Article 31 of that document, that culture and arts are separated, in granting children the right

to participate freely in cultural life and the arts ...Parties shall respect and promote the child's right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life.

(1989: Article 31)

Neither of these documents attempts to rank the individual arts according to cultural merit, unlike the impression given by some national policies, discussed below. The main point emanating from them is that all arts should have equal status and all people should have equal opportunities to access them.

(ii) National Policies and dance provision.

This category consists of UK-wide organisations which have composed policy documents, and those which relate to the Scottish context, produced by the Scottish Executive and other Scottish bodies with a remit for community and arts matters. It includes reference to dance in formal education settings, as this is relevant to the dance experience which the young people in my study bring to their dance classes.

The potential contribution of the arts to social wellbeing is well documented in arts and social policies at local and UK national level. One example is the Developmental Education Association's (DEA) document, *Arts: The Global Dimension* (Nov. 2006), which offers a wide variety of ways in which arts education can fulfil the obligations placed on society by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) (1948) to ensure that everyone's entitlement to the arts is met, starting with children.

The DEA's (November 2006) document suggests that the key attributes to be nurtured are identity, respect and understanding (of each other, through art), these to be achieved through critical thinking and empathy which can be taught through

the arts. Although intended as a guide for teachers as to how the arts can be used to raise awareness of cultures in a global context, its eight key concepts are equally valid in a local context. Citizenship, values and perceptions, diversity, human rights, social justice and interdependence are relevant to the dancers in my study, learning about their own community. By exploring diversity, the document suggests (p. 5) that they can undergo personal development, which can improve self esteem and self image. This may be achieved through the dance stimuli or the social interaction, but either route offers the chance to enhance – or challenge – self awareness and self assurance. These in turn, as the document (2006: 8 -11) points out, can raise awareness of others and the ability to contribute positively to other people’s sense of identity and happiness, while making the dancer a more assertive person. The document suggests it might also make the dancer aware of having “dual identities” (2006: 17) depending on how others perceive them and how they behave in different situations. Through the arts, the document asserts (p.3), the rights stated in Article 22 (UNDHR<sup>4</sup> 1948) can be met, enabling “the free development of personality to be achieved”, while according dignity to the human social condition.

With rights, however, come responsibilities, as the document asserts, and knowing that their contribution is valued leads young people to produce “creative and expressive work of quality and meaning” (2006: 4), giving them the courage to assume an active role in the community – local or global – where they can contribute something positive in return for the opportunities they have been given. Provision of artistic opportunities in the community, they claim, is a fulfilment of the UN Convention on the rights of the child to experiences which enable them to become active and informed members of their community. Arts Council England et al (2006) produced a package promoting the health benefits of dance, in response to the national awareness of obesity in children. In addition to the physical benefits, they endorse dance of all types as a source of creativity, self-esteem and confidence in young people.

This is echoed by the Scottish Executive’s commitment to the arts as a community catalyst:

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<sup>4</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Participation in arts activities...can result in the development of interpersonal skills, new friendships and increased involvement by those participating in the activity, leading to an enhanced sense of wellbeing'  
(Scottish Executive 2004)

Her Majesty's Inspectorate documented traditional and contemporary dance in community settings for the Scottish Executive (2000), which provided an overview of the status quo at that time. Subsequent initiatives, such as the creation of 'YDance' as the performing arm of Scottish Youth Dance (discussed below), stemmed from that, in response to perceived needs of the Scottish people.

In Scotland, the Cultural Commission was appointed in 2004, to investigate the value of 'cultural activities' and in response to that investigation, the Scottish Executive (2006) reported that these values were centred on three main attributes:

- Creativity
- Confidence
- and
- Wellbeing

The justification for selecting these, it reported, were:

- Creativity gives people a competitive edge, needed in the modern world. It is nurtured, not taught, so is well suited to acquisition through the affective curriculum.
- Confidence is linked to self-esteem, and these are transferable attributes which can be taken into the workplace after formal education.
- Wellbeing could be measured by the level of happiness, which individuals felt in their communities. This factor was seen to be a necessary precursor to economic goals.

Underpinning all of these, the Commission states, is the concept of culture, which they see as a means of bringing people together through stimulating, challenging activities, and giving them a basis for communication. The Scottish Executive's National Cultural Strategy (2000) had already adopted a definition of the term, based on that of UNESCO:

In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs.  
(Scottish Executive 2000)

(iii) Local Government Policy

The council which funds the dance company in my study has a well embedded cultural and arts policy, as do all the other local authorities in Scotland. Their pledge to provide accessible arts is enshrined in their recent Arts Development Strategy document (2006) which recognises that arts provision benefits individuals and communities by

increas(ing) self confidence, develop(ing) creative skills  
for personal growth, strengthen(ing) community identity  
and promot(ing) health and well being

— Council (2006: 4)

as well as promoting economic benefits (e.g. employment and tourism), boosting local pride and, in the case of visual art, enhancing the environment. Dance features strongly in their arts programming, and while they mainly fund creative dance, Scottish Country Dancing and street dance, other private dance initiatives are promoted in their literature.

### **2.5.6 Recent Debates and Research**

The following papers present some of the issues and problems encountered in turning community policies into the reality of community activities. The nature of each is summarised in the Table 2.5 as follows (as far as that information is available):

Table 2.5: Recent Debates and Research on Interaction in the Community

| Author                           | Methodological approach                     | Sample   | Data collection methods   | Key findings   |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Amans (2005)                     | descriptive and discursive comment          | not evidence-based research but based on the author's experience as dance leader in a community project. |   |  |
| Foreman-Wernet and Dervin (2005) | Mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative | Students as potential audience members (n = 152)   | primarily "open-ended self-interviews" (2005:174); quantitative methods not specified | Elite art can benefit individuals but there is also evidence that popular art increases individual cultural capital. |
| Crichton (2007)                  | qualitative                                 | Community members (numbers and composition undisclosed)  | Dialogue and interviews   | Political changes can be a threat to continuity in policy-making.  |

(i) Amans (2005) stresses the need to create partnerships with other community agencies when setting up community dance ventures, and the need to be very specific about the target group. In her own community-based creative dance initiative for elderly people, she was aware of the similarities between the local health authority's agenda and her own, so she could cultivate a positive working relationship, to the benefit of the participants. However, she avoided compromising the status of her project by insisting that it was not intentionally a social care project: she stressed that it was not only an arts project, but first and foremost a *dance* project. The achievement of fitness and social skills were secondary to the dance experience.

Amans found that partnership working brought with it certain challenges, such as who was responsible for making funding applications? Who would take the lead in the project? As an independent artist, she found that she had fewer obstacles to overcome than her salaried colleagues in getting the project underway, so was able to take the lead, which was advantageous for the status of creative dance in the communities where she worked. She asks:

Is it realistic to expect community dance practitioners to get involved in public sector partnerships? Have they got the skills ...? Partnership working needs people who can build relationships and that is something we're very good at in community dance. They are creative, resourceful people with leadership skills and experience of communicating with a diverse range of people. As flexible professionals who can 'think outside the box' we can work with other stakeholders to develop joint visions and deliver change. We're just what is needed to translate arts and health theory into practice.

(Amans 2005: 11)

Following on a similar theme, the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) (2007) gave support to a mentoring scheme initiated by YDance, the performing arm of Scottish Youth Dance. The plan was for YDance to work in partnership with local authorities by training key people to deliver dance workshops to young people in a structured way. The SAC reiterates Amans' belief that community dance (of all types) is a powerful tool for transforming people's lives by working holistically in recreational settings, contributing to healthier lifestyles, supporting emotional well-being and improving physical fitness. The input from YDance was seen as a way of addressing the obstacles to wider uptake of dance as a community 'tool': issues regarding how to target the people who would benefit most, and how to build the dance element on to existing strategies for promoting social wellbeing in communities.

(ii) Foreman-Wernet and Dervin (2005) take up the issue of elitist and popular culture, claiming that, through common usage, these terms are difficult to differentiate, though the arts they represent remain distinct. Their research concerns how to encourage potential audiences to enjoy what they perceive to be art, rather than to try to impose any definition of 'good' or 'bad' art upon them. They examine the polarised discourses of the positive and negative attributes of elitist and mass culture. To summarise: elite culture is seen as a way of understanding truths about the human condition, and of promoting democracy through education via a 'top-down' approach (i.e. from government to local authority to communities), but can also be considered self-righteous, unrepresentative of the majority of people and therefore undemocratic in its tendency to discriminate between social classes; mass culture is accused of dulling the senses and promoting cultural stereotypes, thus undermining democracy, while also representing freedom of choice and offering opportunities for community sharing and self-expression.



The researchers used a mixed methodology to gain data from their sample of a student population. Open-ended “self-interviews” (2005: 174) revealed in-depth information about the students’ cultural experiences. It appears from the report that a narrow definition of ‘culture’ has been adopted, i.e. referring to the arts, while the word ‘arts’ appears to have been reserved for the elite sector: they refer to “the arts and popular culture” (p.183). The narrative form of the transcripts gave the researchers clues about what the students were trying to impart on a deeper level, while in deductive mode they were able to match statements with the predetermined criteria of good / bad, elite / mass culture. Issues of gender and racial stereotyping emerged as powerful disincentives towards engaging in the arts in general. On the other hand, there was evidence of both elite and mass art being accepted as an abstract form of truth and a representation of beauty (variously defined). The building of community relations through the arts, and the opportunity for self-expression and creativity were valued. Indulging in cultural activities, either proactively (as creators) or reactively (as observers), was considered an effective way of relaxing, this being defined as either an “escape from everyday routine or ...problems ... or ... an escape to a place that was novel and exciting” (2005: 180).

In summing up their findings, the researchers claim evidence to support the idea that elite art is considered beneficial to the informants, while popular culture can have negative impact. They acknowledge that the narrow base of their research would detract from its transferability to a wider population, but conclude that their findings at least suggest that there is good reason for cultural policymakers to increase the availability of a “broad-based cultural education” (2005: 183), by way of increasing individuals’ cultural capital. They believe that making the arts more accessible to the general public is well worth the investment of public funding.

(iii) The nature of community arts activities will inevitably reflect the prevalent ideology of the time. Crichton (2007) used dialogue and interviews to chart a change of direction of a community arts initiative over a period of some ten years, from a Freire-based ideology to one driven by capitalist principles. The instigator of the project was a child of the radical political movement of the 1960s and ‘70s, while his successor was a product of Thatcherite politics, and the influences of these political polarities were reflected in the shift of policies. In its early years, the focus

of the organisation had been celebration of community identity and the promotion of mutual support among its members. Later, the emphasis shifted to 'developing' individuals, a term which Crichton views with scepticism, asking what is a 'developed' individual and how useful are they to society. Interviews with participants and staff revealed that the aim of the organisation had mutated to help individuals to gain entry into training schemes and employment, thus endorsing the capitalist framework of society rather than challenging it. Instead of identifying a product to create, through democratic dialogue, the individuals themselves had become the product. Art as an expression of the community had become art as an instrument of the prevalent capital ideology.

#### 2.5.7. Summary of Debate and Research

These three studies represent some of the potential challenges to the provision of community arts through cohesive policy. Amans (2005) aired her concern about working in partnership with a health agency which did not necessarily understand the nature of dance as art and so could unintentionally impede the creative output by adopting a different agenda, based on practicalities instead of artistic merit. Foreman-Wernet and Dervin (2005) looked at how their informants interpreted their cultural experiences, through both 'elite' and popular art, finding that both had the capacity to enhance cultural experience although popular art can perpetuate negative cultural stereotypes. This apparent power of community art to influence people is the subject of Crichton's (2007) observation of how manipulative politics can be in the community arena.

The dance company on which my study is based is similarly vulnerable to forces of politics and personalities among the decision makers. However, the fact that it has existed in various forms for some twenty years and survived changes in the political structure of the local council, suggests that its benefits to the health, wellbeing and artistic development of the young people who attend are acknowledged and valued by the providers. The extent to which it can enable them to take responsibility for their own level of social wellbeing is the theme of the next section.

## 2.6 Taking control of social wellbeing

One's state of wellbeing comprises a number of factors, including physical health, recognition of personal identity and the level and quality of interaction with one's social network. The nature of the concept is explored in this section.

### 2.6.1 Models of wellbeing

Williams and Bendelow (1998: 148) comment on the modern trend towards a "holistic health" model, acknowledging that 'health' is a multi-faceted concept, encompassing the physical, social and emotional strands which lead to a general state of wellbeing. All these, they recognise, need to be aligned to enable the individual to feel well and able to function at peak efficiency. They claim that we are on the cusp of an era of 'late modernity', rather than postmodernity. This they describe as being an age when interdependence and 'proxemic' existence tends to promote an existence where a bland picture of community obscures the detailed and colourful lives of the individuals. A superficial image of solidarity assumes a greater importance than the underlying components of individuality, and it is reasonable to assume that states of individual wellbeing could be suppressed or at least compromised in that situation. This certainly seems to be at odds with the model of Weber's capitalist society where individuals struggle against each other for power. The need to assert oneself and gain equilibrium in one's life is the essence of the search for 'wellbeing'. Part of that search, according to Williams and Bendelow (1998: 152), is rediscovering individual expressivity, and the arts are an appropriate vehicle for the purpose. Nussbaum (2000) supports this in his list of cross-cultural factors which promote wellbeing, including:

- (3) bodily health ...
- (4) senses, imagination and thought: being able to use the senses, to image and to think;
- (5) emotions: being able to love, grieve, and to experience longing, gratitude and justified anger ...
- (7) Affiliation: being able to engage in various forms of social interaction ...
- (9) Play: being able to laugh, to play and enjoy recreational activities;
- (10) Control over one's political and material environment (and make choices).

(Nussbaum 2000: 78-80)

In similar vein, Beecher (2005) remarks that the natural holistic state of the human being is put under pressure by our Western way of life. This raises the question of mind-body connectedness, which Beecher (2005) believes creative dance can assist:

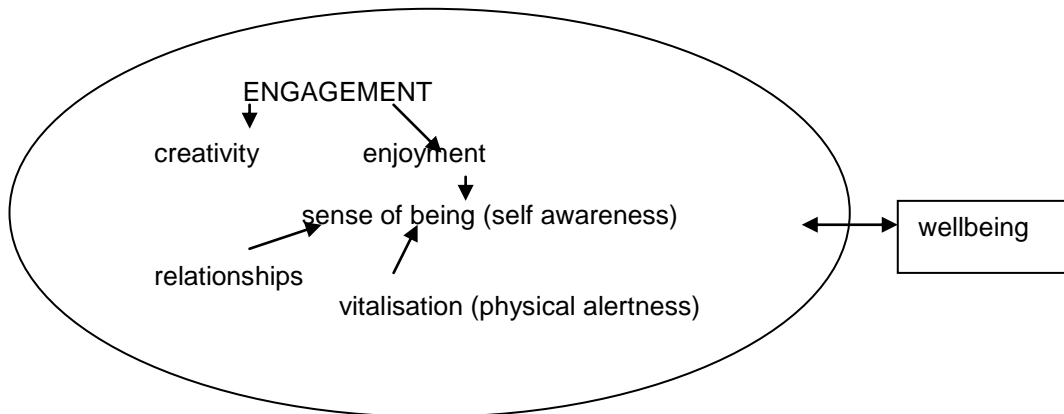
Creative dance movement may bridge the gap between mind, body and spirit by engaging and combining the imagination and thinking body with the physicality of doing.

Beecher (2005: 43,44)

Technical proficiency, Beecher (2005: 45) believes, might be desirable and indeed necessary to any art form, but she warns that it can also work as an inhibitor to the expression which the individual tries to convey through dance. Beecher believes that a conscious experience of making choices about one's physical representation, is a way of enabling personal development through the interplay of the different forms of intelligence (Gardner 1993).

Beecher envisages this intricate web as comprising engagement in the task, "vitalisation", relationships, creativity, enjoyment and a sense of wellbeing. Their presence enables the individual to experience a "sense of being" (2005: 139). In my modified version of Beecher's 'web', I have put the sense of wellbeing outside the web, thus:

Fig. 2.2 Factors contributing to wellbeing, through the dance experience (based on Beecher's (2005) web).



to illustrate that the other factors must exist within the individual, before wellbeing can be experienced, internalised and ultimately utilised to enhance social interaction.

'Engagement' in creative dance happens at the levels of physicality, cognition and emotion as well as social interaction in this holistic model. Without these, Carr (1997) argues, the activity could not be recognised as dance: one can train a chimpanzee to perform the actions of a dance, but it would not actually *be* a dance, as the performer would have no cognitive understanding of the actions beyond the outcome of positive or negative reinforcement in the learning process. Likewise, the performer's emotional engagement would have nothing to do with the content of the 'dance' performance. Physicality, cognition and emotion are all modified by social experience, as Royce (1980) and Polhemus (1998) agree, and social interaction becomes the fourth strand in the process of engaging with the material of dance as art. Williams and Bendelow (1998) address the role of emotions in the way we make sense of our place in the social and physical environment by noting that

rationality, even at its most positivistic, involves the incorporation of human values and emotions. The effective use of thought and decision making ... must rely on emotionally embodied and corporally informed readings and reactions as criteria for deciding between alternatives. Reflective thought and the deployment of reason, in other words, requires the

'tagging' of cognition with emotions... (I)t is necessary to ... construct alternative models of being and knowing which demonstrate the mutually constitutive ... relations between reason and emotion. (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 132)

In the same source, they examine the Darwinian view of emotion as being an organic predisposition and Freud's theory of emotions as being the result of repressed feelings. Neither of these, they point out, considers the constructionist view that culture plays a significant role in the shaping of our emotional experience. By contrast, Thomas (2003: 66) supports the notion that emotions are subject to external forces, that they have a social function and so individuals have extrinsic motivations for displaying them. Likewise Durkheim (in Jeffrey 2005) claims, social facts cannot be explained fully by biological explanations. Acquired attitudes and social constructs such as morality shape our emotional responses to situations, and these are manifested in our behaviour. Hence Williams and Bendelow (1998: 133) suggest that personal interpretation of social and physical circumstances influence the emotional outcome. Emotion can therefore be an outcome of social interaction and an indicator of social wellbeing. Williams and Bendelow (1998) express it thus:

It is in this way that society 'gets inside' the individual's mind. Emotional energy ebbs and flows across a chain of interaction rituals depending on the ups and downs of the individual's experiences of power and status ... (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 139)

They raise the question of how much control the individual has over their social positioning, by referring to the 'structure / agency' dichotomy. Bourdieu (1990), they note, emphasises the role of external forces in shaping the individual ('structure'), while others, e.g. Archer (1995) and Collins (1990) adopt more moderate views, acknowledging the varying degrees of freedom which an individual might have as an agent of his / her own social being. The image of a permanent power struggle emerges, where individuals are constantly evaluating and being evaluated in terms of their alignment to their peers.

Beecher's concept of "vitalisation" conveys the idea of breathing life into the process, which resonates with Smith and Lloyd's (2006) discourse about "promoting vitality in health and physical education." They connect the concept of vitality to

Wellness and health consciousness; it also has to do with energy, motion, and the specific actions of cultivating a state of wellness and health. It is a concept that melds attitude and behavior, disposition and position, satisfaction and action, health promotion and physical motion ... in other words, to the corporeal constitution of active and healthy living. (Smith and Lloyd 2006:249)

But, they ask, how can we recognise vitality? They explain that although the outcome of its presence can be observed in physical movement, it can only be experienced at a phenomenological level. In opposition to the Cartesian view that the whole range of human movement and emotion can be explained in biomechanical terms, they support the Husserlian model of a “lived body” (2006: 254), which is not only reactive physically and emotionally, but proactive in its capacity to initiate movement and feeling, and also interactive – a social body. Smith and Lloyd describe this lived body as being one which

knows itself in movement; and that is literally a body of knowledge not just about the ways and means of movement but also about the meaning of movement for developing a manner and style of being in the world.  
(Smith and Lloyd 2006: 253)

This is consistent with a phenomenological approach to understanding oneself as a social being. Shapiro (1998) endorses the same epistemological position, with the statement that

(b)y attending to embodied experiences ... we can begin to develop a discourse that transcends the view of mind carried in, but separate from, the body.  
(Shapiro 1998: 106)

Shapiro, then, in agreement with Smith and Lloyd, rejects any idea of dualism in her understanding of human experience. Motion and emotion are inextricably linked, and together produce the conditions for vitality to thrive or to be suppressed in the human body. We make the choices, which can either block or enable the vital flow of energy, with consequences for our state of wellbeing.

Harris and Hastings’ (2006) model of “The Wellbeing System” shows, in their view, “how different social, economic and environmental factors interact to affect population health and wellbeing. In their “Citizen’s Panel” project carried out in Dundee they found that

Discussion about what wellbeing might be highlighted its “internal” nature, its links to happiness, and to people feeling content with their lives, although external factors, such as stress, debt and prosperity were thought to contribute as well. An individual’s expectations and attitudes were also felt to be important for wellbeing, particularly as they moved through different life stages. ... individuals could have a set of ‘foundations’ – including religious faith, for example – that then helped them maintain their general sense of wellbeing regardless of the good days and bad days that life always throw(s) at us. Implicitly, therefore, Wellbeing includes resilience as well as happiness.

(Harris and Hastings 2006:28)

It could be applied on a macro or micro scale, i.e. not just to communities and wider populations, but also to individuals. However, there is a danger here in not qualifying the word ‘wellbeing’. Chen-Yuan (2004) argues that wellbeing and happiness are not necessarily positively related: much depends on the definition of wellbeing which one adopts. In his study of suicide trends, he found that where wellbeing refers to economic factors, happiness is often inversely related to it: people might have job, status and income security - Bourdieu’s “economic capital” (2005: 142) and “symbolic capital” (2003: 16) which translates the economic capital into cultural status - but that does not guarantee happiness. This reflects Durkheim’s (1951) work on suicide. Other, less material, forms of capital are equally important for *social* wellbeing, such as cultural, social and emotional capital.

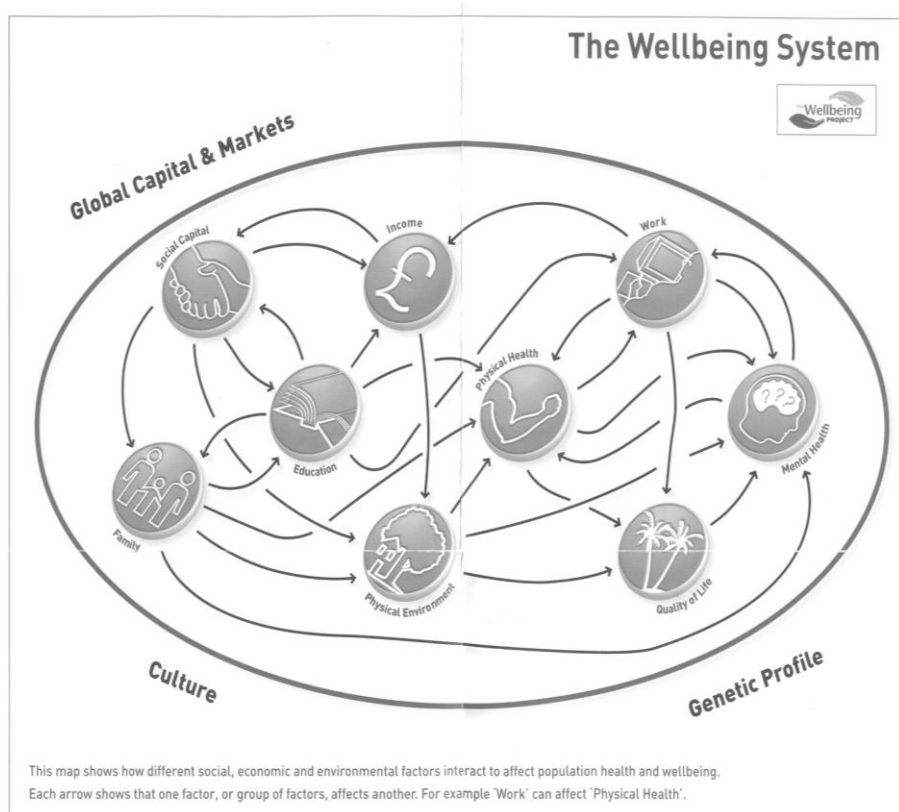
Pahl (2007: 259) endorses the importance of social support through “non-kin” friendship, and distinguishes personal wellbeing from social wellbeing. Criteria for the former include individual happiness with a small network of close friends - “personal communities” (Pahl 2007: 267), neither needing nor wanting wider social recognition, and enjoying collective wellbeing based on “interpersonal trust” (2007: 262). In Haworth’s (2007) view, personal wellbeing is enhanced by the level of absorption in a task, as well as by the people with whom one is working (or playing). He maintains that the opportunity for personal reflection and enjoyment are important in the process of achieving personal wellbeing, and help to induce the experience of “flow” described by Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999: 5) as



... a state of consciousness where one becomes totally absorbed in what one is doing, to the exclusion of all other thoughts and emotions. So flow is about focus ... a harmonious experience where mind and body are working together effortlessly ...(1999: 5)

In the context of this study, 'flow' is achieved through the optimal experience of cognitive and kinetic harmony, motivated by intrinsic, not extrinsic, rewards (Sternberg 2006: 7). *Social* – as opposed to personal - wellbeing in Pahl's view, refers to one's perception of his/her place in a wider social field, and how comfortable one feels in it. The multiple factors which contribute to wellbeing are shown in Harris and Hastings' (2006) diagram of the Wellbeing System.

Fig. 2.3 The Wellbeing system (reproduced with permission from The Scottish Council Foundation)



The diagram demonstrates how culture, economics and individual health are all a part of creating who we are and how well we function in our world. The individual acquires different types of 'capitals' – economic, cultural, social and symbolic – with

which to establish her / his social position. Bourdieu (1990) defines 'economic capital', predictably, as the accumulation of money and assets. Cultural capital, in his view, is the currency of knowledge, skills, education and attitudes, which are influential in determining social status. These are gained through education in its broadest sense: the agents of formal learning and the influences of social relationships through which we acquire the social constructs, help to define our social identity. Bourdieu (1993) defines symbolic capital as the outcome of economic capital, which enhances the prestige of the owner.

'Social capital' encompasses aspects of the other capitals. Harris and Hastings (2005:12) list social participation, perceived 'class' stratification and shared values among the indicators of social capital. Whiting and Harper (2003: 4), in their study of young people's perception of their social capital, agree:

... there is some convergence within the social sciences towards a definition which emphasises social networks and civic norms. The ONS<sup>5</sup> adopted the OECD's<sup>6</sup> definition of social capital which is "...networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups..." (Cote and Healy, 2001:41).

They investigate Bourdieu's (1993) family-centred conceptualisation of social capital and that of Putnam (2002), who attributes its construction to society on a much wider scale. Where Bourdieu's (1993) model sees social capital as being passed on through generations in a family (a linear view), Putnam (2002) presents the idea of societal influences impinging on individuals (a lateral view).

Whiting and Harper (2003) used both quantitative and qualitative methods to determine levels of social capital among young people, the former being a predetermined list of questions, based on the geographically-based definitions of community, neighbourliness and friendship patterns. They compiled a list of indicators, including social participation (e.g. cultural and voluntary activities), civic participation (involvement with local and national affairs), and social networks. They found that the (unspecified) qualitative methods revealed a tendency for young people to adopt a model of 'community' based on mutual interests and activities,

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<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics

<sup>6</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

irrespective of geographic location. They derived a clearer sense of identity from interests and values shared with other teenagers and role models encountered through mass media, rather than those gained from exposure to the influences of their locality. This example suggests that the lateral model of social capital has more credibility than the linear, but much depends on the nature of the local community – whether it is close-knit and traditional, or disparate and transient. The two could elicit very different types of social capital: the former offers security of identity, whereas the latter invites the individual to transcend the restrictions of the established community and seek social acceptability in a wider frame.

### **2.6.2 The Construction of Personal Identity through Social and Cultural Experience**

The need to belong to a group is featured by Chen-Yuan (2004) and Perri 6 (2007), both of whom refer to Maslow's (1998) hierarchy of needs. Wellbeing is derived from "Self-actualisation" (Perri 6 2007: 153), which is in the top section of Maslow's pyramid of needs. Huitt (2004) describes it as a sense of fulfilment or achievement, which is recognised by peers and the wider community: it is not enough merely to achieve, but one has to be seen to achieve, to gain maximum fulfilment. Perri 6 (2007) believes that wellbeing is not static, but a continuous process, and having reached the goal, new goals are sought, therefore creating a struggle to keep life in balance. The acknowledgement of success by one's peers is important for self-esteem and socio-emotional stability, and consequently for the growth of healthy self-image.

Since no-one (or, more appropriately, *nobody*), lives in a social or physical vacuum, bodily awareness is gained from interaction with one's surroundings – human or environmental. Proprioception, for example, is developed through movement in space being interpreted by the brain. However, the learning which occurs in this space is not purely physical: it is holistic, a synthesis of mind and body which helps perceptual development on an emotional as well as a physical level. This is Shapiro's (1999) interpretation of Heidegger's "being-in-the-world" state of existence: Shapiro (1999) explains that

Human memory is constituted through movement ... human beings carry within them their history into the present. From this present, we create our future through projections from this historical context. (Shapiro 1999: 5)

She explains that this way of getting to know one's world through the body equates to 'embodied experience', whereby we gain sufficient information to be able to make decisions about what we are doing and what we are able to do in our environment. The corollary of this is surely that we can make informed choices about how we act and interact in a wider context, i.e. outwith our immediate community, in the world at large, as suggested by Whiting and Harper's (2003) study (above). Shapiro (1999) also notes that in conventional schooling, the body is controlled. We learn to discipline it and objectify it. In writing that statement, I have displayed that very tendency: I have called the body "it", thus separating the physical being from the spiritual, emotional, intuitive being. Dancing can help to restore the balance of body-mind existence by reconnecting the 'knowing' with the 'doing', according to Shapiro, though it could be argued that the rigorous teaching of syllabus dance classes, for example classical ballet, are counterproductive in that respect.

Supporting Shapiro's position, Shepherd (2004: 171) offers neurological evidence that exposure to visual images conditions us to respond in a certain way by prompting a link between muscle stimulation and cognitive learning, so that we are shaped by how we interpret what we see. He describes the postmodern model of the human body as a "denatured, cyborged" entity, which, in daily life, becomes metaphorically fused to the machinery which helps us function in society: our computers and mobile phones, for example, which we personalise to reflect our own personalities. I would add that the constant usage of these will imprint certain movement patterns on our body memory, so that the fusion of body and machine is more than metaphorical; it is also physical. This scientific model of "neuro-reductionism" is also adopted by Martin (2004: 194), who stresses that this stimulus-response learning is the true nature of cognitive operations. She explains that the resulting schemata are able to adapt to new situations through Bourdieu's concept of "regulated improvisation" (2004: 203). We are, in essence, products of our experiences.

Bringing this exploration of the nature of being human back into a sociological perspective, one might well ask, who controls the body? How much control is

exerted by external, and by internal forces? Boal (1972: 125,126) claims that control of one's own body is paramount to becoming an independent individual:

Man must first of all, control his own body, know his own body, in order to be capable of making it more expressive. This enables him to, by stages, cease being an object, and become a subject

and, presumably, escape the oppression which is at the centre of Boal's treaty.

This, then, offers a new insight into discourse – that of the human body as opposed to the spoken word, and it must be acknowledged that these two vehicles of communication might simultaneously tell very different tales. Bowman (2004: 31) agrees, referring to human engagement with music. He believes that the “bodily-constituted knowledge” acquired through music and human responses to it, “is not different in kind from intellectual kinds of knowing.”

Skeggs (2004: 75-88) examines the many concepts of ‘self’ which help to shape an individual's perception of their relationship with their social and cultural environment: the “aesthetic”, “prosthetic”, “reflexive” and “possessed” selves. She makes the point (2004: 77) that the value one attaches to ‘one's self’ (as opposed to the more integral, subjective ‘oneself’) can be measured by one's use of culture to define a place in the social strata. In this way, in modern society, one can use culture as a commodity to buy into a specific social stratus. This view is supported by Fowler (2000: 2), who claims that cultural capital is gained through competition, which is formalised by the state, through the exam system and which consequently becomes currency in society. The self is therefore objectified and can be manipulated by the possessor and by the state.

Skeggs traces the development of Foucault's (1979) concept of the “aesthetic self”, which emerges from the cultural platform by selecting the aspects which are deemed to be of value, thus a person is proactive in establishing the aesthetic self, while simultaneously remaining passive, inasmuch as he/she has made the selection on the basis of what another agency has deemed worthwhile.

Lury's (1998) “prosthetic self”, as an extension of Foucault's aesthetic self, is described by Skeggs as one which is cultivated by experimentation with knowledge

and culture on an *ad hoc* basis to suit particular needs in particular social circumstances. The individual chooses which “extension” of self suits the purpose of expressing his / her uniqueness to suit his /her cultural needs and aspirations. In this way, one can manipulate and control one’s own identity. This differs from Giddens’ (1991) “reflexive” or “universal” self, in which one operates within a culturally-determined sphere, but can acquire or discard properties of cultural identity as required to ensure social progression, i.e. one reacts subjectively within an objectively determined social framework, metamorphosing to attain the goals of social advancement. Giddens sees this as a predominantly masculine approach to defining self, for personal gain. By contrast, Kroker’s (1992) “possessed self” is dependent on, and shaped by, cultural and social forces. This individual is passive and malleable, having little control over his/her cultural destiny.

Meanwhile, Bourdieu posits a theory that ‘self’ is a bourgeois concept (Skeggs 2004: 83), preferring instead the idea of ‘habitus’ to describe the state of being in which one is shaped, rather like Kroker’s “possessed self”, by social mechanisms beyond one’s control. However, ‘habitus’ also allows for elements of Giddens’ ‘reflexive self’, by acknowledging the ability to strategise, to influence the outcome of one’s actions in a given social context. It is clear that this concept of social conditioning tempered with personal choice within limits, is likely to affect physical movement in a cultural setting, and as such, it is concomitant with Fowler’s (2000: 13, 27) view that bodily responses, as well as feelings and thoughts, are modified by social institutions.

Thomas (2003: 53-56) discusses how personal identity is forged through the constant interplay between the “outer” and “inner” body. The former is the social body, most immediately exposed to consumer culture, which, in turn, imposes certain expectations on its appearance and function: it becomes a commodity. If it conforms to certain external (sociocultural) expectations, it can gain membership of specific groups – or be excluded from them. For example, the youthful, athletic body is readily accepted into sports or dance groups, while the ageing or untuned body is not, and must search elsewhere for appropriate groups to join. While common sense dictates that the older body is less likely to be able to perform at the same level as that of a young adult in football or ballet because of the demanding standards of technique, it is conceivable that an adult, say, in their forties, could jive

or tap dance as well as a twenty-year-old, but feel ill at ease in such a class, and therefore be excluded on grounds of age, through an unwritten code of social expectation. I choose this example of ageism as it is particularly relevant in our western culture, where body image is a high priority in the mass media. This consumerist manipulation of body image is not new, as Foucault (1980: 87) points out, with the statement:

Get undressed – but be slim, good-looking and tanned!

Thomas (2003: 55) describes the inner body as that which disciplines the outer body to achieve the socially acceptable image, and one can understand that this aspect of consciousness must be constantly adapting its approach and its goals according to the state of the outer body and the pressure of the external world upon it. Reflexivity must be a key to the success of the body to adjust to pressures imposed by society – but how is success measured? Is it based on the achievement of the externally-imposed indicators of social acceptability, or the ability of the individual to accept the limitations of their own body and possibly reach a compromise? Williams and Bendelow (1998: 68) concur with this image of constant repositioning of the self:

... the self undergoes ‘massive changes’ through the reflexive (re)organisation of the life span and a continuous, yet revisable, biographical narrative of self-identity... The body, too becomes less an extrinsic ‘given’ which functions outside the internally referential systems of late modernity, and is instead reflexively (re)made amidst a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities ...

One could expect it to become easier for the postmodern body to assimilate the expectations of a global community, where images of diverse body types and movement potential are more readily available through the mass media, and through greater geographical mobility of populations. However, Williams and Bendelow (1998: 67, 68) label contemporary Western society as being in the stage of “late modernity” – socially, in their view, we have not yet reached the postmodern ideal. The objectification of the female body in ballet is an example of manipulation of the outer self, which predates even modernity. Kirstein’s (1984) description of Marie Taglioni being thrust into pointe shoes at the whim of her choreographer father to make her look more ethereal, was perhaps the start of the manipulation of the female form, which, in more recent times, is epitomised by Balanchine’s insistence that his female dancers conformed to his exacting specifications of small torsos with long, slender limbs.

The potential dangers that teachers present to children by adopting that type of didactic, masculinist pedagogy are discussed by Shue and Beck (2001) who consider the potentially harmful effect of such teaching methods: children copy their teachers and assimilate values which might not be good for their long-term development. For example, in a ballet class, they assimilate the prevalent body aesthetic of being long and lean. Failure to achieve that could be a source of discontent and negative self-image. The body, they believe, is a “central way of knowing” (2001: 137) and that individuals can learn how to communicate through their bodies. This somatic intelligence is enhanced by teaching methods which allow creativity and which are not limited by rigid rules of technique. Eisner (2002) endorses Shue and Beck’s (2001) concerns about restrictive education practices. He compares the school-based learning environment of ‘academic’ subjects, e.g. mathematics etc., with that of arts. In the average classroom, especially in secondary schools, pupils are expected to remain seated and looking at other pupils’ work is often prohibited because it is ‘cheating’. In an art room, pupils are usually encouraged to look at each other’s work:

... it’s a way to learn. Furthermore, student work is not only looked at, but discussed by both students and teachers. In this setting classroom norms encourage cooperation, autonomy, and community – students can look at the work of peers and at the same time become increasingly independent. (Eisner 2002: 73, 74)

Similarly, Robinson (2001) recognises that learning to exchange views with respect for other people’s feelings is an important function of education. It teaches self-control, and the combination of feelings and reason through the medium of culture is a source of empowerment in society. Thus culture is viewed as a catalyst for potential social harmony.

In performance art, Edsall (2005) gives a personal example of how the body can defy societal– and self–expectation through dance. Describing her own return to performance dance in middle age, she rediscovers the movement potential of her mature body and finds that even though it is less ‘plastic’ than in her youth, it has the power to display the subtle nuances of movement and emotion which have been garnered from years of living. Her dance experience enriched her sense of



personal identity. Young people's bodies are still likely to retain impressions of their life experiences to date, and so portray their identity.

Beliefs in the efficacy of creative dance for promoting self-identity, is reported by Wright (2006), who used it as the artistic medium because "dance is considered by many to encourage self worth and confidence and therefore our identity is key to self-expression" (2006:12). The teenage dancers in his study were encouraged to think about how they were perceived by others and compare this to their own self-image. Based purely on positive comments about each other, as well as such unique aspects of personal identity as their names and dates of birth, they were each able to select information which they could build into dance motifs, which gave them a strong sense of 'self'.

Another example of this approach was offered by the organisers of a project funded by Arts Council England and Oldham Council in 2006, entitled "The Oldham Festival of Tolerance". The project was an integrated arts approach to raise levels of confidence and self-esteem among disempowered and stigmatised young people, fuelled by the belief that "the arts provide a pedagogical framework in which these values can be explored and expressed ..." (Kidd and Murray 2006: 6). The dance element, specifically the choreographic process requiring a high level of physical and social interaction, were highlighted as means of exploring personal identity and the concept of community. The dancers had had little, if any, previous dance experience and much of the movement education was based on abstracting pedestrian movement into dance motifs. The designing of these motifs, which reflected the dancers' self-image, was the first stage in the learning process. These were then combined with partners' motifs and, through the process of discussion, debate and dancing, gradually built to a performance. It is easy to imagine that members of this group must have felt particularly vulnerable at first, having to perform their motifs in front of comparative strangers, but through mutual encouragement, they worked together to create a piece of art which they felt confident enough to perform in public. The organisers' faith in the ability of this project to give the participants a set of social tools which would influence their lives not just for the duration of the project but in the future, too, was endorsed by the funding bodies, and was summed up by the comment of one dancer, who commented,

I took a walk in other people's shoes ... and it's changed the way I see the world. (Kidd and Murray 2006: 6)

Purcell (2001:17) considers the concept of identity as “a modernist idea based on fixed views and cultural certainties”, and that it is not appropriate in a world where identity can be altered to suit changing circumstances. He believes that people can construct their own identity and change it at will, which enables them to deal with social, geographic and economic mobility, all of which could lead to personal conflict. The flexible approach to construction of identity, he believes, helps to resolve such conflict. At a personal level, this might indeed be a solution to the problem, but at policy-making level, it generates problems in seeking commonalities upon which to build stable communities. Communities might be enriched by the diversity of their members, but only if they can be united by common goals. This does not mean, for example, that everyone needs to do creative dance, but that everyone has a right of access to some form of activity which enables them to feel like a worthwhile part of the whole community. This way, Purcell (2001:18) postulates that “celebration of diversity ... (can lead to) coalitions of action”, which he believes is a more appropriate model of community in postmodern times.

### 2.6.3 Recent Research

In the section 2.6, I have discussed various ways of understanding the nature of social wellbeing and what factors can alter it. The following research reports deal with issues about personal and social wellbeing among young people. Three involved creative dance; one other is based on a musical activity, one on visual art and the sixth was based on the teenagers' personal accounts of their lives to date. The research characteristics of each are outlined in the table below:

Table 2.6: Taking Control of Social Wellbeing - recent research

| Author                           | Methodological approach                       | Sample  | Data collection methods  | Key findings   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Hampshire Dance and Laban (2006) | mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative); | three classes of pupils (Key Stage 3 – approx. 11-13 years old)           | physical measurements of performance, e.g. timed activities; standard psychometric tests; questionnaires with open-ended questions | regular creative dance classes improved pupils' fitness and indicated some improvement in self-esteem, motivation and attitude towards dance.  |
| Craig (2007)                     | quantitative                                  | Participants in therapy; undisclosed number                               | questionnaires containing Likert scales  | Responses to music indicated participants' level of engagement in terms of the memories and moods it evoked  |
| Bracey (2004)                    | hermeneutic phenomenology                     | female dance students in higher education (n=6)                           | questionnaires and interviews  | Questionnaires- factual information about dancers' backgrounds; interviews - dancers' perception of their dance process and how the teacher-student power ratio influenced their lives outside the class |
| Critien and Ollis (2006)         | grounded theory                               | professional dancers (n=15)   | semi-structured interviews   | The professional training regime influenced the dancers' self-concept.   |
| Wallace-DiGarbo and Hill (2006)  | mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative)  | teenagers (male and female) in an arts-based intervention programme (n=6) | standard psychometric tests; observation of participants engaged in artistic activities  | increase in positive behaviour, e.g. showing respect for the art facilitators, increased tolerance of each other and greater confidence.   |
| O'Connor (2006)                  | autobiographical                              | teenagers (male and female) aged 14-17 (n=224)                            | narrative texts concerning themes e.g family, friends, and school  | Young people's personal identity was based largely on traditional values learned at home, despite the freedom of life-style choices they enjoyed.  |

(i) Hampshire Dance and Laban (2006), investigated the relationship between creative dance and health (physiological and psychological wellbeing). The participants were young people (Key Stage 3), who undertook a ten-week course of creative dance classes, with levels of physical fitness being measured at the beginning and end of class in Weeks 1, 2, 9 and 10, by standard tests of lung capacity, flexibility and aerobic capacity. The psychological factors, identified as self-esteem, intrinsic motivation and attitude towards dance, were gauged at intervals during the course. While acknowledging the link between physical fitness and feeling good about oneself, as indicated in the previously-mentioned ACE report on Dance and Health, it is these factors of mental wellbeing which are of prime importance to my study.

The researchers used mixed methods in the measurement of psychological wellbeing. The Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg 1965) and the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (McAuley *et al*, 1989) is are used in various psychometric contexts globally, and not confined to dance. They are Likert scales, in which responses are assigned numerical values. 'Attitudes towards Dance' were gauged using a specially-devised questionnaire which included open-ended questions. The answers, however, were assigned to categories ('positive', 'negative' or 'undecided') by the researchers, for numerical comparison. It is not clear from the report whether the questionnaire assessments were peer-assessed or cross-checked for inter-rater reliability.

The results indicated that creative dance enhanced all three aspects of psychological wellbeing, but they were not statistically significant.

(ii) Craig (2007) examines the concept of meaningfulness in music and its implications for participants' perception of their self-esteem, in a therapeutic setting. This was an essentially quantitative study, whereby participants rated statements on a "Likert-type scale" (2007: 6), issued in the form of a questionnaire. The statements had been drawn by the researcher, from other music research sources, based on their relevance to a list of constructs of meaningful activity, namely feelings of security, purpose, self-worth and value. The responses were interpreted

as indicators of the participants' personal engagement with the pieces of music, associating them with memories and moods.

Implications for my own study lie in the questions this type of research leaves unanswered, such as, what types of memories or moods did the music evoke? Were they positive or negative? Did they actively induce these feelings in the participants, i.e. if a piece held sad memories for someone, did that person then go away feeling sad, or did they simply remember the feeling, like an echo or a shadow? Kingsbury's model of emotion, which I have discussed earlier, is relevant here.

(iii) Bracey's (2004) study of six female dance students in higher education uses a methodology similar to my own, embracing phenomenology and hermeneutics. This she justifies, with reference to Fraleigh (2000), on the grounds that "hermeneutics is a second philosophical level of phenomenological inquiry", the first level being phenomenological description of the experience, from a unique, intuitive and sensory perspective. Bracey's research addressed three aspects of the dance training:

- What the experience of dancing meant to each student,
- The relationship between dance as art and dance as an academic study,
- How the experience of dancing together impinged on them in class and in other aspects of their lives.

She used questionnaires to glean the factual information regarding the dancers' past experience and their current level in their dance training, but relied on individual interviews to elicit the information which formed the dancers' unique perceptions of their experience. Bracey lists sample interview questions, but describes how each interview evolved, as the dancers made sense of their experience in the process of phrasing their answers. There is a revelatory feeling in the account, as the dancers arrived at a depth of understanding which they had not formerly anticipated, using their own words.

Bracey was also interested in "the relationship between dance as art and dance as an academic discipline" (2004: 12). It brings to mind Curl's (2005) previously-

mentioned debate about how one can understand dance by adopting an imaginative approach which is, I contended (p.10), dependent on a degree of knowledge to elicit kinaesthetic empathy.

In determining their own perception of their dance experience, the dancers in Bracey's study became more critically aware of the processes which were moulding them, e.g. how their teachers behaved towards them, how the classes were structured and how the atmosphere of the class could contribute to the experience. This recognition of the "balance of power" (2004:19) was something which they could transfer to other spheres of their lives.

As a teacher and dancer, Bracey was able to bring a hermeneutic element in her interpretation of the dancers' experience, and recognised that the process of learning was more important than the product, for these dancers. Through "ownership" (2004: 19) of the process, the dancers were better able to view it, and their teachers, from a more objective stance, all the better to articulate their feelings about it. On reading the report, one is left with the impression of the depth which Bracey managed to reach in the dancers' perception, while realising that this was one snapshot of the experience in an evolving field.

(iv) The discourse about how self-knowledge is enhanced through engagement in physical action, is continued by Critien and Ollis (2006), in their research into how professional dancers acquire and hone their self-concept through their dancing. In agreement with Warburton (2002), they believe that it is not enough to consider the dancing body as a "vehicle for expression only", or to think of dance as a knowledge base shaped by cultural experience, but that it is a much more complex phenomenon:

Dance movement involves the individual cultivation of aesthetic sensibility in relating the self to the physical world (Seitz, 1992). It also requires the integration of skills including social, spatial and musical abilities. This shift in perception requires that educators and company directors appreciate dancers not simply as mediums for choreographers but as developing creative artists (Warburton 2002). Dancers need to be perceived as individuals engaged in 'mindful movement and creative inquiry' (Warburton 2002: 181).

Therefore dancers, whether professional or amateur, are first and foremost *people*, who are engaged in a constant learning process, and their experiences impinge on the shaping of their identity.

Critien and Ollis (2006) interviewed fifteen professional dancers, using a semi-structured interview schedule. The interview transcripts were member-checked, and, through the use of a grounded theory approach as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998), a list of factors emerged, which informed the dancers' construct of 'self'. The researchers identified these factors as including the dancers' own curiosity about the creative process they were undergoing, their reflective practice and interaction with the choreographer. Their effectiveness hinged on these things as well as the practical considerations of sleep and nutrition, personal organisation and peer relationships. The importance of warming-up was recognised, not just for the body but also the mind. These influenced the dancers' perception of 'self' on multiple levels – the individual, social ("relational") self operating in a group and interacting with other groups, and the cultural self (in some cases acquiring a new cultural identity) (2006: 191).

There is a parallel between Critien and Ollis's participants and my own, inasmuch as their dancers were engaged in a similar situation of challenging their ability to accomplish new, increasingly difficult tasks, while engaging in social interaction, and bearing in mind the expectations upon them as elite performers. A possible development of their research, they recognise, could involve a "more in-depth, micro-analysis approach", to gain more insight into the conditions which would bring about optimal performance (2006:198). Critien and Ollis do not suggest that closer examination might reveal the states of 'self' (Adkins 2004) which might enhance performance also, but that could be a worthwhile development.

(v) An art intervention project conducted by Wallace-DiGarbo and Hill (2006:119) illustrated how visual art proved to be an effective medium for empowerment – defined as "development of self-efficacy" – among a group of young people who were identified as having emotional difficulties, low self-esteem and difficulty in adhering to the behavioural norms of their community. The researchers targeted this age group in response to cited evidence that a "surge of creativity ... occurs during adolescence" (Wallace-DiGarbo and Hill 2006: 119), so an artistic

opportunity in a disciplined and supportive environment was seen as an appropriate medium for these young people to examine their expressive powers and self confidence, while channelling their creativity in a constructive direction. Their expectations of the class included experiencing respect, learning leadership and teamwork skills, having fun and learning new skills which could develop into career opportunities.

This piece of research had both quantitative and qualitative components. For its quantitative requirements, it used standard profiling techniques, but these yielded no significant results. However, aspects concerning peer, family and school relationships showed a trend in a positive direction. The qualitative component was largely based on observation, conducted by the facilitators, who reported improved attitudes and acceptance of individual differences. The researchers, encouraged by the positive changes displayed by the participants, suggest that it could “provide impetus for further research” (Wallace-DiGarbo and Hill 2006: 124). Perhaps a phenomenological enquiry would be a useful extension of this research project, to explore what the participants felt they had gained, in their own words, beyond the restraints of inventories with tick-boxes.

(vi) Young People’s construction of personal identity is the subject of research by O’Connor (2006), which examined factors emerging from an Irish study on a national scale, based on adolescents’ narrative accounts of their lives, ranging from the mundane to significant events. The opportunity for reflexivity enabled them to understand how their self-images were dependent on their life experiences, and gave the researcher information about gender differences in self-perception. The importance of family relationships and traditional roles, gives credence to Bourdieu’s (2005) definition of ‘habitus’, which, as I discussed earlier was compared by Whiting and Harper (2003) with Coleman’s and Putnam’s definitions, and found to be more family-centred. This could be interpreted as an impediment to social change, especially where that is seen to be imposed by a third party, e.g. a local authority trying to implement a cultural strategy. However, despite the setting being a country in a state of ‘rapid economic, social and cultural change’ (O’Connor: 2006: 107), traditional gendered values were still in evidence, even though both males and females reported enjoying the freedom and range of life-style choices available to them. Value systems learned in the home environment still appeared to dominate.



#### 2.6.4 Summary of recent research

I selected these pieces of research because they addressed the promotion of wellbeing among adolescents. All but one were set in arts contexts and demonstrated how young people's creativity could be nurtured through arts, especially in the safe environment of a regular class. They therefore offered parallels with my own study, which gave me confidence that my approach to understanding the phenomenon of creative dance for teenagers was a sound one. However, they are all significantly different from mine, given that they either adopted different methodologies from mine, or focused on participants in different age brackets or settings.

### **2.7 Summary**

In this chapter I have shown the main theoretical strands of my study, how they have been developed by some of the major authors in the field, and how they relate to my specific context. I have examined the main reasons why creative dance is considered as a positive device for enhancing social wellbeing, but I have remained loyal to the belief that creative dance – or any other dance form - has its own integrity. As Sheets (1966) claims,

The value of dance is dance. It is a unique and vital communication which needs no further justification, whether professional or educational. (1966: 145)

For Sheets, any extrinsic benefit derived from dance is of secondary importance, although it is inevitable that in the process of making and performing dance, dancers engage with their physical and emotional selves, and communicate with observers and fellow dancers by non-verbal means. The cognitive process associated with creating dance, and the social skills acquired from the community context are an added bonus in her view, whereas the community is at the heart of my study.

The sections in this chapter underpin my belief that the subject matter of my study owes much to the notions of subjectivity and intuition in recognising the place of creativity in self-fulfilment and subsequent feelings of social wellbeing. These have been instrumental in shaping my methodology as discussed in the next chapter. I

have reviewed the main philosophical influences on what is perceived as art, by whom, and how this has been interpreted by some notable dance artists over the past century. I have considered the implications for the art of dance as a form of communication and as a means of nurturing creativity. The social process which moulds the body and consequently the mind which inhabits it is viewed with reference to Bourdieu's (1990, 1993, 2005) theory of 'habitus' as the buffer zone between the individual and the social milieu, and what the consequences might be for adolescents at a stage in their lives when they consider conformity to peer groups as a route to self-identity and self-esteem, more so than conformity to family. This social adherence is played out in a community setting, and I have looked at how the various tiers of authority contribute to encouraging healthy community spirit. All of these factors, e.g. the role of artistic experience, the stage of adolescent development when acquiring self-knowledge, and the community providing the experience, are influential in cultivating social wellbeing, as I aim to illustrate in the subsequent chapters.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

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### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain my approach to the research, stating my methodological orientation and reasons for adopting the strategies I have chosen. I then discuss the data collection methods, the ethical implications they raise, my chosen approach to analysis and the need to demonstrate trustworthiness.

According to Cresswell (1998) the qualitative research paradigm is intuitive, interpretive and requires self-reflection on the part of the researcher. It aims to reach a “broader and deeper understanding” (Steinke 2004:185) of the topic than conventional quantitative or even a mixed methodology would allow; one in which the dancers’ perceptions of their experience are very closely linked with mine. Writing in the first person emphasises the connection I felt with the process I was studying. In my literature review, I have dwelt on the breadth of meanings and understanding which can be attached to the various aspects of the study – perceptions of art and aesthetics, the social moulding of the body, the nature of encounters with one’s peers and community: all are highly personal experiences, bound by social conditioning. The personal nature of my subject has guided my methodology and the procedures I adopted aim to make the dancers’ experiences more visible to me, the observer, so that I could interpret and understand them more fully. My study explored dancers’ experience of creative dance, the way it affected their social wellbeing, and, in so doing, encouraged them to become aware of their own feelings, thus inviting them to be partners in the process. The setting for my research was not set up specifically for the research, but was a weekly event run by the local council, so that there was no artificiality in the context. I sought to create a holistic view of the dancers’ experience, each method of data collection allowing a glimpse of this complex phenomenon from a different angle.

### 3.2 Ontology

Given that this study is about teenage dancers and the factors affecting their self-perception as individuals in a community, the mission I undertook was to understand how the dancers construct personal meaning from the social and artistic activity of creative dance. It concerns *their* reality, recognising them as individuals with unique insight, therefore I am working *with* their subjectivity, rather than trying to rationalise it by deliberately highlighting commonalities which would impose a degree of socially defined objectivity. In this study, reality is not viewed as a constant factor. People ascribe different meanings to it as shifting human perception and experience ensure that it is constantly open to redefinition (Flick *et al* 2004). However, I also acknowledge that the dancers belong to a specific community and therefore share cultural values, so that even though each view is unique, there is a shared understanding and cultural framework to ensure that they are all anchored within similar parameters.

McLeod (2001) and Bannon (2004) agree that “no research can be considered value-free or neutral” (Bannon 2004: 27). I therefore bring to the study my own background of dance teaching and working with young people in other contexts, from which I have assimilated ideas about creative dance and its impact on body and mind, and these inevitably coloured my perception of what I saw and heard. I was not approaching the study as an uninformed, objective outsider (Silverman 1993). In order for my study to contribute to new knowledge rather than being a bland synthesis of participants’ and researcher’s ideas, I acknowledge the plurality of worlds in which we, as social human beings, exist. We are pragmatic creatures who adapt to different realities as our circumstances require (Schütz 1966). Hence I set out to reveal an informed picture of this specific creative dance phenomenon and its relevance to the lives of the dancers.

Finding the best fit for this study on the realist-relativist continuum to account for the cultural background which I share with the dancers took me to a mid-way point – a point best described as “subtle realism” (Seale 2000: 162), as a way of interpreting reality rather than attaining ‘the truth’. While everyone’s accounts of their life experiences are valid, extreme relativism has been criticised (e.g. Best 2004) for failing to offer coherence in understanding social phenomena. Highly individualised

expressions of dance and movement experience, e.g. Engel (2008b), could conceivably be problematic to readers without a shared grounding in the field. One has to make sense of another's account by referring to one's own experience. The acknowledgement of commonalities in individuals' experiences serves to prevent interpretations of the world which are too idiosyncratic. Hence subtle realism avoids reliance on constructions which are too relativist and thus fail to progress knowledge.

### 3.3 Epistemology

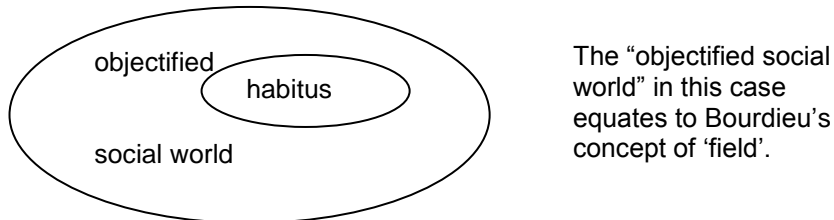
How, then, could I learn about the meanings which the dancers might glean from their social experience? In exploring how they derived personal value and meaning from creating dance in the community, I tried to maintain flexibility by avoiding rigid frameworks, and being sympathetic to the cultural setting. Ness (2004: 131) states that culture is manifested in "embodied practice" and talks of the "cultural character of human movement" (2004:131) which suggests that the body is socially constructed. My epistemological position is that personal meaning can be derived through creative dance, which is largely a socially constructed phenomenon. Similarly, Bourdieu's (1993) position that everyone's body is socially informed suggests that we are not completely free agents in establishing our identity, and this has been fundamental in establishing my approach, given that no-one normally exists in a social vacuum: we are shaped by our social experiences which give meaning to our lives but I step back from this Foucauldian position by adding that we can make choices about our social experiences: we are more than just "docile bod(ies)" (Foucault 1980), as his later work acknowledged (Milchman and Rosenberg 2003). I therefore adopt a middle ground.

Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is described by Orr (2000) as being

A structural and organising principle of existence which reinstates the subject within (the framework of an objectified social world (Orr 2000:127)

Diagrammatically, it would appear as follows:

Figure 3.2: Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" according to Orr (2000)



Together, his concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' demonstrate the dichotomy between "social phenomenology and social physics" (Bourdieu 1993: 3), the former being an individual's perception of her/his world, and the latter being the social structure which exists, independent of an individual. Where there is consensus among people about the nature of the social structure, there is an acceptance of a normatively derived social 'truth'. Lincoln and Guba (2003: 271) call this "intersubjective social knowledge and the active construction ... of knowledge ... by human consciousness." So social 'reality' is a compromise between different subjective views. With intersubjectivity as a key concept, Orr's claim for an "objectified" social world" raises the question, "objectified by whom?" I, as the researcher, am also one of those who are constructing a view of reality – *my* view – which might modify my perception of other people's views.

Furthermore, in this study, intersubjectivity is relevant to the participants' understanding of their experiences of the particular dance class, in which meaning, while not perhaps being totally dependent on sociocultural context (Schwandt 2003: 297), is certainly modified by it. The dancers also exist outwith the class, not as dancers but as social beings, their bodies conditioned by the social norms and values by which they live (Smith 2002: 126, 127). How that affects their perception of their class activity, and how the class activity affects their perception of, and existence in, their social world, will be considered in the Findings.

### 3.3.1 Hermeneutic phenomenology and methodological influences

Because my research investigated personal feelings and understanding, my methodology required flexibility to accommodate the subtleties of the meanings which the respondents ascribed to the key concepts, as well as allowing for my own background understanding and experience of creative dance, the community and of the dancers. I also needed to understand their feelings about themselves beyond the dance class, and how they felt creative dance clarified and enhanced their social identity. I therefore required a methodology that would elicit rich description, and that was best served by a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the product of two philosophical positions: a) phenomenology, which is concerned with the lived experience (Van Manen 2007), and b) Hermeneutics with the active interpreting of this experience. (Heidegger 1996). Husserl's concept of phenomenology was based on the search for universal truth of the phenomenon. It concerned the bracketing off of the researcher's values and beliefs, in order to find a pure representation of the participant's understanding. Heidegger's hermeneutic approach modifies the Husserlian position by acknowledging the importance of the individual's interpretation of the phenomenon. Heidegger (1996) reminds us that 1) we exist in time, 2) we are active in the world and 3) we have feelings about our world and our place in it. Hence we are never in a fixed position as regards our understanding. We interpret our situation in the world, based on our experiences. According to MacNamara (1999: 172), Heidegger's position gives the researcher access to the "internal" and "external" context of participant's experience. The internal context refers to the individual experience and the external to the prevalent social and cultural conditions which bring the individual and the phenomenon together. MacNamara suggests that "the interpreter is (then) free to work with and negotiate both realms of the phenomenon" (1999: 172).

In my research I aimed to gain insight into the meanings which the dancers constructed from their experience of creating dance – the phenomenon – and interpret it in light of my own understanding – the hermeneutic process. The opportunity to describe how they engaged with the aesthetic of dance would

hopefully give them cause to think closely about the nature of their art form and its importance in their lives. They could not, however, separate it from its cultural context any more than I could, so that their construct of dance art could never achieve the pure state of an isolated phenomenon as envisaged by Husserl.

Hermeneutics allowed me sufficient flexibility to account for my own subjectivity as well as the social context, which, though stable in membership, gave glimpses of differing power dynamics. It enabled the development of an interpretive framework. Heidegger's (1971) reconciliation of phenomenology and hermeneutics, based on the "natural attitude" in hermeneutics (Moran 2000: 40), presents a more realistic picture of a phenomenon by recognising that we exist, act and feel in a given timeframe and place. This is supported by McLeod (2001: 59) who states that whereas Husserl aimed to transcend the "everdayness" of a phenomenon by peeling off layers of socially acquired meaning, Heidegger's aim was to clarify it, experience it existentially, and above all, understand it in its natural context.

The melding of the two approaches gave me an interpretive framework which allowed me, as researcher, to be a participant observer who could empathise with the dancers' experience because I have prior knowledge of the subject (community-based creative dance). I was therefore operating a constant dialectic process between my perception of the whole scene and their perceptions of their place in it, basing my inferences on their verbal and physical responses to the tasks. The resulting understanding is a step back from extreme relativism to a point where the researcher's understanding and the participants' understanding meet, and is subject to the external influences of time, place and culture. This supports my ontological and epistemological positions. Schwandt (2003: 302) explains that "meaning is negotiated mutually in the act of interpretation: it is not simply discovered." Therefore understanding is a compromise between different perceptions. My understanding would be shaped by moving back and forth from the periphery of the action to being immersed in it, with various degrees of involvement along the way: an essentially circular process.

Because the study centres on the construction of personal meaning from the social activity, other methodological influences such as a) ethnomethodology and b) social constructionism, are inevitable.

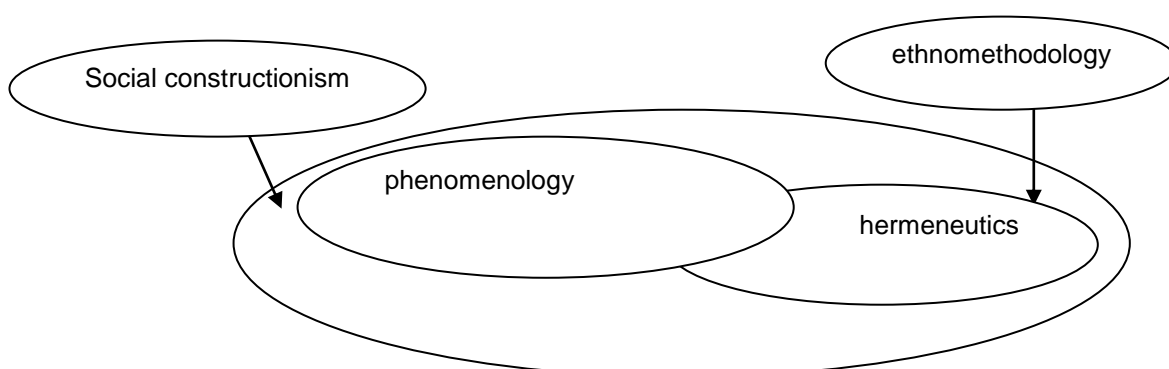


a) Ethnomethodology, following the principles of Garfinkel (1967), allows insight into the way participants organise their perceptions of their world, to draw understanding from it. Applied to my study, it refers to how the dancers articulate the way they personally make sense of their shared experience of creative dance in the company, where certain cultural norms are implicit and perpetuated. In Garfinkel's terms, the company is a social phenomenon because it happens in a social context in the community, and the dancers describe what they do within its frame of reference, i.e. their understanding of what they are doing which makes it creative dance, and why they are doing it. Being social phenomenology (Cresswell 1998), ethnomethodology sheds light on how they viewed the social process which they underwent in the dance class, but I also wanted to reveal their understanding of how – and how much – the creative dance process moulded them into the socialised beings whom they were in the wider community, which is why ethnomethodology is an *influence* rather than the main theoretical approach.

b) Social constructionism, as conceptualised by Foucault (1980), depends on the communication and intersubjectivity of members in a community. Concepts are shared and modified in light of individuals' experience of them. What becomes established as the norm for any community then becomes the standard to which members are expected to adhere. Schwandt (2003: 98) notes that "the world ... is constituted in one way or another as people talk it, write it and argue it." Why not, also, as people *dance* it? There is social pressure to conform. However, that can cause tensions in the individual who has to reconcile her/his individuality with conformity, hence the need to explore not only the constructs but also the dancers' feelings about them, which phenomenology accommodates. The dancers were actively engaged in the process of making sense of their dance experience and of understanding how it influenced their functioning as social beings outwith the class, and it is in that latter respect, that it differs from an ethnomethodological study which would view the social process within the parameters of the class. In that respect, my study differs from others I have found.

The final methodological model followed in this study is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: The core elements of my methodological approach and the influences which shape it.



The slight variation in the sizes of the ovals indicates the relative importance of the components.

As Figure 3.3. shows, the main methodology comprises phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology is the main aspect of the methodology, while hermeneutics is a modifier. Social constructionism facilitates the way in which the dancers derive their own constructs of their social reality from the dance experience. The social theory of Bourdieu underpins the research. Ethnomethodology allows understanding of how they articulate the way they personally perceive the dance experience. It concerns the more immediate, observable experience (Flick 2007).

The dancers were asked to consider how the dance experience impinges on life beyond the class. Where the individual interfaces with the wider cultural milieu, a new “horizon” (Gadamer 1975) is reached i.e. new knowledge and understanding are created.

Reflexivity was a crucial part of the approach for both the dancers and myself, enabling us to share, compare and reflect on the experience. On my part, I had to be aware of my own claims to knowledge of creative dance and how it might affect my perception of what they were doing and what they told me they were doing. It caused me to think about how to word the questions I was asking, to keep them as open and free of imposed values as possible, while recognising that my words could never be entirely value-free. Awareness of the assumptions I held about creative dance in the community also informed my choice of data collection methods and

subsequent analysis, as described below. From the dancers' point of view, their emotions and cognitive skills were engaged in the constant reflexive process of composing, reflecting and performing.

### 3.4 Research Design

Using Yin's (2003a) terminology, this was a single case study with multiple units of analysis embedded within. The case being studied was the dance company and the units of analysis were the dancers. The rationale for this design was that I wanted to glean understanding of the dancers' perceptions of themselves and feelings about the creative process within a delimited timeframe, i.e. one school term. The units of analysis (the dancers) all conformed to one "type" (Boyatzis 1998: 59), the significance of which is that it prevents the design from becoming too complex and changing the nature of the exploration. The focus of this dance company, Southern Youth Dance, was to steer the participants towards a higher level of achievement as dancers and choreographers. Other creative dance classes in the same community were run by the council on a more experiential basis, without the emphasis on performance which Southern Youth Dance had.

I was eager to avoid using the dance class merely as a convenient setting for sociological research. It was necessary for the dance element to have its own voice and not just to be a random outcome while focus was on the social interaction, although that, too, would undoubtedly feature in the data collection. McNiff (2000: 70) triggered my resolve to keep the focus as much on the dance as on the dancers:

The key to keeping the arts as primary modes of psychological inquiry lies in making sure that the research is focused on experiments with the media ...

(2000: 70)

Eisner (2002) is equally concerned about maintaining focus on what can reasonably be learned about art in a qualitative research paradigm, and how it can be used to deepen one's understanding of art. The art in my case was dance and was not interchangeable with any other art. The dance was not just to be seen as a vehicle for the expression of adolescent emotions: it was an artistic creation, crafted within the framework negotiated between the teacher and dancers. The experience of dancing was the 'primary mode' so the visual element was as important as the

verbal or written. The discussions, interviews and written comments elicited from the dance experience would, in turn, feed back into the dance experience as the dancers reflected on it. Hence there was a cyclical motion, whereby the dancers could benefit from a degree of discovery of 'self' by becoming involved as participant researchers and complementing the hermeneutic circle. McKie (2002: 262-266) states the advantages and disadvantages of involving participants in the research process with particular reference to evaluation of community projects. Her reservations dwell mainly on issues of power and ethics and the possible disparity in the understanding of key terms such as 'community'. In my research, the feedback from the dancers was greatly valued as they engaged in "the construction of social meaning" (Guba 1992: 27).

### 3.5 Sampling

In selecting a sample, Gerson and Horowitz (2002: 204) state that the respondents should be "strategically located to shed light" on the phenomenon being investigated. In keeping with that advice, I selected a single group, which existed to facilitate the practice of creative dance. It was neither a spurious collection nor a manipulated group brought together for the purpose of the research. They were representative of the central theme of this creative dance study, being a largely homogeneous group, differing in age and experience, but united by their desire and ability to dance and growing in their self-awareness and their need of social experience. They had been selected for this company not entirely on merit but also for qualities such as commitment and level of interest which their teacher felt should be rewarded. They were all in full-time education so they brought to the class the tensions of work and social interactions which they had experienced in the course of the day. They were products, broadly speaking, of the same cultural enclave, which is significant according to Esquivel and Hodes (2003) for creative potential, as they shared similar aspirations and opinions as far as dance was concerned.

Hence the sampling was "theoretical" or "purposive" (Robson 1997: 141,142; Mason 1996: 100), which allows for the interactive nature of the research in its field and the relevance of the choice of subjects to the concept being explored. This ensured that the respondents could deliver rich data, which was relevant and deep. They had the willingness to participate as well as the 'specialist' personal knowledge

to shed light on the central premise that personal meaning is socially constructed through their dance experience. Mason (1996: 92) recognises that some studies require a sampling strategy which will provide a “detailed, close up or meticulous view of cases.” I required a sample which was small enough to handle in-depth information, to gain insight into the dancers’ thoughts on the subject of the inquiry, and yet large enough to elicit sufficient detail to lead to useful conclusions through interpretation. The quality, quantity and nature of the data which was forthcoming influenced the sample size. This was a discrete population – unique, but not idiosyncratic. I was aiming at revealing normatively derived meanings of the terms of the study, as described by Williams (2002: 134), from within the selected group and not relating them to a wider population.

The sample was also bound by time in two respects. Firstly, some of the dancers had been members of Southern Youth Dance since its inception, so they were able to reflect on the process of their dance development over the duration of their membership and this had significant implications for the data collected. Secondly, the data collection took place over the course of one school term. It was a summer term, when one might have expected attendance levels to fall in favour of outdoor pursuits, but no such trend was apparent. Diane, the teacher, confirmed that the average attendance was high, attributable partly to forthcoming performance opportunities, for which the dancers were rehearsing.

### 3.6 Procedure

Having restricted the data collection to one group and secured permission from the local council to conduct my research with them, I then issued an information sheet and a letter to all participants, asking permission to include them in the study. Those under eighteen required consent from a parent or carer while those over eighteen could sign the form themselves (Appendix D).

They were all free to opt in or out of the graffiti wall option as the comments were anonymous and those who wanted a journal received one. There was no pressure on them to return it, though I hoped that those who were formally participating would indeed return them, or at least use them to reflect on their dance practice. Ideally,

that exercise would in turn enhance their dance experience and their interview responses. The final size of the sample was determined by the number who returned their consent forms (n=15) within a three-week period. No-one actually refused to participate: those who did not take part either forgot to return the slips or had no wish to participate for reasons of their own.

(iii) Methods of data collection

Taking advice from Mason (1996: 87), it was not just the people themselves who were the source of interest, but also their experiences and their feelings about these experiences. This purpose was best served through the use of multiple data-collecting methods, each of which helped to illuminate the central theme from different vantage points. The methods I used are summarised in the following table (in order of importance to the study):

Table 3.1: Methods of data collection, in order of importance to the study

| Method                     | description   | No. of participants   | Nature of data  | Analytical technique  |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Interviews (n=11)          | Semi-structured; tape-recorded; three in pairs, others individual.  | Teacher (n=1); Dancers (n=10)*  | Responses to questions plus participants' wider reflections and recollections where these enhanced the questions. | Thematic, linked to Bourdieu-inspired social trajectory framework and the progression of the dance experience.  |
| Observation sessions (n=7) | Researcher as participant observer of dance classes   | Dancers (n=15); teacher (n=1)   | 4 sessions filmed; 3 sessions observed without filming but impressions recorded in writing.                       | Thematic, as for interviews; aspects of social interaction and physical properties of dance being identified as belonging to points of the framework. |
| Group discussions (n=3)    | Retrospective viewing of video material, participant led, guided by a list of prompts when and if necessary.                  | Participating dancers: (n=3,4 and 3 respectively)                               | Recorded conversations stimulated by the videos; assisted at times by my prompt sheet.                            | Thematic, as for interviews.  |
| Graffiti walls (n=7+)      | Large sheets of paper (one for each observation session); dancers could write their thoughts on their experience at the time. | All members of the class were invited to add comments because it was anonymous. | Spontaneous remarks about the way the dancers were feeling at the start, during, and at the end of classes.       | First stage thematic analysis done by a group of dancers; used to support interview findings.   |
| Journals (n=2)             | Blank notebooks: dancers encouraged to record thoughts about their dancing, in words or pictures.                             | 15 issued; 2 returned   | Personal feelings about dancing; drawings (in one journal)  | Potentially, support for interview findings but contributed little.   |

\*Due to absence and the time demands of the rehearsal schedule, two dancers were not interviewed but participated in group discussion and videos. Three interviews were with pairs of dancers. Hence there were ten interviews in total with the dancers.

Gray and Malins (2004) support the use of a variety of methods to enrich the overall picture obtained. They stress that words alone are inadequate to record a visual art study:

... the sole use of written language for many disciplines is restricting ... Inevitably when an idea is translated from one medium to another it loses some of its meaning and power. The closer one can get to the medium of the original idea or experience the more likely it is to have impact and meaning. The word 'idea' is closely related to the Greek verb 'to see' – how often do we say 'see what I mean'?

(2004: 95)

If this applies to paintings, it must also apply to visual *performing* art.

### 3.6.1 Individual and paired interviews

The interview schedule (Appendix A) had been piloted and modified to be more flexible, to use with single interviewees or pairs. Some of the interviews were conducted in an adjacent room to the hall in which the class was taking place, but still within view of the class through the open door. Others were conducted in a corner of the main hall, far enough away from the action to enable the interviewees to communicate freely with me, without being distracted by the activity in the hall.

Some of my interview questions were clearly and intentionally factual and narrow in terms of the expected response, for the following reasons:

- I needed to set the interviewees at ease, especially the younger ones. Not all of them were confident enough to speak freely about their own thoughts and feelings, although interviewing them in pairs helped them to overcome their diffidence.
- I needed to obtain information about what dance experience they had had in the past, and their feelings about it compared to their perception of what they were doing in this class. For those who had attended the company classes for a few years, I wanted to know how their role within the class, and their self-image, had changed as they grew older and more experienced. This would enable me to infer how they perceived themselves as having been changed by the experience.

Other questions aimed to explore more deeply into the dancers' own understanding of social wellbeing, and in what way they believed their experience to enhance theirs in other settings. I sought to engage them in what Addison (1992: 112)



refers to as "active dialogue", so that ideally, the interview schedule was just a prompt and a means of keeping the interviewees focused.

Bannon (2004: 30) recommends individual interviews as a means of encouraging respondents to be introspective, but the flow of information can dry up, as I discovered, if they feel inhibited. This problem was overcome by interviewing the younger dancers in pairs, which appeared to set them at ease and enable them to chat openly, while I did not have to rely on the interview schedule to prompt responses. Bannon (2004: 30) recognises that by adding more people, the complexity of interaction and data are increased, but I found that limiting the number to two respondents at a time produced manageable flow and content of information. The routine 'question and answer' pattern was broken up by exchanges between the interviewees, with remarks made by one prompting further comment by the other. I acknowledge that interviews can vary greatly in the amount of structure, from those which require the 'yes/no' dichotomised response, to the open-ended, or "structure free" approach (Mason 2002: 231). I adopted a similar flexible approach, also in keeping with Bracey's (2004: 10) "open-ended interviews", and Bannon's (2004: 29) "creative interviewing", rather than with a conventional semi-structured format. This system limited the possibility of a "halo" effect, described by Silverman (1993: 156), whereby my own involvement in the subject might have influenced them, making them feel that they should answer questions in a way that, they might anticipate, I would expect. This is endorsed by Boyatzis (1998: 10), who warns of the consequences of the halo effect on reliability, namely that it could create the illusion of reliability by producing consistent results. While I was not aiming to claim reliability in the statistical sense, I did not want to compromise the trustworthiness of my findings. The interview schedule was there to guide conversation, not to dictate the direction rigidly. I digressed from it where I judged it was expedient to do so, e.g. when a respondent had touched on something particularly interesting or needed prompting to elicit a response. My interview system also allowed an emic approach to analysis, described by Silverman (1993: 24) as "working within the conceptual framework of those studied", rather than an etic approach, working with in a framework imposed by the researcher. I wanted to give them maximum opportunity to respond freely and it was only after the data collection period that the responses were entered into a loose framework based on Bourdieu's concept of a 'social trajectory', explained in Section 3.8.

The interviews were tape recorded, with interviewees having control of the tape recorder so that they could switch it off at any time if they wished. Using the tape recorder left me free to observe and write down any other significant occurrences, e.g. a change of music usually heralded a shift of focus by the teacher to another group of dancers, and this caused my interviewees' attention either to wander or to make a pertinent remark about the action. I could also record non-verbal cues such as any visible anxiety demonstrated by the interviewees or exchanges of glances which might be significant in a paired interview, if one were prompting the other. In making the experience as 'respondent-led' as possible, I was aware that I was opening a possible flood-gate for irrelevant information, which epitomises what Mason (2002:234) calls "the demise of social structures", the antithesis being the structured framework which would enable the researcher keeps control but which might inhibit interviewees. My approach allowed me to adopt the 'middle ground'.

One of the problems I encountered was encouraging the dancers to give sufficient detail of the issues to do with their activity, e.g. the dance content, emotions associated with rehearsing and the experience of performing. They tended to pitch their answers at what Smith (2002: 26) calls an "institutional" level, whereby there is a tacit understanding that knowledge of the subject is shared between interviewer and interviewee, which was of course the case, but at times I had to prompt, to get beyond the generalisations and gain useful data. Smith warns of the lack of useful description which interviews yield because of shared subjectivity, when interviewer and interviewees are too closely connected by the central concept ( in this case, creative dance). My answer was to use the interview schedule very loosely, encouraging the interviewees to add detail. Inevitably, although the core interview schedule was the same throughout, the points of divergence allowed the dancers' different dance backgrounds and experience to emerge.

### 3.6.2 Participant observation

Grady (2008) commends the inclusion of visual material in research because of its ability to reveal layers of meaning, and considers the subjectivity of viewers' interpretation as a strength in social research. The researcher's primary focus might be on the subject in the foreground (the micro level), but what is captured in the background might be equally relevant and offer a different insight into the

activity. He considers that differences in viewers' interpretations allow greater depth of insight into the phenomenon being observed, which enriches the findings. He qualifies his enthusiasm by pointing out that through the act of focusing the camera, the researcher is being selective in what (s)he captures, so that "looking at" an object equates to the object "being framed by" the researcher (paragraph 9). As I discussed in Section 3.2, the researcher's affective conditioning – or bias – is unavoidable, but not necessarily a weakness in qualitative research where intersubjectivity and reflexivity are key features. Grady's position resonated with my study.

My initial presence in the group was, what Robson (2000: 319) labels "The Observer-as-Participant - ... someone who takes no part in the activity, but whose status as researcher is known to the participants." The dancers in the class already knew me and knew why I was observing their classes, which went some way towards their acceptance of my presence. Impediments to being accepted include, according to Kaluwich (2006), "the researcher's age, gender, class, and ethnicity .. (and also) the limitations of participating in activities that are dangerous or illegal." Of these, my age was the only factor which might have been a deterrent to the dancers' co-operation, but that was offset by their familiarity with me and Diane's acceptance of me as a colleague. I had a trial run with the video recorder at one class, before starting the 'official' data collection the following week. This enabled me to practise my filming technique. It also let me decide on the best vantage point and filming strategy. Seven classes were selected for observation during the summer term, on the teacher's recommendation. Sections of four of them were recorded on video, while the other three presented opportunities for conducting interviews as well as enabling me to watch the class without recording on video. That would reduce any possible intrusive element of the camera's presence, as well as freeing me from the physical restriction of watching sections of class through the lens. I would be more able to absorb the atmosphere of the class and observe nuances of interaction beyond the camera's field of vision. By Week 3, my presence in the group had become more accepted and I was able to dispense with the camera tripod and move about among the groups of dancers, who had become desensitised to the presence of my camera and me. I had become not merely a passive observer, but a participant observer. I was allowed to interact with the dancers, who decided, unprompted, to use my film for "audience" feedback, to see

their own created sequences and motifs. This helped them to relax more in my presence, so that I became an accepted part of the class with a specific function. I also had to decide how best to avoid filming those from whom I had not received permission. This was achieved by the participating dancers attaching to their T-shirts a white label, which was big enough for the camera to discern. The non-participants could then be screened out when the films were edited.

In addition to these very practical issues, participant observation was a means of ensuring the trustworthiness (discussed in Section 3.9) of the study, insofar as it complemented the other methods of data collection – aiding the understanding of the verbal accounts of social interaction in the class, illustrating the non-verbal communication and supporting the conclusions drawn from the data. Kaluwich (2005: para. 21) adds that it is also a way of enabling “the group members (to) control the level of information given,” as well as letting the researcher interact with subjects without having to participate in the group activity, in my case, of creative dance. Thus I was free to take notes and the video footage. Yet what seems at first glance to be a foolproof way of ensuring that the researcher’s account of a situation is accurate, contains potential pitfalls, for example, selective viewing of the action: what should be viewed and/or filmed, what should be omitted, and on what basis is the decision made? Sanchez-Janowski (2002: 145) refers to this process as “the filtering system”, which combines the sensory input and the researcher’s “knowledge-bank” of stored schemata concerning the concept being studied. In his explanation of this process, it becomes apparent that the way the filtering system is turned to the data collection is fundamental to the methodology underpinning the research. The amount of prior knowledge which the researcher has can alter the accuracy of the emergent picture in different ways: less knowledge could lead to the omission of potentially useful data; more knowledge could possibly result in the inadvertent skewing of data to suit preconceived ideas – what Robson (1997: 201) calls “selective attention”. Being aware of these possibilities goes a long way towards avoiding them, but inevitably, with or without a camera, the participant observer will miss some of the action – there is always something going on outside the visual field, unless the observer or the camera is static and situated where the entire field of activity is in the frame. Even then, if the activity is being observed from too far away, some of the subtlety of action will be lost, such as small gestures and facial expressions. To ensure the accuracy of the observation process, Robson

(1997: 204) advises that field notes should be written up as soon as possible after the event. This is also important from the point of view of maintaining a reflexive position, remembering how I, the researcher, felt about the dance action which was taking place.

Williams (2002: 155) warns against making too many assumptions from observed action in this sort of setting, because of its limits of location and time. It would be wrong, she suggests, to generalise from the observations as to the nature of the dancers' relationships in other contexts. However, the video material was a valuable resource for later discussion and an endorsement of interview data, as well as divulging unspoken information gleaned from the body language and interaction of the dancers.

The criteria I was seeking as a participant observer emerged firstly from my observation of the first class the week before I started filming, and secondly from my early viewing of the films. Taking an open-minded stance towards dealing with this data meant that each viewing revealed new aspects, but the repeated observations revealed consistent themes of social engagement:

- Evidence of leadership;
- Focus on the task, gauged by facial expression and sustained practice with or without the presence of the group leader (the dance creator);
- Evidence of sensitivity in relationships where the dancers helped each other to overcome difficulties or give reassurance or judgement when asked;
- Signs of strain, anxiety or other negative indicators;
- What was going on in the background: what were the dancers doing when they were not the main subject of the filming? Did they act differently when the attention was turned away from them?

In addition, I was looking for evidence of the importance of the dance context as distinct from any other art form, for example:

- How far they were willing and able to explore new movement ideas;
- What their facial and bodily expression revealed about their sensitivity to the creative task;
- How they used the music, space and dance dynamics in their compositions;
- How willing they were to correct, restructure and rehearse their work.

Ultimately, these would give me an idea of how secure the dancers felt in the context of dance class and performance, which in turn would be an indicator of self-image. I was interested to see whether the dancers themselves would identify these same themes when they were watching the video material as participant researchers, which would justify my selection of these criteria, adding to the trustworthiness of the study.

### 3.6.3 The 'graffiti wall'

This method of evoking response to the dance experience is described by Claggett and Brown (1992) and demonstrated to me by Stephanie Knight<sup>7</sup> at a research forum. It emanates from a constructivist approach to education, which enables students to gain knowledge by gradual increment through active inquiry, rather than a more traditional didactic method of teaching for knowledge acquisition.

Before commencement of the identified classes, the dancers were invited to write on a large sheet of paper, any comments or thoughts – either written or pictorial – which they wished to share with the class, about their expectations or feelings towards the evening's activity. I hoped that this would be as revealing to them as it was to me, giving them cause for contemplation through the sharing of thoughts. I provided a selection of coloured pens and discouraged any tendency to write at length: the purpose was to produce a range of short comments, which may or may not coincide with the feelings of others in the group, and drawings which might be a form of emotional shorthand, again escaping from Gadamer's (1975) preference for written language.

During and after the class, the dancers were offered the chance to add further comments and encouraged to read each others' remarks to see where there was overlap and disparity. Over the weeks, I noticed a certain blandness and repetition in the responses, as well as an increase in totally irrelevant remarks, so, to stop this, I wrote statements and comments on the 'walls', aiming to stimulate the writers into thinking harder about their remarks. For example, on one I wrote, "When I dance I ..." and "When I watch dance I ..." These openings elicited more focused

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<sup>7</sup> Formerly Director of the Royal Bank of Scotland Centre for Community Arts Research and Practice, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh.

and useful remarks. The 'walls', along with video recordings, were then used to prompt group discussion.

#### 3.6.4 Group discussion

I use the term “group *discussion*” as opposed to “group *interview*” as the latter suggests a more structured approach and as with the individual and paired interviews, I wanted to keep the structure as loose as possible. Mason (2002) warns that these are likely to have their own implicit structure, often dictated by the interviewees’ own agendas, so the idea of a structure-free interview is not entirely realistic. The same applies to a group discussion, in which group dynamics and relationships between individuals might guide the development of the discussion. I did not have a schedule to steer the discussion, only a general guideline; I wanted the dancers to be as free as possible from any intervention by me unless they digressed or ceased to talk, so I maintain that these events were discussions, not interviews. Moreover, the group discussions offered the dancers the chance to consolidate their identities as individuals and as part of the group, as described by Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 24,25) in their account of Social Identity Theory. As they point out, “identity is *intersubjective*, rather than merely *subjective* ... One cannot be a self on one’s own.” I would extrapolate from that, that if one cannot be a ‘self’ in isolation, then one cannot be a social being in isolation and consequently cannot experience social wellbeing. Even a prisoner in solitary confinement is not really in social isolation because (s)he is contained within a social setting – though his/her social wellbeing might register as very negative.

Group discussion, then, is a way of affirming one’s place in a social network and that can manifest itself in the individual’s performance in the group.

The graffiti walls became the starting point for one group discussion, when I asked a group of four dancers to check whether any of the remarks matched, or were similar to, other comments written on the sheets (i.e. whether emergent themes were obvious), and if so, to colour code them. The themes they recognised were:

- High spirits, positively motivated;
- Low energy, looking to have spirits raised by the dance class;
- Despondent, not in the mood for dance that day.

Thus they could see for themselves how the dancers felt about the dance experience on the whole, and this sparked an open-ended discussion. Initially, there was a noticeable amount of inhibition in the group so I had to intervene quite often to steer the conversation, but subsequently they became less reticent and talked to each other about what they noticed. Hence my aim for the discussion was achieved.

A group of five dancers watched the videos and discussion was largely free-flowing, guided by me only when it faltered. I was prepared to ask, for example,

- What were you thinking when you were composing that piece of the dance?
- How did you feel at that point when you were performing to the class?
- How hard was everyone concentrating on the task, there?

After initial reticence, the dancers talked about the work they were creating in the film, and how much they liked or disliked the product of the group work. They offered insightful comments into their individual roles in the creative process.

The third discussion with three dancers was also based on the videos. It started with prompts about the dancers' experience but evolved into a free discussion, sharing thoughts on what attracted them to this class and what they thought they gained from it. Interestingly they were, on the whole, more reluctant to talk into a microphone than they were to dance in front of a camera.

Useful data were gathered using the graffiti walls and video material to prompt discussion, particularly the latter when viewed by groups of dancers, who were participant researchers for that purpose. I wanted them to voice what they thought were the important aspects. This method enabled them to experience the reflexive process for themselves – the hermeneutic involvement, through which I also was viewing the material. I hoped it would encourage them to be more reflective and articulate about their own dance experience. Van Manen (1990: 96) recognises this process:

Composing linguistic transformations is not a mechanical procedure. Rather, it is a creative, hermeneutic process.

In addition, this approach helped to eliminate contamination through the aforementioned 'halo' effect.



### 3.6.5 Individual journals

The dancers were given blank journals to record their thoughts and feelings about dance in general, or about their class experience or spare-time practices. In keeping with Symon's (2007: 97) observations, the blank journals, did not "pre-specify activities, events, attitudes or feelings" but gave the dancers freedom to be as selective or inclusive as they wished in what, when and how they recorded their dance experiences. This leans towards a relativist position in accepting the relevance and sincerity of their individual accounts, which is why Robson (2002) warns that unstructured diaries could be too vague and idiosyncratic to be of value, but in fact they enhanced my interpretivist approach to analysis. Structured diaries might have tempted quantification of data and threatened to obscure the uniqueness of individual perceptions. The dancers did not have to submit these books as they might have used them for private thoughts which they did not wish to share, and in fact only two were returned, but both gave useful and detailed insight into their authors' feelings about dance. It was also hoped that their journal entries, like the graffiti wall, would prompt their memories and stimulate the flow of conversation in interviews and group discussions. I also kept a journal where I recorded snippets of information about, for example, what was going on in another part of the room while I was filming, or how I felt my research was progressing and if it was not, then I would examine why, committing my thoughts to paper. Day (2002) supports this move, which aims to avoid the idea of the neutral self as researcher and do justice to the notion of personal involvement. She considers this approach as a celebration of the connectedness of researcher and topic, endorsing the hermeneutic approach. Gray and Malins (2004: 59) consider the use of a journal as "crucial", as a reflective and flexible store of information, including quotes, pictures, the researcher's thoughts and observations.

### 3.7 Ethical issues

Being a physical discipline, dance research could pose problems, however, having enhanced disclosure from Disclosure Scotland and ethical approval from Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, enabled me to proceed. Reaching beyond the institutional regulations for ethical approval, I had to consider how to maintain the dignity of these teenagers, who might be acutely self-conscious or harbouring self-doubts. Dancing in the context of this class is expected to increase their sense of wellbeing. Although they were selected by audition, and were well used to

performing in public, it was possible that there would be days when their confidence was low and they would be particularly sensitive to criticism, or even to having someone watch them. When the researcher has a camera as well, the situation could be especially intimidating. Welsh (1999: 89) offers an eight-point guide for dancer research in an *experimental* situation, but it is equally valid for any human research:

Table 1: Ethics for Experimental Research with Dancers

Gain informed consent  
Mitigate consequences for withdrawal  
Protect the welfare and dignity of the participants  
Minimize invasiveness  
Avoid exploitation and misuse of influence  
Maintain confidentiality, disclose any limits  
Use records only for research purposes  
Debrief participants following study

Welsh (1999: 89)

It provided a useful starting point, although I recognise that the issue of ethics is constantly evolving – a point to which I return in Chapter 5.

In addition, in this qualitative setting, it was important to inform them that they themselves were an integral part of the process, that anything they said and did was valid; that this was a non-judgemental situation, in which their feelings were valued. Indeed, their feelings were the pivotal point of the whole study. Some of the most valuable insights came from the group discussions generated from video material and the graffiti wall which the dancers helped to code. Through the ensuing discussions, I learned more about their response to the dance activity and the reflexive process insured their role as participant researchers, enabling me to get closer to understanding their experience of the creative dance process.

### 3.8 Analysis

The application of the “hermeneutic circle” (Gadamer 1975: 293) was relevant for understanding the phenomenon at the centre of the study. Through it, meaning is arrived at by alternately attending to the small personal details of the creative dance experience and the wide-angled ‘lens’, which situates the dance class in its unique community. Gadamer explains that

The circle then is not formal in nature, it is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter.

(1975: 293)

The hermeneutic circle enabled me to gain a balanced view by giving me glimpses of the dancers' impression of the class and its impact on them personally, while accommodating my own perspective. Hence the previously mentioned need for my own reflexivity was fulfilled.

I adopted a framework for analysis and interpretation which was inspired by Bourdieu's (2005: 259) concept of a "social trajectory (defined as) the series of positions successively occupied by the same agent or the same group of agents in successive spaces" as one journeys through the 'field' – Bourdieu's construct of the wider social environment beyond the habitus – in the course of one's life. It is not necessarily a straight progression: the points may be arrived at in any order and any number of times. The habitus is shaped by each encounter en route.

Bourdieu is not prescriptive about the names of the points on the social trajectory but does insist that there are commonalities in everyone's experiences. To view each individual's social pathway as being unique and isolated is

...almost as absurd as trying to make sense of a trip on the metro without taking the structure of the network into account ... (Bourdieu 2005: 259)

There are always points of intersection. Bourdieu (1993) describes these points on the 'journey' as positions in a "field of forces" (p.184) which are the scenes of constant struggle between self and habitus within the constraints of the field.

The social trajectory was punctuated by points which reflected the literature reviewed concerning adolescent development and indicators of wellbeing.:

- 'Sources of motivation and inspiration' include the cultural factors which Harris and Hastings (2006) identify as education, environment, economics and family.
- 'Personal feelings' are represented in the literature by Nussbaum (2000) and Pahl (2007) as contributory factors to wellbeing. Nussbaum (2000: 80) makes special mention of the need to "play and laugh" and enjoy recreational activities.
- 'Social Interaction' and the sense of belonging to a community equate to Harris and Hastings' (2006) model of wellbeing and Nussbaum's (2000) concept of 'affiliation'.

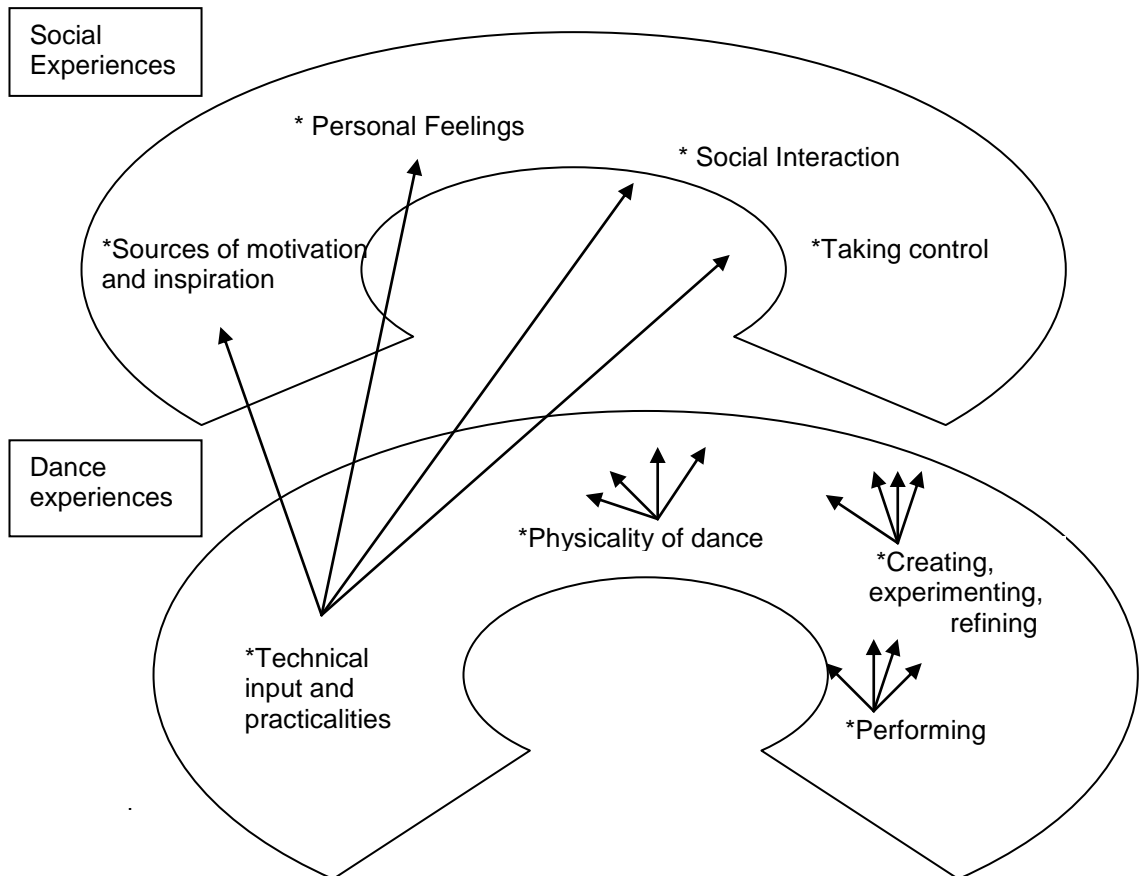
- 'Taking control' refers to Bourdieu's (1993) recognition of the ongoing struggle of individuals to shape their habitus. Nussbaum (2000) also identifies the need to take control and make choices as being important for wellbeing.

Having established this framework, the analysis of the interviews and supporting data sources proceeded as follows:

1. The interviews, as the primary source of data collection, were transcribed and printed out.
2. I attached each whole transcript to a wall to view them in their entirety.
3. I spent a lot of time reading and re-reading them before coding. Thus I acquired an overall sense of the emerging themes before examining each transcript in detail. This reduced the temptation to use the data from individual interviews merely to support my preconceived ideas, while allowing me to interpret with sensitivity and understanding.
4. I coded the individual transcripts in terms of the social trajectory.
5. I followed the same procedure with the discussion material, to see how it supported the interview data.
6. Through continued familiarisation with the interview and discussion data, I identified a dance trajectory: a 'journey' whereby the dancers' progressed from learning from the teacher, to the ultimate state of performance. At that point they could assume agency by taking responsibility for their creative output, thus going some way towards defining their own habitus, i.e. negotiating the acceptance, rejection or refining of the dance techniques they had acquired.
7. I then had my framework into which I selected and organised the interview data and the discussion data, adjusting the cell boundaries where necessary because, as already stated, some of the data applied to more than one cell. Thus most of the interview data were used.
8. I studied the videos for evidence of the social and dance-related themes stated earlier (3.6.2 Participant observation) and added the times of relevant sections into my framework.

The elements of the two trajectories which constituted the framework are depicted in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Social and dance trajectories, modelled on Bourdieu's explanation of 'social trajectory'



The arrows demonstrate how each heading in the dance trajectory was viewed with reference to each social trajectory heading.

'Sources of motivation and inspiration' include previous dance experience.

'Taking control' refers to shaping one's habitus, i.e. actively shaping the patterns of norms and values which one constructs and alters self-identity and self-worth.

Can the dance experience act, not just as a mirror for the social experiences outwith the class, but as a means of intensifying the experiences and contributing to the opportunities the dancers have of taking control and negotiating their habitus, and

thus improve their feelings of social wellbeing? The points on these two trajectories equated to the points of 'intersection' to which I referred earlier. These were the commonalities which I identified in the early stages of the analysis. The 'journeys' along these two trajectories were not necessarily a linear progression. In keeping with Bourdieu (2005), I recognised that the dancers might move back and forward between the points in any order. My plan was to relate each point on the dance trajectory to each point on the social trajectory, i.e. to determine how each stage in the dance 'journey' contributed to the stages in the dancers' personal and social 'journey'. An example of this for Technical input and Practicalities can be seen in Figure 3.4.

I applied the hermeneutic circle by switching my focus between individual or small groups of dancers engaged in a specific task, and the wider view of the whole class. The use of the video camera facilitated that effectively, as I could study the film repeatedly after the event. I looked for actions and reactions which would illustrate the points on the social trajectory, e.g. bodies conditioned by past experience, reflective moments, interaction and emergent leadership. In addition, I wanted to see how the dancers demonstrated the way they internalised the movement genre – how comfortable they felt with it and how they 'played' with the movements – and how they worked on the material towards a performance. Watching them heightened my awareness of my own understanding of what the class was designed to achieve, and through the process I was witnessing, I recalled my own experiences of creative dance in terms of the social trajectory. I was able to be receptive to what I was seeing and what they were telling me. This gave me greater insight into the dancers' experience. Through analysis and subsequent interpretation of the data, I expected that it would become clear how the dancers believed they were affected by the creative process, e.g. whether, and how, the creative process enhanced their feelings of wellbeing.

Intuitively, I felt that using a computer programme to analyse the interview transcripts was at odds with qualitative research, especially with a small sample, and my view is supported by Willig (2001). I was concerned that it would fail to reflect the depth of feeling; there was no way of allowing for the speakers' intention in their choice of words. I had tried the programme NUD.IST 6<sup>8</sup> and abandoned it

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<sup>8</sup> Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing

as it did not enrich my interpretation of the data. Visually, I found it too fragmented so that it was difficult to maintain a holistic view of the emergent pattern or to grasp the subtleties in responses. Hermeneutic phenomenology requires broad-ranging transparency to enable the researcher to move between the wide scan of the whole picture and the narrow focus on individual respondents. I felt that NUD.IST 6 did not give me that transparency.

I involved the dancers in the first stage analysis, firstly through having them check and sign the transcripts of their interviews, although I am aware that member checking only shows ownership of the original, but does nothing to endorse the way the researcher has dealt with it in subsequent analysis. Hence their involvement in the early analysis of the other data sources was important: by allowing them to identify themes in the graffiti walls and videos, they had the chance to speak further about their views on their dance experience. Providing them with that opportunity gave me insight into their understanding of the social process they were undergoing.

To facilitate entering the data in a 2D format, I had to present the trajectories as a matrix (Appendix A), but they were not treated as such. The boxes were not mutually exclusive: some quotes spanned more than one in a column or row, so lines were removed to show flexibility. I interpreted the verbal responses in the context of the whole interview or discussion, using my understanding of the dancers' experiences. My interpretation was inevitably coloured by my own experience and the understanding of what it is like to create and teach dance – hinting at the hermeneutic component again - and I was aware that someone from another background might have interpreted them differently. It was beneficial to have hard copies of the entire transcripts to see the comments in context as well as fragmented, in boxes, in case this revealed any further useful data which was obscured in the process of fragmenting them in the analysis template, and to avoid misinterpretation. Furthermore, it gave me a strategy to cope with comments which could have fitted in more than one box. I added some manual coding to remind me to revisit these statements later, and in some instances this led me to modify the descriptors of the trajectory points, broadening them to accept wider interpretation of comments. Thus the framework was adapted to fit the data, not *vice versa*, while being underpinned by these social and dance 'journeys'. I ensured that there was enough structure to the analysis to keep the focus on the predetermined framework

headings, without being too rigid and narrow. Because I had adopted a partial 'top-down' approach in which the points on the social trajectory emanated from the literature, my data analysis model did not entirely fit with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Whereas in IPA, the researcher is looking at how an individual makes sense of a particular phenomenon in a given context and looking for emergent themes in his/her responses, I was seeking to align the data as far as possible with loosely-defined categories, as explained above. I encouraged the dancers to look beyond the immediate context and think about how their social functioning is influenced by their dance experience. The data were shown to fit the existing social framework rather than categories having been generated by the data. However, the four points on the dance trajectory emerged from commonalities recognised in the dancers' responses.

I have interpreted the concept of 'social trajectory' as including the cultural and artistic nature of the setting of my research, which is consistent with Bourdieu's (2005: 294) thesis on cultural production as a social phenomenon. In this section, the points on the dance trajectory are treated as main headings with the social trajectory points being treated as subheadings, to highlight the prominence of the dance element in this research.

### 3.8.1 Points on the trajectories in relation to the data

The dance trajectory contains the following categories:

- a) Technical input and practicalities
- b) Physicality of dance
- c) Creating, experimenting, refining
- d) Performing

Bourdieu (2005: 319, 320) talks of "the well-being procured by the artistic contemplation" as being an outcome of the socialised body encountering the arts, and this is a source of happiness. Observations of the dancers practising are used to support their comments.

#### a) Technical input and practicalities

Information was gained about the dancers' preferences for different techniques and their social and artistic experiences of other dance classes as well as this one. It included the teacher-led section of each class, where they warmed up and learned technique, and addressed their reasons for choosing to be a member of this group.



b) Physicality of dance

The dancers talked about their feelings towards the kinaesthetic experience of dancing: how it felt to be dancing, what made it special for them, and its impact on their social and emotional states. They considered, for example, whether the corporeal engagement with the artistic task made them feel more confident intrinsically (emotional), and how it affected their relationships with other class members (social). I looked for evidence as to whether they felt that the physical nature of dance art contributed to their sense of agency in shaping their own habitus.

(c) Creating, experimenting, refining

This aspect referred to composing the dances and preparing them for performance. The dancers discussed their sources of ideas for creating dance, and whether the process altered their perceptions of themselves as artistic creators and directors. They also considered their experience of collaborating to produce their work; sharing, discussing, modifying and rehearsing the piece were parts of the process, which they identified in creating a dance for performance.

(d) Performing

The dancers described the feeling of reaching this stage of achievement, and what drove them to pursue it. They talked about the reaction of family and friends who watched them, and how this impacted on their feelings of self-fulfilment and of being in control of creating their own self-image.

The social trajectory is identified in this study by the following points:

- (i) Sources of motivation and previous experience
- (ii) Personal feelings
- (iii) Social interaction
- (iv) Taking control (of shaping one's own habitus).

(i) Sources of motivation and inspiration

This included the dancers' previous experience of dance classes and other forms of creativity, before joining the particular dance company, and their reasons for deciding to join. It also included their motivation for wanting to engage in the processes of dance-making which led up to performance.

(ii) Personal feelings

Their emotions as they engage with the process of learning technique, creating dances and working with others in the creation of work good enough for public viewing, were considered under this heading.

(iii) Social interaction

In this section I considered the extent to which the dancers experienced pleasure and tensions of sharing their dance work, and learned to interact to achieve a common goal.

(iv) Taking control

This theme aimed to shed light on whether and how the dancers learned to use the dance class experience as a tool to take control of shaping their social status, leading to a state similar to 'self-actualisation' in Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs.

Not every box had an entry, while some contained a lot of comments so were clearly meaningful to almost all the dancers. The emergent pattern is significant in itself: why did some have no information? Why did others attract more responses?

To gain depth of understanding, I referred back to the unique picture offered by each dancer, seeking greater insight into their perceptions, as individuals, of their dance experience and how it can impact on their wider social experience. Hence I looked at each interview transcript in its entirety as well as the version in the matrix and gained insight from different perspectives, tempered by an understanding of the phenomenon which I share with the dancers.

The video material enriched the picture by corroborating much of the interview data and providing a fuller picture of the dance-making process. Information from the graffiti walls and the individual diaries were used to add weight and depth to the findings where relevant.

### 3.9 Establishing Trustworthiness

How can the writer be sure that (s)he is recording an accurate account of what has been witnessed, complete with all the subtleties of the action? Who is going to judge the element of 'truth'? How are they going to judge it?

In addition to triangulation through my multiple methods of data collection, I addressed the problem of ensuring rigour in light of recent trends in qualitative research, which have given suggestions for alternatives to the quantitative yardsticks of validity and reliability. These include crystallisation (Bannon 2004),

comprehensiveness (Mays and Pope 2000), transferability (Steinke 2003), persuasiveness (Houtz: 2003), trustworthiness (Seale 2006; Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Howden 2005), generalisability (Gobo 2004; Seale 2006), credibility (Mays and Pope 2000; Robson 2002) and dependability (Steinke 2003).

“Crystallisation” is offered by Bannon (2004: 39) as the qualitative equivalent of internal validity and the search for something which is indisputable. She uses it to confirm the plausibility of her findings, drawing an analogy between them and a multi-faceted crystal containing “symmetry and substance ... and (diverse) angles of approach”. However, the term suggests to me something which is inert and immutable, denying the constant subtle changes of meaning and interpretation inherent in studies of human phenomena.

‘Persuasiveness’ suggests sufficient weight of evidence to counter doubts about conclusions but concerns remain as to whether it ensures confidence in the integrity of the findings. A persuasive researcher could argue convincingly for the conclusions drawn from the data, but they might be the result of unjustified manipulation.

As a measure of external validity, ‘comprehensiveness’ suggests a property which is widespread and widely understood, which is not really fitting for my study where I am seeking depth of understanding, my sample is small and the findings are not widely transferable. I was not seeking to transfer my findings to other populations although I accept the need for knowledge to be transferable. Similarities between Southern Youth Dance and other creative dance contexts exist, even though Southern Youth Dance is regarded by dancers and providers as being ‘special’ as described in Chapter 1. Greenwood and Levin (2005) assert that there has to be some basis for knowledge to be shared, otherwise it is not ‘knowledge’ at all. However, each incidence of creative dance classes is unique in terms of its membership and artistic output even if it shares with others the language in which it is expressed. According to Greenwood and Levin (2005), the researcher has to tease out how the new setting differs from any previous understanding of the concept in question, and must “reflect on the consequences” (p.55).

It seemed to me that establishing the trustworthiness (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Gillham 2000; Howden 2005; Seale 2006) of my findings encompassed the qualities of credibility, dependability and generalisability, and consequently challenged me to make my account as transparent as possible. Credibility was increased by gathering data directly from the dancers, and triangulating through interviews, discussions and written comments as well as my observations, as advised by Kalof *et al* (2008). Commonalities emerged in our mutual understanding of the phenomenon. The member-checked interview transcripts and the comments arising from the videos and graffiti walls all added dependability to the findings. The implicit feeling of openness and trust in the way the data were gathered and construed by the dancers as well as me gave us all confidence that the findings were a true reflection of the their feelings. Because this study was about discovery, not prediction, it encouraged the sort of open-mindedness which could allow claims of generalisability, not to another dance class scenario, but to a theoretical position – it was opening a new window on this dance setting, which caused me to modify my understanding of the social implications of creative dance. This seems to me to equate to Greenwood and Levin's (2005) concept of transferability, described above.

I am inviting readers to follow my research step by step and judge for themselves whether the findings have been arrived at fairly. This, along with the informal involvement of the dancers as co-researchers and the systematic presentation of the analysis, allow me to make assumptions based on the evidence of the data, which are supported by “constant mutual interpretation” (Bohnsack 2004: 218). By inviting the dancers' participation, I was encouraging the intersubjectivity which is a feature of my study: it gave strength to the acceptance of the findings by allowing them to see and comment on how their contribution had been interpreted.

Bearing in mind Trotman's (2006: 261) advice that, “for a work to be trustworthy and meaningful, demands attention to disposition (setting the context), interpretation ... and articulation”, I have acknowledged my own background and understanding of community-based creative dance in the application of my research methods, and later, in the conclusions I draw. By delimiting the study to one group of dancers in an area which I knew, I eased the practical problems of attending the classes and liaising with the teacher. My knowledge of the social and cultural setting was also

an asset as it ensured that I could empathise with the dancers and obtain a deeper understanding of the process they were experiencing. Delimiting the time frame to one school term (except for one group discussion, held later) ensured that the dancers maintained interest in what I was doing in their class.

### 3.9.1 Summary

The design of the study allowed meaning to be built intuitively, anchored by the cultural background which the dancers and I shared. This was achieved by adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological approach which enabled our intersubjectivity to be viewed as an asset as it facilitated mutual understanding about how the dancers perceive it as a social instrument: it is an individual experience, modified by shared experience. My intention was to dig deep within a small sample, to find the elements which were “*specific* to that group” (Gillham 2000: 6). I aimed to demonstrate the integrity and trustworthiness of my study by using various methods of data collection and involving the dancers in first stage analysis which helped to gain insight into their feelings. These helped to deal with a concept which goes beyond the realms of spoken language for its expression, and which is “time, place and situation dependent” (Sanchez-Janowski 2002: 150).

The dance context and the dancers’ understanding of it are dynamic and ever-changing, so trying to pin it to a precise definition would be futile. The richness of the study lies in the pluralistic nature of the dance experience and the dancers.

In the following chapter, I consider the data under the dance headings and their implications for the points which became apparent on the social trajectory.

## Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

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### 4.1 Introduction

My methodology provided the framework for my research aim which, as stated earlier, is to explore the feelings of social wellbeing that these teenage dancers derive from their creative dancing. I approached the task of interpreting the data with many questions in mind, e.g. are the dancers' feelings portrayed in their movement, do the emotions conveyed in their dances tell me the same information as the spoken word, and how much of it is internalised and so affects a dancer's feelings beyond the studio door? How does it help them to create their own 'truth' about their perceptions of themselves in their social environment? These thoughts follow from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, particularly Parviainen (1998), Thomas (2003) and Engel (2008a), as to how and when movement is representative of 'true' feelings, and why verbal discourse alone might be insufficient to convey meaning fully. They form a network of possible routes toward how the dancers make sense of their world and what effect that has on their feelings of social wellbeing.

This chapter explores the meanings which the dancers ascribe to their activity, probing as deeply as their responses (verbal, written and physical) would allow. To set the scene, I have started with a description of the company members. I have then approached the task of presenting and interpreting the data by viewing it in two layers of meaning. The first is predominantly descriptive with some initial interpretation. It is essentially the observed activity which was my first point of access to the data. It consists of what I witnessed them doing and saying under the label of 'creative dance'. In doing this, I am recalling Silverman's (1993) explanation of ethnomethodology, being what people are seen to be doing in order to say they are doing a certain thing, as I have described in Chapter 3 (Methodology). That layer is then stripped away to reveal greater depths of understanding in keeping with my chosen methodology, namely hermeneutic phenomenology: the dancers' 'multiple truths' (Heidegger 1971) are the result of their dance experience among other sources. These truths are the outcome of an ongoing process of social construction (Foucault 1980) and are organic in nature, evolving as the girls

encounter and assimilate new experiences. At this point my exploration delves to a deeper level of interpretation which I have framed using the Bourdieu-inspired social trajectories described in the Methodology Chapter, to tease out what the dancers' responses tell me about the tensions they might encounter in aligning their self-image and habitus to accommodate new learning about themselves in the social environment of the dance company. Hence this chapter is divided into the following sections:

- an overview of the dancers and their experience with the company;
- a description of the observed activity supported by the dancers' comments, and initial interpretation;
- the dance and social trajectories: deeper interpretation and further discussion.

Appendix A contains the analysis of the interviews, Appendix B contains the group discussion transcripts and the graffiti wall transcripts are in Appendix C.

## **4.2 Overview of dancers and their class experience**

Unlike Stinson's (1997) dance participants, the Southern Youth Dance (assumed name) members had actively sought company membership, as explained earlier (Chapter 3). Despite the disparity of age and experience, they had a broadly similar cultural background and a common goal. Being teenagers, they were at a critical stage of forming self-perceptions (Damon and Hart 1991; Moshman 1999; Raby 2007); their "socially informed bod(ies)" (Smith 2002: 126) were articulate physically and expressively, in many cases it seemed, more so than their verbal skills, perhaps indicating an imbalance in the body-mind connectedness championed by Merleau-Ponty (2000), to which I referred in Chapter 2. A more plausible explanation for verbal reticence might stem from Piaget's (1954) theory of cognitive development, whereby they were embarking on a stage of abstract thinking (the stage of Formal Operations and the application of metacognition: Piaget 1954) and, given the age span, some were more comfortable with it than others. Language is regarded as an essential tool in the development of metacognition. Possibly their apparent reluctance to articulate their feelings verbally was also influenced by their experiences of social interaction to date (Vygotsky 1986). Vygotsky stressed the importance of social interaction as a tool for social development, whereby cultural

norms are internalised, verbal skills are honed and higher-order cognitive functions are cultivated.

Most of the dancers went to school in the same community where they danced, so their education and community dance fields overlapped. Consequently, they had friends in both fields, and each dancer could act as a link for friends in the discrete groups. For example, the non-dancers among their school friends could catch a glimpse of the dance world through the dancers. Chapter 3 Figure 1 shows this two-way interaction, where the company is firmly situated within the community, with the dancers being a part of both. In the process of creating dance, I have found that a dancer's own reflexivity impinges on his/her multiple worlds – not a single Husserlian 'life-world' – which, in turn, modify him/her and inform his /her dances. In this study, the dancers could take ideas from the mass media to which they are exposed, and compare the various cultural climates portrayed in films and pop videos for example, with their own. They might have empathised with the emotional content of a song and be inspired to manifest it in dance because they found it easier than communicating it in words. This constant modification ensures the reflexive engagement of the dancers in shaping and being shaped by their social and cultural environments.

The majority of the dancers, who were all female at the time of data collection, had experience of other types of dance: some had gone to ballet, tap, modern, highland or jazz classes, and a few of them were continuing with these disciplines while also attending the creative dance class. Active hobbies, such as football, volleyball, basketball and horse-riding also featured among their spare-time activities, though some admitted to having a dislike of sports and physical education, other than dance. The following table (4.1) summarises the background information about the dancers.



Table 4.1: Background information about the dancers participating in the study

| Name    | Age                            | Main interests outwith the Creative Dance class    |
|---------|--------------------------------|--|
| Kate    | 12 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> | Ballet, jazz, highland dancing                     |
| Rosie   | 12 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> | Highland, majorettes, another creative dance class |
| Laura   | 13                             | Hockey, athletics                                  |
| Emma    | 13                             | Hockey, badminton, athletics                       |
| Maria   | 14                             | Highland dancing                                   |
| Fran    | 15                             | ballet   |
| Caitlin | 15                             | Hockey, contemporary dance                         |
| Kathy   | 15                             | ballet   |
| Elaine  | 15                             | Horse-riding                                       |
| Amy     | 15                             | Swimming   |
| Roberta | 15                             | Music  |
| Kirsten | 16                             | Contemporary dance, highland                       |
| Dee     | 16                             | Hockey, running                                    |
| Donna   | 19                             | Contemporary dance, jazz                           |
| Sharon  | 17                             | Contemporary dance                                 |

To ensure confidentiality, the dancers' names have been changed.

Also present was their teacher, Diane, herself a product of formal ballet training, but with wide experience of performing in contemporary companies and school-based dance teaching as well as community-based.

### 4.3 Observed activity: a description and early interpretation

During the observation period, the company met in three different venues: a function room in a town hall, a rehearsal studio at the local theatre and a large, multi-purpose games hall-cum-function room. The latter was the regular venue; the others were temporary arrangements. The settings were significant in respect of social interaction and production of dance:

- The town hall was spacious, light, and allowed each group of dancers to select an area in which they could work. Only one group could use music at any time, but it did not appear to interfere with the work of the others.
- The studio was the smallest, requiring dancers to sit out and watch while others were rehearsing with the teacher. When rehearsing without the teacher, the use of music had to be negotiated, so that it did not interfere with other groups.
- The multi-purpose games hall was the main venue, and was big enough to enable two groups to use music simultaneously, albeit quietly, and

interviews to be conducted, so that dancers could talk about their experience without having to be removed from the setting.

This section offers my impression of the activity and interaction I witnessed, and my initial interpretation of it.

Members of the company were engaged in creative dance, influenced mainly by contemporary and street dance. They were participating in it as a recreational activity. It was not assessed or certificated; the motivation for taking part was enjoyment. Bearing in mind Best's (1985, 2004) definition of art as opposed to aesthetics, and Franko's (1996) assertion that recreational dance is not art because it is not "spectacular" (p. 30) (see Chapter 2), I was interested to see that there was a tacit understanding among the dancers that this particular creative dance class involved a 'spectacular' component, i.e. performance, which elevated it beyond the status of a class-bound activity to that of 'performing art' even though it was indeed a recreational class. When I referred to dance as art in my questions, there was no dissent because what they produce is the outcome of their creative effort for the purpose of performing. When Dee, one of the members of the group, was asked whether she considered her composition to be 'art', she replied,

I take that on board and it's good to learn what your body can do (Dee, interview 6)

implying that she did indeed consider it to be an art form, which had the body as the point of reference. Kate recognised dance as a performing art, while when Maria was asked why she selected dance "as (her) chosen art form", she explained,

I chose to dance ... because there are so many things you can do in it. (Maria, interview 9)

without questioning whether it was art or not. It may have been a recreational class as far as the local authority community arts policy was concerned, but these girls worked hard at their chosen art and had serious intentions about their membership. Their creative product might be viewed by Franko (1996), and like-minded people as examples of popular art rather than 'spectacular' high art or Gardner's (1999: 117) "little c" creativity (see Chapter 2 Section 2.4), but a more generous view of it would be that of Brinson's (1993) concept of community art where personal

achievement is appreciated for its intrinsically fulfilling properties for the performer. This view echoes the concept of 'mini c' creativity (Beghetto and Kaufman 2007).

The completed dances I witnessed were evidence of the creative product, while the sharing, experimenting and discussion were indications of the creative process. An essential part of rehearsing and refining the dance involved adopting roles of leader or follower and experiencing how that feels. The dancers were encouraged to watch each other and comment constructively on other people's work, based on the knowledge which they had acquired through exposure to the dance medium. Being able to cast an informed and critical eye over one's own or someone else's work requires confidence as well as artistic knowledge. I believed that having the artistic skills and confidence, as well as the opportunity to employ them, would contribute to feeling positive about oneself in this company, i.e. enjoying social wellbeing.

The video material (Appendix B and DVD) gave clues about the degree to which the indicators of commitment and expressivity were present or absent, and enabled me to study interaction, as well as the dances as works in progress. It also provided the dancers with an opportunity to view their own creative effort and discuss how they perceived their own emotions, physicality and cognitive input, and what informed their choices of stimulus and artistic responses, in keeping with my methodology. Later, from the interviews and discussions, I sought to understand the dancers' perception of their commitment to the art form and expressivity as indicated by their expressive movement on video.

#### **4.3.1 Session 1 (video section 1)**

My immediate impression as I walked into the first class to be observed in the town hall, was that everyone was so intent on the task in hand, they had not even realised that someone new was in their midst (most of them had met me previously, when I briefed them about the purpose of my visits, and when I conducted the pilot study). I was keen to be as unobtrusive as possible, and was relieved to note that the buzz of conversation and the level of physical activity did not falter as I moved across the room to set up the video camera. Even after Diane had stopped them to remind them who I was and why I was there, the activity quickly resumed. The camera was mounted on a tripod so that from my corner, I could move it in sweeping arcs, while

keeping it steady. As the groups of dancers were restricted to their chosen area of the room, I gained clear views of the closest and of the more distant groups engaged in learning their dances although their voices could not always be heard. Levels of co-operation within groups appeared to be high on the whole. Seemingly unconcerned about my presence, the composers taught their dances to their groups, and demanded a significant degree of precision. There was evidence of motifs being practised until the dancers and the choreographer in each group felt comfortable with them. When not engaged in practice, they would watch other groups. In the foreground, two young dancers, Rosie and Kate, worked together using chairs as props. Although one was clearly the leader, there was evidence of negotiation (video 1.5, 01:45-03:20) in the creative process.

Swinging the camera further round, I saw Diane circulating among the groups, advising, making suggestions about dance content, and encouraging dancers to improve the quality of their movement. From the perspective of my own dance background, it was clear to me which dancers had had dance training before (primarily ballet), and which ones only came to this class judging by their posture and movements. For example, whereas the three ballet-trained dancers often used turnout and balletic posture as the foundation of their creative movement (particularly Kathy, who was older than the other two and had done more ballet than them), the jazz, highland and modern dancers seemed to me to move more freely. The highland dancers looked strong and had good deportment but their training did not appear to influence their experiments with contemporary moves. The hint of ballet technique was not necessarily intentional, but had clearly been internalised by those who had been exposed to it: it was a part of them and was often a starting-point for their creative endeavour. Diane encouraged them to move beyond the parameters of their technique to explore a wider range of movement. Some of the dancers who had no formal training (e.g. Dee) had a refreshing, unrestricted range of movement, which Dawn guided them in utilising effectively.

Periodically, groups would stop dancing, relax and chat, but were on the whole sufficiently self-disciplined and motivated to keep the breaks in concentration brief. When dancing, most of them seemed comfortable with the physicality of the activity. I had the impression that their identity was embodied in their image of themselves as dancers. They were living the role and clearly enjoying it (video 1.5, 03:22-

03:42). It seemed to me that they were experiencing a sense of wellbeing from the social setting as well as from the physical activity, and this was endorsed by some of their comments:

...it's really good ... how you interact with other people, how you make friends and socialise, interacting with others... and I feel comfortable because everyone in the room is friendly with each other. (Amy, interview 4)

We're all working towards the same thing and it's good to feel like you're part of the process. (Roberta interview 5)

At this point I felt strongly that my chosen methodology was working for me: the dancers were creating their own realities within the parameters set by Diane, an agent who was external to them and shared by them all. I was watching them and making my own interpretations based on my pre-understandings of the activity and my self-knowledge of what it feels like to create dance.

#### **4.3.2 Sessions 2 (video section 2)**

There was no sound on this video section due to a technical problem. This class took place in the rehearsal room of the local theatre where the group's imminent performance was to take place. Restrictions on space and time meant that not all the dancers could attend at once, giving Diane the opportunity for in-depth work with smaller numbers. Consequently, some dancers had to sit out and observe while others danced, and that provided the opportunity for another perspective to be captured on film – how they responded as observers of each other's work.

I captured footage of one of the older dancers, Sharon, teaching her dance to a group, to a tune entitled 'Roxanne' which was charged with emotional content depicted by slow, controlled gestures and movements performed at different levels (video 2.1, 04:40-05:00). Sharon adopted some well-known strategies for enhancing dance, incorporating floor-level moves, changes of direction, and movement in unison and canon. The dancers in her group were of mixed ages, so this was an opportunity for the younger members to learn from her example. Communication was two-way: verbal exchanges were accompanied by movement demonstrations, and members of the group were not afraid to stop and ask for clarification. Their focus on the task was clear, the level of intent etched on their faces.

I focused the camera on one young dancer (Emma), observing her concentration while engaged in rehearsal. She copied the lead dancer and gave feedback, not afraid to volunteer ideas. While sitting alone on the floor (video 2.1, 06:01-06:20), she watched for a few minutes and then appeared to lose concentration. She focused again, responded to instructions, and recommenced practice. Her expression was thoughtful; she appeared to feel the music, internalising its emotive properties. I wondered whether it was an indication of how she actually felt, and learned later in a group discussion that she was a newcomer to the company, still unsure of how she fitted in socially, still shy about revealing too much of her own personality, still restricted in terms of social wellbeing.

As with the last class, the dancers gave the impression of being at ease with their physicality: it appeared that they were masters of it, in control of it, that they identified themselves as dancers. Donna, among others, confirmed that in interview when she spoke of herself “as a dancer” (interview 10).

I noticed that the least focused among the observers were those who had not opted into my research, and I felt that that could be significant: those who were research participants perhaps had a more deep-rooted interest in creative dance, and a stronger image of themselves as dancers, irrespective of the camera’s presence. Maria concentrated on creating her dance with Elaine, while later on (Video 2.3, 05:30-06.42) she knew I was filming when she danced with Kathy, but she ignored me and concentrated on the task. I would not have the opportunity to examine the idea further, of interest level between participants and non-participants, as I could only interview the participants and not the non-participants, but it would inform the way I viewed subsequent classes: how much did they interact with the participants? Were they contributing to the creative process by offering comments? Did they serve a function as ‘audience’? On the evidence of other video shots, I believe that the presence of the camera was not a contributory factor to the way any of the dancers focused on their task. This was evident in the next video section, with Kirsten’s dance.

### **4.3.3 Session 3 (video section 3)**

While video 1.5, (01:37-03:40 intermittently) shows Kirsten teaching her group in the background, oblivious to the camera's presence, Video 3.3, (06:28-06.52) shows her rehearsing her dance with them while she knew that the camera was on her. While comparing the two different extracts, I could not see her level of focus vary. Being a company member, and thus an experienced performer, it seemed to me that the camera posed no threat to her.

The main focus in this class was the practising of dances already created for a forthcoming show rather than on new creativity. The opportunity for composing, choreographing and negotiating was passed. Three groups were working in different areas of the hall. Two of the older dancers (Kirsten and Sharon) were rehearsing their compositions with their groups, while the third group worked with Diane. The level of focus was high, even among the non-research participants, probably due to the performance date being imminent. The dancers were absorbed in the task and paid careful attention to the leaders, who, in turn, were intent on getting the details right and demanded accuracy from their group members. Here was evidence of the leaders asserting themselves and defining their identities by taking control of their situation. Interaction consisted largely of dancers asking for clarification of aspects of the choreography. All were co-operative, single-mindedly pursuing their aim of delivering the best possible performance on the night. I found that as I became familiar with the dances, I was also becoming attuned to certain dancers' individual styles, e.g. the way Sharon (video 3.3, 07:43-08:04) could focus on small details and was learning to project them to an audience (in this case, a group of girls who were not dancing at that time); Kirsten's expansive movements which used the space and which would break up the background effectively when transferred to the stage (video 3.3, 08:05-08:52) and the confidence exuded by Mhairi's strong movements, out of camera range, but based on highland dancing: all three very different as dancers and as group leaders. The activity allowed them to define their individuality through their dances.

### **4.3.4 Session 4 (video section 4)**

This short section took place the week after the performance, and shows the dancers doing a 'mirroring' exercise, led by Diane. The dancers worked in pairs,

taking turns at being the leader and the follower. The task required them to refine their movements into a motif which they could repeat in these roles. Clearly some were less comfortable in a leading role and preferred to follow. The camera then focuses on two dancers composing a piece based on highland dancing. The leading dancer explained afterwards that Diane had suggested using a different dance genre as the creative medium instead of contemporary dance to push them into less familiar territory. As I described in Chapter 1, contemporary dance was the usual foundation of their creative ventures and it gave them a very wide base of movement vocabulary to experiment with. However, their main influence for it was often the company they had seen most recently or their favourite music. They needed encouragement to look beyond what they were comfortable with and to think about how they felt in that relatively new movement zone. The 'highland' dance which they created seemed attractive and effective to me and I wondered why alternative dance modes are not used more often in dance art. One answer lies in Cohen Bull's (1997) observation that embodied meaning in specific techniques is not necessarily transferable to every audience (Chapter 2). Contemporary dance in its various manifestations seems to be generally considered more accessible to dance-going audiences, though that is not always my personal experience. In my view, some contemporary performances can best be described as esoteric as they fail to communicate beyond the proscenium arch. As I discussed in Chapter 2 with reference to Best (1999), Oliver (2004) and Curl (2005), there has to be some shared cultural understanding to enable effective communication between dancer and audience. If the dancer cannot communicate, the performance must surely be detrimental to his/her feelings of social wellbeing.

Discussion arose from this later, about what the girls thought contemporary dance is and its value as the foundation for creating dances in this class compared to other approaches; how restrictive a technique-based dance form might be, or how limiting a non-specialist, loosely modernist approach to dance might appear because of the lack of prescribed movement vocabulary. This brought to mind the point raised by Seroff (1972), about Nijinsky's criticism of Isadora Duncan for having insufficient movement vocabulary (see Chapter 2): her retort was that classical ballet was too restrictive for her because of its rigid technique base.



Although several of the dancers had had instruction in other techniques, it seemed to me that ballet was the strongest influence. In my view, it had clearly left its imprint on the bodies of the dancers who had had ballet training (e.g. Kathy in video 1, 00:05-00:10 and Emma in video 2.7, 05:57-06:22). It appeared that they were conditioned to internalise its characteristics, so clear in their posture, gestures and flexibility of their bodies. Their movements suggested to me that they had previously constructed images of themselves as ballet dancers and they might have difficulty countering that image. The creation of self-image would have implications for feelings of wellbeing: they had to be happy with it. In this class, they were encouraged to break free from predetermined self-images and turn their bodily conditioning into a positive force for experimenting and learning about their own powers of expression, as the next section demonstrates.

#### **4.4 The ‘dance’ and ‘social’ trajectories: a description and interpretation**

Using Bourdieu’s ‘social trajectory’ and my devised ‘dance trajectory’ (Chapter 3, Methodology), the data will be examined with reference to the points on the trajectories, namely:

- The dance trajectory:
  - Technical input and practicalities
  - Physicality in dance
  - Creating, experimenting, refining
  - Performing
  
- The social trajectory:
  - Sources of motivation and inspiration
  - Personal feelings
  - Social interaction
  - Taking control

However, the nature of the research required an acknowledgement of flexibility. Some of the data could conceivably belong to more than one area of the framework as one would expect in a study with hermeneutic phenomenology at its heart. Remembering Kroger’s (2003: 208) advice about avoiding preconceived ideas, I looked for these young people’s own perceptions of their identity and consequent state of wellbeing. The trajectories represent broad themes, not mutually exclusive categories and the layout of the analysis accommodates the blurred boundaries where necessary (e.g. interviews 1,2 and 5) rather like the colours of a rainbow, which merge into each other. My findings reflect that flexible approach: I have adopted the points on the dance trajectory as main headings, while the social

trajectory sub-headings follow the sequence of milestones on the social ‘journey’, without being followed rigidly.

The findings comprised data principally gleaned from the interviews, discussions and observation. Observation was ongoing during the period of data collection, interspersed with interviews at times convenient to Diane and the dancers. The discussions were held at later dates, after the end of the term. The time gap was unavoidable due to the summer holidays, but in fact, it enabled the dancers to reflect on their work from a more distant position, which enriched the emerging picture by providing a slightly different angle. Table 4.2 shows the relative importance of the data collection methods for each combination of points on the trajectories:

Table 4.2: Main sources of data for points on the trajectories

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience | Personal feelings                              | Social interaction                        | Taking control                            |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Technical input and practicalities | Interviews, observation                       | Interviews, Group discussion, observation      | Interviews, group discussion              | Interviews, observation                   |
| Physicality in dance               | Interviews, group discussion, observation     | Interviews, Group discussion<br>Graffiti walls | Observation, interviews, group discussion | Observation, interviews                   |
| Creating, experimenting, refining  | Interviews, observation                       | Interviews, Observation, Graffiti walls        | Observation, interviews, group discussion | Interviews, observation, group discussion |
| Performing                         | Interviews, observation                       | interviews                                     | Interviews, group discussion              | Interviews, observation, group discussion |

#### **4.4.1 Technical input and practicalities**

This aspect of the trajectory encompassed the girls’ previous experience of dance, i.e. what techniques they had learned either at classes in the past, or with Southern Youth Dance when Diane or visiting choreographers introduced them to something new. These background experiences provided the ‘springboard’ from which they launched into their own creativity. They provided the physical, and arguably the verbal, vocabulary which helped the dancers to achieve “readiness for creativity”

(Chappell 2007: 44). As Table 4.2 shows, the data were revealed largely through interviews, in which the dancers talked about their dance backgrounds, but were supported by my observations, for example where ballet and highland dancing techniques being employed, as discussed below. Seeing themselves on video using a variety of dance techniques and also social techniques as choreographers, teachers, and learners stimulated group discussion.

**(i) Sources of motivation and inspiration**

Under this subheading, the dancers had the opportunity to tell me about why they wanted to be members of the company, what were their preferred dance techniques, and about companies or performances which had been a particular source of inspiration for them.

Elaine reported that she had had to choose between gymnastics and dance, which she perceived to be conflicting disciplines, and she favoured the experimental nature of contemporary-based creative dance over the rigid discipline of gymnastics. She enjoyed the competitive edge of auditioning for the particular dance company and the drive to learn more, but was not overly concerned about fitness. The social and creative aspects of this class were a greater source of motivation than physical achievement for her.

Emma appreciated the ease with which dance as art could be facilitated, contrasting it with visual art or music-making, which required specialist equipment to produce an expressive output. This sort of dance appealed to her particularly because the only requirements are space and an articulate body: in dance, the artist, the instrument and the product are one entity. For her, there was an appealing simplicity about it. It was very accessible.

Most of the dancers were drawn to the class because they welcomed an additional opportunity to dance in their home area. The audition was not a deterrent – indeed, some reported that they enjoyed the experience and felt that it made them rather special:

... it meant that people couldn't just walk in off the street.  
(Sharon, interview 1)

The issue of elitism in this dance company is interesting in light of the local government arts development plan discussed in Chapter 2 which aims to create equality. Some texts which I believe are significant, present elitism as a negative factor (Boal 1979; Friere 1985; Fowler 2000), blaming the state for perpetuating cultural stereotypes, yet here is an example of the participants actively seeking out an opportunity which promotes their status, demonstrating that, given the same starting point, individuals will strive to assert their differences. Delle Fave's (2007) findings support this, adding that

complexities of competencies at the individual level could be used as indicators of the degree of health and positive development of a culture (despite) the current trend towards homogenisation and social levelling. (Delle Fave 2007: 54)

The dancers were aware of being different from the other council-run creative dance class participants. They did feel rather superior to participants in the other community creative dance classes because they had auditioned for their places and company membership was important to them:

It makes you feel quite important, belonging to a company. And we had to audition for it. (Roberta, interview 5)

It feels good to be part of a company that's good enough to perform. (Caitlin interview 2)

However, they were still bound by cultural conformity in a wider frame e.g. in the community where they lived and socialised, they were still daughters, pupils, team members, friends and possibly adversaries. This was their social 'field' in Bourdieu's terms, even if they were given the opportunity to be responsible for aspects of their 'habitus'. Hence they were encouraged to 'break their mould' and push their horizons increasingly further away – but always within the parameters of cultural acceptability.

The dancers saw the class as an opportunity to have 'fun', defined as "being really happy and learning new things that you wouldn't normally do ..." (Maria, Appendix A interview 9). The literature confirms that physical and artistic challenges are often experienced as 'fun' by children and adolescents (Stinson 1997; Giguere 2006; Wallace DiGarbo and Hill 2006), provided that they are "intrinsically satisfying" (Stinson 1997: 61) and give rise to a sense of achievement. Giguere's (2006) dancers experienced fun from learning to be aware of how their bodies moved.

They learned something about themselves as social individuals from the experience and that enhanced wellbeing. In my study, the mastery of a new skill in dance and the chance to push oneself harder was considered important by most of the dancers. Whether or not they were aware of increasing physical fitness or whether they cared about it, the activity led them towards experiencing wellbeing through bodily health (Nussbaum 2000) and nurturing a positive body image (Gordon and Grant 1997). Sometimes there was a lack of physical challenge but it did not appear to be a criticism; rather it was an acknowledgement of the diverse nature of the dancers in their company and their varied dance experience:

In class I gain more experience of what dance teaches you and what it does for you ... The range of movement is not too demanding. I know (Diane's) style. (Sharon, interview 1)

Only four of the twelve participating dancers mentioned the fitness aspect as being a motivational factor, and of these, only two considered it a positive attribute of the dance process. For example, while Kirsten enthused,

Fitness – that's the big thing. It's cool ...if you go away feeling ...like you've achieved something. You don't have to lose pounds or anything ... (Kirsten, interview 8)

Maria's comment shows that she disagrees:

It's nothing to do with how fit I am or what I want to be – it's just what's fun. I don't find it challenging. (Maria, interview 9)

There was a split, therefore, between those who danced to become fit, and those who became fit incidentally through dance, but the majority did not even consider it worth mentioning. For them, it appeared, the issue of fitness was less important than the chance to apply their creativity.

Previous dance experience could be beneficial to the dancers' creative skills, or counter-productive. Kathy was one of those with a ballet background. Her balletic steps (Video 1 00.05 – 00.30 and 01.25 – 01.29) were something with which she was familiar because she had done ballet from an early age. Her place in the company offered her new challenges to experiment with movement outwith that frame of reference, but she had to start with what she knew while gradually assimilating a new movement repertoire based on various contemporary dance influences e.g. the resident dance company at the local theatre. Video 2.1 (04:47 –

04.58) shows Diane in the background working with her to push her movement parameters beyond what she felt was familiar and safe. Later on (video 2.3, 05.29-05.32), she appeared to have grasped the new material and incorporated it into the dance. She has assimilated it; it is part of her movement vocabulary now. At other points in the video she is seen retreating to her safety zone again. Perhaps her actions were indicative of her level of self-esteem, which is linked to confidence (Scottish Executive 2006; Quinn et al 2007). Although, in my view, she had a very acceptable level of technical dance proficiency, she left me wondering if indeed she was evidence of Beecher's (2005) caution that technical rigidity can inhibit the development of expressiveness by blocking mind-body connectedness. In an extreme case, the holistic experience is interrupted by the dancer's desire for technical perfection when technique is allowed to take precedence.

This discussion of Kathy's technique and her level of confidence and self-esteem is an example of why I had to keep the analysis framework flexible: it tells us as much about her personal feelings and her very tentative attempts to take control of the 'self' she wished to portray, as it does about her source of inspiration for her creative dancing. It will therefore be revisited in the next section.

Diane was always on hand to support and ensure that the experience of gradual image building and self-realisation was as positive as possible. This was demonstrated in Video 1, 00.15 –1.50 where the dancers were responding to a task which Dawn had set them, involving creating a motif in pairs from a given starting point. It resonates with Harris and Hastings' (2006) interactive model of social wellbeing, with various external and internal factors impacting on each dancer, providing social and kinaesthetic feedback on the creative experience. The external factors included the set task, the watchful eyes of teacher and peers and the limitations of the space where there were the inevitable distractions of background chatter and movement. The internal factors included the need to find their own starting point for the movement – a point where they were comfortable with the movement before they could start to be adventurous. In Bourdieu's (1993) terms, this is the tension between conditioning and creativity: they learn some technique from Diane or bring something to the task from their previous dance experience, then alter it for their own purpose. The constant questioning, challenging and

reinforcement by peers and teacher seemed to help reshape their sense of self as surely as the exercise honed their bodies.

## **(ii) Personal feelings**

The dancers were asked to consider how their dance experience and membership of the company made them feel about themselves.

Joining the class was viewed by some as an intimidating experience, and fitting in was largely dependent on new dancers identifying members with a similar level of dance skill, to whom they could relate. An intrinsic feeling of confidence was a recurring theme. Caitlin and Kathy agreed that “it makes you feel important, belonging to a company” (interview 2). The nerves before the audition gave way to feelings of enjoyment as they relaxed and concentrated on dancing. In most cases, being accepted for membership of a selected group in the locality enhanced their feelings of wellbeing and self-esteem:

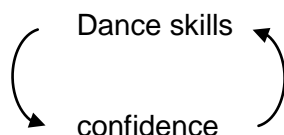
...it made you feel good that you'd got in – that you'd really achieved something to get this length, yes, to be accepted. (Elaine, interview 7)

They then had the status of belonging to a dance ‘company’. This echoes Pahl’s (2007) concept of ‘personal communities’, Riley and Cahill’s (2005) ‘subcultural capital’ and Williams and Bendelow’s (1998:148) acknowledgement of the importance of solidarity among peers: it gave them a positive identity and a sense of belonging which they had earned, consistent with the findings of Augoustinos and Walker (1995), Nussbaum (2000) and Kroger (2003), that a sense of belonging is a key factor in establishing positive self-identity, which contributes to feelings of wellbeing. Some of the dancers commented that membership of the dance company was a prized goal to strive for and at the point of audition, the dancers assume a degree of control of their identity through their bodies. As Boal (1979) describes, it is an opportunity to start visualising themselves as subjective beings, in charge of shaping their own images (see Chapter 2, section 5.2). Sharon summed up that feeling of empowerment by remarking that “it makes you take on different aspects of your life – makes you more self-aware” (interview 1).

The issue of the dancers’ concept of fitness and its benefits proved to hold varying degrees of significance for their personal feelings of wellbeing. Why does Kirsten want to be fit? Apparently not for her physical appearance, so it must be to do

either with feelings of wellbeing more generally or because she knows that if she is going to pursue dance as a career, fitness is crucial. Why does Maria disregard physical fitness as important? She rates the outcome of having fun more highly: that was her motivation for joining the company. She had no intention of dancing professionally. She perceived improvement in her physical fitness to be an added bonus. Using the criteria which Quinn et al (2007) used to gauge the positive effects of dance, I believed that both Kirsten's and Maria's level of participation indicated a positive attitude to their dancing. The amount of time and effort they put into creating and practising supports my interpretation of what I saw them do. They exuded a feeling of being comfortable with their image of themselves as dancers, which I believed indicated a positive level of self-esteem in the dance environment. Although my remit excluded the measure of physical health which Quinn et al (2007) address, I concur with Greenland (2000) and Bell (2009) that that these dancers' positive frame of mind would be enhanced by their healthy physical condition and that these two factors would help to trigger their creativity. I suspect that Mhairi had not stopped to think about the relationship between fitness and creativity. Being two years younger than Kirsten, she just wanted to have fun.

Kate volunteered that their level of achievement affected their confidence. This was reinforced by the knowledge that their dancing skills were improving, creating a cyclical effect, with confidence and skills attainment feeding each other:



although Fiona pointed out that the opposite is equally true: if your confidence is low, you will not dance well; if you do not dance well, it erodes your confidence. Again, this suggests the relationship between the physical and emotional properties of creative dance raised by Quinn et al (2007), i.e. that they are inseparable and that they enhance the adolescent dancer's attitude towards creative dance and improve intrinsic motivation: if (s)he feels (s)he can achieve something, it will reinforce the pleasure of trying. This also resonates with Williams and Bendelow's (1998) holistic model of 'health', encompassing physical, social and emotional wellbeing.



There is evidence here of Lury's (1998) concept of prosthetic self – that which the individual wants to project for some extrinsic purpose - because the dancers had chosen to create a specific 'self' which fits the image they want to portray, to become unique within their cultural and experiential framework. In most cases, their prior experience formed their image of themselves as dancers, which was not always positive. Kathy commented that “ballet was daunting”, but that Southern Youth Dance was “much less threatening” and allowed her confidence to grow (interview 2). She had cast off one extension of 'self' in favour of another, demonstrating a proactive approach in selecting her self-image. Kirsten was another example of the cultivated 'prosthetic self': when she first joined the company, “just being different” was intimidating, but she, too, found an image she was happy with, and honed it to fit comfortably as she demonstrated in Video 3.1, 06.20-06.52, while teaching her choreography to her group. She assumed the position of authority with apparent ease and her dancers followed her without demur. Kirsten and Sharon were demonstrating that they were taking control of their identity by taking the lead in their respective choreographic ventures (Video 3.1 and 3.2, 06.60 – 07.20).

At times, the dancers might bring problems and negative emotions from outside into the studio as the graffiti walls bore testimony: “sore head; can't be bothered” 22/05/06; “... like I have a sore back” (Appendix C 19/06/06), but the dance experience might help to dispel them:

(In class) I feel really happy ... I keep feeling it is just me, I can forget about everything else, just – it's about dancing. I forget about my problems or anything like that. (Roberta, interview 5)

Still, perhaps the opportunity to feel some negative emotion can be helpful because it encouraged the dancers to reach deeper into their feelings to explore and deal with the source of the negativity, while also enabling them to appreciate the positive emotions more highly, when things go right. Moreover, all experiences, positive and negative, help to strengthen personal identity which can equip them to negotiate their habitus and potentially reinforce self-esteem.

The aim of the exercise was to produce a finished piece of art (Best 1985), “pure art” (Bourdieu 2005: 58) or something “spectacular” (Franko 1996:30) – an entity created for no other reason than to be viewed and appreciated as art. Each work is the composer’s unique response to a given stimulus. In terms of Franko’s (1996) account of Classical Expression Theory (Chapter 2 section 2.3), the stimulus has made an emotional impression on her, which has triggered her desire to express it in movement. By engaging with it at a cognitive as well as corporeal level, she creates her dance as the physical manifestation of an emotional experience, albeit through ‘mini-c’ (Beghetto and Kaufmann 2007) intrinsically satisfying creativity, or ‘little c’ (Gardner 1999) creativity (see Chapter 2 Section 2.4), destined to impress a limited group of local spectators before physically disappearing from view, as is the fate of any ephemeral art in the community arena. However, creative art makes an impact beyond its physical existence: the fact that the dancers have internalised and danced their creations will have changed them in some way, and likewise, the audience will have in some way been changed by the experience, even if they have viewed the dance in a more social, value-laden light than by employing Bourdieu’s concept of value-free “pure gaze” (Prior 2005:126). To the dancers, the value of their work may well have seemed like ‘big C’ creativity (Gardner 1999), as each dance held such strong personal meaning for them – not just as an expression of who they are, but ultimately as a self-contained goal. It is their prerogative to promote their personal perception of their own work. The video clips show the dancers enjoying a level of creative freedom circumscribed by Diane, whom they trust and admire: the graffiti wall comments, such as “We all love Diane” (Appendix C, graffiti walls 24/04/06, 15/05/06,) bear testimony to this, as well as their willingness to accept her judgement. The class structure is therefore an enabling feature rather than a restrictive one, as Houston (2005) suggests. This reflects Gardner’s (1999) and Robinson’s (2001) portrayal of creative potential being given free reign within limitations set by controlling forces, however benign, e.g. Diane, the purpose of the class, and the dancers’ own creative skills. Inevitably, the

compositions cannot transcend the dancers' personal experiences, and these, Parviainen (1998) and Thomas (2003) remind us, are influenced by culture. Hence the dancers were demonstrating a mixture of cognitivism (Gardner's (1999) 'inside-out' approach) and constructionism (Bruner's (1996) 'outside-in' approach): cognitivist to the extent that they were making their own meaning from their observations of their dance environment; constructionist to the extent that the social environment invites them to reflect on the sociocultural conditions which can be as much a restriction as a safety net. Their personal feelings are shaped at least to some extent by their cultural conditioning.

### **(iii) Social interaction**

This was an opportunity for the dancers to reflect on the influence they felt that their dance experience had on the way they interacted in the class – where they were all viewed as 'dancers' – and whether and how that identity affected relationships outwith the class.

Two broad categories of social interaction were recognised in the data: a) relationships within the class, and b) the perceived impact on friendships in the community. Both of these aspects of social interaction link with the concept of social wellbeing and reflect the aim of my study.

- a) Making friends with a similar interest was reported to be an important reason to belong to this class. The dancers recognised that through social interaction, they learned about themselves as well as about other people. They learned to appreciate and accommodate individual differences by working together:

Everyone's different – the same as in dancing, everyone has different experiences ... everyone has different personalities ... everyone has something special about them. Kathy (interview 2)

Diane commented on how much social development various company members had undergone over the period since they joined, noting that they had created a "good 'peer learning' environment" (interview 11). Kathy and Caitlin agreed that the experience of dancing in this group made them more able to mix socially, because they gained a certain social confidence or "inner assuredness" (Kroger 2003: 206) from the dance class experience, overcoming the shyness of dancing in front of other people. Indeed, gaining confidence was a frequently recurring theme among

the dancers' responses in this as in other categories, not just through the process of co-operating with others to create dances, but by changing their self-image. Most of the dancers appeared to be quite adept at switching from being leaders to being followers, as the videos show (ref). Again, Sharon's remark about becoming more self-aware (interview 1) is relevant and resonates with Critien and Ollis' (2006) description of how dancers shape their self-concept through dance. As the dancers strive towards realising who they are (Maslow's stage of "self-actualisation" in Huitt 2004) it is less of a risk for them to assume other roles, and as Beecher (2005) points out, this is a step towards wellbeing.

The flexibility which Sharon and others demonstrated in adopting different roles is consistent with Bourdieu's (1993) description of how individuals acquire social constructs, as they move between the polarities of social experience as individuals and as members of society. These roles also reflect Houston's (2005) views, of the 'enabling' factor in community dance participation. They learn the skills of working together and each finds her own niche in terms of age, experience and preferred style of creating, teaching and performing, and the process enables each to become more self-aware. Maria talked of "making connections" (interview 9) in describing this process of finding where they fit in best, and endorsed the idea that confidence was a key outcome of creative dance:

(It) does make you more confident ... being able to show someone a dance., like, being able to show them moves ... (Maria, interview 9 )

Helping, sharing, trusting and belonging were equally important properties in promoting their social wellbeing, confirming Gordon and Grant's (1997) findings that being able to give as well as receive help and to experience peer support had a positive impact on self-image and consequently on self-esteem. They learned to accommodate other people's needs and desires for performance skills, as well as recognising and fulfilling their own. Amy (interview 4) commented that dancing with the others

can also affect your personality, make you more social ... because you know they're the same as you. (Amy, interview 4)

The common interest in dance was the factor which made the members gel, and recognition that they belonged to a dance 'company', as mentioned by Kathy,

Kirsten and Donna, was important to them because it helped them to define themselves in a positive way.

b) Social skills acquired in the dance class could be transferred to circles of friends at home and at school, and this social aspect is one of the intended outcomes on which the local council based their rationale for funding the company. Self-confidence, leading to personal growth and wellbeing was seen as a benchmark of success ( \_ Council 2006) – the route of all other social achievement. This resonates with Brinson’s (1993) argument for promoting arts in formal and community education, namely to enhance cultural, social and personal identity. Sharleen believed that she drew courage from her dance training, which affected the way she interacted with friends in the wider community. She was confident that she could make better social connections, as well as dancing well, as a result of the confidence-boosting experience. Roberta agreed:

Confidence is one of the things, like, I gain confidence after each time I come here ... Yes, socialising, and the dancing itself ... It makes me more confident, which ... makes me find it more easy to talk to other people outside dance. (Roberta, interview 5)

Kathy agreed that being able to show someone a dance “makes it easier to go and talk to someone, it did make you more confident ...” (interview 2) and improved social interaction both within and outwith the group. This suggests that she had reached a stage of “self-transcendence” in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Huitt 2004) whereby she is secure enough with her own self-identity to be able to help others to find self-fulfilment and realise their potential. Kirsten reported that she often discussed her dancing with her non-dancing friends, who expressed surprise at her dedication but were supportive nevertheless. She reported that she and her friends chat about their various interests, and when she was particularly nervous about a forthcoming performance, they provided a sympathetic ear (Appendix A interview 8) alluding to the supportive framework which group membership can offer in the wider community.

Sharing group identity was important for the dancers, some of whom found that their performances had encouraged their friends to take up dancing:

People that aren't into other stuff, might go and try dance, and after they've done it, it's like ... (they enjoy it). (Elaine, interview 7)

and this gave them a glimpse of how they were perceived by other people. Through the performance, the dancers had projected an image to the audience – an image of Durkheim's (1976) concept of 'Körper', the physical or outer body. Thomas (2003: 53) tells us that 'Körper' has become fused in our consumerist society to the inner body, the subjective, 'lived body', or what Husserl (1970) refers to as 'Leib' (see Chapter 2 Section 3.5). Through the media, Thomas (2003) claims, ideals are communicated and people adopt them to strengthen their sense of belonging. When the dancers in my study projected their image to their audiences, some spectators were keen to join the company, possibly being drawn to the observable 'Körper' image of the company. This suggests that membership was perceived as a type of cultural capital (Bourdieu 2005) which was desirable to have because of the sense of identity attached to it.

#### **(iv) Taking control**

The dancers were prompted to consider whether and how their experience as dancers enabled them to be proactive in shaping the way they were perceived by peers within and outside the dance context. There were implications for their self-image.

The personal and social experiences coupled with the acquired dance skills helped the dancers to take control of their own level of participation and consequently of their own social identity. The prestige attached to belonging to a group perceived by the dancers to be an elite one in the community, was a very positive contribution to self-image. There was no indication that they were aware of creating a social anomaly through their membership of an elite group in a democratic society. Why should they not perceive themselves as being in some way different from other community dance groups? Through the coaching they had received, were they not in the process of acquiring what Bourdieu (2005) labelled "pure gaze" (2005: 125, 126) and were they not entitled to it? I made the point in Chapter 2 that the democratic right of access to the arts has given more people the chance to aspire to greater heights of artistic attainment, or 'Big C' creativity (Gardner 1999). Here we have a new wave of dance elite being cultivated in a community, so that democracy in this case is not so much about maintaining the status quo but of giving someone

else a chance to experience the feeling of being special and to live a dream of succeeding in their chosen art form. To give people a small taste of superiority might whet their appetite for more or might make them contented with their lot and not wish to continue their heightened status. Perhaps the provision of this dance company by the local authority was manipulative in the way in which the company was showcased as special, and different from the other creative dance classes (Boal 1979; Fowler 2000; Prior 2005), but their policy gives everyone an equal chance, and whether the opportunity is seized is a matter for individuals to decide even if the decision is based or prompted by the influences which create their habitus – family, peers and media, which might fuel their ambitions. These dancers had seized it as their entitlement because they believed they had demonstrated their potential to reach a higher standard than members of the other creative dance classes. Gaining entry to the group through the audition process gave the dancers a head start in feeling different from, or better than, friends who did not dance or who danced elsewhere:

... you know that because you went to the audition and you got through, that you are good. (Kate, Appendix A interview 3)

As Danish *et al* (2003) assert, having the skills to set their own goals for their creative efforts is considered a useful learning experience:

In class I gain more experience of what dance teaches you and what it does for you ... (Sharon, Appendix A, interview 1)

Membership of Southern Youth Dance had given her social skills which she employed during class when she was teaching or rehearsing, and which, she felt, gave her added confidence when leading people.

Three dancers - Donna, Sharon and Kirsten - were considering dance as a career at the time of data collection, and the former two had already embarked on the process of achieving that. Donna was a student on a dance degree course at a Further Education College, and Sharon had applied to join a dance HND course the following year. They had an image of what they wanted to be in a few years' time, and were focused on achieving that. Kirsten had applied, and been accepted, to

dance in a national youth dance project<sup>9</sup> which was soon to tour various Scottish venues. The younger dancers also carried a mental image of themselves as dancers, somewhat superior to non-dancers:

When I put my hair up ... my mum says I look like a dancer ...  
Our posture and things like that have improved. Yes, some  
people walk around slouched, but we go around straight up.  
(Rosie, interview 3)

Rosie's response suggests the cultivation of self-image and is consistent with the view that having an *image* of self is an important part of attaining the *desired* self (Csikszentmihalyi 2002, Thomas 2003). Being able to envisage themselves as dancers in relation to their wider peer group was an important part of the process, which gave them the confidence to test and challenge their own and other people's creative ideas. This supports Tate's (2007: 88) findings that it is important to a creative artist to perceive her/himself as being different from others. The dancers were proud of being able to say, "I am a dancer. I belong to this company." Within the safety of the class, they found themselves able to experiment with stimuli to devise their own original work.

In the spirit of phenomenology, the dancers revealed to me through words and movement, the nature of the dance experience to each of them as individuals. In the spirit of hermeneutics, I had the impression that for them, having to speak about their self-image as dancers helped them to bring it into sharper focus: they could see themselves as an integral part of the larger entity, the company. It seemed to me that for some of them, the very act of speaking about it led to a revelation about what it meant to them and what they gained from company membership, particularly Kathy, Fran, Elaine, and Roberta, who appeared to be exploring this introspective territory for the first time. They mentioned the self-confidence which they gained from their dancing (e.g. interviews 2, 5 and 7). Others, principally Sharon, Donna and Maria, appeared to have a more clearly defined understanding of themselves as dancers and what that meant to them. They had joined the company because they loved dancing and choreography, and not because they were seeking some deeper insight into their social identity.

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<sup>9</sup> A group of around twenty young dancers, selected each year from community dance classes by a Scottish trust-funded youth dance company, trained by company members and guest choreographers, to give them a taste of being a professional dancer.



Kirsten seemed genuinely surprised to discover her own potential. She seemed to grow in the realisation that she was a competent dancer who moved intelligently, as she talked. She gave the impression that she had not really stopped to examine her performance (in the widest sense of the word) from a more distant perspective before, yet her methodical approach to choreography suggested a dancer more in tune with the physical experience of composing than her emotions. I sensed a detached quality in the way she undertook the task.

Amy alluded to the importance of assuming responsibility, and not letting the team down. Membership is voluntary, but the members' enthusiasm ensures their commitment to attend classes, rehearsals and performances. Maria endorsed that point: they were proactive in choosing to dance in that group because they loved the diversity of the challenges, but along with participation there is responsibility to others. Sections of Video 1, (e.g. video 1.5, 01:45-03:20) show dancers assuming the lead in their group, and prompted Maria to comment, when observing the video, "(leading a group) makes you feel more responsible." Videos 2 (04:40-05:00) and 3 (06:28-06:52) are further examples of senior members' ability to lead, adopting very assertive modes of delivery, which indicated a level of security in their knowledge of their own ability and led to a confident output. Sharon demonstrated in various parts of the video (e.g. video 3.3, 07:43-08:043,) that she was in control of determining the goals for her dancing and teaching as she exuded confidence both in solo practice and in leading her group. She gave the impression of having a clear self-image and she spoke with the same conviction to me, the researcher, as she did to her group.

The attribute of confidence seemed to underpin the description and interpretation of all the data concerned with Technical Input and Practicalities. On close examination, the concept includes such factors as self-esteem (indeed the Cultural Commission (2005) equates confidence with self-esteem) acquisition of dance and social skills, and the sense of belonging to a company which is highly regarded in their community of family and friends as well as in the community arts circle within that local authority area.

#### **4.4.2 Physicality in dance**

In this section, I explore the dancers' feelings about the kinaesthetic experience of dancing. I asked them to consider how the act of dancing influenced their

perceptions of themselves as creative individuals physically engaged with their materials, and how they connected with others through the process. During interviews they took the opportunity to tell me about what motivated them to dance in preference to other activities, and to express their feelings about the physical engagement with dance. Spontaneous comments on the graffiti walls gave clues about the dancers' frame of mind at times during the classes. My observation of the social interaction through dance supported the data from the interviews and group discussions.

### **(i) Sources of motivation and inspiration**

Here the dancers told me about how they worked with different aesthetics and ideas gleaned from sources outside the class.

Diane's aim for the class was to give the girls a broad experience to encourage "a greater interest in dance and create work with minimal input from a tutor," an approach very much in evidence in the video clips, where, after warm-up, she would teach one group while the others work on developing their dances. She would not interfere, so that the dancers had maximum opportunity to discover for themselves how the movements felt as they internalised them. On seeing Video 3 some months after the recording, Maria noted that

(since the video was made) I have gone on to try different kinds of dance. I think I was more immature then (*laughs*). (Maria, group discussion 1)

She drew inspiration from the various companies which she had seen performing, trying to emulate them afterwards. She was keen not only to expand her movement repertoire, but also to find what suited her style – carving out her self-identity more clearly. Kathy agreed that after attending a performance, she had a strong desire to try the moves herself and to internalise them for future use. In that way her movement memory was enhanced through the immediacy of kinaesthetic learning and added to her artistry. That, she felt, was an intrinsically satisfying kinaesthetic experience when she watched herself on video (video 2.3, 05:30-06.42). It is quite likely, I believe, that her sense of self-awareness as a dancer would be heightened by watching herself dance and living the experience again, feeling the movements in her muscles and reawakening the emotions she had experienced when dancing in front of the camera. The reinforcement of her self-identity in this way would help her to cultivate positive feelings about herself (Gordon and Grant 1997) which would add to her sense of wellbeing.

Evidence of Emma's engagement with the aesthetics of the dance task was to be found in Video 2 (06:03 – 06:07), where she was motivated to learn a dance by observing it first. She appeared to be empathising kinaesthetically with the dancers she was watching. This raises the two conflicting statements by Best (1999) and Curl (2005) which I discussed in Chapter 2, namely that in Best's view an observer cannot really know what the observed person is feeling, but that Curl thinks one can "imaginatively empathise" (2005: 59) with the observed person. However, Emma had some prior knowledge of the dance – she had seen it before and was an experienced young dancer, which lends weight to my own assertion (Chapter 2) that an observer has to have at least some experience of the component parts of the dance in order for the observed movement to be learned. This thought draws me to the work of Reynolds *et al* (2008) on kinaesthetic empathy in audiences. Having practised the dance previously, perhaps her body had already stored the movement memory in its synapses. The issue of shared knowledge being necessary to enable communication and learning (Chapter 2 Section 2.3) applies here.

Being secure in the knowledge of her ability might also have contributed to her feeling of ease with her identity as a dancer. This would have implications for her state of wellbeing - physical, emotional and social - which links to the following sections where feelings are verbalised by some of the dancers.

### **(ii) Personal feelings**

The dancers were asked to explore how they felt when they were dancing, e.g. how the movements felt, what they thought about themselves dancing, and whether and how it impinged on them emotionally.

In the connection between the physicality of the dance and the thoughts which stimulate it, one expects to find evidence of emotional involvement. Sharon reported that when she dances, she feels happy:

...it's exciting; I don't want to stop. The hotter I get, I feel like a different person... Dancing makes me feel good about myself. I'm not naturally confident. When I'm dancing, a different personality comes out – it changes in a good way. (Sharon, interview 1)

Kirsten also liked to come away from class feeling “hot and worked out” (interview 8): it made her feel that she had “achieved something” (interview 8) and she could leave the class feeling better as a result. However, she contradicts herself on the subject of self-image, stating first that the satisfying feeling of having achieved something was a help to self-image, then later that:

I'm not very good on the whole self-image thing  
(*laughs*); it's not a big thing for me. (Kirsten, interview  
8)

Her first remark was made in the context of personal feelings about her dancing, while the later response was an observation about dancing with other people, i.e. how she compared herself to other dancers and whether she felt empowered by her position in the company. Modestly, she remarked that when she knew that she was “doing it right and I've got it, I can, kind of, come across a bit more confident” (interview 8). Her feelings here are at odds with the apparent ease with which she assumes the role of choreographer, teaching her dance to her group (Video 3.1, 06.28-06.52). Perhaps her age (sixteen at the time of data collection) and level of maturity hold the key: focused on the dance, her trained mind and body portrayed assertiveness, but when prompted to examine and speak about her feelings and actions metacognitively (Piaget 1954), she was less secure. Her reticence on this aspect could be because she had not been called upon to reflect on her practice before, but also because she was not yet secure in her own self-identity (Moshman 1999). She was still at a stage of negotiating her ‘self’ (Hartup 1998; Bourdieu 2005). In her interview (interview 8), she talked about the insecurities she felt when she first joined the company some two years previously, at that time being the youngest and “just being different and having less experience”; then, finding that she could cope with the demands, she found that “it wasn't ... too uncomfortable”. Her responses and her attitude suggest that she danced mainly for her own sense of challenge and fulfilment. She needed other dancers and the performance opportunity to manifest her creativity, but the mental stimulation of creating and the kinaesthetic act of dancing were what she found so absorbing and rewarding. Indeed, when she danced, her level of engagement suggested that she was experiencing a state of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, 2002).

Donna (Appendix A interview 10) endorsed Kirsten's feelings when she stated that her confidence in her physical ability to dance had grown. Being three years older

than Kirsten, it is fair to assume that she was further along the developmental continuum of either Vygotsky (1986) or Piaget (1954). She had the opportunity for wider social interaction and cultural exchange – she was already a student, while Kirsten was still at school – which, Vygotsky (1986) believed, is fundamentally important for cognitive development. She would probably have better-honed metacognitive skills by virtue of age as well as her social environment. She impressed as having a more clearly defined self identity, and, being a keen performer and dance leader, her self-esteem was more positive as a result of her constructed identity. This was reinforced by peer support in the company and beyond it - she and Sharleen belonged to the same circle of friends – and by the knowledge that her dance skills were valued by other people. These findings confirm Gordon and Grant's (1997) conclusion about factors affecting teenage self-esteem (Chapter 2 Section 4). In her case, these include being able to help the other dancers, enjoying mutual trust and shared interests, belonging to a social group (the dance company), experiencing success, manifested by performing in front of an audience, having the support of family and friends, and having the freedom to make choices. The latter encompasses the choice of joining the dance company as much as the choice involved in creating dances.

The promotion of positive feelings about themselves emanating from the movement, as described by Sharon and Donna, was a common thread running through almost all the responses. Here, individuals' feelings were voiced:

When I'm dancing I feel special. It gives me confidence.  
(Kathy, interview 2)

I expect to gain confidence because I know I'm getting better  
... Dancing gives you confidence ... It just makes you express  
yourself better than any other thing. Well, I try very hard to  
...match their abilities so I'm quite confident.  
(Rosie, interview 3)

Most of the dancers, like Sharon, eagerly described their emotions as they danced – not in relation to their group performance, but on a personal level. The chance to focus on their inner being (as identified by Thomas 2003) and to 'express' their feelings through dance seemed to be important. The difference between 'expressing' and 'communicating' feelings was not an issue for them at this stage of toying with the physical enjoyment of dance. When left to their own devices, the focus seemed generally to be inward as the dancers were absorbed in what they

were doing, as opposed to the outwardly projected 'communication' necessary in a performance (e.g. video 3.1 06:28-06.52, showing a rehearsal). Positive feelings about the physicality of dance were evident in the graffiti wall, where comments included, "energised", "power surge" and "(tired) but in a good way" (Appendix C, 15/05/06). In the videos, there was an absence of self-consciousness as the girls set about their dance tasks, especially when they were dancing on their own (e.g. Video 2, 05.48-06:10). Evidence of this is to be found in Sharon's bodily attitude as much as her spoken words. There was no sign of self-consciousness; she spoke and moved quietly but assertively (Video 2.1 4:40-05.00), clearly making use of eye level and directional focus. In the latter, she followed her hand movement with her eyes, creating a close focus which was offset by diffused distant focus. She gave the impression that this shifting of focus, inwards and outwards, was a strong personal statement and not just an example of dance motifs, as it recurred in other dances.

The freedom to play with movement was valued, safe in the knowledge that no-one was going to "point and laugh", (Amy, interview 4). The time for judgements to be made was later in the composing stages, but until then, there had to be an opportunity to experiment. Diane had to decide at what point to intervene and guide the dancers towards solutions to their choreographic problems. On the occasions where she intervened (e.g. video 1.5, 02:05-02.23, video 3.3, 07:24-07.28) she was helping them through what Vygotsky (1978) termed the "zone of proximal development" (1978: 86) to bridge the gap between their dance knowledge and what they needed to know, i.e. through her, they could explore their own potential. The chance to express feeling was important to many of the dancers, and those who were involved in Sharon's dance based on a song, 'Roxanne', enjoyed its moody character which enabled them to empathise with the moods and communicate their own emotions through it. Amy appreciated the narrative content of the dance simply as a personal preference, and let herself be guided by the aesthetics of the music, to portray her emotion through movement.

Sometimes the girls danced alone, thoughtfully working through a routine, playing with ideas to build a dance, immersed for short spells at least, in the physical sensation of the movement. Kathy and Maria agreed that it was easy to forget everything else when they were dancing: they became totally absorbed in the

action, and their personal feelings as they moved became their prime focus. This equates to Haworth's (2007: 247) description of 'flow' as being "optimal experience", when the physical and cognitive properties of the activity are in harmony. The girls also agreed that a dancer could reflect his/her own personality and emotional state through their dancing, but conceded that "it's easier if you're feeling the emotion of the dance." Kathy commented that it is more difficult to convey a different feeling in the dance to that which the dancer is experiencing personally. No-one reported taking an objective stance and seeking to portray the mood of the song irrespective of their own feelings. Perhaps that reflects the stage of experimentation these young dancers were at: they were exploring their own feelings and how best to communicate them. This brings to mind the conflicting schools of thought in performing arts, to which I referred in Chapter 2 section 2.3, namely that which requires the dancer or actor only to *portray* the emotions, not to *feel* them directly (Langer 1953; Best 1985; Kingsbury 2002); and that which requires him/her to feel the emotion intensely (Anderson 1997; Grau and Jordan 2000).

In this community class, the dancers were given the opportunity to 'play' with their feelings and explore how they could be manifested in movement – an approach which is consistent with Vygotsky's (1986) theory of how cognition and social experience combine to enrich the learning process (Chapter 2 section 3.1) and likewise, how Bourdieu (2005) envisaged the lived experience being one of exploration and negotiation.

Kathy also referred to the kinaesthetic empathy she experienced when watching herself on video, "feeling the effort when you're doing it," (Appendix A interview 2) reawakening the movement memory. This is an interesting twist to the debate (Chapter 2 Section 2.3) about the extent to which a spectator can empathise with a performer (Best 1999, Oliver 2004 and Reynolds 2008) which I raised earlier with reference to Emma: what happens when spectator and dancer are the same person? How much more real is the kinaesthetic feeling? Kathy did believe that the physical engagement made her more self-aware, stating that "It's about what you feel when you're, like, moving about" (interview 2). Laura agreed that making dances made her feel good:

You're working hard and you come out feeling quite hyper and then I can't sleep! (Laura, video 2 group discussion)

Fran agreed with Elaine that

(i)f you're feeling good about yourself, feeling great, the better you dance, but if you're rubbish, then ugh! You can tell if you're feeling down, then you're not dancing properly, like you should be ... we all have our off-days sometimes. (Elaine, interview 7 )

Furthermore, they believed that by persevering and challenging their emotional state, their confidence grew, in line with Green's (2004) and Criteron and Ollis' (2006) findings. Green (2004) notes the same determination in her dancers, who enjoyed pushing themselves to the limit to make their bodies conform to some objectified ideal. It raises the question of whether the dancers in my study are taking an active, subjective approach to shaping their bodies, or whether they are Foucauldian 'docile bodies', being shaped to conform to someone else's ideal. Are they taking control, or being controlled? What constitutes 'feeling good about oneself'? Interestingly, in my pilot study, a dancer commented that dancing was a good way to counteract a "bad eating day". Diane was very concerned about the implication of negative body image in that remark, although the dancer was not unduly over- or underweight. Negative body image is specifically mentioned by Gordon and Grant (2007) as an indicator of low self-esteem in adolescents. Hämäläinen (2004) notes that a critical remark from the teacher about one's body or dancing can send self-esteem into a downward spiral, but I saw and heard no evidence of criticism from Diane. In Husserlian terms, Diane aimed to promote the 'Leib' over the 'Körper' (Husserl 1970). The lived experience was always more important for her than corporeal conformity. She recognised (in conversation with me, 2005) that a dancer who was happy in her body would dance better as a result.

Elaine's use of the phrase, "dancing properly", suggests a need to conform to a predetermined cultural norm. Who decides what "dancing properly" is, especially in this sort of creative dance class? Most creative dance facilitators, myself included, would concede that anything that was safe, was 'proper' in this context. Despite having had no formal dance training, it seems that Elaine had been conditioned by observation and by mixing with other dancers, to conform to an established norm of what was 'proper' and that achieving it would reflect on self-confidence:



When I came to try it, I was a bit nervous because I thought about the others: you people do ballet from when you were tiny and I don't do any, so, well, you're (*referring to herself*) not confident in yourself ... Yes, this gives you confidence. (Elaine, interview 7)

Rosie, one of the youngest dancers, reiterated the belief that creative dance was a vehicle for portraying emotions, but showed some confusion about whether she was conveying the emotion of the dance, or her own personal feelings:

Sometimes you do different dances, like, contemporary, sometimes you have to look sad or sometimes you have to be happy or scary - it shows your mood. (Rosie, interview 3)

However, her friend, Kate, had no doubts that she was feeling the emotion which she portrayed in her dance:

It just makes you express yourself when you're dancing, better than any other thing... Yes, it's like a different world when you start dancing. (Kate, interview 3)

Her sentiment was endorsed by Sharon, who stated that "it's the physical feeling that makes you feel good emotionally", a remark which echoes the existentialist and monistic nature of learning through the dancing body, which I interpret from my own experience as being that only the dancer who is experiencing the dance kinaesthetically, can make any valid judgement about how it affects her/him. Only (s)he can make sense of it from a physical and personal point of view. The dance co-exists in the body with the dancer's mind. On seeing the videos, Emma and Laura commented that it is not possible to know a dancer's own feelings through facial expression alone, but the energy level which (s)he applies to the dance can be an indication of her/his enjoyment of the activity. Perhaps these two were unwilling to consider that an outsider could gain any insight into their innermost feelings; that might have been an uncomfortable thought for fourteen-year-olds who were still at the stage of establishing their personal identities (Kroger 2003). Their remarks brought into focus the personal nature of the experience.

At times I spotted dancers who seemed to retain an individual identity and self-awareness even though they were dancing together, possibly because these particular sections of dance were isolated steps in unison and did not require

interaction except for each dancer's awareness of the placing of the others around her (e.g. Video 2.1 04.44-04.55). They appeared to be concentrating on the feel of their movements, and, being physically very different from one another, their movement qualities differed quite a lot. Video 3, (07.10—07.22) shows the same dance being practised at a later date and I had the impression of more cohesion within the group but that might have been a trick of the camera focus: I was able to get a wider view of the dance because the hall was bigger than the previous week's studio so I could see more dancers at one time. Here, then, was a limitation of the efficacy of video evidence. There was a general feeling of concentration in anticipation of the imminent performance, though, and it seemed to me that, as a group, they were focused on a common goal, that should be a positive feeling as Gordon and Grant (1997) discovered – direction, solidarity and skills channelled towards the show.

Diane encouraged them to develop “an eye for movement” (Appendix A, interview 11), which indicated to her that they were engaging with the aesthetics and physicality of the art – not just learning or creating a sequence of movements, but internalising the spirit of the dance and developing movement memory. Her aspirations for the group were that “they can develop a greater interest in dance and create work with minimal input from a tutor” (Appendix A, interview 11). This would require a deeper level of engagement with the task than might have been expected of the other creative dance classes.

Maria commented that Diane often told her to smile, but added that she is not smiling in the video clips because she was focusing on the dance. Her facial expressions suggested that she was thinking about the task in hand and feeling the music. She displays all the features contained in Beecher's (2005) web of wellbeing – engagement with the task demonstrated through her creativity and apparent enjoyment of it, self awareness and “vitalisation” (Beecher 2005: 139). All of these are indicators of wellbeing, according to Beecher. Someone commented on a graffiti wall (Appendix C) that she felt “energised” by dancing.

Various video clips e.g. Video 3.5, (Kirsten's dance, 08.10-08.50), show other dancers apparently absorbed in the task of creating and experiencing the movement, their faces portraying their connectedness with the music, and whether

or not it coincided with their own mood at the time was impossible to tell. Perhaps without realising it, the music affected their mood in much the same way that a sad song or film can make the observer feel sad because (s)he can recognise the emotion from previous experience (Best 1985). However, with regard to Emma's and Laura's comment, to which I referred earlier, about the unreliability of a dancer's expression as an indicator of her/his feelings, an exception can be made in some instances of dance art. In the course of training, dancers might learn to mask their personal feelings and portray those required by the dance: witness the remarks of Langer (1953) and Best (1985), to which I have already referred, and their argument that a trained dancer can cast aside her / his own feelings and adopt the persona required by the role. I qualify this with my previous references to schools of dance art (Chapter 2 section 2.1), e.g. the German *Tanztheater* and the examples of various contemporary dance artists and companies closer to home, where the dancer is required to reach deep into his/her own reservoir of emotions and bring them to the surface.

Video 2 (05:00-05:10) demonstrates an example of Grady's (2008) 'micro level' of visual evidence, showing Emma sustaining a contemplative expression, while she was intent on watching others in her group practising the dance they were to perform in public. Her face and body movement suggest to the onlooker that she was learning kinaesthetically from watching the other dancers, recalling the phenomenon addressed by a professional dancer, which I reported in Oliver (2004), who believed that learning through kinaesthetic empathy was only possible if the observer already had experience of the movement repertoire, in much the same way as one cannot appreciate or understand a poem if it is in a language one does not know. The dancers in this company, however, had a common foundation of dance knowledge and understanding, even if they were at different stages of the continuum heading towards expertise. Later, when Emma was dancing, the flow of movement and the thoughtfulness etched on her face suggest high-level personal involvement. Recalling her feeling of social isolation earlier in the film, as she had only recently joined the company, she seemed to have lost those inhibitions and appeared to be enjoying herself judging by her level of absorption in the task.

Elsewhere in Video 2, there were other examples of facial expressions and corporeal attitude among the dancers (e.g. video 2.7, 05:51-06:10) suggesting that

there were moments of intense focus, particularly when dancing on their own. There seemed to be nothing half-hearted about their dancing here, just commitment and enjoyment. With a few exceptions, the look on their faces suggests that a high level of thoughtfulness was being applied to the creative task. It was as if they could isolate themselves from environment; not concerned about who might be watching, they concentrated on the task. The dance assumed ultimate importance.

Maria offered further insight into the process of learning and rehearsing by explaining her use of imagery:

I normally build up an image in my head of all the moves, then I try to dance them out and make a performance ... I imagine, just like (one of the dancers) is doing just now, maybe moving side to side or something... You can imagine what you're like.  
(Maria, interview 9)

once again echoing the findings of Czikzentmihalyi (2002), that maintaining a positive image of what one aspires to achieve brings the fulfilment within reach. Nordin and Cummings' research (2007) endorses the importance of imagery in the dance process for attaining the desired goal.

### **(iii) Social interaction**

Here I was looking for evidence of how the dancers interacted with each other through the medium of movement and whether they established a movement-based rapport.

There were no verbal responses in this part of the analysis from the interviews although there was plenty of evidence in the videos. It seems that the dancers were more aware of the physical expression of their dancing on a more personal level, yet, as Parviainen (1998: 35) points out, "the lived body ... makes us immediately present to others." Other people can learn about us through the visual presence of our bodies, just as much as we learn about our world through our bodies. It is possible, however, that at least the younger dancers' level of maturity at the time of data collection prevented their realisation that other people could perceive any subliminal messages which their dancing bodies were emitting: the older dancers were possibly more concerned with the presentation of their objectified bodies – vehicles for conveying the meaning of their dances, rather than appreciating themselves as a *part* of the dance. The younger members of the company showed

some confusion about their subjective or objective presence in the dances, i.e. whether they were dancing as themselves or dancing a role. It was evident from the video material that there was plenty of social interaction linked to the physicality of dance – for example, they helped each other by sharing constructive discussion and criticism about movements (e.g. video 1.3 00:53-01:05) - but it is probable that the dancers considered it to be more of a personal expression than a social activity, without realising the social aspects of it. They did, however, demonstrate interdependence through co-operation and seeking approval from each other. Group membership and the sharing of interests were valued, and are consistent with Gordon and Grant's (1997) criteria for positive feelings listed in Chapter 2 - helping, sharing, trusting and belonging were all important experiences for them. At school, these dancers were used to a traditional learning environment as described by Eisner (2002), for the most part sitting in seats, working in isolation from neighbours (with the exception of arts subjects and physical education) and internalising the values of their teachers. In the dance class, they enjoyed greater autonomy and learned to give and receive helpful criticism, and evaluate the outcome of their own and their peers' work with the sensitivity to each others' feelings which Robinson (2001) deems necessary to release creative powers.

Despite the lack of verbal evidence, this section of the data analysis revealed more about the source of personal meaning than most of the other sections, but in addition to personal meaning being socially derived, I saw that it was enhanced by the kinaesthetic experience: that dancers learned much about themselves through the physical engagement with creative dance.

#### **(iv) Taking Control**

I aimed to observe how far the dancers would go in creating dance, to shake off conditioning and experiment freely.

Daring to be different appeared to be one of the results of the physical involvement in dancing, which serves to heighten the dancers' level of confidence. By providing a time slot for experimenting with movement, the format of the dance class gave them the opportunity to let go of the "body politic" (Thomas 2003: 65) and escape the bonds of cultural conformity as far as possible, to experiment with movement which might ask questions of their social field (Bourdieu 2005) as far as their socialised bodies (Durkheim 1976; Smith 2002) would allow. How far they took that

opportunity was their decision, but it was delimited by Diane who would prevent unsafe practice (either physically or emotionally unsafe). Video 1 shows her moving around the various groups and pairs, monitoring what was happening. Potentially, this was an opportunity for individuals to test and stretch the limitations of their habitus, while Diane represented the controlling function of the field, keeping a rein on the bounds of their creativity.

Fran and Elaine recalled an incident when they were dancing at a bus stop, and obviously enjoyed the attention they attracted from other people in the bus queue, judging by their animated account. Fran reported that

Before I started dancing, I was really – I wouldn't do anything in front of anyone. Now even my family have said it has changed me. (Fran, interview 7)

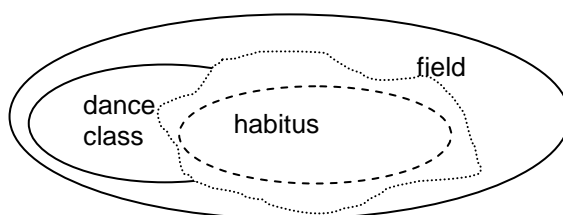
Experiencing success in the physical challenge of expanding their movement repertoire was a source of confidence, which spilled over into their personal relationships. This suggests that as their self-image gained clarity, their level of self-esteem rose, as did their social effectiveness and sense of agency (Moshman 1999; Damon and Hart 1991). Kirsten, who had shown confusion about her own confidence in the previous section, could recognise it in others: when they were secure in their technique and knowledge of the choreography, it reflected in their performance:

... I know from looking at other people, that when someone's dancing confidently they look better ...  
(Kirsten, interview 8)

implying that the public, visible social image is important.

The salient point here is that the dancers themselves were taking control of how they appeared to their audience and hence to the wider public. They were wresting control of their own habitus. The picture which emerges of the tension between the dancers' social field and their work in the dance class is illustrated in Figure 4.1:

Figure 4.1: A possible effect of the dance process on 'habitus'



The dotted oval represents the habitus defined by family and community influences.

The irregular line represents the alterations to the habitus as a result of the dance experience.

The dance class may be perceived as sufficiently different from the field to warrant its place partially outside it, because the dancers can experiment more freely with movement than they could in another social environment, e.g. school. It is a chance to escape some conventional restraints, but never completely. They can adopt a new or altered identity for the duration of the class, i.e. they can 'be' someone different, but always returning to familiar territory at the end of the class. By having that experience, however, they have made changes, however minor, to their habitus.

#### **4.4.3 Creating, experimenting, refining**

This section addresses the dancers' experience of taking their work through and beyond the experimental stage, shaping it into a distinct form. It happened at two levels: firstly, within each weekly class there was a chance for the dancers to develop their ideas into a dance or a section of a dance; secondly, over the course of the term, the object of the whole series of classes was to build towards a performance. I therefore observed the process at a micro and macro level. As the term progressed, I felt that the focus and the mood had changed due to the imminent performance (Video 3): I did not feel tension, but I was aware of greater concentration.

The interview data gave me insight into how the dancers went about the creative task, bringing their previous experience and personal feelings to it. I observed the

interaction during the creative phases and invited the dancers, in the interviews and group discussions, to expand on how they perceived themselves as creators.

### **(i) Sources of motivation and previous experience**

In this subsection I was looking for evidence of what inspired the dancers. Where did they get their ideas for innovation? How focused were they on the task?

The dancers' main mission was to create dance, and that was where the challenge was met and appreciated:

(From the class) I have gained the ability to make up more dances ... (Amy, interview 4)

The opportunity for the dancers to extend their knowledge and level of performance skills was high priority and they agreed that it was necessary to have input from professional choreographers and dancers from time to time to build on their skills and stimulate creative ideas. There was a significant disparity of age and experience, and it was not always the younger dancers who had difficulty with the content. Rosie, who was one of the youngest dancers, for example, had some ten years' dance experience, and that was reflected in her confidence and her approach to composition (video 1, 01:40 – 02:40 'chair dance'), as well as the way she carried herself. In the background, some of the older girls could be seen engaging less effectively with the task they were undertaking, for example, breaking concentration by chatting or letting attention wander to other groups. Other sections of video showed the dancers responding to the teacher's instructions to be creative with the moves she had taught them, and to perform them to each other: as described earlier, Diane usually taught some aspect of technique at the start of the class and gave the dancers the opportunity to be creative with it. Thus their dance knowledge and movement repertoire were always increasing. The physical and emotional engagement in the creative process is identified by Beecher (2005) as being vital to achieve a successful outcome. It follows that lack of engagement will compromise success. Cognitive ability and a certain level of movement maturity are required also, enabling mind and body to meld into a unified 'thinking body' (Parviainen 1998) with the stimulus as catalyst and avoiding a dualist split (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). This was evident in Video 1 with Rosie and Kate's 'chair dance' and Video 3 where Sharon and Kirsten were rehearsing with their groups. Wellbeing in this context



cannot be achieved passively – it is a holistic experience resulting from active involvement.

In light of my discussion in the previous section about the amount of freedom the dancers actually had – or actually took advantage of - it has to be borne in mind that most of these dancers were well conditioned from years of dancing, to recreate a normatively defined model of ‘good’ contemporary dance – evidence of what Tate (2007: 56) calls the “creative press”. This amounts to the external forces which shape perception of a phenomenon – even “something small that can make a dance look real”, reported Fran (interview 7) - and reinforce cultural benchmarks of creativity. Again this hints at Bourdieu’s (1993) concept of ‘field’ as a controlling factor, in which cultural norms are reinforced through symbolic production. In this way, Parviainen (1998: 94) contends, art acquires value – Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital. The dancers in this study were often exposed to dance art which other people, e.g. teachers, theatre programmers and parents, had deemed acceptable for them to observe. That was their first frame of reference, whether it was what Bourdieu called “bourgeois” art (2005: 75) or some more accessible, liberally-defined community or ‘popular’ art. The dancers would acquire the movement aesthetic before they could transcend it and become creative in their own right. Donna, the older of the college students, admitted that

If I was learning a dance, I’d copy the teacher ... yes, (I would copy a company I’d seen) because you learn from what they use, to make it look good. (Donna, interview 10)

Therefore the first hurdle the dancers met in their creative efforts was to overcome limitations set by their social and artistic conditioning. They were moving back and forth along a continuum, between conditioning and creativity (Bourdieu 2005).

The dancers discussed how they met the cognitive demands of creating dances, i.e. finding the inspiration and translating it into their own movement ideas. They had recently participated in a local choreographic competition at which they had fared well and that had fuelled their motivation to continue their creative dance. Apart from the influence of the dance companies they had watched, there was no consensus about what inspired their creations. Maria was influenced by the music:

Depending on the song for the dance, you think of different moves that can go to it ... (Maria, interview 9)

Elaine concurred, stating that she took direction from the phrasing of the music (Appendix A, interview 7), while Donna disagreed, preferring to compose the movement before selecting the music. During the stage of composition, Diane facilitated the groups' choreographic efforts by watching without interfering, unless she judged it necessary, e.g. if the dance was not progressing, or if they specifically asked for her input – again indicating Vygotsky's (1978: 86) "zone of proximal development". She encouraged them to vary the techniques on which they based their dances, to avoid leaning too heavily on contemporary dance mode. Thus in Video 4, Maria is seen composing a piece mixing highland dance with contemporary moves and teaching it to Kathy.

In Video 1 Kate and Rosie collaborated over their composition of the 'chair dance' without the inclusion of any obviously stylised or codified movements plucked from external sources. Perhaps their capacity for original movement was why they had been selected for the dance company: possibly, without realising it, they had transcended the level of imitation and were capable of a deeper engagement with the material than they were aware of, or able to articulate verbally. They clearly described this process of abstraction:

(When composing) we look at different dances and take different moves from them but change them, and just sort of like everyday life, you can do something and change it into a dance move. Like, on a movie, there's playing basketball and she takes moves from what they do, playing basketball. (Rosie, interview 3)

Roberta (interview 5), however, did admit that although she used external sources (music and professional performances) to guide her composition, she also saw the creative phase as being a chance to "express yourself", defining that as "deciding on your own movements and how you want to ... show how you feel." Perhaps this was evidence of engagement on a more personal level. Kirsten (interview 8) endorsed Roberta's view about the value of external stimuli for initial ideas, but that the true value of creating dance as art is feeling how the emotion and the physicality complement each other. She described how she adopted themes from dance performances she had seen, and 'moulded' them for her own purposes, composing and experimenting with the expressive content at home, before choreographing the dance on her group in the class. She added that there was no point in learning

from other sources if she was not going to use the material in some form in her own dances.

These two responses allude more to the monistic view of the 'lived body' experience, accommodated in Bourdieu's (2005) view of the body as a conduit for understanding the world. The physical and cognitive skills interplay with emotions in the production of art. In this context I view cognition as the link between body and emotion. The dancers can be aware of how they feel but without cognitive functioning they cannot express it. Vygotsky (1986) and Gadamer (1975) would claim that they can process it because they have acquired language which allows them to think constructively, so language is the facilitator. They can then express their thoughts in their chosen mode of communication, in this case, dance. Referring back to Kingsbury's (2002: 13) model of emotional expression (Chapter 2 Section 2.3), this is perhaps evidence that a more mature person can modify her/his raw emotions more readily through cognition than a child can, by dint of language acquisition. Inevitably the dancers' responses are conditioned, operating within parameters set by a) the "social field" (Parviainen 1998: 91) - recognised as the system of norms and mores which bind people of similar outlook and background - and b) the "cultural field" (Bourdieu 1993: 34) which is regulated by those who seek to benefit from it, namely educators, artists and those who promote and sponsor the arts (Parviainen 1998).

### **(ii) Personal Feelings**

Under this heading, I was looking for links which the dancers might make between their emotions and the dance material they created. Realising their creative potential through composing and choreographing dances on others was an important step towards achieving a positive sense of self-identity (Nussbaum 2000; Gordon and Grant 1997). By applying both cognitive and physical skills to achieve artistic goals, they were well on the way to attaining the level of "self-actualisation" in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Huitt 2004).

The general impression I gained from the older dancers was, that while collaborating with others in the creating stage, the focus shifted to become external to them, i.e. on the dance itself, rather than personal feelings while engaged in the process. In class, the dance was objectified, and seemed, for them, to exist outside the lived

body at that stage in its development. Maria and Kathy endorsed the belief that it did not contribute to their understanding of themselves, as they watched themselves dancing in Video 4 (09:19-09:40). For them, the reflective, introspective phase preceded the creative phase. The interpersonal experience seemed to be more important than the bodily experience at this point, though comments on the graffiti walls revealed that the physical act of dancing at this stage sometimes contributed to negative feelings, e.g. “can’t keep up” (22/05/06), “confused” (15/06/06), as well as positive, such as “worries disappear” (22/05/06) (Appendix C). Rosie and Kate were alone in thinking that this phase of dance-making “show(s) your mood” (3).

Kirsten spoke of her personal feelings when teaching and rehearsing with her group, asserting that the process gave her more confidence. She believed that when dancers were collaborating to perfect their performance, they became aware that their emotions could be articulated through gesture, movement and expression, or could be disguised and new emotions assumed for the purpose of the dance (Kirsten, interview 8).

Video 3 shows Sharon performing her dance in rehearsal. While watching the video, Emma and Laura discussed the emotional content of the dance:

L: That was a weird dance.

E: Yes, the music was evil.

L: Look at her focus. It obviously had deep personal meanings to her.

E: Yes, you can’t make up evil.

L: I like to know what the dance is about.

E: Yes, it’s good to know what it’s about, but even if you don’t, you can understand the meaning. You can remember the emotion, because you’ve felt it before.

(Appendix B, video 2 group discussion)

Was Sharon harbouring evil thoughts at the time she was dancing? Did the music evoke some deep, dark emotion in her? Or was she recalling thoughts which she had experienced before, and using them to enhance her dance? These questions bring to mind Best’s (1985) and Langer’s (1953) previously-mentioned (Chapter 2 section 2.3) references to performers using memories of personal experience to portray emotions convincingly. This was a full rehearsal – the dance had been taught and was now being polished. This was the time for Sharon and her group to be concentrating on how best to convey emotional meaning to their audience – but

whether it was Sharon's own emotion or something assumed for the purpose of the dance remained an unresolved question for other members who had watched it as Laura and Emma's conversation would suggest. Whichever was the case, the spectators would be able to recognise the emotion portrayed only if they had had their own experience of feeling it in the past (Best 1985).

### **(iii) Social interaction**

Here I was looking for evidence of the different roles which the dancers adopted in the process of creating dances, e.g. as leaders, followers and critics.

The honing of creative skills through mutual support and collaboration was identified as a major item in preparation for a performance. The video evidence shows examples of the level of co-operation (e.g. Video 2, 06:30-06:40), and also sections of direct input from Diane, in coaching the groups towards a better performance (Video 3, 07.22-07.30).

The collaborative process was not confined to class time. Rosie and Kate explained how they watch each other when practising at home, making constructive comments to improve technique and polish performance. The home environment was conducive to experimenting and composing:

(At home) we're, like, structurally (*sic*) critical, I mean we tell each other our mistakes and what we could do better. We make up a lot of dances for shows and things. (Rosie, interview 3)

The experience seemed to be a positive one for them both. Being able to give and take informed criticism was an accepted part of the process which suggested that they were confident about their dancing ability and that in turn would indicate positive self-image and self-esteem (Gordon and Grant 1997; Moshman 1999). One has to be secure in one's identity in order to accept and act on criticism.

The dancers probably criticised each other more than Diane did: she always tried to find something positive to remark on. However, left to their own devices, Rosie and Kate composed dances happily together, as did Roberta who commented,

If we're doing a dance, sometimes if we haven't finished it, then me and whoever else I'm doing it with might

spend some time going over it, outside of class.  
(Roberta, interview 5)

I interpreted this as an indication that dancing does impinge on their social field: time and space are devoted to the activity, and other people (e.g. families and the wider circle of friends) must accommodate it.

It would be interesting to know how far they deviated from their class work with Diane – whether they erred on the safe side or whether they felt more free to explore in their own environment. How far did the conditioning go? As Parviainen (1998: 96) notes, “social institutions” provide the opportunity for artistic activities, but also restrict and control the content. I have already raised the point earlier in this section, regarding the effect of the “creative press” (Tate 2007: 56) where the artist is subject to artistic conditioning from within the arts enclave. When the artist takes it out of its usual context, the pressure of the ‘field’ (Bourdieu 1993) impinge upon him/her. Can there ever be a totally neutral space for art to flourish? Can Kate and Rosie escape the pressures of either the creative pressure or their social field? I would suggest not. However, such thoughts did not upset their enjoyment of dance-making.

The social aspect of composing dances seems to be as important as the experience of creating art for their own fulfilment. Donna remarked that she enjoyed the opportunity in class to compose dances with Sharon, because they were friends and “we’re really good at making things together” (interview 10). Sharon remarked that she likes “to show people her creative side”, and it is evident that the other dancers took note and copied what she does:

... seeing other people move ... I even saw on the video, that Sharon was doing something up here (*gestures*) and I turned round and looked and thought “I like that” and I took it and moved it somewhere else and that went into my dance. (Kirsten interview 8)

By the expression, “moving it somewhere else”, Kirsten was describing how she adapted Sharon’s dance motif to suit her own purpose. The class environment allowed this sort of interaction to occur. Each group can see the others, so if they are having a break, they can watch the others at work.

Sharon was well aware of the effect that her dancing had on the other members of the class:

Others look up to us because we're older, and watching us gives them confidence. We're much more flexible – but not physically! (Sharon, interview 1)

Maria remarked that “you're interested in what moves (the older dancers) make up,” but part of the learning process is in transcending that stage, dispensing with the need to copy, and becoming able to create original art work. In class the dancers work together, ‘feeding’ off each other's inspiration:

We just work together unless one person has an idea. We kind of watch each other. (Elizabeth Appendix B, video 1 group discussion)

Donna, who was studying dance at a Further Education College, described the process of working with school groups to create a performance. She and her colleagues found that the creative phase provided an ideal environment for pupils to confront social and emotional problems, and use them in the dances they created. Having gained their confidence over a number of weeks, she found that the pupils were willing to discuss issues that were troubling them, e.g. bullying, so she was strongly of the opinion that the creative dance experience is beneficial to social interaction and consequently to personal understanding:

(The dance) is a piece about everything, really, like bullying ... then afterwards we talk to them. Yes, it's all about their feelings. It really helps them. They can go and get help afterwards. (Donna, interview 10)

Donna's statement indicates that, for these pupils, the social interaction involved in dance-making was clearly a linked to personal understanding of themselves and contributed to their state of wellbeing, yet it also gives clues about Donna herself, which are addressed in the next section ('Taking Control').

The range of social skills from which the dancers felt they benefited included the chance to interact with others and to help those who required it, with the dance content. Inevitably, tense situations arose from time to time, which Diane defused:

I help manage sensitive situations ... (I) intervene if a group are challenging the choreographer, as they can do

if they 'feel' the choreographer falter. (Diane, interview 11)

The video clips show her taking charge of groups which had lost their focus and as participant observer during the second recorded class, I was aware of her watching dancers who had become distracted, playing with props or sitting out unnecessarily, so that no-one was allowed to drift off task for very long. Usually they were able to discipline themselves: as previously mentioned, it was acceptable for the dancers to have a break, reflect on whatever task they had been engaged in, watch the others, and then resume practice – a potential opportunity for conditioning by internalising someone else's norms and practices, as Parviainen (1998) states.

Adopting these strategies enabled them to prepare themselves mentally and physically for the forthcoming performance. Laura caught sight of herself on the video giving another dancer some feedback on her performance, prompting her to comment that they "do help each other, but I would normally do it at the back, out of view, because I'm kind of shy," (Video 1 group discussion) but clearly the co-operative approach was an important factor in preparing for a performance. Amy felt that the friendly atmosphere which prevailed in the class was important for setting the dancers at ease (interview 4) while Roberta believed that it was a good way to develop social skills:

We develop more skills – social and "inventing" skills.  
It's a good way to spend the council's money! (Roberta, interview 5)

Kirsten and Donna agreed that "a lot of collaboration" (interviews 8 and 10) was a useful feature of the dance class from the point of view of social development. This was demonstrated on numerous occasions, by showing members of a group pitching in ideas and helping each other; some dancers composing small sections and then linking them together to make a bigger piece of dance. Mutual co-operation in this way is a criterion of social wellbeing (Gordon and Grant 1997; Moshman 1999; Nussbaum 2000).

Towards the end of the data collection period, most of the dancers were anxious to press ahead with the creative task, possibly because their target at that time was the next performance. It was not the time for lengthy intuitive engagement with the subject matter. In this case, the dancers' approach was geared to reaching a



predetermined goal rather than savouring the journey, i.e. product-orientated, not process-orientated. Amy commented on how the pressure builds up in the weeks prior to a show: "... sometimes it's a bit hectic" (interview 4). It became a more mechanical process, she believed. Still, it was not a negative experience: the ultimate goal of performing was in sight and there was a palpable feeling of tension among the dancers. Someone remarked on the graffiti wall, "dance 2 the music, can't wait" at the rehearsal prior to the show indicating a sense of excitement.

#### **(iv) Taking control**

Under this heading, I was seeking evidence of how the dancers' self image as innovators was moulded through the medium of the 'lived body' as well as through the social experience. Did they feel that the combination of their cognitive and bodily creativity empowered them in their relationships with others?

Kirsten noted that

(i)f you've got a big epic song to dance to, and big movements, then or like something really funky where you can get down and get the beat and stuff – it's just such an expression of who you are. (Kirsten, interview 8)

This suggests that the choice of material is significant in carving out the dancers' identity, and, being an active part of that process enables them to influence the dance aesthetics, which, Parviainen (1998: 96) believes, are shaped by social conditioning. Their acceptance becomes an issue of body politics. Sharon's response indicates that through her creative efforts she can exert some influence to counteract that conditioning:

I like choreography best, and seeing my own work on other people ... We (the older dancers) are not scared; we'll try new ideas. (Sharon, interview 1)

The creative dance setting offered them a sense of freedom and space to experiment, allowing them the chance to experiment within a framework which they had negotiated. Maria endorsed the idea that in the class, they have the freedom to experiment with, and develop, their own movement vocabulary, so exploring their potential for creating their own authentic movement:

I have learnt that I can make up different moves for different dances, not always going to one song. (Maria, interview 9)

Thus they move away from the early-Foucauldian concept of the 'docile body' (Thomas 2003), taking control and making their own meanings from the source of inspiration.

Most of the responses indicated that the creating phase gives them a sense of personal achievement within the social context, and a clearer self-image. Sharon felt that working towards a common goal adds focus, and "it's good to feel like you're part of the process." When the dancers are pitched into a leadership role in the class, they experience a unique opportunity to shape their identity and assert themselves in this role. Fran declared her interest in what moves the other dancers made up and recalled that when watching Sharon:

... you think, "Oh, that would be good to do", and we try moves that are similar to what she does. It's really interesting watching her. (Fran, interview 7)

Mhairi M Maria relished her chance to be creator and choreographer. She observed that "it makes you feel more responsible ... (and) more confident." (interview 9). Kathy agreed, but qualified this by adding that she preferred to lead a smaller group, finding a large group "more nerve-wracking." (interview 2). They both agreed that the experience of teaching dances gives them more confidence in their social lives outwith the class. However, two of the younger dancers (Laura and Emma) were less assertive and felt uneasy about being in a position of authority in a dance group. On watching themselves on video, they agreed that they did not like "controlling people" (video 3, group discussion) and telling others what to do when they were choreographing. As most of the dancers had been in the group for a number of years, I assumed that, over time, they would gain confidence as leaders, as Sharon demonstrates in various parts of the video material, but I also accepted that not everyone was striving for the same goal, in this case of being a leader. They seemed to find contentment in the social interaction and the sharing of an experience. Working on a challenge together might have been more rewarding for some, than being the first to find a solution. Enhancement of self-identity and social wellbeing could conceivably be linked to the embodied experience of making dances together.

Donna's college experience of working with S2 school pupils gave her the chance to experience responsibility as a role model for younger adolescents in a social context as well as passing on (or conditioning them with) her aesthetic preferences. Unwittingly, she has become the vehicle for reinforcing cultural conditioning by presenting to the pupils a contemporary dance genre based on a "natural form" (Thomas 2003: 54,55) of movement, itself highly codified, through which the young dancers acquire meaning about the world they inhabit (Merleau-Ponty 1989). Recalling Thomas's (2003:71) remark about "everyday movement" being manipulated into dance, one should bear in mind that much of that movement is specific to the culture of origin (Polhemus 1998), in this case predominantly western and perhaps even more specifically centred on life in a Scottish semi-rural community. In Bourdieu's terms, this conditioning would equate to the strengthening of their social field, which exerts external pressure on their habitus. It could be conducive to increased social wellbeing by offering security but excessive restrictions on the movement content might be counter-productive (Gordon and Grant 1997) and lead to feelings of frustration and negative feelings about the class and perhaps even negative self-esteem as a result of having one's freedom restricted. Autonomy is lost, so feelings of social wellbeing would be compromised, as the social setting would be perceived as a source of negativity because the individual lacked control over it (Nussbaum 2000; Harris and Hastings 2006).

In my view, Sharon and Kirsten both displayed considerable powers of assertiveness as they taught and rehearsed their groups, although in the interview, neither girl considered herself to be a particularly confident person (interviews 1 and 8). Their assertiveness must therefore have been derived from creating dances and choreographing them on other people. In addition, Sharon felt that the experience contributed to her level of courage in other social contexts. Both girls were able to maintain discipline and focus in their groups, leading by example, though both had different styles of dancing as well as leadership. Kirsten admitted that she was "always counting" (Video 3.3: 08:06 – 8:15) and she expected that precision from members of her group. Sharon, on the other hand, used the phrasing of the music, requiring her dancers to listen to the emotional nuances and follow her 'interpretation' of it. Both dancers demonstrated that they were in control, imposing a style of learning on their respective groups. The dancers used the word

'interpretation' freely in this context, though Best (1985) and Parvianin (1998) would contend that it is not possible to interpret someone else's music or other art form although through spoken language it can be discussed (Chapter 2 Section 2.3). Only the composer, they would argue, can understand the meaning (s)he intended in the piece. Another musician or a dancer can only 'reveal' an idiosyncratic understanding of it – a truth (one of an infinite number), Parvianin (1998: 147) explains, is made visible, which is consistent with Heidegger's (1996) relativist position of multiple truths: the dancers perceive and portray an 'echo' of the original. Experiencing it somatically builds kinaesthetic intelligence (Parvianin 1998: 128), which is one means of enabling the individual to gain understanding of his/her world. Through the experience, one can invest in the body a measure of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1993) with which to negotiate his/her place in the social field. Applying that thought to my study, I consider the dance company to be a microcosm of the wider community. The dancers' accumulation of social and movement skills equate to 'cultural' capital (Bourdieu 2003, 2005) which they could employ to their advantage. These skills gave them the status they enjoyed within the class, which is the benchmark by which their success is judged and was conceivably a source of wellbeing for them. The enhanced prestige in the class could have empowered them to influence the thinking of the dancers in their own choreographic groups and so perpetuated the values which underpinned the image of the company. That could possibly limit the number of 'truths' which emanate from the dancers' understanding. Looking at Kirsten and Sharon's situation, one could argue that they were keen only to portray their own understanding, their own perceived truth, and reap their own symbolic capital at the expense of their dancers: by adopting a didactic role, they could possibly stifle their dancers' creativity. Hence they asserted, rather than negotiated, their place in the social field of the dance company. However, the other side of this argument is that the structure was not static and as younger members gained experience from being the instruments of their choreographers' imagination, they also would have the chance to create their own work on other dancers. Ultimately, everyone had the same opportunity to experience success in the company.

#### **4.4.4 Performing**

This is what the dancers had been working towards: the chance to showcase their original work to family, peers and community. In this section I look at how they used

their past experience of performing to prepare themselves for their next performance. They offer insights into how they feel about performing and what the social implications are for their sense of wellbeing.

The interview data revealed how the dancers felt about performing – thoughts which were inaccessible to the observer (myself) who saw the finished product, although their mastery of their art form was evident to spectators. Group discussion elicited supportive evidence about the importance which the dancers attached to this ultimate goal.

### **(i) Sources of motivation and inspiration**

In this subsection, the dancers were encouraged to tell me how they felt about performing and what they learned from previous performances.

The dancers were aware that the outcome of their work was a piece of art which Diane considered to be worthy of performance. As previously acknowledged, they trusted her judgement and would be able to perform, confident in the knowledge that they had met her standards. No-one lays down hard and fast criteria for standards, but as an experienced teacher, she would not expose the dancers in her charge to possible humiliation by putting them in the public eye before she judged that they were prepared, both mentally and in terms of competence.

As previously stated, all the dancers in the study had prior experience of performing, either with this class or elsewhere, and most had joined Southern Youth Dance because they enjoyed performing. Only Elaine had indicated that performing was her least favourite aspect of being a company member (interview 7).

Rosie remarked that she drew on her previous performance experience to prepare herself for Southern Youth Dance performances. The forthcoming show was the culmination of the term's work, and a chance to demonstrate to family and friends how much they had progressed.

The responses in this section suggested that at the point of performance, there was no time to dwell on the artistic merit: any concerns of that nature had to be

addressed before then and the dancers needed to be well enough rehearsed that a good performance was automatic:

I try to emphasise the importance of doing the choreography as clearly as possible regardless of whether in performance or not. (Diane, interview 11)

For some, performance was a celebration of achievement - "I get to show the dances that I've learned" (Kirsten, interview 8) - while for others it was of secondary importance - "Performance isn't really important. It's making the dances that's important" (Maria, interview 9). Amy (interview 4) seemed to relish the challenge of staging a performance, with all the extra pressures of remembering stage directions etc in addition to remembering the choreography. For Diane, as teacher and leader, it was a time to bring together all the strands of her teaching, from helping them manage their stress and nerves, to ensuring that their costumes and props were in order. Very importantly, she watched closely to see that they handled their energy reserves efficiently, by eating and drinking appropriately. She explained,

Mostly the changes come from working together and observing how the older or more experienced dancers cope. (Diane, interview 11)

For her, reaching the stage of performance was the point of confluence of practical skills, artistry, and cognitive and social engagement. Although she felt that many of the skills could be gained from other types of performance, e.g. "solo and group instrument playing" (interview 11), dance offered some different aspects to think about, such as "timing – responding to visual and musical cues – and spatial placement in relation to one's own body and to others in the group" (interview 11).

## **(ii) Personal feelings**

Under this heading, the dancers told me how they felt about preparing to perform and participating in the actual performance.

Apart from Elaine's feelings of insecurity about performing, the prevalent opinion was that the chance to perform was their reason for belonging to the company. Although most confessed to be nervous immediately before the show, a feeling of eager anticipation was prevalent among them, as indicated on the graffiti wall (Appendix B). Responses such as "feeling very alive, and creative – I push myself as far as I can go" (Sharon, interview 1), and "feeling really good about myself"

(Kirsten, interview 8) were representative of the dancers' feelings. Kathy added that

When it's finished, I want to do it again, and wish it wasn't over. (Kathy, interview 2)

Excitement and nervousness also featured among the interview responses:

It's mainly excitement, really, when I'm performing, and – yes, that's all it really is – excitement. (Roberta, interview 5)

Performing is weird – if you haven't done it before, if it's your first time, it's very nerve-wracking, but ... the more I've done it, I kind of get used to getting up on stage and dancing. We get too excited to get nervous now ... you're so happy to be up there dancing. (Fran, interview 7)

while Dee felt "nervous at the start, but then it's fine once you're actually dancing," and Elaine was concerned about her dance being compared unfavourably with other people's (interview 7). Perhaps she felt insecure. If her self-image tended to be negative, then her self-esteem would suffer likewise (Gordon and Grant 1997; Moshman 1999) and consequently her confidence would be low. At the point of performance, any positive feelings about having been selected as a member of the company seemed to have been forgotten. She seemed to have a personal attachment to her creation. It was like an extension of herself, so that if it were criticised, the criticism would also be aimed at herself, in her opinion. She admitted that her feelings were an indication of her state of confidence (interview 7), i.e. rather low at that time.

Comments relating to the level of focus during performance suggested that at least some of the dancers were experiencing a state of "flow" (Jackson and Csikzentmihalyi 1999: 5):

A state of consciousness where one becomes totally absorbed in what one is doing, to the exclusion of all other thoughts and emotions. (Jackson and Csikzentmihalyi 1999: 5)

Rosie, for example, remarked that she is often told to smile while performing, but forgets as she is concentrating so hard on her dance, although, she added, "I'm enjoying it inside: you just can't see it." Like Maria (interview 9), her face suggested that she was feeling the music, becoming absorbed in it. Kirsten found

that once she overcame initial anxieties, she could feel more confident and “get lost in the dance a bit” (interview 7), enabling her to devote attention to the rhythm of the music and hence to the expressive content. Drawing back slightly from her position of total absorption in the dance, she qualified her original statement by admitting that she could never quite forget that the audience was there: she was

kind of aware that people are watching. It’s maybe not all bad, though – it makes you push yourself a bit more.  
(Kirsten, interview 7)

It was not possible to film the actual public performance, but as I watched her, I had the impression of a technically competent and well-rehearsed dancer who tended to withhold emotional expression compared to Sharon, who was a year older and perhaps had a little more confidence in her portrayal of emotion. Kirsten seemed to rely on her timing in the belief that so long as she was kept it right, she could concentrate on making her movements bigger and more expressive. It would have been interesting to see her compose and perform a dance with erratic timing or no time signature at all, which relied on expression and natural timing like footfall or breathing. Perhaps that could be her next challenge.

Maria’s feelings about performing contrasted with Kirsten’s, because of her apparent lack of fear. She reported that she thoroughly enjoyed being on stage, “showing people what I can do” (interview 7). She gave the impression that she had no intention of forgetting that the audience was there, preferring to perform on stage where she can command attention, rather than in a hall, where the audience’s focus is possibly more diffused. Maria was an experienced highland dancer, used to performing under the critical gaze of a panel of judges. Throughout her interview, she gave the impression of being more detached emotionally from the creative dance experience than the other dancers, although her enjoyment and commitment were evident. She did not find the physical content of the dance challenging; she did not engage with the emotional content; she simply felt happy, doing an activity she knew she was competent at, and being seen by others to do it well.

By contrast, Donna, who was an experienced contemporary dancer, and who performed to much wider audiences through her college course, reported that she felt “like a different person” on stage. Though shy by nature, she described the feeling of performing as “amazing” and “being in control of everything” (interview 7). Clearly



the sense of 'control' was a source of social wellbeing for her which resonates with the findings of Gordon and Grant (1997) and Nussbaum (2000), that control over one's environment or some aspect of one's life is a positive experience.

The latter three dancers – Kirsten, Maria and Donna – represent the broad spectrum of responses to the question of feelings experienced during performance: the reflective dancer in touch with the expressive content of the dance despite the audience presence, the confident extrovert who enjoys the limelight irrespective of the meaning and emotional content of the dance, and the comparative introvert who felt empowered when performing and teaching. Each girl took something different away from the experience – something personal which defined themselves and enhanced their sense of wellbeing.

### **(iii) Social interaction**

Two levels of social interaction were observable here: firstly the connection which the dancers made with their audience; secondly that between the dancers as they had to co-operate with each other to make the show work well.

Invariably, friends and family made up the bulk of the audience and the dancers reported that they appreciate the support they receive, particularly from friends who do not dance. Rosie reported that being able to perform for such people intensifies the feeling of satisfaction and self-confidence (interview 3). The feedback from audience members was important to them:

... when they see your show, you get feedback. Like, 'That was a really good dance' or something like that. Some of them found (our dances) a bit funny ... but they said it was good, even so. Yes, that was surprising in a way ... because they didn't know what to expect. (Rosie, interview 3)

Showing people what she could do was a source of fun for Dee (interview 6). Donna, Fran and Elaine both reiterated Dee's sentiment that it was enjoyable to communicate through dance to their friends in the audience, and to receive feedback – usually very positive (interview 6). The feeling of being able to do something that their friends could not do seemed to be a significant factor in gaining

enjoyment from the process. As Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2006) acknowledge, the importance of social support beyond the family is a yardstick of acceptance for each of the dancers. In this case, if the dance is well received, the dancer is also as the two cannot be separated: the creative instrument is also the artistic product. The total absorption of dancers in the dance, endorsed by the findings of Critien and Ollis (2006) was experienced by most of the dancers, the most notable exception being Maria, who appeared to adopt a more mechanical approach to performing, which did not however compromise either her standard of performance or her enjoyment. What they all had in common was a well-embedded movement knowledge. How they used it was the way they retained and communicated their individuality.

Of course, the actual performance on stage is only the tip of a theatrical iceberg – what goes on behind the scenes is as much a part of the total experience as actually dancing on stage. Diane commented that social relationships backstage were intrinsically important to the dancers in ensuring they had the right frame of mind to produce a competent performance. Amy agreed, adding that the show was a team effort, where “you turn up because you want to, not because you have to”, so everyone is motivated and aiming at the same goal. Collaboration was an essential ingredient in ensuring that the show came together smoothly. The idea of helping each other seemed to be a positive motivational force, which again is evidence to support the views of Robinson (2001) and Eisner (2002) that learning to co-operate and to be sensitive to other people’s emotional needs is a prized outcome of this sort of activity, which is not always accessible in a formal education system.

#### **(iv) Taking control**

My aim here was to understand how the dancers reacted to being the focus of attention.

Although the dancers were not unanimous in their opinion of the importance of the performance, it was acknowledged as a milestone – the culmination of several weeks’ practice, and confirmation that they had reached a standard which was acceptable, not just to themselves, but also to their teacher, and to a wider public audience. Those who enjoyed performing reported that the praise received from

their audience gave them positive feelings about themselves. Rosie, for instance, found that

It just makes you feel good about yourself, and ... you know that you're good at something. (Rosie, interview 3)

a sentiment shared by Fran (interview 7) For Roberta, performing for her family was a way of repaying them for accommodating her passion for dance, and showing them that it was worth the effort and sacrifice, while Dee was very clear about why she enjoyed performing:

It's just that you're the centre of attention. (Dee, interview 6)

Again, the backstage situation has something to offer them in terms of self-understanding and development. Diane found that sharing their concerns as well as their make-up was a bonding experience; they shed inhibitions about costume changes and frankly admitted their nervousness. Backstage, personal façades were cast off like discarded costumes.

Onstage, new identities could be revealed, however temporarily: Sharon believed, "You take on a new persona when you're dancing," (interview 1) which, she believed, can carry on beyond the class or the show. It seemed that these dancers were not just demonstrating art, but exploring and demonstrating new facets of their personalities. In the creating process, they had been on a personal exploration of their emotional responses to stimuli, bearing in mind Kingsbury's (2002) definition of emotion as the sum of feelings plus cognition. The process had taken them through the stages of feeling their response to the stimulus, challenging them to think about that feeling, employing their 'thinking bodies' (Thomas 2003) to express the resulting emotional response in movement, and work on the final product to make it a finished entity. Along the way, a lot of experimenting took place and, like all artists, much material was discarded till they found what they were happy with. This included the forging of new identities where desired: they could be whoever they wanted to be when they were dancing.

## **4.5 Key Findings**

My research aim was to explore the dancers' feelings of social wellbeing, derived from their creative dance experience. Guided by the literature, I identified the main components of social wellbeing in this arts setting as stated in the glossary, and through my chosen methodology I looked for evidence of these, for example through:

- The creative process (Nussbaum 2000; Gardner 1993, 1999; Robinson 2001; Verducci and Gardner 2005; Pahl 2007);
- Co-operation and interaction (Nussbaum 2000, Harris and Hastings 2006);
- Peer observation and evaluation (Robinson 2001; Eisner 2002)
- Self-esteem as a contributory factor to self-confidence (Gordon and Grant 1997; Nussbaum 2000; Beecher 2005)

as viable manifestations of the dancers' social wellbeing (or lack of it). I considered them in terms of Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' to gain a picture of how the social background influenced the domain (the creative dance context) and the participants within it (the dancers of Southern Youth Dance).

From the findings, certain key elements indicate the presence of these factors and stand out as benefits which creative dance can offer these young dancers. They are summarised under the appropriate headings, below.

### **4.5.1 Technical input and practicalities**

This section took into account the dancers' previous experience of dance as well as aspects of technique which they learned in this class and the wider environment which framed their current engagement with creative dance. As stated in Table 4.2 and expanded on in Subsection 4.4.1, the interviews were the prime source of data, supported mainly by my observations of the dancers experimenting with the technical content. Group discussion gave them the opportunity for further reflection on their own class experience and to voice and compare their feelings about the process with each other.

The emergent aspects were:

- The dancers' cultural background and their previous dance experience (or lack of it) were the main influences on their creative output.
- Membership of the company was important for their sense of identity.
- They enjoyed the experience of mind and body working in harmony.
- Working towards the end goal of a performance was not detrimental to the experience of creating dance.

#### **4.5.2 Physicality in dance**

My main interest here was the dancers' engagement with the kinaesthetic element of their dancing, and how they felt about themselves as dancing beings. As Table 4.2 shows, the main sources of data were interviews and group discussion. These were supported by my observations, mainly of the social interaction and of the situations where the dancers took control of the dance material and their group of dancers.

The main feelings expressed were:

- They felt at ease with the movement genre;
- They were able to let go of preconceived ideas of how they 'should' move;
- They could sometimes experience a state of flow;
- Through the medium of creative dance they were able to negotiate their habitus to some extent, by escaping social conditioning.

#### **4.5.3 Creating, experimenting and refining**

Under this heading, in Subsection 4.4.3, I was seeking to learn about the dancers' experiences of creating dance with a view to producing an artistic entity for performance. I wanted to learn how they felt about that aspect of the company's activity and how it made them feel about themselves. Table 4.2 shows that the principal source of data was the interviews, supported by my observations and, to a lesser extent, the group discussions and graffiti walls.

I found that:

- With experience, the dancers learned to separate themselves from the end product;
- The process of social interaction and self-discipline required in the roles of leader and led increased self-awareness.

#### 4.5.4 Performing

As the company was largely performance led, this part was the inevitable outcome of the other three sections – the technical input, the opportunity to play and experiment with movement, and putting the components together to create a finished product.

Table 4.2 shows that the interviews were the prime source of evidence, supported by my observations and the group discussions, and the following findings are drawn from my interpretation of the data in Subsection 4.4.4.

The dancers' feelings about performing were that:

- Performing was a celebration of achievement; it was a chance to share their work with family and friends;
- They derived a sense of self-fulfilment from performing, which enhanced their feelings of wellbeing. These were carried beyond class and performance, enhancing their self-image and the way they interacted with others in their social field.

Throughout the interpretive sections, there are references to the proactive stance the dancers took in determining how they would present their aesthetic selves (Skeggs 2004) through their dance work. It seemed that while these alternative selves might have been prosthetic (Lury 1998) i.e. adopted for an external purpose, e.g. for a dance, they were internalised at least in part, and so modified the dancers' self-image.

The most commonly used word used by the dancers to describe the benefits they felt they gained from creative dance was "confidence". This agrees with the last graffiti wall they wrote on, which asked for replies to specific questions (Appendix C). When asked what they expected to gain from creative dance in the long and short term, confidence featured beside new skills and enjoyment as sought-after features.

In comparing these key elements with the wellbeing criteria of Gordon and Grant (1997) and Nussbaum (2000), I found that the dancers gained fulfilment on a personal level through a greater sense of self-awareness and taking control of their

own identity. Socially they enjoyed the feeling of intersubjectivity, working together to create an artistic product through dance. These led to a stronger sense of personal identity and positive self-esteem. There was little evidence of negativity, which was to be expected in a voluntary class. Amy endorsed this (interview 4) with her comment about voluntary attendance: if they weren't enjoying it they would soon stop attending.

One of the strongest images which I took from the data was that depicted in Figure 4.1 under the heading of 'Physicality in Dance', representing how the habitus became a negotiable construct. This indicated to me that the physical component of the creative activity had a lot to do with the dancers' ability to take control of their identity. It was more than verbal engagement which boosted their social development (Vygotsky 1986) and more than visual art (Eisner 2002). A combination of these and the movement dimension seemed to catalyse their identity, self-esteem and confidence and hence contributed to their feelings of social wellbeing.

#### **4.6 Summary**

The adaptation of Bourdieu's concept of 'social trajectory' enabled the data to be analysed by comparing them with a similar trajectory for the dance process but these were not fixed points and the journey was not a steady progression. In keeping with Bourdieu's use of the term, the dancers skipped back and forwards along the trajectories. The social journey started with individuals' reasons for embarking on this particular journey, moving through emotional reactions and the creation of their art to the social end of the spectrum where they gain experience and confidence through interaction, and start to take control of their artistic product and social standing. That might cause them to re-examine how they feel emotionally about their achievement and how it impinges on their social relationships. The dance 'journey' was plotted in stages which started with what the dancers brought to the class by way of technique and previous experience, and I charted the development of physical expression and the process of creating, experimenting and refining their dance material, before culminating in performance. Along the way, they gain fitness and extend their movement vocabulary, which increases their scope for creativity and ultimately enriches the performance – provided that they have gained the social and personal confidence to perform in

public. More importantly for this study, they gain understanding about themselves as creative, social beings.

The data emanating from the dancers' accounts of their 'journeys' were placed in the resulting framework and matched with the literature.

The majority of dancers did report that Southern Youth Dance equipped them physically, emotionally and socially for managing their lives outwith the studio walls. They felt that it gave them the experience of being the leader and the led, making them more socially adaptable and therefore empowered to cope with a greater level of autonomy, and to shape their own habitus. This contributed to their feelings of positive self-esteem, confidence, and ultimately social wellbeing.



## Chapter 5 Conclusion

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“I have learnt that there is more to dance than dancing” (participant in Youth Dance Festival, Leeds UK, July 2006, quoted in Foundation for Community Dance: *Animated*, autumn 2006: p23.)

### 5.1 Introduction

I have been totally immersed in a situation and absorbed in the action within it, building up relationships and observing other people’s relationships; watching them work together to achieve a shared outcome. The only glimpse I could get of the world beyond was when some of them offered to give me a look over the edge. I could then start to make sense of the whole by referring to my own existing schemata of the situation inside and beyond. In researching and writing this thesis, I have been on an exploration of a constructed world (the dance company) with its clearly defined parameters. I have sought insight into the dancers’ perceptions of it and of themselves within it, and further, I have sought to understand how they think it helps them to make sense of the world beyond the studio doors, to the advantage of their social wellbeing.

In this chapter, I offer a summary of the research ‘journey’ and give an update of literature and policies and their implications for dance provision in communities. I also give thought to directions for future research in light of my findings and finally I reflect on my experience as an informed participant observer in the dance classes.

### 5.2 Summary of the research background and process

I started by setting the scene from personal, theoretical and practical points of view. Personally, I could not detach myself and my *a priori* knowledge of the subject from my research, so I capitalised on it by letting it inform my methodology. I acknowledged that the terms I have used may be subject to alternative interpretations, so I compiled a glossary of the key terms I used to ensure that the reader knew how I was using them, irrespective of whether he / she agreed with my definitions.

Historical developments which have helped to define the art of dance in western society, particularly in the UK, were outlined and I addressed the question of how it is justifiably considered as a means of communication and an outlet for creativity. Debate about the nature of art and aesthetics (e.g. in Best 1985, 1999, 2004; McFee 1999) was relevant for understanding the process which the dancers were undergoing. They were being taught technique, they were developing aesthetic awareness, and they were combining these to make the art of dance. To do that, they had to employ cognitive skills in harmony with their physical skills in an attempt to ignite their creative spirit. I stated my belief that communication through art can only be successful if the observers have a similar cultural background to the dancers, bringing the message of this section full cycle, that there has to be a shared understanding before any meaningful exchange of ideas, values and knowledge can take place. The work of Gardner (1993, 1999, 2006), Robinson (2001) and Eisner (2002) among others, were fundamental in describing the structures which allow that to happen. Gardner's (1993) work and subsequent volumes on multiple intelligences recognise bodily-kinaesthetic, spatial and musical intelligences, among others, as being distinct forms of intelligence. He, along with Robinson (2001) and Eisner (2002) acknowledge the role of culture and exposure to the arts as being contributory factors to a person's overall intelligence and that these will only thrive in a liberal social environment which will not restrict access to these aspects of life.

All this happens in a sociocultural framework through which we all move - Bourdieu's (2005) concept of social trajectory - whereby the individual embarks on a life of social encounters which shape his/her life experience and this leads to my discussion of adolescent development, especially factors affecting self-image and self-esteem.

The next step in the social journey is interaction in the community. Here I have elaborated on the meaning of 'community' and considered the pressures which shape it and therefore shape the individuals which constitute it. These pressures are the norms, customs and values which are implicit in the social field (Bourdieu 2005) and which form the individual's habitus (Bourdieu 2005). The 'field' includes government policies and the mass media as agents of social change as well as families, friends and other agencies such as school, while the habitus is something

of a buffer zone, both protecting and restricting the individual. Finally in the literature review, I have dealt with how individuals can become agents of their own social wellbeing by negotiating their habitus and consequently taking action to define for themselves their place in their social field.

My methodology emanated from the assumption that the dancers each derive personal meaning from their dance activity in their own way, establishing multiple truths which are all equally valid but are entrenched in the same social field so are governed by the same constraints. Hermeneutic phenomenology was appropriate because it allowed the 'lived experience' (van Manen 1990) of the individuals to be interpreted in relation to the shared world of researcher and participants – an active and evolving process as opposed to the fixed snapshot of Husserlian (1970) phenomenology. I adopted a position of subtle realism (Mays and Pope 2000; Seale 2000) to account for the effect of shared community influences moderating their personal perceptions of 'truth'. The data were viewed in light of Bourdieu's (2005) concept of a social trajectory. In similar mode, a dance 'trajectory' was identified from the dancers' responses which I combined with the social trajectory to give a flexible framework for analysing the data.

The findings from the analysis were presented according to the points on the trajectories. I had a purpose in using the points on the dance trajectory as the main section headings: I wanted the emphasis to remain with the dance element and not with the social element, i.e. the social commentary enhanced the dance experience, not *vice versa*. The discussion emanating from the findings was intertwined with the description. In this way I aimed to preserve the holistic nature of the study.

### **5.3 Key Findings and their Implications**

As social beings, the dancers belonged to at least one community and were all subject to cultural restraints and consequently some degree of repression – the influence of Bourdieu's (2005) social field, which helps to shape their habitus. I reflect back to my ontological principle, that personal meaning is socially constructed and conclude from what the dancers told me and demonstrated in their dancing, that social reality is indeed an amalgam of social constructs, though perhaps not entirely all of our own making. Consequently personal meaning is embedded in a

foundation of inherited constructs and they must negotiate to push their boundaries, hence the misshapen habitus (Chapter 4 Figure 4.1), which is in a constant state of change – yielding or resisting, malleable or standing firm, retreating or probing. The dancers demonstrated this in their classes by swapping roles, sometimes being leader, sometimes follower – directing and accepting direction – in a way which they felt mirrored their relationships outside their dance world. There was ample evidence of their proactive approach to shaping their aesthetic selves (Skeggs 2004; Lury 1998) the way they wanted, and not just the way external influences, in the dance class or beyond, tried to steer them.

The confidence they gained from the microcosmic setting was an asset that they could transfer to their wider environment. They gained a more defined sense of self-image which brought with it increased self-esteem. These were identified as contributors to the acquisition of confidence and positive feelings about oneself (Gordon and Grant, 1997; Moshman 1999; Nussbaum 2000) in one's social environment. Therefore they were possible indicators of social wellbeing. The dancers' accounts and actions imply that the experience was a largely positive one. Moreover, the research process caused them to be more introspective than they might otherwise have been, so that conceivably they learned something about themselves in the process. Perhaps they were able to carry that extra self-knowledge across into their lives beyond the dance company. In that case, hermeneutic phenomenology served well as a methodology which allowed both them and me to see 'over the edge' and make comparisons between their learning environment in the class and their functioning in the community – the hermeneutic circle in practice.

The medium of dance was important to them. They enjoyed the feeling of mind-body connectedness which it afforded them and which, they believed, they could not feel from any other art form or sport. The kinaesthetic experience and freedom for self-expression which they gained from this particular dance class was a source of fulfilment which, they felt, they could not attain from a didactic and strictly technique-based dance class. They could indulge in a depth of focus which some experienced as 'flow' (Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi 1999; Csikszentmihalyi 2002). They believed that the level of self-awareness through the medium of dance movement allowed them greater scope for experimenting outwith the parameters of accepted

movement in other spheres of their lives. Additionally, they felt that they had a higher threshold of comfort with the physicality than they would have if they had not been company members. As creative dance was their chosen means of communication, it suggests an analogy between dance and language (Merleau-Ponty 2000): when we talk, we do not have to think hard about every single word. We might have to if we were, for instance, defending ourselves in court, but for ordinary conversation we think about general meaning. Similarly, when an able-bodied person is walking, (s)he might not think about the steps, but if (s)he were dancing without being trained, the effort would be very conscious. For trained dancers, the threshold is raised, so they would at least appear to be more at ease, more self-confident.

The influences of contemporary dance and hip-hop, underpinned by a loosely-based technique as a basis for safe exploration of their own ideas gave the girls the opportunity to experiment with their physical powers of communication through dance, which they found rewarding. Using Kingsbury's (2002) formula, they applied cognition to their spontaneous reactions to a stimulus (usually a piece of music) to find ways of communicating an emotion. Some were still at a stage of wrestling between whether they were expressing their own emotion or were detached enough to express the perceived emotion of the stimulus. The more experienced dancers claimed to have adopted a more objective perspective from which to create their dances: having moved from the experimental stage to creating, they were focusing on an end product from which they were emotionally less attached. Whatever stage they were at, they felt comfortable with their self-image as dancers, which contributed to their feelings of wellbeing derived from the social interaction and from the physical activity.

Performing was the ultimate expression of achievement for all except one of the dancers. It was the chance to communicate to their audience the image of themselves that they wished to portray. For some of them, it was a chance to give something back to families who had supported them in their desire to dance. Given that the audience represented their social field (Bourdieu 1993, 2005), perhaps it was a manifestation of the negotiating process through which they shaped their habitus. It was an opportunity to show their families and friends the result of the personal and social journey they had undertaken. This implies that it was important

to the dancers to have the approval of the main players in their social field. They did not view their dancing as an isolated activity: they were aware of the connection between the company and the community.

Summing up all aspects of the findings, I think my participants would agree with the dancer quoted at the start of this chapter, that 'there is more to dance than dancing.'

## **5.4 Reflections**

Doing justice to the rich harvest of data in a qualitative study like this was a challenging prospect. Fraleigh (1999) emphasises the multidimensional nature of aesthetic understanding, where a phenomenon has to be considered within its social, political and historical context to enable meaning to emerge. My local knowledge and background of creative dance stood me in good stead to explore my topic in depth: the social understanding is equally multidimensional. The dancers were very willing to share their experiences of the dance process with me, trusting me to portray it sensitively and as accurately as possible given the nature of the study.

I was grateful to the Principal Arts Officer and the Dance Artist in Residence in that local authority, for granting me permission to conduct my research and giving me as much freedom of access as possible, the only limit to my attendance being the rehearsal schedule for a forthcoming show. I recognise that, since that time, ethical procedures have become much more stringent, although I have no doubt that my research would still comply with the new standards.

As explained in Chapter 3, the sample was identified from a discrete population, bounded geographically and temporally. The geographical area was one I was familiar with, both geographically and culturally, so I could make informed inferences about the Findings. There were other creative dance classes in the area, but this one was particularly focused on the task of creating dance, having been set up to perform regularly. It was ideally placed, then, for deep exploration of the participants' creative dance experience.

At the start, I felt able to witness the class activity from an objective standpoint, although that position changed through time. I had a clear idea of the uniqueness of my research: it was more than an ethnomethodological study into the dancers' experience of creative dance. It had the added phenomenological dimension of exploring their thoughts about how it helped them to engage with their social world outside the class. It involved them in clarifying their own thoughts before articulating them in words and movement. Hermeneutics gave validation to the individuality of their perceptions and inevitably, my *a priori* knowledge was brought to bear on my findings, giving depth to my understanding of the way they sought to make sense of their dancing as an enhancement of their lives. My subjectivity, therefore, was an advantage to the process.

As I became increasingly more involved in the dance processes I was witnessing, I realised how great was the responsibility for accurate representation. How did the dancers view my presence – as intruder or collaborator? How did I know that I was representing them in a manner which was true to their own reflective practice, and thirdly, how could I be sure that I was not contaminating the data with my own preconceived notions?

In answer to my first question, I recalled how relaxed the dancers appeared to be about my presence, and that for the most part, they seemed able to ignore me. I felt that they accepted me because they knew I understood what they were doing and why they were doing it. However, when they were nearing a performance date, some of them utilised my presence with the camera by asking me to film them for feedback on their rehearsals. At that point I realised that I had become accepted as a collaborator. I considered it a privilege for me to be invited to share someone else's reality and of course I was well aware of the ethical implications of being a participant observer, e.g. avoiding filming non-participant dancers wherever possible, which meant I had to sacrifice at least one excellent example of dance and social interaction because I had failed to notice while filming that a non-participant dancer was within the frame of the video shot. I had been so absorbed by the action in the foreground that, sitting at the back, she had escaped my attention. Unfortunately it was not possible to trace her to gain retrospective permission to include her.

With regard to the second question, I have dealt with the issue of establishing trustworthiness in Chapter 3, but I wish to stress the importance I attached to engaging the dancers as participant researchers. It was important to me that the data-gathering and interpretation process was not one-way: I wanted the dancers to gain something from the experience, too. I hoped that by inviting them to be part of the process, as co-participants, they would think more deeply about their motivation to dance, and how they believed it affected their sense of social wellbeing. For example, did it encourage them to focus more closely, and make them aware of their social interactions in the dance-making process? It was important that they realised the full extent of their contribution to the study, so feedback from me to them was crucial at every stage. To ensure this, I arranged opportunities for discussion outwith the class time, such as the group sessions where we examined the graffiti walls and the video material. In addition, because we live in the same area and share a common interest in dance as a performing art, we continue to meet from time to time at our local theatre, our local dance shop (where, at the time of data collection, one of them worked) or at other dance events. These spontaneous opportunities to discuss our favourite art form helped to consolidate our thoughts about it and its place in our lives. I could argue that it is misleading to write about it in the past tense – it is a living, ongoing process of personal and community development, embracing all the various meanings of the word ‘community’ as discussed in Chapter 2.

My third question refers to the hermeneutic process as explained in Chapter 3 and accounted for in Chapter 4 (Findings and Discussion). I had to honour the integrity of each dancer’s response, in words and movement, using a metaphorical zoom lens to preserve its relation to the whole picture. To ensure that I did not influence the data unduly, it was essential to keep an open mind and to reassure the dancers that I was not in any way being judgemental about what they were doing or saying. Yet I had to acknowledge that my construct of the subject was as much one of the multiple truths as each of theirs.

I made sure that my personal involvement in creative dance was perceived as a reassuring and receptive vehicle for understanding, rather than being a source of threat. I did so by keeping a low profile unless specifically asked to contribute, e.g. when Kirsten asked me to film her dance. One response on the last graffiti wall



(Appendix B) suggests that they might have appreciated greater practical involvement on my part: when I posed the question on the wall, as to how I could have increased my understanding of what they were doing, one dancer replied, “You could have joined in” (Appendix C, 04/12/06). I interpret that remark as an acceptance of me as a dance professional in their midst. However, I had refrained from participating more actively because

- I did not want to get in the teacher’s way, unless she invited me to become more involved. I respected her position and was aware that my presence could become an obstacle if I were inadvertently insensitive to the teacher-student dynamics;
- I did not want to impede the dancers’ progress with their art. They needed their creative space;
- I could not define a clear role for myself as an active participant.
- It is alien to my personal nature to be an intrusive presence. I prefer to remain in the background.

The commonality shared by the dancers and me goes deeper than our culturally acquired aesthetic appreciation and mutual understanding of the art form. It is derived at a kinaesthetic level from experiencing the dance movement at first hand. Just like the dance audiences in Reynolds’ *et al* (2008) and McKechnie’s *et al* (2008) research, who could empathise with the movement because they had felt it before, I could recall the embodied experience of creating dance movement as I watched the dancers. Moreover, I could draw on my own social experiences of working with others to create dance, similar to the context that these dancers were experiencing. I remembered the various group dynamics which operated in the creation of a dance and could empathise with the dancers as they assumed different hierarchical roles in their group, e.g. as leader or follower. My insight was therefore valuable in understanding the process they were going through. However, I felt that my methods of dealing with the data as described in Chapter 3, especially involving the dancers in discussion of the videos and in the first stage analysis of the graffiti walls, ensured that my own preconceived ideas did not cloud my vision of what they were conveying to me. The influence of my subjectivity was present but held in check by the chance to think in a reflexive manner, i.e. my thoughts oscillated between my own experience and what I was witnessing and being led to understand by the dancers.

Inevitably, my position in this research enabled me to reflect on my creative dance experience. I was already a young adult when I first tasted it, and that was within a formal educational framework as stated in Chapter 1. Being awoken to the freedom of creativity through dance in a more liberal setting, i.e. the community, by an inspired and inspiring friend, was a refreshing experience. Now through my research, I could witness these teenage dancers feeling that freedom and I could make sense of it with sensitivity to the context. My own movement memory enabled me to share, at second hand at least, some of their dance movements in the same way that the audiences studied by Reynolds et al (2008) and McKechnie et al (2008) could connect with dance performers. The dancers in my study knew nothing of my teaching background, only my community involvements, so they regarded me as an equal, albeit an extremely mature one. For my part, I knew the education system which governed much of their lives and the expectations held by family, friends and other influences in their social field. Hence I could appreciate their need for a creative outlet which did not restrict their practice other than by supporting their physical and emotional safety.

In my own life as a dance practitioner, my thoughts are now turning towards creative dance for mature adults because I realise that the need to create, as a social expression of oneself, does not necessarily cease at the end of formal education but is equally important as an aspect of one's working years and beyond. Being on the brink of the latter category personally, I can appreciate the need for mature people to validate their own social reality through art. I also need a way to confirm my social identity in an artistic context. When the art in question is creative dance, I find myself regarding the visual and kinaesthetic experience as a manifestation of where I position myself in my social world.

## **5.5 Trustworthiness of the study**

In Chapter 3 I argued for the trustworthiness of this research, encompassing the qualities of credibility, dependability and generalisability. I have tried to do as thorough job as possible of exploring and describing (Robson 2002) the phenomenon at the heart of my research, namely young people's creative dance in a community and how they felt it contributed to their social wellbeing. I have tried to

do this as fully and as deeply as possible while maintaining credibility. I do not attempt to generalise my findings to any other population because they are derived from a unique situation, but I do generalise to a theoretical position (Seale 2000), in that its very uniqueness makes it stand out and stretch perceptions of the phenomenon to encompass the aspect of social wellbeing as opposed to being only a description of the activity. Triangulation through the multiple methods of data collection ensure that a full and focused account of the creative dance phenomenon has been arrived at. The picture I have presented has credibility because it combines the dancers' thoughts and my observations, interpreted in light of my own professional background. Consequently I believe that my research is original without being idiosyncratic as it might have been if I had maintained greater distance between myself and the dancers, i.e. if I had been a non-participant observer and if I had chosen to bracket off my own impressions based on my own experience of this type of creative dance environment. Involving them in the initial analysis process bridged the gap between us and ensured that they took at least some ownership of the process.

My confidence in my approach to this research has been strengthened by positive reception at two conferences: the annual World Congress on Dance (Oliver and Karkou 2006) and Critical Connections (Oliver and Karkou 2007). While in 2006 I had only conducted preliminary analysis of the data, I was able to share the process with the delegates and received positive feedback, particularly in support of my decision not to rely on a computer package for analysis. The general feeling among the delegates who heard my presentation was that this type of data required to be dealt with in a more intuitive, interpretive way than a computer programme could offer. By the time of the second conference, I had a clearer idea of my findings in the Bourdieu-inspired framework, which I was called upon to expand on. The experience helped me to clarify in my own mind the way I had proceeded with the study and gave me confidence in the value of my findings.

The limiting factors of the study included the length of the data collection period. The timeframe of a single school term was not ideal, in that it limited the rapport which I could establish with the dancers. It would have been interesting to watch their development as teenagers as well as dancers over the course of a year, for instance. However, that was not an option, as there was no guarantee that

membership of the class would be consistent over a longer period. Even assuming that membership was fairly stable, new dancers joining the class could completely change the social, as well as the artistic, dynamics.

The degree of my involvement in each class was limited to the obvious role of researcher – interviewing, observing, operating the camera – although the dancers knew about my dance background. If I had adopted the role of teacher/researcher, which I did in my MPhil research, perhaps I could have gained a different perspective on the dancers' experience. Deeper involvement might have compensated for brevity of exposure (one school term), but it might have been difficult to maintain an overview of class dynamics from a close-up viewpoint. In the end I had to work with the limitations to best advantage and accept that the findings were the representation of my 'truth' at that time and place, and in the capacity of participant observer.

## **5.6 Looking to the future**

The social and artistic climate in which community-based creative dance takes place is thriving throughout the UK, evidence being gleaned from such organisations as the Foundation for Community Dance, the 'Leaps and Bounds'<sup>10</sup> (2006) project in England and, in Scotland, various dance initiatives funded and run by councils, government-funded bodies like the Scottish Arts Council and independent trust-funded organisations such as Scottish Youth Dance.

The case for funding creative dance provision in the community rests at least in part in the lack of coverage in the formal education system, despite the current legislation. The Scottish Executive Education Department's (SEED) Curriculum for Excellence (2004) places the art of dance firmly in the curriculum as a subject in its own right, unlike its predecessor, the National Guidelines (5-14), where dance was a part of Physical Education, which, in turn, was one strand of Expressive Arts (SOED 1992). School pupils can theoretically opt to study dance at the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA) Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher Grade, but the limiting factor is availability of trained staff to deliver it. Personal contacts

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<sup>10</sup> A collaboration between Birmingham Royal Ballet and a publicly-funded social inclusion programme, whereby young people who were neither working nor in education were selected on grounds of motivation and attitude to work with dancers to stage a performance of the ballet "Romeo and Juliet."

and first-hand experience of teaching dance to P.E. students and school teachers lead me to believe that creative dance is not being adequately resourced to give children wider access to it within formal education, though a Higher Dance initiative is being provided by one local authority out of school hours, taught by their Dance Artist in Residence.

The SQA courses are also available at two Further Education Colleges which have Dance departments. They also offer a Higher National Diploma and two of them offer BA degrees in dance. This improves access in two ways:

1. they provide young dancers, like the two oldest in my study, to further their dance ambitions, and
2. they train new community dance artists who hope to secure dance teaching posts as community dance teachers, either freelance or employed by a local authority.

Some Postgraduate Certificate courses in Community Education allow students the option of community dance as a specialism. With these various options, the quality of dance input in communities should be assured and ideally community dance artists work in schools, too. The difficulty, however, lies in shortage of local authority funding. Therefore it is all the more vital to be able to put forward a compelling case for the inclusion of creative dance in community education programmes.

The local authority which facilitated my research caters for creative dance in communities by employing one full-time and one part-time dance artist in residence and has a contemporary dance company in residence in its provincial theatre. Its current Arts Policy (2008) allows for continued provision of dance and other arts, recognising their role in promoting personal creativity and community cohesion. The Scottish Executive takes its responsibilities for promoting arts and creativity seriously, as the Community Health Exchange (CHEX, funded by NHS Health Scotland), note in their newsheet, 'Snippets' (February 2007), specifically that the Scottish Executive have emphasised the need to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people as a priority for community and health workers. Promoting creativity is a key tool in their strategy, which is built on the belief that

creativity is the route to confidence and raised self-esteem. If people have the chance to experiment creatively, it will increase their curiosity and encourage them to communicate, not just verbally, but through artistic media. This, CHEX believe, sets in motion an upward spiral of imagination, motivation, interaction and self-belief, in accordance with above-mentioned SEED policy (2004).

Currently, the Scottish Arts Council (2008) dance budget helps to fund dance artists and touring companies with community interests, while Scottish Ballet receives direct Scottish Executive funding for performing and education. With a new government body, Creative Scotland, poised to take over from the Scottish Arts Council in 2010 (assuming the draft bill is passed by the Scottish Parliament by then), the state commitment to the arts is clear. It remains to be seen how dance will compare to the other arts in the funding stakes.

Meantime, at national level, it seems that too much dance provision is dependent on sourcing trust funds and short-term central (SAC or Scottish Executive) funding, which makes forward planning difficult. To take one example, Scottish Youth Dance is described by Lappin (2007) as offering “children and young people aged from three to twenty-five the opportunity to realise their potential as individuals and to learn and grow through participation in dance”. YDance, the performing arm of Scottish Youth Dance, received funding from the Scottish Executive Health Improvement Strategy Division to run their Dance In Schools Initiative (DISI) which ran from 2005-2008, aiming at boosting health through dance and offering in-service training for teachers as well. But the funding was finite and the problem of children’s fitness still prevails.

YDance have funding from the Lankelly Chase Foundation and the Scottish Refugee Council for a three-year dance project aimed at young immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the Glasgow area, which culminates each summer with a show involving dance (creative dance inspired by street genres) and multimedia performances. Entitled “Under the Same Sky”, it was well received when it had its first showing in July 2008 (Oliver 2008). However, one of their major funders, a local government source, withdrew in Summer 2008. Fortunately, they have also recently secured funding from the Scottish Government Health Department, for a project to increase the level of physical activity enjoyed by

teenage girls. This is being run at three centres, in Ayrshire, Glasgow and Orkney and allows free access to the dance classes for the girls. Another project delivered by YDance was entitled “Dance for Boys” is underway, under the auspices of the National Physical Activity Policy Co-ordinator, currently Dr. Matthew Lowther. The lack of continuity of funding remains a problem, however.

At the time of writing, Dance Base, the National Centre for Dance in Scotland, which is a trust-based charity, is also offering a range of free classes to encourage participation by people who might not otherwise be willing or able to try them (Dance Base 2009).

Provided funding can continue to be sourced, these initiatives will continue and will evolve as they have been doing, to meet changing demands.

### **5.7 Future Research**

The benefits of arts for health and general wellbeing are attracting attention. Angus (2005), writing for the University of Durham’s Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine and NHS Health Development Agency, has reviewed numerous reports on the subject in England. He notes that

(t)here seems to be a widespread assumption that social activity and inclusion in social networks are important for health and wellbeing. It is not clear whether there is any justification or evidence for this assumption. (Angus 2005: section 4.2)

Despite the apparent lack of evidence, he comments that the employment of creativity through art promotes “social connectedness, leading to increased confidence, self-esteem and empowerment” (Angus 2005: section 4.3), enabling people to control, and be responsible for, their own lives. Relating this to my own findings, I suggest that the following lines of exploration could be useful future research projects:

a) Technical input and practicalities:

The importance of the cultural background and the feeling of belonging which enhanced self identity and esteem in the dance company could be a starting point for research with different user groups e.g. younger children, adults or non-performance orientated groups, different art forms or different cultures. The

significance of culture on movement vocabulary in creative dance would make an interesting study.

b) Physicality in dance:

The physical nature of the art form was important to the dancers in my study, for understanding themselves and carving out their own identity. Engel (2008a and b) has described how the physical experience of dance movement can make a solo professional dancer more self-aware. The feelings of a community dancer, however, monitored over a period of time (one year, perhaps) might reveal much about how he/she engages with the art form to affirm identity and enjoy a feeling of wellbeing. Perhaps the effect of the group context could be probed more deeply, for example, how being one of a group might inhibit or enhance performance and how one feels about oneself in the group.

c) Creating, experimenting and refining

I found that these community dancers learned to distance themselves from their creation as they moved from creating to refining, while enjoying the benefits of self-understanding and awareness which came from their group interaction along the way. The way that sources of motivation stimulate creativity in dance for an individual could make an interesting in depth case study, especially if the researcher could follow the process from its inception and encourage the dancer to articulate his/her connection to the dance material verbally. Tate's (2007) group of professional actors and drama professionals looked at how they related to their product and to the audience. Similar studies could be undertaken following individuals engaged with other creative activities, outside the arts, e.g science, engineering, architecture or any other discipline where the aim is to produce something new and original with a function and for use by third parties, i.e. not necessarily themselves.

d) Performing

My dancers considered their performance as a celebration of what they had learned and achieved, which gave them a feeling of fulfilment. How does a professional artist cope with the potential conflict between self-fulfilment and the profit motive? To what extent does one have to 'sell one's soul' when creating for a market, and what effect does a sponsor have on the product? In one way



they can empower dancers by enabling the performance to happen, but on the other hand, sponsors can have their own agenda which can have a limiting effect on the creative output of choreographer or dancers. On a more practical note, the performing space – vast or intimate, proscenium arch or site specific – could be a starting point for exploring how a dancer uses the space. The relationship between performer and audience, already the subject of research by Reynolds et al (2008) and McKechnie et al (2008), could be explored with performing artists other than dancers. Consider, for example, the task of puppeteers in connecting with their audience, where changing facial expressions and possibly voices are a step removed from the immediate interaction.

In the case of dance, there are many descriptive and well-reasoned accounts of the benefits of community dance (including creative dance) in such sources as “Animated”, the semi-annual journal of the Foundation of Community Dance written by highly knowledgeable dance artists and participants but research reports are harder to find especially in Scotland, although the community arts commitment is broadly similar in all parts of the UK. The lack of evidence-based research into social wellbeing through dance needs to be addressed.

Future research might include a much closer single case study of an individual dancer and follow her/his interaction beyond the dance class, into the community. It could be achieved by her/his use of a digital voice recorder or MP3 player as in Doughty *et al* (2008), where each dancer had an MP3 player strapped to her arm so that she could record her feelings as she danced. Alternatively, a small group of participants followed in the same way, could offer the researcher the added benefit of group discussion, which I found so valuable in my study. Studies of individuals in different art forms might offer insight into their chosen routes to social wellbeing, but they could never be compared, due to their phenomenological nature. They could, however, elucidate rich personal meaning for the participants, which would take the understanding of individual perceptions to a new level. There is therefore the potential for further new knowledge to be created.

## 5.8 Summary

In this chapter I have aimed to encapsulate the essence of what creative dance has meant to a group of adolescent girls who have been drawn to it because they love it for a variety of reasons. They let me into their world and demonstrated through words and action why they had chosen it as their preferred art and how they believed it helped them to construct their understanding of themselves in their social world. The pictures they created for me were unique although they overlapped in certain respects, namely their cultural frame of reference – their social ‘field’ (Bourdieu 1993, 2005) - their exposure to dance as a performing art, and to the mass media which influenced their cultural tastes. Their ‘buffer zone’ of accepted values and customs - their ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1993, 2005) is both supporting and restricting and as the literature confirms, they were at a stage of seeking to assert themselves and negotiate new areas for freedom and self expression. Membership of the dance company gave them a new identity separate from family and school; it gave them a sense of exclusivity. In the safety of the dance class they could experiment not only with movement but also with their self-image. Taking on group leadership in the role of choreographer heightened their self-confidence and sharpened skills of social interaction. It gave them a sense of agency in shaping the image of themselves which they wanted to present to the wider public, and that in turn enhanced their feelings of social wellbeing. The use of video material supported the interview data by giving insight into feelings which were not always articulated verbally, as well as providing the chance for the dancers to give feedback on how it felt to watch themselves dancing. Their input as participant researchers enriched the study.

The ultimate opportunity to demonstrate their negotiated image was in performance, which all but one enjoyed as a celebration of achievement. For the dancers, it was evidence that they were succeeding in understanding themselves more clearly through the process of creative dance and it made them feel good to show off their increased self-awareness and confidence in a social context.

For me, the research process has been a personal voyage, which, though ended, has broadened my horizons and left me wondering in which direction I should proceed next.

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## Appendix A: Interview Schedule, Group Discussion Prompts and Analysis of Transcripts

### Interview Schedule (semi-structured interviews)

9. How long have you danced – here? ...elsewhere?
  10. What other dance classes do you go to?
  11. Why did you choose to come to this class?
  12. How did you feel about the audition process? Were you daunted by it?
  13. What do you expect to gain from this class and membership of the company?
  14. Does it spill over into your life outside the class? How? (talking with friends ...practising ... composing?)
  15. What do your non-dancing friends think of your dancing?
  16. How do you think your dancing makes you feel about yourself?
  17. How do you feel when you are dancing?
  18. How do you feel when you are performing?
  19. How demanding is the range of movement – are you challenged?
  20. Why do you dance, rather than another art form?
  21. How would you describe the dance you do? (contemporary? modern? Something else?)
  22. What are the main influences on your creation of dances?
  23. What have you learned about yourself through creative dance?
  24. How would you finish this phrase: “When I dance, I feel ...”?
  25. What do you think ‘social wellbeing’ is?
  26. What do you get from the class, which contributes to your social wellbeing (if anything)?
- 
19. How important is it to you, to belong to this group?

### Group Discussion Prompts

How did you go about composing the dance? How did you get started?

How did you feel when you were doing this? What were you thinking? Was that the feeling you wanted to convey?

What do you think [a dancer's name] was feeling when she did that?

What do you learn about yourself through your creative dance?

You were working towards a performance here. How were you feeling about performing?

What sense do you get about the other dancers' feelings when you watch them?

## Analysis of interview transcripts

### Interview 1: Sharon

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings  | Social interaction | Taking control  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------|---|
| Technical input and practicalities | <p>I've been dancing 5½ years: community dance.</p> <p>In class I gain more experience of what dance teaches you and what it does for you...</p> <p>I do practise at home but it's not like class, where Dawn pushes us...</p> <p>The range of movement is not too demanding: I know Dawn's style.</p> | <p>... it's a form of exercise that's enjoyable.</p>   |                    | <p>I chose to do this class partly because my best friend is doing a professional dance course at Dundee College.</p> |
| Physicality in dancing             |  | <p>When I'm dancing, I feel happy, it's exciting: I don't want to stop. The hotter I get, I feel like a different person.</p> <p>Dancing makes me feel good about myself. I'm not naturally confident. When I'm dancing, a different personality comes out – it changes in a good way. Dance is so important to me, so it does impose on my social life – makes me more "balsy". It has changed my self-image, given me confidence and a different persona. I can say, "I'm a dancer".</p> |                    |   |

|                         |  |   |   |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| Creating, experimenting | When I have to make up dances, that's demanding... | <p>I like to show people my creative side... (The audition) helped the class because it meant that dancers weren't just walking in off the street. If you are confident in class, it can make your social life better;.</p> | <p>I like choreography best, and seeing my own work on other people. Others look up to us because we're older, and watching us gives them confidence. We're much more flexible – but not physically! We're not scared; we'll try new ideas.</p> |
|                         |  | <p>It gives me confidence, I meet new people It makes you take on different aspects of your life – makes you more self-aware.</p>   | <p>you are able to help others in different ways, not just in dance</p>   |
| Performing              |  | <p>When I'm performing I feel very alive, and creative. I push myself as far as I can go – it feels really good.</p>  | <p>My non-dancing friends think it's good that I do it; they go to see the performances I'm in, and so they give me their support, which I appreciate.</p>  |

Interview 2: Kathy and Caitlin

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience   | Personal feelings  | Social interaction  | Taking control   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Technical input and practicalities | <p>I've been dancing for 5 years; with ELYD for 4 years. I also do ballet, jazz, and dance with a performance group. Interested in dance and gymnastics.</p> <p>I gave up gymnastics in favour of dance – the two disciplines were conflicting.</p> <p>I came to this class because a friend was coming ...</p> | <p>Ballet was quite daunting to begin with. This class is much less threatening and gives me more confidence. The physical fitness side of it isn't important to me.</p> <p>It makes you feel important, belonging to a company. And we had to audition for a place in it. ... it feels good to be part of a company that is good enough to perform.</p> | <p>The social gain is that I have friends here; we go to the same school.</p> <p>It's about friends, meeting new people, and what you learn from dancing you learn from other people, and from and about yourself.</p> <p>Making friends, yes. Everyone's different – the same as in dancing – everyone has different experiences.</p> <p>... how well you work with other people. Everyone has different personalities. When you come to dance, you can think about friends outside dance and that will affect your dancing. But that depends on who you are with.</p> <p>Around your best friends, your dance background does influence you because you're more confident, but if you were with people you didn't know, you'd be quite shy about your dancing, till</p> | <p>I'm interested in dance as a career; not just dance but performing arts in general.</p> |

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|                                   |  |  | <p>someone else showed off first!</p> <p>Then you could show your dancing. It can also affect your personality, make you more social, because you know they're the same as you.</p> <p>...everyone has something special about them.</p> |  |
| Physicality in dance              |  | When I'm dancing I feel special. It gives me confidence. |  |  |
| Creating, experimenting, refining |  |  |  |  |
| Performing                        | When I'm performing, I feel really good about myself. When it's finished, I want to do it again and wish it wasn't over. |  | I enjoy performing; it makes me feel confident – all the more so in front of friends. I have a non-dancing friend who is very supportive.  |  |



Interview 3: Rosie and Kate

|                                    | Sources of motivation and inspiration  | Personal feelings  | Social interaction  | Taking control   |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Technical input and practicalities | <p>(We've danced) nearly 11 years, since I was 2.<br/>We just joined (ELYD) in March. K does ballet, jazz and highland. R – highland dancing and Kerry Swan Dancers (a local group), and majorettes.</p> <p>We both just really like dancing (and) wanted to try something different</p> <p>We saw the poster up for audition so we just thought we'd give it a try. We didn't really expect to get in.</p> <p>.</p> | <p>I was quite scared at (the audition) ... but then when I started there – I was quite nervous before I started, but I heard I had got in, I was really happy and excited; it was brilliant. I feel good when I'm dancing in class, unless we keep going over things more than once and you already know it .. then you get bored ... then you get it right ...</p> | <p>(Yes, we are pretty extravert people) in some ways, but ...<br/>Because I do ballet, some people think it's a bit silly, but I just try and rise above it all.<br/>I once went to a summer school and made friends there, in Glasgow.<br/>It's good to feel you belong to a group. It makes you feel special.<br/>Quite a lot of our friends didn't used to do things like ballet, but ... they all started doing ballet and became interested in dancing.</p> | <p>People know that we've auditioned and we got through so friends at school ask you we're getting on ...<br/>...when I'm older I want to be a dance teacher so we try to go to as many dance classes as we can.<br/>I'd never stop dancing because of what other people say.<br/>Yes ... same for me; I got more confident when I came to this because you know that, because you went to the audition and you got through, that you are good.<br/>All our friends are dancers apart from one, but because we've told her all about dancing, I think she's wanting to start.<br/>Sometimes when I put my hair up, sometimes I put it in a bun and my mum says I look like a dancer. ...Our posture and things like that have improved. Yes some people must walk around slouched, but we go</p> |

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|                                   |   |  |   | around straight up.   |
| Physicality in dance              |   | <p>I expect to gain confidence because I know I'm getting better.</p> <p>Dancing gives you confidence. You know you must be quite good if Dawn lets you dance in a show.</p> <p>It just makes you express yourself when you're dancing, better than in any other thing.</p> <p>Yes, it's like a different world, when you start dancing: you think about different things.</p> <p>Well, I try very hard to, like, match their (the older dancers') abilities so I'm quite confident,</p> | <p>...when people ask me to do things, like bits of dance and stuff like that, and they try to copy them it makes you feel good about yourself, like they're saying we want to be like you and dance like you and things like that.</p> <p>... so when I see other people dancing well, it really spurs me on to try to do as well.</p> <p>I go to classes more often, and just to gain more strength in dancing, and gain more experience.</p> |   |
| Creating, experimenting, refining | <p>Well, just to improve my dancing – the different styles.</p> <p>(When composing), we look at different dances and take different moves from them but change them, and just sort of like everyday life, you can do something and change it into a dance move. Like, on a movie, there's playing basketball and she takes moves from what they do, playing basketball.</p> <p>We make up a lot of dances for shows and things.</p> | <p>... sometimes you do different dances, like, contemporary, sometimes you have to look sad or sometimes you have to be happy or scary ... it shows your mood</p>   |   | <p>We meet up (to practise at home) – we're, like, structurally (constructively?) critical, I mean we tell each other our mistakes and what we could do better ... if one of us does a bigger kick then we help each other in how to get higher and improve and things like that.</p> |

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| Performing | A lot of experience probably helped. I had experience of shows. | (When performing), I always get told to smile because when I'm dancing, I have to concentrate and I can't smile, but .. I'm enjoying myself inside: you just can't see it.<br>... I really like being watched by others. |  | When I had dance shows, it feels good because like, when ... once a year when I was at my dance show, .. I got a few people who came up and said that I was good ... it just makes you feel good about yourself, and ... you know that you're good at something. |
|------------|---|--|--|--|

Interview 4: Amy

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings  | Social interaction  | Taking control |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|----------------|
| Technical input and practicalities | <p>...I've been dancing about two years with the company but I've been doing Dawn's Friday class since I was about 6 years old (From the class I have gained) the ability to make up more dances, because ... when I joined the company I don't think I could have made up, like, any moves, and made up a dance for myself, because at the beginning I was just copying people and learning their dances...</p> | <p>I thought (the audition) would be really tense and strict but it wasn't; it was like a normal dance class... Dawn could see you relaxed and just learning the dance instead of... all stiff...<br/>...I've been dancing for a long time and I really enjoy it.</p>  | <p>I meet friends from dancing outside of dancing, and it's really good because you can meet new friends and I've got loads of new friends in the company<br/>...how you interact with other people, how you make friends and socialise ... Interacting with others. Seeing a different group of friends. It's nice to have a separate group of friends – not to get away from my school friends, but just to meet other people. You can discuss what you've been doing all day, etc.</p> |                |
| Physicality in dance               |  | <p>(When I'm dancing) it's good – I just feel relaxed, and I can, like, do whatever I want and nobody can say, well, point and laugh ...<br/>... most of the time it's normal Mondays, so it's a really good fun place to be. I think ("Roxanne" is) really moving; ...I think Roxanne's a really good dance because it's not just a</p> |   |                |

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|                                   |  | dance, it has really good moves, but it has feeling in it – it tells a story. I really like doing dances like that .. |  |   |
| Creating, experimenting, refining | ...now we've just had the competition we just did, which was making up your own dances and stuff like that, which I think is really good Leading up to a show, when we're doing more rehearsals ... the pressure for learning more dances, sometimes it's a bit hectic |   | ...and (I feel) comfortable because everyone in the room is friendly with each other. We all know each other so there's no-one in the group that we don't really know. We talk to each other ... |   |
| Performing                        | .... We made – learned – dances which we did at the end of term show. You've got to remember all the dances and you've got other things – stage directions and things like that ...  |   | It's important because it's like a team – we're all getting ready for the same show.   | You turn up because you want to, not because you have to. |

Interview 5: Roberta

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings   | Social interaction   | Taking control |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|----------------|
| Technical input and practicalities | I did ballet ... I've just done Dawn's class since I was 7. ...it's different types of dances, it's not just one. (The dance type) is modern, and some contemporary. | ..(I come here) just 'cause it's fun ... you experience lots of different things and I like the people. (the audition) made me feel important. It was a bit scary, but it was good because we all did it as a group and it wasn't just you doing it by yourself.... I was just really nervous at the start. (In class) I feel really happy ... I keep feeling it is just me, I can forget about everything else, just – it's all about dancing; I forget about ay problems or anything like that. | It makes me more confident, which makes me more ... makes me find it more easy to talk to other people outside dance. (My friends) think it's really good that I go – I don't really do any other sports outside dance ... |                |
|                                    |  | Confidence is one of the things, like, I gain confidence after each time I come here, usually ... yes, socialising, and the dancing itself.   |  |                |
| Physicality in dance               | (Fitness) does play a wee part of it, but not huge ...   | I always feel good about myself when I'm dancing;   | (dance) is a good social thing to do..   |                |

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|                                   |  | <p>there's not really any bad points ... I just feel good about myself ..(and that lasts) usually the rest of the night anyway.</p> <p>It's good to express yourself (in dance) and it's not competitive, because I'm not a very competitive person...</p> <p>I don't really like talking ... I don't really like the whole drama-type action or whatever you call it, I'm not very good at it, so I'd rather just be doing my movements and concentrate on that, really.</p> |  |  |
| Creating, experimenting, refining | <p>... listening to music and trying to find movements that would fit in with that, and watching other dances, like, when we go to see other concerts, that always makes me want to get up and dance as well, and then start a new dance, or dance to a certain song if I hear it.</p> | <p>("Expressing yourself") is ... deciding on your own movements and how you want to, kind of, - how to describe it really? – show how you feel ...</p>   | <p>If we're doing a dance, sometimes if we haven't finished it, then me and whoever else I'm doing it with might spend some time going over it, outside of (class).</p> <p>We develop more skills – social and "inventing" skills. It's a good way to spend the council's money!</p> <p>... a chance to interact, always improving your social skills.</p> | <p>We're all working towards the same thing and it's good to feel like you're part of the process.</p> |
| Performing                        |  | <p>It's mainly excitement, really, when I'm performing,</p>   |  | <p>I think it's quite exciting (performing in front of</p>   |

|  |  |  |  |   |
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|  |  | and – yes, that's all it really is – excitement. |  | friends and family) ... they've taken me to dance classes, I like to show them what I've produced, ... to show them that it's worthwhile. I like expressing all that. |
|--|--|--|--|---|



Interview 6: Dee

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings  | Social interaction   | Taking control                                 |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Technical input and practicalities | I auditioned for this class about two months ago ... (I've done) jazz, modern, ... My friend's here and she wanted me to come along and try it.<br>You learn stuff that you didn't know before ... but it keeps you fit as well. You just learn stuff, and it's fun. | I think dance is fun as well. I was nervous at first but then it was OK<br>I feel fine (in class) – like I'm having a good time. It's something different from school.   | (At the class) you make friends.<br>I don't know (if it affects life outside the class). |  |
| Physicality in dance               |  | (Dancing makes me feel) just normal, happy.<br>I take (the art element) on board and it's good to learn what your body can do.<br>(Practising) makes me focus more, like, because you have to focus when you dance ... | I'm not very confident around people.  |  |
| Creating, experimenting, refining  | If I was learning a dance, I'd copy the teacher ... yes, (I would copy a company I'd seen) because you learn from what they use, to make it look so good ...   |  |  |  |
| Performing                         |  | I feel nervous at the start, but then it's fine once you're actually dancing.  | It's something where you can show people what you can do, and it's also fun.             | It's just that you're the centre of attention. |

Interview 7: Fran and Elaine

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings  | Social interaction   | Taking control   |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Technical input and practicalities | (We started) about 2 or 3 years ago... it's contemporary (and) other types too – hip-hop – connected to the workshops we do. | I was a bit nervous before we did (the audition) (but) it made you feel good that you'd got in – that you'd really achieved something to get this length, yes, to get accepted.<br>Usually happy, sometimes tired. When I had my exams recently, I promised myself that I wouldn't miss any dance classes because it was a way of getting away from (the pressure), and I never missed any.<br>I was a bit nervous because I thought about the others: you people do ballet from when you were tiny and I don't do any, so, well, you're not confident in yourself ... Yes, (this gives you confidence). |  |  |
| Physicality in dance               |  | If you're feeling good about yourself, feeling great, the better you dance, but if you're rubbish, then ugh! You can tell if you're feeling down, then you're not dancing properly, like you   | It's important for your fitness and general wellbeing.<br><br>Definitely yes, (creative dance is a good thing to have in the community). | (Dancing here) boosts confidence up, I think. Before I started dancing, I was really – I wouldn't do anything in front of anyone . Now even my family have said it has changed me. |

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|  |  | <p>should be ... we all have our off-days sometimes.</p> <p>When I came to try it, If it's dancing like we're doing now, I really take it serious and enjoy that best. I don't like funky stuff. Yes, really fast and hip-hop isn't always the best.</p>   | <p>People that aren't into other stuff, might go and try dance, and after they've done it, it's like ...</p>  | <p>We practise outside class; anytime we're out, we're just dancing away. We were dancing at the bus stop yesterday! Guys were giving us strange looks! Yes, you do get some funny looks when you're dancing away!</p> |
| <p>Creating, experimenting, refining</p> | <p>You can be influenced by anything – something small that can make a dance look real.</p> <p>To make something from the phrasing of the music is best. That's how I would describe the dance.</p> <p>Yes, (we create dances). We've made up one (at home) ... yes, we get told to split up into our own groups and do our own thing.</p> | <p>I think the dance is like a story – like dancing can be about interpreting the music. If you get a really emotional song, you make an emotional dance.</p>  | <p>The way (one of the other dancers) dances makes you think, "oh, that would be good to do" and we try moves that are similar to what she does. It's really interesting watching her.</p>  |  |
| <p>Performing</p>                        |  | <p>(Performing) is weird – if you haven't done it before, if it's your first time, it's very nerve-wracking. Yes but more and more, the more I've done it, I kind of get used to getting up on stage and dancing. We get too excited to get nervous now... you're so happy to be up there dancing. I don't enjoy ... the feeling</p> | <p>(Until our friends) came to see it, they weren't interested ... but when they see your show, you get feedback, like, "That was a really good dance" or something like that. Some of them found (our dances in the last show) a bit funny... but they said it was good, even so. Yes, that was surprising in a way...</p> | <p>You get to show what <i>you've</i> done, what you've achieved, through practising.</p>  |

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|  |  | of showing (a dance you've made) and it's not as good as someone else's. Yes, you're showing your work to someone else but you don't feel that it could be as good as someone else's. Something to do with confidence. | because they didn't know what to expect. |  |
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Interview 8: Kirsten

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings  | Social interaction  | Taking control  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Technical input and practicalities | (I've danced) since I was 3 years old ... highland, and then I discovered this class when I was about 12. I only started ballet when I was about 14 ... I had friends who went. I went to Diane's Friday class after school ... and it was a natural progression to join the company, I think, to do something more technical and starting to get a little more depth. I've always liked dancing and I wanted the progression. | It was a little scary coming at first ... because a lot of the girls were a lot older than me ... it was definitely intimidating. When I got to know people a bit better, it was more relaxed and there was more chat, and I think, I was still aware that I was still the youngest member, and – just being different and having less experience or something – but for the most part I was able to do everything they were able to do, so in that respect it wasn't ... too uncomfortable with them. | I think (my friends) think I dance quite a lot because I do this and then I do a Wednesday night's dancing ... and when I used to do highland, I used to compete at the weekends, and they'd say, "Gosh, Smith, you're always dancing!" a lot of my friends are dancers ... and we chat about it, and people who aren't ... have got other interests and we chat about it and if I'm nervous about a show - I don't know what they think, though. |   |
| Physicality in dance               | Fitness – that's the big thing   | it's cool to ... if you get here and go away feeling ... like you've achieved something. You don't have to lose pounds or anything, but ... you leave feeling better. I think in my other dancing, some of this dancing makes me feel more confident<br>Physical exercise again, when I come away I feel hot and worked out and that's good; that helps self-  |   | ... when I know I'm doing it right and I've got it, I can, kind of, come across a bit more confident and I know from looking at other people, that when someone's dancing confidently they look better, so ... I'm not very good on the whole self-image thing (laughs); it's not a big thing for me.<br>if you've got a big epic song to dance to, and big |

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|                                   |  | image – that satisfying feeling that you’ve achieved something. And dance is just really expressive. |  | movements, then or like something really funky where you can get down and get the beat and stuff – it’s just such an expression of who you are.   |
| Creating, experimenting, refining | <p>. It’s kind of an outlet for being creative and ... I get to show my dances, that I’ve made up.</p> <p>just dance about my room at home and I bring a lot of that back here. And then if I’ve made something up here, I might go and build on it at home. I’m always thinking about making something. If I see something, I’m like, “that’s good, I’ll remember it for here.”... most of my choreography starts in front of my mirror in my room <i>(laughs)</i></p> <p>You can pretty much do what you want and bring it here.</p> <p>I think that to me is, learning dance is always good, but that’s how you learn to dance and there’s no point of in learning it if you’re not going to use it</p> | It’s a useful way of learning what your own body can do ... you can take ideas.                      | A lot of it is collaboration, which I like, because, seeing other people move ... I even saw on the video, that Sharleen was doing something up here <i>(gestures)</i> and I turned round and looked and thought “I like that” and I took it and moved it somewhere else and that went into my dance. I can’t remember what part it is or where, but I think a lot of the collaboration helps as well. | <p>– It is, it’s just to be able to do your own thing and make up whatever you want, and you can learn other people’s creative things which is also ... fresh and new. It’s great to learn a syllabus and it will make you a better dancer, there’s no doubt, but at the end of the day, I think, making stuff up – even if you don’t choreograph for anyone else, to dance and make stuff up by yourself, that’s where the kind of expressive side of it is, and just how you’re feeling at the time.</p> <p>You get more confident from teaching.</p> |

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|            | <p>for your own stuff, and maybe some people won't be choreographers or whatever, but being here in here, able to do what we want, is what I come to the class for.</p> <p>If you go to see a dance show and you see it's got a running theme or style through the choreography, then you maybe pick a part of that and mould it a bit, like, all I'm sure every single dance I've learned from other choreographers, you know, guest people who come in, or shows we've been to see, but definitely all the people who've come in, I've used maybe moves or maybe just aspects of that dance, that style, in one or more of my own dances in here and I think that's how it builds: we do a workshop with someone ... and then you go and take five moves and make a 30-second dance. Then we bring it all together.</p> |   |  |  |
| Performing |   | I think, if it's something I know well ... I don't like being watched, but I know I | ... and I get to show dances that I've learned ...it's good to do shows as |  |

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|  |  | <p>don't mind an audience, but if it's something I'm not good at, I'd rather not. Yes, (I can forget the audience is there) ... the music is definitely in my head, and the counts, because as you see on the video, I'm counting everything. It is for other people at the same time, but it is for me as well, so I get the right beats. Then when I've got the right beats, I can make things bigger and better so I think I try to focus on that. I can never forget the audience is there, though ... if I know something really well and I'm really confident, I can get lost in the dance a bit , but, a lot if it I'm kind of aware that people are watching. It's maybe not all bad, though – it makes you push yourself a bit more.</p> | <p>well as classes.</p> |  |
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Interview 9: Maria

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience   | Personal feelings  | Social interaction   | Taking control   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Technical input and practicalities | <p>(I've been dancing) about 7 years now. I started out in Musselburgh (Dawn's creative dance class for children) ... I do highland, and I used to do country (dancing) and I've tried out a lot of things, like jazz. I heard about (this class) when I was being taught by Dawn, and I think it's because they do a range of dancing, it's not just one: modern – we go from hip-hop to contemporary, from slow to funky stuff ...</p> <p>. I'm not that much of a sporty person – I don't like PE that much – I've just loved dancing since I was wee.</p> | <p>I come to have fun. It's nothing to do with how fit I am or what I want to be – it's just what's fun. I don't find it challenging. If someone brought a new sort of dance, like a really professional dancer, a break dancer, that would be a challenge to me, because I'm not used to it. I'd feel glad that I was being taught something else, but I'd feel quite frustrated at some point.</p> | <p>... I suppose (my non-dancing friends) feel quite proud of me because I've kept it up this amount of time, but some of them started going to dance classes after they came to some of our shows. But I don't really know what they think.</p> <p>When you first come, you don't really know anyone ... but you seem to go to a wee group of friends and just make connections with some people here, and they share the same interest – the dances that you do.</p> | <p>I choose to dance ... because there are so many things you can do in it</p> |
| Physicality in dance               |   | <p>(I expect to gain) more confidence, really, and just self-belief that I can do something.</p> <p>It makes me feel really happy ... it depends what sort of dance I'm doing: if it's got a mood to it, like 'Roxanne' was quite a moody, queer sort of dance, and that makes you</p>   | <p>I don't think (my dancing) would carry on into school work, because I find that totally different, but every other dance classes that I do, I learn to – just be more confident in what I do.</p>   |  |

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|                                   |   | <p>bring out character. You can imagine what you're like. But in really slow dances, it's just moves.</p> <p>Fun is being really happy and learning new things that you wouldn't normally do, just come sometimes to enjoy it, and do it sometimes at your house, too.</p> <p>If you watch the videos, I'm probably not smiling because I've been focusing on it. Dawn tries to get me to smile.</p> |  |  |
| Creating, experimenting, refining | <p>Depending on the song for the dance, you think of different moves that can go to it, like if it's a very slow dance, you won't do very fast moves, just depends on the music and the mood.</p> |  |  | <p>I have learnt that I can make up different moves for different dances, not always going to one song.</p> <p>I normally build up an image in my head of all the moves, then I try to dance them out and make a performance... I imagine, just like (one of the dancers) is doing just now, maybe moving side to side or something.</p> |
| Performing                        |   | <p>I don't get scared of going on stage in front of people, it's just something I don't ...</p> <p>I'm just really happy, I like to show people what I can do.</p>   |  | <p>I have also learnt that I can have more confidence in me on stage.</p>  |

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|  |  | (You can) sometimes forget the audience is there – it depends where you are. If you're on stage, you know that people are watching the one person that's dancing, but in a hall, they can be watching anyone. |  |  |
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Interview 10: Donna

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings   | Social interaction  | Taking control  |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Technical input and practicalities | <p>I started dancing when I was about 14... a workshop with (hip-hop teachers) and then I started going to one class a week with Dawn ... and gradually it just built up more.... I just really wanted to be part of this dance group. There's not many dance things on in this area, so... I think I knew I really wanted to dance when I was at college ...</p> <p>... I started line dancing at the age of eight, till I was 14. I just loved that, and I'd never done any other dance until I was 14, so I think that made me start more...</p> <p>(This class) is contemporary, modern dance – anything you want.</p> | <p>... the first time (the audition) was really horrible, then the second time I got in straight away. Some people never got in. Yes, it was really good (that I was selected).</p> | <p>I want to be part of a dance company, so it's giving me more dancing to do if I come (to this class as well). I'm at college with dancers so, yes, we're always talking about dancing.</p> | <p>Making decisions; it helps you focus, concentration becomes higher. It helps you to look at others and see if you can improve or help them to improve. It's a challenge – it pushes your boundaries.</p> <p>It gives you an idea of what you want to do in the future – in dance, I mean, as a dancer, teacher or choreographer. It gives me direction, focus.</p> |
| Physicality in dance               |  | <p>(Dancing makes me feel) so much more confident. But I have got a lot fitter over the years – more muscle – a lot stronger.</p>   |   | <p>It does (make me feel different). I find what I really enjoy, like choreographing. I never used to like it that much before. I have done some teaching in the past, but I find it quite hard, since I'm quite a shy person.</p>  |

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|                         |   |   |  | Confidence, being able to help other people. It's not just about the dancing, here. |
| Creating, experimenting | I don't think it has anything to do with the music really. You make up movement before you pick the music, a lot of the time. | I just really enjoy it. I like working with my friend Sharleen. We're really good at making things together. It's fun to be with her again, when I've been away for three years. That's good. |  |   |
| Focus on production     |   |   | .I had a lot more things to do at college, like schools tours – where we go around schools and talk to them maybe about problems, and do a dance piece to them and stuff. It's been really good. ... about bullying or and any problems they might have. (the dance) is a piece about everything really, like bullying ...<br>Yes it is a dance, then afterwards we talk to them. Yes, it's all about their feelings. It really helps them. They can go and get help afterwards. (They are second year (pupils). |   |
| performing              |   | ... I'm quite a shy person, but when I'm performing I'm different – I feel like a different person.<br>I feel amazing, like, I'm in control of everything (when                               | I have (non-dancing friends) but yes, they really like it. They think they're really good. My boyfriend always comes with me. He loves them.   |   |

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|  |  | I'm performing). I love it,<br>it's the best feeling. Yes (I<br>can forget the audience). |  |  |
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Interview 11: Diane (teacher) response sent by email

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings | Social interaction  | Taking control  |
|------------------------------------|--|-------------------|---|---|
| Technical input and practicalities | I think of myself as teacher introducing them to basic technique and choreography skills   |                   |   |   |
| Physicality in dance               | (My aspirations for them are) that they can develop a greater interest in dance and create work with minimal input from a tutor. |                   | . I have seen huge developments in the group as the dancers have created a good 'peer learning' environment. They enjoy observing how they have improved over a period of time. They also develop social skills through making work together – confidence, self-awareness, co-operation, initiative. It still surprises me how long this can take for some people, particularly those who have very fixed ideas about identity / fashion / behaviour although | Best when I let group get on with things then I can help them see what they've done well and if they want to do more. I perceive the dancers develop an eye for movement – true movement as opposed to making shapes in space/floor patterns. As they learn to trust my teaching and their technique improves, they then invest greater effort which increases their improvement. |
| Creating, experimenting, refining  | plus facilitate the group in developing their own choreography   |                   | I help manage sensitive situations in relation to that (e.g. intervene if a group are challenging the choreographer, as they can do if they 'feel' the choreographer falter;.   | I encourage them to be self sufficient (to an extent) especially leading up to shows when I ask them not to ask me any questions that they think someone else can answer. This helps them stop seeing me as the authority who   |

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|            |  |  |   | knows everything and start to take some responsibility. In the past I have tried to impose this ("You are in charge of this, you are in charge of that", etc) but I didn't feel it was productive.  |
| Performing | This could also be learned through solo and group instrument playing – but the dancers also have to think about timing (responding to visual cues as well as musical cues) and spatial placement (in relation to own body and to others in group). |  | Mostly the changes come from working together and observing how the older or more experienced dancers cope. I try to emphasise the importance of doing the choreography as clearly as possible regardless of whether in performance or not. But the backstage social side often helps break down barriers ... | ... usually these people do make strong bonds during preparation for performance (especially backstage time – perhaps the strangeness of backstage/onstage helps free them up? Changing in front of other people, borrowing and lending each other make-up, 'free time' chatting, etc).<br>...help the choreographer manage their rehearsal time, etc<br>(They benefit from) learning to concentrate on doing what you've practised in a highly stressful situation and not freaking out if it goes 'wrong'. Responding to music, managing costume changes and managing energy reserves (eating and drinking enough). |



## Appendix B: Video observations and group discussions

### Video 1

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings   | Social interaction   | Taking control   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Technical input and practicalities | 0:10 - Class lesson: in pairs, taking turns to practise moves and watch.<br>L: Dawn said, "find someone to work with" so we worked together.<br>Neither of us was leading, we just worked together |   | Follow-up to set task -<br>0:15 - giving feedback to each other  | Following teacher's instruction –<br>2:20:S interpreting the move her way<br>2:50 E adds a jump to the move<br>3:13 L adds a spin<br>3:30-3.45 A and partner show their idea to L. |
| Physicality in dance               |  | Happy, chattering, indicating positive feelings;<br>Ki's group concentrating on task at back of room; | Evidence of positive communication throughout.<br><br>4.10 Ki's group focusing on rehearsal; impression of 'feeling the movement' conveyed to observer.<br>Commitment to task. | Ki, S and F taking control, teaching their dances.   |

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| <p>Creating,<br/>experimenting,<br/>refining</p> |  | <p>M: (Composing) is better than being told what to do; well, it's fun.<br/>K: Yes, it's good fun. I think we enjoyed it more than having to sit through a class and being told to do this or that: it gave you more freedom and ...</p> | <p>practising<br/>choreography.<br/>4:55 – Ki's group practising in Ki's absence.<br/>6:00 – 7:11 S's group practising S's choreography, "Roxanne".<br/>7.11- Ki's group practising in background<br/>10.35 – 13:06 S's group practising<br/>5:45 – 6:00 and 7:11 - R+Ka composing with chairs<br/>10:35 M's group discussing with teacher.<br/>11:24 - A + partner composing<br/>We just work together unless one person has an idea.<br/>We kind of watch each other.</p> | <p>R+Ka: taking turns at leading.<br/>11.24 – A leading partner.<br/>M: (leading a group) makes you feel more responsible.<br/>K: if it's just a few of your friends, it's OK, but if it's a bigger group it's more nerve-wracking.</p> |
| <p>Performing</p>                                |  |  |   |   |

Video 2

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings  | Social interaction  | Taking control  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Technical input and practicalities | 0:53- K joins another group; Teacher directing that group.   |  | 10:40 – M+? being directed by teacher   |   |
| Physicality in dance               | 5:20 F practising S's dance alone; facial expression indicates absorption.<br><br>7:09 teacher watches M+K | 4:38 – E contemplative, watching<br>L comments on length of E's period of reflection.<br><br>E: "I was feeling a bit lost that week because I didn't really know anybody who was there. I find it easier when I'm forced to work ,and not just socialising. I know what I'm doing (in this part of the film): I'm concentrating.<br>Throughout – E+F sustain high level of focus; amicable exchanges<br>L: (Making dances makes you) feel fine when you're there. You're working hard and you come out feeling quite hyper and then I can't sleep. | 0:0- 5:45 M, K (for part of time)+? composing together.<br>5:45 – 7:35 M+K practise together, equal input<br>7:50 F opts out for rest, and 8:10 back in again.<br>9:05 M+K opt out for rest<br>14.45 S rests<br>18:53 – M+K watching S's group rehears; applaud at end.<br>19:20 L,F+E watching M+K<br>19:59 4 watching another group<br>21.20 H+? practising dance together; group in background and to the right practising and watching at random<br>10:20 – E+F engaged in practising parts of S's dance separately, exchanging comments occasionally, resting intermittently<br>10.55 S practising her | 2:26 – S leads the practice of her dance with her group, very didactic.<br><br>M: being able to show someone a dance, like being able to show them moves (feels satisfying).<br>K agreed. |

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|  |   |  | <p>dance alone<br/> 12:50 M+K practising separately<br/> 17:23 E still practising on her own<br/> 17:30 M+? practising together; S practising alone: high level of concentration</p> <p>K: ...all pitched in ideas; everyone helped each other,</p> |  |
| <p>Creating, experimenting, refining</p> | <p>(L+E tell me that they composed the dances themselves.)<br/> E+L agree that the music is very important. E-It's hard to dance to music I don't like.<br/> There can't be any really original moves left – everything's been done before. It's how they're put together that makes them original. It's good to experiment.<br/> Ballet people are more precise. There's no room to experiment. The teacher is very stiff and strict. You do exactly what she tells you to do.</p> | <p>E: If you don't focus, she (S.) gets annoyed. That's OK though, it's just because she wants the dance to be good.</p> | <p>0:0-M, K+? composing together.<br/> 0:53 F opts out<br/> 4:13 – 4:38 E contributes opinion to S's choreography;</p>  | <p>M: (the dance experience) does make you feel more confident.<br/> K agreed<br/> M: being able to show someone a dance, like, being able to show them moves ...<br/> K: It makes it easier to go and talk to someone ...it did make you more confident ... being able to show people a dance does make it easier to interact and talk to people.</p> |
| <p>Performing</p>                        | <p>(Performance) isn't really</p>   | <p>L: That was a weird dance.</p>  | <p>9:45 S's groups show</p>   |  |

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|  | <p>important. It's making the dances that's important.</p> | <p>E: Yes, the music was ...evil.<br/>L: Look at her focus. It obviously had deep personal meanings to her.<br/>E: Yes, you can't just make up evil.<br/>L: I like to know what the dance is about.<br/>E: Yes, it's good to know what it's about, but even if you don't, you can understand the meaning. You can remember the emotion, because you've felt it before.</p> | <p>dance to teacher and others.</p> |  |
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Video 3

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience   | Personal feelings  | Social interaction  | Taking control |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|----------------|
| Technical input and practicalities | <p>M: (since the video was made), I've gone on to try different kinds of dance. I think I was more immature then (<i>laughs</i>)</p> <p>E: You don't need any special equipment to dance. You're never limited because of not having some equipment. If you paint, you need brushes and things.</p> | <p>M: I think I'm more serious about my dancing now. (Speaking to K: well, you want to do it as a profession.<br/>K: yes</p>   | <p>M: They all seem to be getting on with (the task).</p>   |                |
| Physicality in dance               |   | <p>Throughout – dancers happily engaged on task;<br/>6:33 E's face suggests thoughtfulness and enjoyment; watching leader (S)</p> <p>E: (You can't tell about dancers' feeling of involvement by their facial expression), but only when</p> | <p>8:15 Ki's group rests</p> <p>M: You're with all your friends, so it's very much a social thing, (K agrees) like you don't have to worry about school or exams. You're forgetting about stuff and concentrating on the dance.</p> |                |

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|  |  | <p>you're dancing it.</p> <p>L: You can see who's enjoying it or not by the energy level – how they're moving. You're often tired at the start, but by the end you feel energetic, happy, in a good mood.</p> <p>L: (Dance) is more fun (than other arts). You can express yourself more in dance.</p> <p>K: When you're dancing it's easy to forget everything else, you just concentrate on your dancing. (M agrees)</p> <p>K: It's about what you feel when you're, like, moving about. When you go and watch a show and see other people dancing, you're like, "Why can't I do that?"</p> <p>M: Yes, once you go and see a show, you just want to go and do it.</p> <p>M: (in dancing) you can tell what kind of person you are, like, if you're smiling, you're like, happy, enjoying it.</p> <p>(It's easier if you're feeling the emotion of the dance).</p> |  |  |
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|                                   |  | <p>K: You can convey other feelings but it's more difficult.</p> <p>(Watching this), I'm thinking "What are we doing? Feeling the effort when you're doing it; how it feels we weren't doing very well!"</p> |   |   |
| Creating, experimenting, refining |  |  | <p>(Watching someone else performing their dance), M: you're interested in what moves they make up. I used to get a bit annoyed with (the older dancers). They always wanted to be the ones who made up the dances and everything.</p> <p>1:25 background group rehearsing with teacher</p> <p>6:46 group with teacher are less focused; less coherent structure; those nearer to camera are behind the beat – result of lack of concentration?</p> <p>8:18 Ki discusses aspect of dance with ??</p> <p>L: We do help each other, but I would normally do it at the back, out of view, because I'm kind of shy.</p> | <p>L+E both felt that they didn't like controlling people and telling them what to do when they were choreographing.</p> <p>00:00-8:15 Ki rehearsing group; in control; counting</p> <p>1.50-9:35 S in control of her group rehearsal; counting</p> <p>L+E commented on the way Kirsty counted the beats meticulously and was very precise.</p> |
| Performing                        |  |  |   |   |



Video 4

|                                    | Sources of motivation and previous experience  | Personal feelings   | Social interaction | Taking control                                 |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------|--|
| Technical input and practicalities | 00:00 – dancers given mirroring task by teacher; working in pairs  |   |                    |  |
| Physicality in dance               |  |   |                    |  |
| Creating, experimenting            | 00:38 M using her highland dancing to create - Teacher had suggested trying something other than contemporary as stimulus<br>M: we were putting highland and contemporary together.<br><br>I've never watched myself doing highland in my life! It was something different.<br>Both: Yes (our ideas have developed). | M+K: (it doesn't affect their understanding of themselves). |                    | 1:10 M leading, teaching steps to partner      |
| Performing                         | 1:45 M and partner demonstrate to teacher what they have been practising.  |   |                    | 2:08 M receives praise from teacher for dance. |

## Appendix C Graffiti walls

Code: *motivated, positive feelings; feeling low, but not too bad*, not tuned in to dance today.

**These codes were originally colours, arrived at jointly between myself and the three dancers who helped with the analysis (see last page for the transcript of their conversation while they ere coding.**

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>08/05/06<br/>Before class</p> <p><u>I'm tired and upset, but looking forward to dancing</u></p> <p><i>I feel quite tired but am looking forward to dancing as usual.</i></p> <p><b>I'm sleepy ... Yawn!</b></p> <p>I'm feeling sunny!!!<br/>I'm quite in the mood for dancing</p> <p><b><i>I'm feeling tired</i></b></p> <p><u>Feeling a bit lazy as usual</u><br/><b><i>Dancing will waken me up, plus the sun has made me happy!</i></b></p> <p>I'm feeling happy and can't wait to dance!</p> <p><i>Happy!</i></p> <p><i>I feel like dancing!</i></p> <p><i>I feel ready and up for dancing.</i></p> <p>(Various drawings of smiley faces, and hands)</p> | <p>During class</p> <p><i>We love to boogie!</i></p> <p><i>Having a great time – learned lots.</i></p> <p><i>We all love Diane!</i></p> <p><i>Dance is groovilicious!</i></p> <p><i>I feel energetic + happy.</i></p> <p><i>Keep smiling!</i></p> <p><i>I feel energetic.</i></p> <p><i>Feeling grrreat!</i></p> <p>(drawing of Maria's hand by Amy)</p> | <p>After class</p> <p><i>v.g. class</i></p> <p><b>I feel peckish.</b></p> <p><b>I feel fab and fit + tired</b></p> <p><i>Relaxed</i></p> <p><i>Glad I came tonight, got lots of work done on my dance, which has now got a solo part for me!</i></p> <p><i>I've just been teaching my class and it's going good!</i></p> |
|---|--|--|

This was Video Section 2, in a small studio, when Diane was working with specific groups only, and there was not enough room for all the dancers to be on the floor simultaneously.

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>15/05/06</p> <p>Before</p> <p><b>I'm loving life</b></p> <p><i>I'm feeling jolly.</i></p> <p><i>It's boogie time</i></p> <p><i>Feeling High!!!</i></p> <p><i>Let's go!</i></p> <p><i>I feel Hype-e-e-er!</i></p> | <p>During</p> <p><b>Bored!!!</b></p> <p>Bored – nothing to do!!!<br/>I'm sleepy</p> <p><u>Tired</u> – but energised and happy</p> <p><i>I'm flying</i></p> <p><i>I'm in the mood</i></p> | <p>After</p> <p><u>Tired</u></p> <p><b>Excited!</b></p> |
|---|--|---|

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>22/05/06</p> <p>Before</p> <p><b>Ready to dance</b></p> <p><i>I feel pretty fit</i></p> <p><i>excited</i></p> | <p>During</p> <p><i>Happiness</i><br/><i>Funky</i><br/><i>We all love Diane</i><br/><i>Fun, energetic,</i></p> <p><b>Worry-free</b><br/><i>Energy boost</i></p> | <p>After</p> <p><i>Energetic</i><br/><u>Tired</u></p> <p><b>Very tired but stretched</b><br/><i>Re-energised</i></p> <p><i>Relaxed! Forgot about biology exam!</i><br/><i>Good!</i></p> <p>(various smiley faces)</p> |
|--|---|---|

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>05/06/06<br/>Before</p> <p><b>Feeling ready to dance</b></p> <p>Sore head – can't be bothered</p> <p>lazy</p> | <p><b>During</b></p> <p><b>Sore</b></p> <p><i>Worrys (sic) disappear</i></p> <p><i>Power surge</i></p> <p><b>Feel out of breath and can't be bothered</b></p> <p><b>Glad the warm-up is over</b></p> <p><i>I'm enjoying dancing</i></p> <p>confused</p> | <p>After</p> <p><i>Unstressed</i></p> <p><u>Tired</u></p> <p>Happy</p> <p>refreshed</p> |
|--|---|---|

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>12/06/06<br/>Before</p> <p><b>Dance!</b></p> <p><b>Can't wait</b></p> <p><u>Nervous</u></p> <p>Coughing today</p> | <p><b>During</b></p> <p>Tired</p> <p>Can't keep up</p> <p>Sore head</p> <p>Coughing</p> <p><i>Hyper</i></p> <p><i>Learning ... slowly</i></p> <p><i>Great fun!</i></p> <p><b>Bruised!!!</b></p> | <p>After</p> <p>Sore head<br/>Me too.</p> <p>Really tired</p> <p><b>Great! Really happy!</b></p> <p>Tired and hungry</p> <p>Ready to go home</p> |
|--|---|--|

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| <p>19/06/6</p> <p>After the summer show, I wrote the comment, "Brilliant show on Thursday evening! Well done! What did you think of it?"</p> <p><b>Good fun</b><br/> <i>Yes, really fun</i><br/> <i>New dance – exciting</i><br/> <i>Fab</i></p> | <p>I asked, "How did you feel about it?"</p> <p><b>Really fun, yes good fun</b></p> | <p>I asked, "Any other thoughts about your dancing today?"</p> <p>I received no reply, so tried another strategy the following week -</p> |
|--|---|---|

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>26/06/06</p> <p>I wrote:</p> <p>"When I dance, I feel ..."</p> <p>They wrote:<br/> <i>Great</i><br/> <i>Good / fit</i><br/> <i>Energetic</i><br/> <i>Fabtastic</i><br/> <i>good</i></p> | <p><b>I wrote, "When I dance, I can .....</b></p> <p><i>They wrote ... feel fit and relief</i></p> <p><b>Jump</b><br/> <i>Feel good</i><br/> <i>Feel happy</i></p> <p><i>Gossip</i><br/> <i>Cool!</i></p> | <p>I wrote: "When I dance, I see ..."</p> <p>They wrote, "other people dancing<br/> People having fun</p> <p>Confidence!</p> <p><u>Other folk</u></p> |
|--|---|---|

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>04/12/06</p> <p>(After some retrospective discussion about the research, and a chance to thank them for their participation)</p> <p>I asked:</p> <p>What would you like me to know (and communicate) about your dance 'work'?</p> <p><i>Happy feelings</i></p> <p><i>It's fab.</i></p> <p><i>Dancing has to be fun.</i></p> <p><i>Everyone should do something they love – ours is dancing!</i></p> <p><i>It's a very good experience</i></p> <p><i>Makes you feel like you have achieved something.</i></p> <p><i>We enjoy it.</i></p> | <p>How can I best represent you in my thesis?<br/>Is there any other way you want to share your dancing?</p> <p><i>Pictures</i></p> <p><i>Happy feelings</i></p> <p><i>Our show</i></p> <p><i>You should participate.</i></p> | <p>What do you expect to gain from your dancing?</p> <p><i>New social skills</i><br/><i>Confidence</i><br/><i>Happy feelings</i><br/><i>New dance moves</i><br/><i>Energy</i><br/><i>Fun</i><br/><i>Happiness</i><br/><i>FUN!</i></p> <p>How is it likely to influence you in future?</p> <p><i>New skills</i><br/><i>Enjoy to dance (sic)</i><br/><i>Confidence</i><br/><i>Happy feelings</i></p> |
|--|---|--|

I did not have a tape recorder when this analysis took place, but the three dancers who assumed the mantle of participant researchers (for this task only) knew that I was writing down as much of their conversation as I could. This, and other group discussions, proved to be much more productive and content-rich as data than the graffiti walls themselves, or even some of the interviews.

Their comments:

You take on a different persona when you're dancing. That carries on outwith the dance class.

Yes, it grows.

You can see how enthusiastic they are.

But some are just writing rubbish. They probably don't understand the questions. They all want to dance, that's clear.

Sometimes you can lose yourself in the dance. You come in from school and you're tired, maybe don't feel like dancing, but once you've done the warm-up you feel better and ready to dance.

It's the physical feeling that makes you feel good emotionally.

Are there enough categories here? (referring to the coding task).

I'm just leaving the ones I can't code.

Why has Amy drawn Maria's hand? What's that got to do with dance?

(Researcher) Could it be the stimulus for something creative?

Well, maybe ...

If you got the right music, you could do all sorts of things with it.

(researcher) Which comes first – the music or the idea?

The music usually (consensus of all three).

Appendix D Sample information sheets, email and letter of consent from the Council, consent form for participants, Ethics Approval form (in hard copies only)

The following are:

My Application to Queen Margaret University College for Ethical Approval, signed as approved (in hard copies only);

A copy of my (anonymised) letter to the Principal Arts Officer of the Council under whose auspices the class was run;

The Principal Arts Officer's reply by email in response to my prompt, as I had not received her reply to my original letter;

A copy of the research information sheets given to all participants;

A copy of the consent form for parental consent (and, in one case, for the participant's own consent as she was over eighteen).

An anonymised copy of the letter of consent issued retrospectively from the council representative, to whom I wrote to ask for permission to conduct the research.



**Queen Margaret University College  
Leith Campus, Edinburgh EH6 8AF**

28 February 2006

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
Principal Arts Officer  
XXXXX Council  
XXXXX Hall  
XXXX Wynd  
XXXX 6AF

Dear Ms. XXXX,

***Research Project***

I am writing to ask permission to conduct my postgraduate research XXXXX Youth Dance. My topic is "Creative Dance and Social Well-being in the Community", and I enclose a copy of the information sheet, which I would give to willing participants, if you grant me permission to work with this group. You will note that the sheet is written on the assumption that I will receive permission. Obviously, if permission is refused, the sheet will not be distributed.

As you are aware, I have worked with our Dance Artist in Residence in the past. She knows what my research will entail and is willing to accommodate it, subject to your approval. If you wish more information, please feel free to contact me or my Director of Studies, whose details are on the information sheet.

I enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Oliver.

Subj: RE: dance research  
Date: 09/05/2006 18:00:24 GMT Standard Time  
From: @ .gov.uk  
To: SueOliver @ .com

yes that's fine

-----Original Message-----

**From:** SueOliver @ .com [mailto:SueOliver. @ .com]  
**Sent:** 08 May 2006 22:06  
**To:** @ .gov.uk  
**Subject:** dance research

Dear @ .gov.uk,  
D @ .gov.uk has told me that you have no objections to my research, which I'm conducting with YD, under the auspices of Queen Margaret University College. Would it be all right, therefore, if I went ahead with it?

- Sue

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11 July 2009 AOL: SueOliver UK

## Research Information Sheet

*For members of Southern Youth Dance*

April 2006

My name is Sue Oliver and I am a postgraduate research student at Queen Margaret University College in Edinburgh. My research is entitled "Community-based Creative Dance for Adolescents and their Social Wellbeing" and I have been granted ethical approval and permission to go ahead with it.

The purpose of the study is to gain understanding of how creative dance is perceived by community dancers to enhance their sense of social wellbeing. It is intended that the findings will be useful to the academic establishment, by giving insight into the personal perceptions of the dancers using approved research methods, and also to community dance teachers and policy-makers. The research process will not interfere with the dance class, and in fact I hope that the dancers might gain from the experience by focusing on their own feelings about dancing and their involvement in it.

My research is self-funded.

I have permission from .....Council to conduct the research with members of Southern Youth Dance, and their teacher is happy to allow it. However, there is no obligation on any member to participate, and only those from whom consent has been gained, will be asked to take part. Dancers can withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.

The research methods involve group and individual interviews, voluntary keeping of a journal and digital video recording. Individual interviews will be taped and interviews with under-18s will be conducted with another person present. I do not have to view the journals – they will be there to prompt memories and stimulate discussion. All data will be confidential and anonymity will be ensured in interview transcripts. Video recordings will be viewed by the participants and their teacher, and images with which they are not happy will be discarded.

The results may be published in a relevant academic journal or presented at a conference, in addition to being an integral part of the thesis.

If you wish more information or assurance, please contact my Director of Studies, Dr. Vicky Karkou, at the address below.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any concerns or questions have been addressed, and you are willing to participate in my research, please now look at the consent form.

Queen Margaret University College, Leith Campus, Edinburgh EH6 8AF

Queen Margaret University College  
Edinburgh

“Creative Dance and Social Wellbeing in the Community”

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving a reason.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: .....

Signature of parent: .....

Signature of researcher .....

Date: .....

Contact details of the researcher

Name of researcher: Sue Oliver

Address: Postgraduate Student, Art Therapy,  
School of Health Sciences  
Queen Margaret University College  
Duke Street, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 8HF

.....Council

Our Ref: XX/SM/A/X/X  
Direct Line:  
Date: 6 February 2009

Sue Oliver  
M.Phil., M.Ed., B.A., PGCE., Cert. Dance in Ed.  
PhD student  
Dept. of Occupational Therapy and Art Therapy  
School of Health Sciences  
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh  
EH21 6 UU

Dear Sue,

**RESEARCH**

I should like to confirm that I gave permission for you to undertake research with Southern Youth Dance in 2006. Diane XXXXX was responsible for the young people and was in attendance at all times during the research activities.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
Principal Arts Officer