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Dance, class and the body: a Bourdieusian examination of training trajectories into ballet and contemporary dance

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This article is a result of a small-scale interview-based study that explored the social conditions of ballet and contemporary dance production in the city of Glasgow. This study draws on interviews given by twelve professional dancers and choreographers, both freelancers and company based, who for the purposes of this research offered to share their experiences of studying and making dance. More specifically, this article aspires to map the social conditions of possibility of dancing and making dance, drawing on the class condition and career trajectories of those individuals who became dancers. With the aid of Bourdieu's (1984; 1990; 1993a) concepts of 'capitals' (economic, social, cultural and physical), 'habitus' and 'trajectories', this piece of work will discuss how class conditions give or limit access to vocational training as a career pathway to dance. It is argued that, although the social origin of this sample presents relative variety, dance is an activity that demands different types of support, which are eventually more accessible to those social groups with more assets.

Keywords: Sociology of dance, Pierre Bourdieu, class, habitus, training trajectories

Introduction

This paper will discuss social class in the form of the social conditions of introduction to dance as a determinate of a career in ballet and contemporary dance, using Bourdieu's (1984; 1993a) concepts of 'habitus', 'capitals' and 'trajectories'. Based on a sample of twelve dancers, the complex relationship between class conditions, the body, an individual's introduction to dance and opportunities for vocational training will be shown.

Little has been written about the accessibility of dance or the class origins of dancers. One study systematically examined the social origin of dance practitioners (Sussman, 1990), whilst Prickett (1990) has looked at the relationship between politics and dance addressing issues of class struggle. Gay Morris (2006) mapped the field of dance production in the mid-twentieth century United States with reference to modern / modernist dance, without, however, discussing analytically issues of class. Morris (2001) also positions Martha Graham in the post-war period field of dance but focuses mostly on the aesthetic and embodied characteristics of her practice, even though she employs a Bourdieusian approach. Artists are often seen in isolation to the social conditions that generate them, and a systematic exploration of the social conditions that allowed these individuals to enter this sphere of activity is often omitted, even in the historical studies that look at social context (Franko, 2002; Garafola, 1998; 2005; Manning, 1993).

Furthermore, sociological perspectives on dance produced in the United Kingdom that have looked at organisational or structural aspects of dance and globalisation only marginally examine the social origins of dancers (for example Wulff, 1998; 2005). Thomas (1995; 2003) has written on embodiment theory and the sociology of dance aesthetics. Sociologists Turner and Wainwright (2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) discuss the construction of the balletic body in

light of the formation of dancing 'habitus' and physical 'capital' but do not situate this in the historically determined conditions, both aesthetic and social, in which the dancing body is produced. Alexias and Dimitropoulou (2011) employ Bourdieusian perspectives on the body, looking at the latter as a means ('capital') for survival in the professional world of ballet, whilst examining the attitudes ballet dancers develop towards their physicality. Although this study looks at everyday practices and bodily values, it does not link this to class.

Pickard (2012) explores school children's vocational dance education, focusing on their emotional efforts to internalise the ideal balletic body as a process of developing dancing 'habitus'. Foucauldian works on embodiment and power examine the types of bodily surveillance ballet dancers succumb to (Dryburgh and Fortin, 2010) and their physical experiences of daily pressures posed by the slender-body ideal type (Heiland et al., 2008). Lastly, Ritenburg (2010) conducts a genealogy of the Balanchinean conception of the female balletic body especially prevalent in North America, through looking at the impact of text—books and images on ideas about the ballerina's physicality. However, none of the above studies locate the issue of power in social class.

Theoretical discussion

Janet Wolff (1983) argues that the arts have been historically produced from specific status groups with authority over the definition of artistic practice and access to the means for such practice. Specifically, historical studies reveal that ballet is the product of French absolutism generated in the Italian courts and formalised during Louis XIV's reign by the emperor himself and further by the Academy he established (Franko, 1993). Ballet was also a powerful instrument of other courts, monarchical and, later on, state

institutions (Foster, 1997; Foster, 1998; Pudelek, 1997). Further, ballet and modern / contemporary dance—loosely defined as forms that stemmed from a symbolic break from the balletic tradition—have been performed by specific social groups of differential social power depending on the historical phase. For example, pioneers of early modern dance, what Bourdieu would label as the avant-garde, such as Isadora Duncan or Mary Wigman, had privileged access to both economic and cultural means that allowed them an anti-institutional role in dance production.

Bourdieu (1984; 1993a; 1996) showed that artists often enjoy the privilege of a culturally affluent familial environment that equips them with ‘capitals’, namely means in various states and forms which allow them to invest in markets in which these ‘capitals’ are rendered valuable. Every cultural product, including dance, and every producer is the outcome of specific historical relations among positions consolidated by a form of power—a specific form of capital—which is valid in the particular area of activity (the ‘field’). The field of arts is conceptualised as a competitive game, an area of struggles where different interests are at stake. As Bourdieu notes, the field of cultural production ‘is a place of specific struggles notably concerning the question of knowing who is a part of [this] universe [...]’ (Bourdieu, 1993a, p.163).

In a similar manner, the field of dance is a system of positions through which individuals of specific social classes and aesthetics negotiate and develop forms and styles of movement. The main capital or property, which sets the field in motion and which individuals employ in their engagement in the field, has historically been physical capital or the dancing body. The latter becomes an asset to the extent that it incorporates through practice a set of properties which are measured against the legitimate / dominant principles of dance making. However, other forms

of capital such as cultural and economic make dance possible, as we shall see.

Bourdieu (1984; 1990; 1992) speaks about forms of capital such as economic, cultural and social as forms of assets whilst Wacquant (1995) expands upon the idea of 'physical capital' drawing on Bourdieu's concept of (bodily) 'hexis' / 'habitus'. Bourdieu (1986, p.46) defines capital as the:

accumulated labour (in its materialized or 'incorporated' embodied form) which when appropriated on a private, i.e. exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour'.

Consequently, he defines cultural capital as the result of the relationship between lived cultural practices and the rules of (legitimate) cultural production. It is apparent in three forms: a) embodied in the form of dispositions b) objectified in the form of cultural goods and c) institutionalised or certified in the form of educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1993a). Social capital is equally the set of social obligations or connections, especially the ones that open up opportunities for employment or recognition. Lastly, physical capital concerns the use of the body as a form of capital within a context where the former is the centre of production. In that sense it refers to the use of the bodily forces in order to 'appropriate that particular part of nature, so as to optimize these kinds of forces' (Wacquant, 1995, p.67).

Bourdieu (1990) argues that the use of such capitals can be both instrumental and unconscious and are amenable to what he calls the 'habitus'; namely a 'set of historical relations "deposited" within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation

and action' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.16). In other words, habitus is both the perceptive and generative embodiment that directs and explains individual perception and action. As Fowler (1997, p.18) explains, habitus has an improvisational character, namely as a 'feel for the game' which entails a creative adjustment to the rules and structures of social fields that organises one's response to this set of objective social structures—objective in the sense that they are independent of one's will. Indeed, habitus and capitals are exemplified in the trajectories of individuals or collectives, namely their course across different positions in the various fields of activity and in the wider field of power (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993a).

Methodology

This piece of research was conducted over four and a half months in Glasgow, and recruited twelve professional international dancers / choreographers, both resident in dance companies and freelance. The sample was obtained by means of snowball technique and twelve face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with artists working in the dance scene of Glasgow¹. More specifically, six ballet practitioners and six contemporary dancers were recruited, nine of whom worked in companies (including their own) and three were freelancers. Four artists were of international origin whilst eight identified as being British. The sample consists of five female and seven male artists.

The social origin of dancers, their classification in categories within the wider context of social classes, is an essential means of revealing the accessibility of art. According to Bourdieu (1984) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) such classification is approximated by the relative volume and structure of forms of capital (economic,

cultural, social) composed in the context of the family / conditions in which individuals are allocated. In this case, class origin was estimated by a series of combinations, namely that of parental socio-occupational categories² and educational status, the composition of certain forms of capitals accumulated in time, and finally their particular use in dancers' career trajectories. As such, dancers' social origin was designated by self-reported assessments of the volume of economic and cultural capitals they possessed in their various forms (inherited / embodied and acquired) and their outcomes in time.

From an ontological viewpoint regarding the conditions of one's existence as inscribed in their experience, and from an epistemological one that sees these conditions as embedded in individual narratives (Bourdieu, 1999), I designed an interview guide which was divided into specific sets of questions. These concerned demographic data and questions about respondents' initiation to dance. Indicatively, participants were asked a series of questions concerning how and why they decided to take up dance and the parental contribution to this decision. Further, they were asked about their own perception and experience of their economic and cultural status, as well as their level of engagement in cultural activities, in order to explore the links between their initiation to dance, their means and living conditions. Lastly, they were asked about the academic institutions they attended and their bodily habits.

For the purposes of this study, my respondents were grouped into two categories derived from the relative similarities in the self-reported volumes and structure of capitals they possessed and the occupational status of their parents. Given the small size of the sample there was not great room for analytical differentiation between the different composition of these capitals, at least one that would allow a meaningful analysis.

Analysis

Mapping class conditions: familial occupations, economic and cultural 'capitals'

As shown in the table below, the first sample category consists of participants who came from financially insecure backgrounds with restricted cultural interests whose parents mostly practiced traditional skilled working-class professions or low managerial ones. Patriarchal professions included engineering worker, taxi driver, factory worker, insurance company agent and small business owner. Fathers possessed no degrees, and in some cases they only had basic school education. The occupational statuses of mothers ranged from housewife, factory worker, nurse, to technical designer with the equivalent training or diploma where relevant. Overall, this group reported no inherited economic and cultural capitals, as we shall explore later, and most male participants in the sample belong to this category.

Participant	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Father's education	Mother's education	Economic capital (self-reported)
Sylvia	Factory worker	Housewife	Basic schooling	Basic schooling	Low
Sean	Taxi driver	Technical designer	Basic schooling	College	Satisfactory
Anthony	Oil refinery engineer	Housewife / carer	No qualifications	No qualifications	Satisfactory, yet not a lot of economic means
Stephen	Engineer / technician	Housewife	No qualifications	No qualifications	Low economic means
Ross	Factory worker	Housewife	No qualifications	No qualifications	Low
John	Insurance company agent	Housewife	No qualifications, basic schooling	No qualifications, basic schooling	Working class, low economic means

Richard	Small business owner	Housewife	Basic schooling	Basic schooling	Low
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Table 1: Category 1—parental professions, education and economic capital.

The second group consists of those dancers and choreographers whose families had relative financial security as a result of higher rank professions and educational capital, with strong cultural interests. Parental professions for this second group ranged from transfer consultant, teacher-writer, architect and painter as far as the father is concerned—all had an academic degree—and housewife, secretary, nurse, actress, sculptor, painter as far as the mother is concerned—with equivalent diplomas or degrees where relevant. To an extent, the artists belonging to this category possessed both economic and cultural capital in the inherited form as well as educational capital accumulated through training or universities.

Participant	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Father's education	Mother's education	Economic capital (self-reported)
Josephine	Architect	Actress	University	Drama school	Sufficient
Luke	Consultant	Housewife / secretary	History degree	Secretary diploma	Satisfactory
Elisabeth	Doctor	Housewife	Medicine	Nurse / housewife	Satisfactory
Rose	School teacher / writer	Nurse / sculptor	University degree	Art school / nursing school	Satisfactory
Emma	Visual artist	Visual artist	Art school	Art school	Sufficient economic means

Table 2: Category 2—parental professions, education and economic capital.

However, mapping participants on the axis of their parental profession and / or economic means does not explain why they became dancers. As Bourdieu (1984) argues, such structural determinations cannot be used to predict the future positions of individuals. It is rather the set of everyday practices and choices—often defined structurally—that can take us closer to the experiences of class (Savage, Warde and Devin, 2005) and the conditions enabling these individuals to become artists. Such conditions are both objective and embodied, guiding individual practices and decisions (*habitus*). In an effort to establish a relationship between these conditions and respondents' introduction to dance, the frequency in which participants engaged in cultural activities as children was examined.

Dancers with a lesser volume of inherited economic and cultural capital appeared less familiar with artistic activities³. Consequently, performance attendance, visiting museums / galleries, and reading were kept at a minimum or appeared non-existent. Parental unfamiliarity with arts and cultural activities led to the indirect rejection of these as possible leisure activities. Most participants in this first category did not engage in the aforementioned practices due to their particular family disposition. As John characteristically reported: 'the world of the arts [was] just so far away from their daily life'.

The relative inaccessibility of culture to this first group was not limited in relation to content but was also economic. Sylvia, a twenty two year old female ballet dancer, discussed the lack of economic means for cultural activities, reporting: '[There were] not too many opportunities, we didn't have the economic means for it'. Further, two participants reported lack of options for cultural consumption in their area of residence: 'we didn't have many options where I come from'. According to Bourdieu (1984), geographical distribution of individuals is relevant to the possession or lack of economic

and cultural capital and vice versa. Central cities are usually culturally richer than the periphery and offer more opportunities for cultural engagement.

Conversely, a significant number of respondents within the second more privileged category came from strong artistic backgrounds, where at least one parent is an artist. Unlike the previous group, all but one participant engaged intensively in cultural activities during childhood as a result of parental interest in culture. As Luke from this second group reported: 'I joined performances, museums and art galleries'. Further, three participants reported to have been playing a musical instrument (piano, cello, flute) whilst one studied music at a professional level. Overall, such practices were supported economically by families whilst in at least three cases parents commuted in order for their children to attend dance classes, overcoming possible geographical restrictions.

These differences in the cultural and economic status of the two categories are the product of an asymmetrical distribution of capitals (economic, cultural, etc.) among different social groups, or the result of the exclusion produced by the existing social relations. However, the majority of dancers in this sample reported that they engaged in extra-curricular activities (but not necessarily artistic) as a result of parental instigation irrespective of social origin. This signifies that the deprived category of this sample did not face full exclusion as we can see below.

Participant (category)	Indicators of cultural capital	Extra-curricular activities
Sylvia (category 1)	None	Ballet
Sean (category 1)	None	Drama classes, dance
Anthony (category 1)	Paternal interest in jazz and drawing, yet no active participation in any other cultural activities.	Ballet
Stephen (category 1)	None	Folk dance, martial arts in local community schools. Peer influenced
Ross (category 1)	None	None
John (category 1)	Interest in design, but as a child less familiar with cultural activities as a result of parental provision. Much more engaged as an adult.	None
Emma (category 2)	Dance and painting, drama, attending museums, galleries concerts, reading literature.	Dance, painting
Josephine (category 2)	Participation in cultural activities, theatre, museums, galleries.	Gymnastics, ballet
Luke (category 2)	Participation in cultural activities, dance and music performances.	Gymnastics, ballet, flute
Elisabeth (category 2)	Theatre performances, music performances, plays, musicals, dance.	Ballet, arts and crafts, tennis
Rose (category 2)	Attending film, theatre,	Ballet, piano, painting,

	dance performances, book reading (literature).	cello
Richard (category 1)	Interest in folk music and dance, no cultural activities.	None other than recreational dance.

Table 3: Cultural capital and cultural activities.

Capitals and Introduction to Dance

The parameters identified as influencing participants' introduction to dance constitute aspects of economic, cultural and social capitals. More specifically, geographical space, the availability of the activity in the area of residence, its relative cost, peer influence (social capital) and familial artistic interests or interest in dance particularly, have been widely identified here as deciding factors. The majority of the sample started dancing at a local dance school (mostly private) at a relatively early age.

However, for those dancers allocated to the less privileged group, introduction to dance depended primarily on peer influence and the reportedly low cost of the activity when compared to other possible activities. Additionally, cultural and regional parameters, such as dance being a customary national activity, motivated introduction to dance at an early age. Parental experience in dance and especially in social and folk dance was also a common pattern in this category and reportedly played a key role in several participants' introduction to dance. Folk dance (introduced by peers) was also the means through which one male participant moved on to ballet and modern dance, whilst only one male participant in this group was introduced to dance as a mature adult. Most families in this less affluent category approved of dance as an activity and a possible profession⁴. However, the former possessed ignorance of a suitable

strategy for their children in this respect.

In the second, more affluent, group, all but one respondents were directly introduced to dance (ballet primarily) at a very young age under the rationale that dance was an activity which benefits the body and / or constitutes a medium of socialisation that encourages physical activity and artistic creativity. Familial decisions for participants' introduction to dance in this second category depended on a set of values evidently distant from material necessities and restrictions. Dance was seen as a legitimate pastime activity and valid in its own right. Overall, families in this group were supportive of their children's later professional choice without necessarily viewing dance as a profession from very early on. Only in one case did commitment to the activity come at an early stage, thus resulting in a specific strategy by both the parents and child. Additionally, only one participant within this second group reported her family having objections to her choice to study dance at a professional level, suggesting academic study would be more appropriate.

The body as capital: the role of bodily hexis in dancers' introduction to the form

This sample has shown that people from diverse social categories come to practice ballet and contemporary dance. However, the material and cultural means available to them and the role these played in their introduction and practice of dance are linked to dancers' embodiment. Physical capital, a set of bodily usages, capacities, attributes and values, are linked to one's material and symbolic status in the form of bodily hexis. The former constitutes the incorporation of social structures such as values, representations and uses of the body in one's mental schemata and physicality, structures amenable to the social conditions to which individuals are subjected. As Mauss (1973) argued, primary socialisation, in particular cultural

contexts, marks the body in specific ways. As a result, individuals develop characteristic ways of applying their body, or, as conceptualised by Mauss (1973), 'techniques of the body'. Further, Bourdieu (1984) argued that these 'techniques' are class significant. Unrefined movement is always associated with the working classes—an example of this is the identification of football being historically seen as a working class terrain (see Hughson, Inglis and Free, 2005). Hence, proclivity for certain bodily activities can be explained by the specific bodily dispositions which are formed in the context of everyday life (Bourdieu, 1993b, 1984).

For example, a predisposition towards intense movement was evident amongst individuals belonging to the first category, who we could classify under the general term 'working classes'. Most participants reported having a really active childhood with a noticeable inclination to jumping and running which made them prone to enjoying physical activity and, importantly, their parents were keen to encourage this. It is thus of great significance that some participants in this category were introduced to ballet / contemporary dance after having tried other physical activities such as martial arts and folk dance. This indirect route is significant of the lack of familiarity of the artistic aspects of bodily usage but constitutes a sign of disposition towards physical engagement. Conversely, values about the body being socialised through an artistic bodily activity were strong motives of the more privileged categories of this sample, which saw ballet as a form of bodily socialisation.

Further significant differences exist between particular attitudes to the body, the social origin of their bearers and their introduction to theatrical dance. The respondents who were directly introduced to ballet and possessed a relatively high volume of cultural capital reported that they were self-

assured about their body before their introduction to dance. They valued proper nutrition and a healthy, exercised body and took care of their bodies as a whole. Thus, introduction to dance as a bodily activity was the realisation of these values. According to Bourdieu (1984), this indicates distance from necessity and a conception of the body as an end itself and not simply as a means.

Josephine explained:

When I was seven, I started with gymnastics and my parents heard that gymnastics give length to your body and make your muscles tight; [...] similarly, dancing [since] makes you more 'stretched' (ballet dancer, 22 years old).

Conversely, some dancers from the less privileged category expressed their sense of discomfort within their bodies, as they reported to have been shy or over-apologetic about their appearance, especially, but not exclusively, in childhood. At the extreme, they totally disregarded the appearance and function of their physicality. For example John, who was introduced late into dance, reported of his physical presence: 'I was very apologetic'. Lack of confidence in bodily presence combined with a diffident posture signifies a disposition associated with the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1984). It further follows that other everyday practices contributed to these bodily states. These include patterns such as unhealthy eating, and, later on, alcohol consumption and careless management of injuries. Male dancers, especially in the less privileged category, reported not taking care of their bodies until later on in their professional lives and were less careful with food and alcohol.

Further, an affinity between late or indirect introduction to dance with lower class origin, gender and a particular

bodily ethos was also traced. For example, one male participant initially trained in judo, started folk dance and engaged in break-dancing. Being brought up with the values of good build, strength and masculinity—which are directly relevant to a lower class ethos (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993b)—this particular individual was inclined to engage in effortful bodily activities under the reported slogan ‘man lift iron’. Thus, his particular route to dance complied with a cluster of values corresponding to this working-class hexis.

However, for those cases which were marked by an early introduction to ballet training in either category, dance shaped participants’ bodily hexis as much as any other social activity they engaged in. Their dancing body was constructed and experienced as a naturalised state of being. As Emma remarked: ‘I’ve been dancing from a very early age, and therefore don’t really have a point of comparison’.

Nevertheless, both social categories as bearers of distinct forms of physical capital and bodily hexis gained access to the practice of dance. As Bourdieu (1993b) would argue, the particular activity can be associated with different bodily states and therefore be performing a different function depending on the social category practicing it. As we have seen, the body is a bearer of social relations and distinctions which can be reproduced through dance. Thus, ballet and contemporary dance appear compatible with clusters of values and attitudes towards the body deriving from different relationships with the body. This signifies, as Bourdieu (1993b, p.126) states for sports, a structural modification in the field, namely the attribution of diverse functions to dance by its practitioners but also:

[...] a transformation of the very logic of [dance] practices [...] runs parallel to the transformation of the expectations and demands of an audience which now extends far beyond its former practitioners.

This is why demands of bodily control and discipline, often associated with the particular choice of bodily activity, acquire a different meaning according to one's values. Regulation of the body as a working class value and direction of one's energy towards a bodily activity signifies a totally different relationship with the body when compared to that of a middle class agent which under the same name or demand enacts the body as an end and not as a means. As Desmond (1997) argues, dance as a cultural practice is not the direct manifestation of economic base; it is an outcome of struggle within the social universe in which economic relations are prevalent. As a result, 'social relations are enacted and produced through the body and not merely inscribed upon it' (Desmond, 1997, p.33).

Career strategies and trajectories

Among the objectives of this study was to examine the field and social trajectories of dancers in order to identify how social origin and capital possession influence their opportunities in dance. This section maps the specific strategies employed on the onset of vocational training and their effects on individual histories and status at that stage of their career. Dancers' field mobility and social reproduction are ongoing processes whose instances could only be partially captured in this research. However, trajectories and strategies are directly related to each other, constituting indicators of the social efforts for replicating or upgrading one's social positioning and position in the field of dance. Dancers plan their strategies according to the volume and structure of capital they do or do not possess, thus making specific investments.

Within this sample, those with a greater volume of cultural capital appear to have a wider space of possibilities, while investing in their existent cultural capital often in the state of disposition to arts, cultural practices, and education. Multiple strategic investments in different fields (academic,

artistic) are often simultaneously put into practice and function as strategies for social reproduction. More specifically, most dancers in the second, more privileged category, reckon to never have made a clear choice to become dancers, since they had the relative material ease to try several life options and career routes (see Bourdieu, 1984). Some cases were markedly typical of this notion, where trajectories were marked by investments in several institutions (universities, schools of art, dance schools). These routes also reflected on their conversion strategies, specifically changes in dance styles, return to academia, or changes of institution, which took place with the aid of economic capital⁵. For example, three respondents in this more privileged category possessed university titles in the arts, and one held a postgraduate title in choreography, as opposed to the first category where only one participant had a postgraduate qualification in dance practice.

Dancers possessing more cultural capital and a more direct relation to the arts, or those with sufficient economic capital, appear to consciously choose the training institutions they attend, which appear to be in elective affinity with their aesthetic disposition (*habitus*) and evidently match their ideas about dance. However, studying in these institutions was not considered or functioned as a life decision. Emma characteristically reports:

I never decided for real to become a dancer but when I auditioned for the place in the contemporary dance school and got in that was really my chance to train as a professional, to be a professional dancer. I still had in my mind—had the safety net of thinking—oh well I still don't know if this is definitely the right pathway for me. I don't know if this good enough, I might decide to leave if I'm not enjoying it.

In contrast, steps like auditioning in specific schools or picking dance styles functioned as absolute decisions for

those deprived of the means to design alternative strategies. For example, Ross never changed institutions although he felt it was not what he had expected. It was nevertheless a choice very much directed by the fact that he studied at a renowned dance academy.

Indeed, institutions perform different functions according to the different uses made of them. One of the differences produced in that sense relates to the extent to which individuals adjust to the educational logic of such institutions by internalising the criteria of assessment and validation in order to develop their career. As shown in the example above, institutions exert more power over those lacking the means to plan alternative strategies. Hence, such dancers see their training as a lifetime opportunity as opposed to those who have other options. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) suggest, there is a homology between institutions and their students, and one between the trajectories and their bearers. In that sense, individuals lacking the means are led by institutions, while their privileged peers make use of their institutions.

However, individuals who possess the means (those from the second category) often abide by this scholastic logic for some time or for as long as they can persevere, either because of their unfamiliarity with dance an early stage or the privilege of taking this option without committing to it fully, whilst simultaneously investing in several other options. However, complex orbits and multiple directions could also be a result of the struggle for survival in the field, especially for those with less means, which may force someone to study dance regardless of the style of dance studied. Nevertheless, dependence on institutional validation is common for all dance trajectories.

Conclusion

This sample has shown that particular social and aesthetic conditions give access to the practice of ballet and contemporary dance at the level of vocational training. Overall, dancers in this sample were divided into those relatively deprived of economic means and cultural capital, and those who drew on much more economically secure and culturally privileged backgrounds; the effects of which we examined in relation to their trajectories towards vocational training.

The different means available materialised in different types of opportunities (or lack of) for cultural and educational practices in early life. The most privileged category engaged in a variety of cultural and extracurricular activities, including other forms of art, at an early age, whilst those with less means had no access to these activities, marginally practiced ballet or inexpensive physical activities.

However, those with less means were not completely excluded from dance; cultural parameters such as country of origin, geographical proximity to dance schools, the relatively low cost of the activity and parental experience in folk dance can explain the early introduction to dance practice for those participants with less means. Late or indirect introduction to dance, a phenomenon encountered in the less privileged category, is a result of the lack of the resources mentioned above. Indicatively, a number of dancers from this category practiced other physical activities before they took up dance.

However, bodily capital also constitutes an important dimension in the structure of capitals allowing introduction to dance. Thus dancers' bodily hexis and disposition towards movement may be an explanatory parameter and

differential embodied characteristics such as attitudes towards the body, eating habits, and bodily practices reveal how different social categories understand and apply their physicality. As we have seen, some dancers from the less privileged category reported discomfort within, or took less care of, their bodies, and saw them as a means to survival. In contrast, the more privileged dancers saw their physicalities in a positive light and reported that exercise and care are essential for their well-being; as such their bodies were highly valued. This is particularly reflected in the choice of 'refined' activities that are considered as beneficial to the body such as gymnastics and ballet, as indicated earlier.

Class differences were also made visible in the different trajectories participants drew within the field of dance, particularly at the stage of vocational training. Those participants who were relatively deprived of cultural and economic capitals did not employ a specific strategy towards becoming dancers but depended heavily on institutional direction. They often had long and complex orbits until they reached a dance institution in which they tended to remain. Conversely, dancers with relatively augmented forms of capital employed multiple strategies, investing mostly within the scope of culture and education as a result of their embodied cultural state and economic means. They were also more secure in their attendance and use of dance training institutions. Hence, they appeared confident enough to make use of the cultural markets of training and education as an objective space of available opportunities. Indeed, as this research has shown, dancers from economically and culturally more privileged backgrounds have greater flexibility and more opportunities for success within the field of dance.

Notes

1. For the purposes of anonymity, confidentiality, and the protection of my participants, as agreed with the Ethics Committee of the University of Glasgow prior to this research, the nationality of the participants will not be revealed. Glasgow constitutes a small scene, which can make particular individuals highly recognisable. For this reason all participants have been given British pseudonyms. Similarly, I will refrain from attributing particular characteristics to these individuals, such as the schools attended or the companies they work for, to keep them unidentifiable.

2. In this article, I place emphasis on the starting points and the career 'trajectories' of these artists before their vocational training. Therefore my aim here is to address the means required for one to become a dancer, i.e. the relationship between one's means and ends, rather than looking at the present class situation and status of dancers in the wider social structure. My classifications draw on participants' own understandings of their life conditions at the starting point and throughout their career. I also introduce the socio-occupational categories of their parents in order to contextualise these conditions. Occupations reflect positions in the economic and social organisations that are linked to particular rewards and status (Scott, 2006). However, it is not my attempt to conflate these with class. In this case, I adopt Mills' (2014) argument that occupations are seen as proxies and, as in all research, they do carry assumptions if there is lack of detailed data. McGovern et al., (2007) argue that class indicators can be measured at the level of individual jobs. However, Mills (2014, p.2) explains that: 'no general purpose survey will collect the detailed information required for accurate measurement of the real variables of interest'. Given the qualitative character of the study, these classifications have a descriptive character and there are a series of associations made here in order to represent class in context. Other aspects, such as parental education and their links with cultural practices, bodily usages and geographical space, are included here to highlight the multidimensional phenomenon of class. This study is in no way exhaustive of the issue and therefore acknowledges the limitations of operationalising class throughout.

3. With the exception of two cases where the mother had a past experience of dancing as an amateur.

4. Only one family opposed it as a legitimate occupation.

5. Only two participants in this second category reported issues of financial support and funding for their studies, which were overcome by means of scholarships. Overall, pursuing an artistic activity, which would lead eventually to a career, was for this group a prospect interwoven with their strong dispositions towards arts and culture.

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