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Young, talented dancers in contemporary dance training: widening participation and fair access, rhetoric or reality?

Socio-economic disadvantage can be a significant barrier to accessing high quality dance training for young, talented dancers. Government policy and strategy relating to widening participation and talent development in the UK are premised on raising aspirations and meritocracy. This article uses Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework of field, capital and habitus to examine social variations, that can act as barriers to talent identification and talent development in dance. An interview study was undertaken with 33 talented, contemporary dancers, between the ages of 13-16 years, from a variety of backgrounds, about their experiences prior to and during their participation in a dance Centre of Advanced Training programme. Findings suggest the dancers' have experienced barriers to access, but also capital gain, symbolic exchange and transformative potential.

Introduction

There are many young dancers that may be passionate and talented in dance but will not have their talent recognised and/or will not be able to participate in dance training. Children from two-parent families, with educated parents and high socio-economic status are more likely to be identified as talented and have their talents developed (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen 1997, Chua, 2014). This article uses Pierre Bourdieu's (1986; 1990) conceptual framework of field, capital and *habitus* to examine social variations and distinctions, that can act as barriers to talent identification and talent development in dance. Government-led widening participation and talent development policy and strategy for dance in the UK are also explored. It is argued that a belief in so-called 'talent' and 'widening participation' are powerful and seductive discourses but these are embroiled in cultural judgement and social construction. Dancers from a range of backgrounds do gain access to participate in dance training but there are struggles. There is transformative potential but social inequalities and *misrecognition* exists through a (re)production of the hierarchy of positions and capitals. This work contributes to existing conversations in dance studies that use Bourdieu's framework as a way of making greater sense of social worlds (e.g. Rimmer, 2017; Pickard, 2015; Stryke, 2013; Thomas, 2013; Alexias and Dimitropoulou, 2011, Risner and Stinson, 2010; Schupp, 2010; Wainwright and Turner, 2006).

Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework

Pierre Bourdieu (1990) argued that capitalist societies produce and reproduce unequal and unjust economic, social and cultural relations through a series of fields. Societies are differentiated into fields as structured systems of social positions and arenas, where people compete for resources as capital as power. Capital can be economic as money and assets, cultural such as forms of knowledge, aesthetic as cultural preferences and taste, and social such as family, networks, religious and cultural heritage. In addition, symbolic capital are things that stand for all other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). An example of symbolic capital is physical capital in dance. Capital is a process and can be increased, decreased and exchanged. Anything that counts as afforded with an exchange value in a particular field is capital. Moreover, capital acquired in one field has uses in another. As Beverley Skeggs (2004:9) asserts:

> Each kind of capital….bring with them access to or limitations on which capitals are available to certain positions…The social relations of capitals into which we are born and move, have been constructed historically through struggles over assets and space.

Position and value is defined by capital as currency, which in turn shapes life experiences and possibilities for action. Bodies, people and groups attain value and currency through systems of symbolic exchange that enable or restrict access to a particular social space.

Value is accumulated, retained, lost or appropriated in the social arena through particular ways of thinking, being and doing as *habitus*. *Habitus* 'as the word implies, is that which has durably been incorporated into the body in the form of permanent dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1993: 86). *Habitus* can be thought of as a 'social game' with rules; those that embody the *habitus* understand the rules and that understanding is read by others as having worth. 'The field and habitus are locked in a circular relationship as involvement in the field shapes the *habitus*, that, in turn, shapes the actions that reproduce the field' (Pickard, 2015: 27). This process is significant as a way of understanding the symbolic exchange values of a culture or field, and who is able or entitled to embody the culture and be involved in managing the resources. In a dance context, certain bodies can or cannot belong, and certain representations will be attributed value (Wainwright and Turner, 2006; Alexias and Dimitropoulou, 2011; Pickard, 2015; Schupp, 2020). Fields are not equal, those who begin with particular forms of capital are advantaged because the field is continually producing and reproducing. Capital can be used to advantage to accumulate more. Socio-economic disadvantage means less capital as currency to exchange.

Social variations and talent development in dance

A range of social variations can determine whether a young dancer's interest or talent is recognised, identified and developed through dance training. Lack of economic capital, for example, is a barrier (Charlesworth, 2000). Dance training is a long-term financial commitment and can include, for example, costs related to classes and performances, travel, clothing and shoes. Young dancers from a two-parent family generally have more opportunities and access than those from a one parent family, due to the potential of two-incomes for example. There are approximately one quarter of young people in the population in the UK living within single-parent families. Socioeconomic variables within families, as well as practical issues such as work, transport, balancing activities of siblings and childcare, may be a barrier to a young person accessing dance training. There are also now 500,000 more children in poverty in the UK in 2019 than in 2012 (Social Mobility Commission, 2019), so for some families, there is not the possibility for a young person to access dance training, as there is not the means to pay for classes.

Within the social context of the family, a parent or parents will have an influence upon whether their child will participate in dance (e.g. van Rossum, 2001, Ferreira and Armstrong, 2002, Ambrose, 2003, Jago et al, 2011, Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Worrell, 2011, Warburton *et al*, 2014). If a parent believes that dance carries value and capital, then they are more likely to invest finances and time accordingly. A study by Bloom (1985) of talented young musicians and athletes, found that parents often encouraged talent development by investing time in observing practice, classes and rehearsals, watching performances, searching for teachers/coaches and for programmes for further experiences, as well as providing financial resources to pay for training, transport/travel and equipment/instruments. Similar positive, supportive behaviours by parents were found in studies of successful performers by Subotnik and Jarvin, 2005 and Subotnik et al, 2011, and are significant to a dancers' commitment and

perseverance. In addition, parents tend to talk and meet with other parents and this creates social chains; if one parent sends their child to a dance class (or engages in other cultural activities) others are likely to follow suit. These chains usually create like-minded peer relationships and friendships too.

Social relationships with teachers, peers and friends can influence access, engagement, sustained motivation and commitment in talent development domains (Fredricks et al. 2002, Critien and Ollis, 2006, Kamin, Richards, and Collins 2007, Chua, 2014). A supportive dance teacher as a role-model or mentor, in either the young persons' school (state or independent) or in a private dance setting/community sector, often signpost pupils to further opportunities in dance, and will communicate these to parents. Such recognition of a young person's talent from a dance teacher can enable that young person to gain access to dance schemes, summer schools, workshops, dance companies and wider dance experiences for example. Significant others in the form of parents and teachers are particular influencers and signifiers as to whether a young person is able to access dance training (van Rossum, 2001, Chua, 2014). In addition, friendships with peers doing the same activity, offer a young person social integration and support. Friendships meet a cognitive need as friends provide stimulation in the form of shared experiences and opportunities to express oneself. Patrick *et al* (1999) found that peers and friendships played a positive function in supporting the continued commitment of talented adolescents during out of school talent activities in sports and arts. In addition, the ability to build positive friendships and networks and gain a sense of acceptance and belonging in a talent domain, through reciprocal relationships where there is mutual liking, develops one's balance of power and social capital (Majors, 2012). A sense of belonging is described by Hamm and Faircloth (2005:61) as relating to 'students' perceptions that they are liked, respected, and valued by others in the school.' Adolescents particularly, need to develop their sense of identity and belonging for self-concept and wellbeing (Critien and Ollis, 2006). Moreover, interactions with friends facilitate identity and 'reassurance of worth through the social validation' (Cotterell, 2007:80) and the 'power of positive alliance' (Majors, 2012).

In terms of schooling, those attending schools in the independent (private) sector, rather than in the state sector, will have access to greater economic, cultural and social opportunities. This is due to, for example, the wider arts curriculum including performance opportunities, smaller classes, group and individual teaching experiences, and engagement with privileged and esteemed networks. Importantly, students at independent (private) schools internalise their status and the value produced from the attachment of experience in the resourcing of the self, and this builds self-concept (Skeggs, 2004). Work by Gaztembide-Fernandez (2009) suggested that students in elite private schools gained reinforcing messages from home and school that convinced them that they belonged and were entitled to gain esteem and power in society. Positive self-concept has a strong connection to social privilege and identity Skeggs (2004). This is described as 'identity capital' by Warin (2015) drawing on Cote's (1996) notion. Identity capital is described as positive 'advantage gained through the reflexive capacity to articulate a narrative of self' (p. 689).

Access to specialist dance training tends to include an audition. Those with access to prior dance and/or audition experience, supportive parents and teachers, immersion in arts and cultural events, formal technique training, and identity capital are viewed as at an advantage. Gaztambide *et al* (2013:130) suggested that dance training programmes for talented dancers, rather than transcend:

> the dynamics of social inequality that usually shape racial and class segregation… they rely on narrow conceptions of talent to justify their ability to exclude…(this)

> undermines the value of dance forms that may be more culturally relevant to other students (particularly non-white students). These hierarchies translate into feelings of being bad students, as students of color come to see themselves through the lens of a Eurocentric curriculum as not talented enough.

Current talent identification processes may exclude many young people (Abbott and Collins, 2004) as there is an under representation of black, Asian, minority and ethnic groups in many domains (Radnor, Koshy and Taylor, 2007).

Within a ballet context, Wulff (2001) suggested that ballet dancers that are deemed 'specially gifted' and those ballet dancers that are accepted into ballet training, as well as those that become professional dancers, also appear to be white, middle class or upper working class. Schupp (2020) examined the largely white, middle-class, female space of dance competition culture through a critical race theory framework, demonstrating that competition dance is a space of systematic racism and white supremacy. Although many of the dance forms performed in competition dance stemmed from African diasporic roots, the notion of 'dance all styles' in the competitions translates as 'all styles that employ a balletic foundation' (p.221) thereby privileging and excluding. Schupp analysed policies and practices of competition dance such as rules, regulations and commentaries by judges, as power structures that perpetuate racial inequalities and reinforce 'whiteness as normative' (p.209). This resonates with the analysis by Thomas (2019) in relation to jazz dance. Thomas, argued that there has been significant marginalisation, sterilisation and whitewashing of jazz dance:

> Jazz then, with its African sensibilities, had to wrestle with the pervasive ideologies espoused by the principles and contexts of white superiority. It is these principles and contexts that informed how white Americans classified and defined other cultural forms, as cultures that reflected similar constructs to their own were deemed more valuable (p.100).

Further, Jones (2014: 231) demonstrated that there is a loss of lineage, and realignment of aesthetics in jazz dance according to white values. Those in positions of power, whether as artistic/company directors, choreographers, competition judges and teachers, legitimise and perpetuate 'taken for granted' social norms.

According to Bourdieu (1990), any field has its own rationale for its existence, this is internal and self-evident, informing the actions within and legitimising the game. Investment in 'playing the game' moulds the *habitus*. Bourdieu called this rationale *doxa* as norms and expectations or unspoken rules and hidden agendas. *Doxa* works by 'deliberately obfuscating how the game (re) produces social inequality through the (re)production of the hierarchy of positions and capitals' (Thompson, 2005: 748). This is *misrecognition* because the rationale attributes failure to poor playing, rather than the game itself. Bourdieu's *doxa* and *misrecognition* can be used to examine policies and strategies of widening participation in dance. Such policies and strategies can be read in a way that it is the aspiration of the working class that is at fault; blaming poor playing rather than seeing the nature of the game itself.

Widening participation and talent development in dance

Over 30 years ago, the Department for Employment and Education (DfEE) in the UK claimed 'that all children had the same rights to develop their abilities…the pursuit of excellence was too often equated with elitism' (DfEE, 1997:11). The term 'widening participation' (WP) was adopted nationally at this time and has since featured prominently in government policy initiatives aimed at addressing under-representation, particularly in relation to Higher

Education (Burke, 2012). Under-represented groups are lower socio-economic and low-participation schools and neighbourhoods and this includes care leavers (young people that have been in the social care system in the UK), first generation likely to apply or register for or go to University, and black, Asian, minority, ethnic students. Widening participation is based on raising aspiration, meritocracy and a commitment to remove barriers to enable people from more disadvantaged backgrounds to access the same opportunities as those from advantage (Greening, 2017). A disadvantaged background includes factors discussed earlier, such as low income, single parent families, schooling, social class but also, ethnicity, sex/gender and geography (where someone lives or the postcode/zip code) (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2008).

A strategy to develop greater opportunities for young people to engage with high quality music and dance training, without having to leave home and attend boarding schools, was motivated by a review of existing access and opportunities in these domains, commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and reported by Myerscough (2003). The report initiated the DfES Music and Scheme (MDS). The Music and Scheme (MDS) launched Centres of Advanced Training (CATs) in both music and dance, with the first Dance CAT being established in 2004. This scheme has continued and there are now 11 Dance Centres for Advanced Training nationally, providing intensive, part-time dance training for 11-18-year-olds. All the CATs provide physical training and opportunities to engage with professional companies and artists. Each centre structures its programme differently, most including some Saturdays, some mid-week activity and intensive holiday projects. Content involves, for example, dance technique development, working with professional artists, creative and choreographic skills, performance skills and a focus on health and fitness. The ethos underpinning the Centres is dancer-centred, to nurture the whole person, fostering creativity and artistry, as well as creating a safe environment for taking risks. In addition, working with professional artists, choreographers and companies provides a variety of role models for the young participants and is intended to raise aspiration.

The Dance Centres for Advanced Training (CATs) aim to identify children and young people, aged between 11-18 years with 'exceptional potential in dance and develop their talent through non-residential training programmes' (National Dance Cats). Successful applicants can access highly specialist dance training in their locality, whilst continuing to live at home and benefiting from a broad and balanced education. Centres are deemed to be excellent in prevocational training, promoting best practices and providing exceptional and innovative tuition to young people, regardless of their personal circumstances. In (2018-2019), 906 young people regularly attended a Centre for Advanced Training nationally with 29% of students being male, 71% female and 0.2% non-disclosing. 71% of families of CAT participants receive financial support from the Department for Education's Music and Dance Scheme and 40% of students receive full-grants for their training. Grants are means-tested based on family's annual earnings per tax year, with deductions and allowances made for dependents, in accordance with the Department for Education's guidelines. Dancers who are eligible and who make appropriate progress are entitled to receive financial assistance until they graduate or exit from the programme. Fees contribute to dance training, travel, accommodation, dance-wear and other activities depending on each individual Centre's policy.

The principles that underpin the Music and Dance Scheme and Dance CATs are to promote an inclusive and fair approach to access, talent identification, widening participation and development of talent. The application of these principles in practice should recruit a range of young dancers, broadly representative of the population and demographic in terms of sex,

ethnicity and socio-economic background. Dancers participating in CAT schemes have been the focus of a developing body of research (e.g Steinberg and Aujila, 2014, Walker et al, 2011; 2012, Nordin-Bates et al, 2012, Aujila, 2014). However, very little research has investigated whether the premise of the Dance CAT scheme: to widen access and opportunity for young dancers to engage in high-quality dance training, is realised. Given that disadvantage, as discussed early in this article, can be a barrier to access, how can young, talented dancers from low socio-economic backgrounds, with less cultural and social capital, gain access to dance training? Given the government focus on widening participation in policy and strategy as raising aspiration and meritocracy, is this rhetoric or can widening participation be a reality?

Methods

Adolescent dancers (n=33), between the ages of 13-16 years, engaged in a qualitative, interview study across one academic year. The dancers were in their first year of a dance talent development programme, at a Dance Centre of Advanced Training (CAT) in London, England. The interviews took place at the Dance Centre of Advanced Training and included one at the start of the year (November) and one at the end (June). Each interview was semi-structured, lasted for between 30-40 minutes and was voice recorded. In addition, observations of dance classes were conducted at the beginning of the study in November and at the end of the study in June.

Ethical clearance was gained via the author's University. Prior to the start of the study, the author as the researcher, had a meeting with the CAT manager and teachers to ensure that all were aware of the foci of the research and that dancers' participation in the study was voluntary and anonymised. All first year CAT dancers and their parent(s) received an information letter inviting them to be part of the study with a consent form. N=33 Dance Centre of Advanced Training dancers agreed to participate in the study and consent was gained. The purposive sample was a representative sample of the first year Dance CAT cohort. The sample consisted of 18 girls and 15 boys, ages between 13-16 years, 16 dancers on a full bursary, 9 on part and 8 with no Department for Education funding or bursary. The dancers self-identified their ethnic backgrounds as 3 mixed background, 20 White British, 1 Black British, 3 White other, 3 Asian, 1 Black/British Caribbean and 2 British African.

At the start of the interview, dancers were reminded of the purpose of the research, that participation was voluntary and that they were free to opt out at any time. In addition, dancers were reassured that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, and that the dancers did not have to answer any questions if they did not feel comfortable. It was also explained that responses to questions in the interview were confidential and a pseudonym was to be used when disseminating findings. Child protection and safe guarding guidelines were also shared. The interviews took place at the Dance Centre of Advanced training as a familiar context, in-between the normal dance classes, in a quiet meeting room. The timetable was set and supported by the dance teachers and the CAT Programme Manager.

Questions were asked in relation to the dancer's background, family and schooling, experiences of dance, awareness of the CAT programme prior to audition and access and experiences of the CAT programme. Each interview was transcribed verbatim. The content analysis of the transcriptions took place after each interview. After multiple readings, a process of open coding

was employed to create units of analysis and categories for abstraction (Polit and Beck, 2012, Creswell, 2013). The data was also shared with two other objective colleagues for triangulation, *trustworthiness* and conformity, that is the data's accuracy, relevance and meaning (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Furthermore, the transcribed text was examined carefully to critically assess the researcher's actions for potential bias (Koch. 1994). The analysis was undertaken by hand rather than using a computer package. Analytical notes were added to observations of classes to make connections between codes and categories in the observation data and the interview data. In this paper pseudonyms are used in order to protect the identity of each young dancer. Similarly, the Dance CAT is purposely not identified. Presentation of quotations from the dancers are used to highlight the salient themes in the data (Whittemore *et al*, 2001).

Findings

The dancers shared how their talent was identified, how they gained knowledge about the Centre of Advanced Training (CAT), the audition process, the importance of supportive parents and their sense of belonging and developing identity as a contemporary dancer.

Talent identification and access to dance CAT

The Dance Centre of Advanced Training provided dance workshops from September-December and January -March to schools across an area of London, and in Kent and Essex in England. The workshops were marketed to dance teachers working at secondary schools and managed strategically within the Dance Centre. This included much work being targeted in lower socio-economic areas and low participation neighbourhoods as a focus on widening recruitment and participation. The workshops were led by Dance Centre Advanced Training (CAT) practitioners and offered an opportunity for student dancers to be identified as talented and to be invited to visit the Centre, with the view to potentially auditioning for the CAT programme. For some, this may have been the first time they had their talented recognised as evidenced by Josie, a 14-year-old female dancer:

> Someone came to my school and did a workshop. They kept noticing me and giving me praise. Afterwards they gave me a letter and a leaflet and said audition for the CAT. I didn't really know that I was talented. I knew that I liked moving but didn't really think about doing more dance until then. I got to second audition and was quite surprised at myself but I wanted to get in. I pushed myself in a way I had not done before and it felt good. I did get in. It's been so good for me, em, em, good for my confidence and my focus. I'm really confident now, I'm more creative. I'm better at being independent.

The workshop strategy, included the CAT practitioner identifying and speaking with the young person at the end of the workshop. The dancer then received a letter and a leaflet that explained CAT and invited them to visit the Dance CAT on a taster day (a day at the Centre to meet teachers and try classes before applying to audition). The letter is a significant confirmation and reinforcement that the young person has been identified as talented in dance and could access further training, this was evidenced by Sadie, a 14-year-old female dancer:

> When the tutor came to my school to do a workshop and I got my letter afterwards that invited me to an open day and an audition, I couldn't believe it. I took the letter home and translated this to my mum, as she does not speak or read English very well. She was worried about the money and the time it would take, but I said that there is funding we could apply for and they help at the CAT with this. She said I could go and here I am! This has been the best thing for me. If the CAT tutor had not come to my school, I

> would not have thought of trying for CAT. I thought it was for people that had been doing ballet since they were 3 years old.

Recognition as talented translates as currency for access and makes a positive contribution to the self-concept for the adolescent dancers and 'identity capital' (Warin, 2015).

The taster day involved an introductory talk by the CAT manager, two dance technique classes (one in ballet and one in contemporary), a creative dance session and a Q and A. Unlike some other CAT programmes the taster day at this context is free of charge, is not part of the audition process nor is it a prerequisite to audition for CAT.

> I did the CAT taster day. I was nervous because I haven't got very much technique but I am creative. I thought I had better do the taster day to see if I could manage without all the technique that others would have and if I fit in. I wanted to meet the teachers and see if I could get on with them. I wanted to see if there were any like me, that might understand me. It was good. The other people were a mix. Some had a lot of technique and some more like me. I was worried when I had to do ballet. I have never done ballet and felt embarrassed if I am honest with you. The teachers were great, friendly and casual, they made me feel ok. The teachers are not like in school as more relaxed but they are all white. I was hoping there would be a black teacher, I think they'd understand me more. I am on the CAT now but I am taught by teachers that are cool but all white. I don't mind (Kenrick, Male, 14 years).

'Fitting in' was important to the young dancers. Kenrick above, had hoped for a black teacher as he thought that they may understand him, his background and culture, as a black student. The dancers were from a range of backgrounds, although the majority in the sample were white. The CAT team of teachers were all from white backgrounds and cultures. The techniques offered at this CAT are ballet and contemporary, stemming from 'white dance and cultural practices' (Schupp, 2020:219). The notion of widening participation in this example is not an inclusive strategy that encompasses all backgrounds.

Audition

Auditions at this CAT context are a two-stage process. Firstly, all that apply are invited to an initial audition; this can be useful as a confidence boost but also for the young dancer to gain audition experience. The first audition is a group-based practical dance session. From here, individuals are selected to attend a final audition with an informal interview. The assessment criteria for entry to the CAT covers both technique (performance) and creative skills and young dancers are to be evaluated on future potential as opposed to just their existing skills. The context is mindful that identification of young talented dancers should also allow for the effects of maturation, for example, changes in coordination, control, balance and flexibility, and to avoid discrimination against those with potential, but with little or no prior training.

Sita, a 13-year -old female dancer, shared how the audition was challenging for the dancer and also for their parent, as both felt that the teachers and other parents during the CAT audition would be judging. Not only judging dance technique and creative ability but a wider judgement about social background:

> My mum said that this sort of thing would not be for people like us. It would be for people with money. I said I really wanted to try it and I'm glad we did. I was worried that I would be judged because we don't have much money and I haven't done that many dance classes. She saw that there were lots of people like us. She felt uncomfortable at first as she had to wait in the café while I did activities and she was worried about talking to the other mums. She always thinks people are judging us, you

know, not being good enough. But, it turned out that lots were feeling the same and once they got talking they had children that dance in common so it broke the ice.

The view that the CAT audition would be judging more than technical and creative dance ability, was common amongst a number of dancers in the sample. In particular, the dancers felt they were being judged on, according to 14-year-old male dancer, Kenrick:

> The invisible money sense, you know they know that you don't have much money. It shouldn't matter but it feels like it does.

Notions of judgement, that is what is valued by the dominant symbolic, are significant in relation to talent identification and development. Symbolic boundary marking, such as in the form of an exclusionary practice as in an audition process, protects interests, power and distinctions of the social culture.

Financial barriers

Financial concerns were evident from a number of responses from the young dancers. In this example from Jane, a 14-year-old female dancer, she refers to her socio-economic background as an initial barrier to continue with dance classes and her feeling of shame and concern that she would not fit in:

> I did dance when I was young but did not keep it up because of money. We had a lot of money troubles when I was younger. I loved dance but had to give it up the after-school classes because we could not afford it. When I was 13, my mum came up to London and she got a leaflet for the CAT programme. When we found out that you could get a bursary I applied. Getting the bursary is amazing as now I can afford to come to do something I love – dance, and I might get a career from this. I was worried about fitting in 'cos I thought they'd all have money. I didn't want to feel like, ashamed, as I was the only one on a bursary. But, it wasn't like that – there are lots of people like me. Not very well-off, you know…more working class, and it is ok.

The majority of the dancers (n=26) cited that they had experienced financial constraints and this had been a barrier for them to access and participate in dance. Although successful at audition, some dancers, had been uncertain about joining the CAT programme. Jane, (above) expressed her anxiety: 'I didn't want to feel like ashamed, as I was the only one on a bursary.' Shame and pain associated with working class struggles has been well documented (Charlesworth 2000; Skeggs 2004). Some of the dancers in the study shared experiences of how they and their families had been judged, compared and de-valued in their lives, inside and outside the dance context. Sita, cited previously, refers to this when she says her mum 'always thinks people are judging us, you know, not being good enough.'

The majority of dancers in the study placed high value and currency on technique training as physical capital and were aware that they were often limited in resource here. Technical training is not just the movements associated with the technique but also relates to understanding of dance class structure, movement memory, ability to pick up and retain movement, understanding the body in space as well as co-ordination, control and stamina/fitness aspects of dance training. The knowing the structure of a dance class and technique training as inscribed on the body as *habitus* are examples of knowledge of 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1990), capital and currency. Although there is dance provision as part of the National Curriculum in schools in the UK, the quality of the provision varies. Many young people do engage in after school or private dance lessons, in order to develop technical training and to do examinations (e.g Royal Aacdemy of Dance RAD).Technical competency was often perceived by the dancers in this study to be the first priority when at the audition for a CAT programme:

> My family couldn't afford dance classes and they didn't have time as they were both working and I've got brothers and sisters, so I thought I was at a real disadvantage. You can tell the ones that have loads of ballet by how they stand and they can do lots of impressive movements. Even those that have done lots of contemporary at their school are better than me and what I've done. I was really surprised when I got asked to audition. I still feel that I haven't got much technique but I am creative. They said they saw a spark in me and that has given me a real boost. (Jason, male, 15 years).

In addition to Jason, some of the other dancers in the study (N=11) did recognise those dancers at the audition that were able to afford dance classes and demonstrate technical training as having an advantage.

15-year-old male dancer Saffy, described how the financial bursary gave him access to dance training including travel costs, but that there was still a concern as the travel bursary did not cover his mum's travel:

> I have always loved dance and have done a lot at school but could never afford to do ballet or other dance classes out of school. Not that I really wanted to do ballet really. My dad is also not living with us and is not keen on me dancing. When the workshop came to school, I loved doing it. Afterwards I was told about these options. I had to persuade my mum that I could do this as I live so far away. The bursary covers my travel but not my mum's and I can't travel on my own at the moment so sometimes things are tight. I also have a brother.

The lack of funding for travel for an accompanying adult means that money needs to be found to pay for the parent's travel. As Saffy describes above, this can put a strain on the family finances and may become a barrier to continuation.

The young, adolescent dancers involved in the study, recognised the importance of economic capital and of capital gain related to 'having money.' One dancer, Sita, cited above, acknowledged that there is status afforded to financial affluence, when she stated that her mum had said 'that this sort of thing would not be for people like us. It would be for people with money.' Furthermore, Jane, a 14-year-old dancer expressed concern about fitting in 'cos I thought they'd all have money,' and Kenrick, also 14 years, was very aware of the advantage and exchange value related to money, when he refers to 'the invisible money sense, you know they know that you don't have much money. It shouldn't matter but it feels like it does.' Financial means has exchange-value and capital gains. Gaining access to participate in the CAT programme involves more than aspiration and merit. Despite being identified as talented, gaining a successful outcome at auditions and gaining financial support, the dancers described struggles that included economic factors and feelings of shame, guilt due to the strains on family life and being judged as 'not good-enough' or worthy to 'play the game'. Other dancers claimed that they were just 'lucky' to gain a place and 'still be here' (Josh, 14 years), due to their lack of dance technique, implying that they were passive and had little control over their participation. Such struggles and experiences can impact on dancer confidence and sustained motivation to continue in dance training.

Supportive parents

Parents or a significant other can have an influence upon their child's participation and development in dance. Barriers to access and participation may stem from parents in the first instance as there may be perceptions that dance may not for their child. This may be due to a lack of knowledge of the art-form and career potential for example. Jacey, a 13-year -old female

dancer cited how she had to persuade her dad that his preconceived ideas about dance were not founded:

> My dad said that he was surprised that I got into dance. He thought it was a bit snobby and he's never gone to a dance class or even watched dance. He was quite surprised where he saw me and now he is more willing to learn a bit more. He knows that I like it so he will support me. He doesn't think I should make a career out of it though as he says there's no money in it.

The parents of the young dancers at this CAT were also able to build a social group as many accompanied their children on a Saturday through travelling together. Often the parents would gather for a coffee and chat together at the Centre's cafe. These opportunities for parents are also important in relation to the dancer's retention. If parents are able to build a social group, share thoughts, questions and concerns together for example, then a supportive community group develops.

The importance of support from a parent was viewed by young dancers as crucial in relation to access and sustained motivation. Many had to travel some distance from their homes in order to be part of the CAT programme. Parents most often organised and/or accompanied the young dancers in regard to travel. Furthermore, parents often aided the young dancers in, for example, purchasing dance clothing, providing food so that they were eating appropriately, time management and organisation, bedtime routines, liaising with schools and other health/social matters. In addition, parents supported the young dancers through the use of praise, encouragement and by attending and watching performances where their child was dancing. All the dancers (even the oldest) claimed that they could not be part of CAT if it were not for their parents and the support, particularly in terms of time commitment that they offered, as well as the understanding that the CAT programme was important to them. Holly, a 15-year-old female dancer acknowledged the commitment that her mum had made to CAT in order to support her in her dance training:

> My mum has made the commitment to CAT as well as me. My mum gets me up on a Saturday, helps me sort my bag out, gets me food, snacks and drink, makes sure my dance kit is ready and washed. She comes on the bus and train with me. We leave early in the morning to get here on time. We eat breakfast on the train. I sometimes do my homework on the train and my mum helps me. We walk from the train station. When we are at CAT at around 9.45am, she has a coffee and a chat with the other CAT mums. Sometimes she walks into town but it is expensive so she doesn't buy anything. Mostly she brings a book and reads and waits for me all day until 4pm. We then make our way home. It is a long day for her. She saves the money to cover her travel as mine is covered by the bursary. I am grateful to her for all she does. When I'm older, I can travel myself but she thinks I'm still a bit young. I couldn't come if it wasn't for her.

Some dancers shared that the commitment at the Dance Centre of Advanced Training, although was generally positive for them, caused tensions in families regarding equality of opportunity and childcare arrangements for other siblings. In addition, much organisation and negotiation had to happen regularly in families in order to 'fit in CAT' and the commitment that the programme demanded. This included the impact on school holidays and therefore opportunities for family holidays was restricted, as there was an expectation that dancers would engage in creative and performance projects as part of the CAT training programme across school holidays.

Sense of belonging and identity as a contemporary dancer

Identity as a contemporary dancer was viewed by many dancers in the sample (N=30), as significant and this contributed to sustained motivation and commitment to the Dance Centre of Advanced Training programme. Many dancers (N=17) described how they were made to feel welcome and relaxed as they entered the CAT building on the taster day or the day of their audition. They cited the teachers as being more relaxed in comparison to those in school. Josh, a 14-year-old male dancer described how the teachers made him feel valued and talked to him 'as though they really wanted me to be here.' This was deemed significant by the dancers as motivation to continue to audition or commit to the CAT programme. Dancers reported positive feelings, a sense of achievement and increased confidence in relation to the CAT programme. Some dancers spoke about feeling special at being selected and this was motivating, as evidenced by 14-year-old male dancer, Kenrick:

> I feel special as not all that audition get a place. It is nice to be noticed and told you are good at something. The teachers take time for you here. That feels good. Makes you feel like you belong. They are interested in you. I like that I have been selected and am kind of better than other people at something. This has fuelled my passion for dance and keeps me motivated for sure. I can see my body changing from the training and I look in the mirror and I see a dancer. I think to myself I am a dancer.

Being oneself, being able to express themselves, feeling valued and having a sense of an identity as a dancer, as an individual and as part of a group, were also cited by dancers as motivating. Here is an example from Ben, male, 15 years:

> I feel myself here. I like the creative best because I can be myself and put my ideas across. Once I put the CAT hoodie and T-shirt on, I am a dancer.

Positive feelings associated with identity included self-belief in achievements or ability and social factors as the young dancers often reported being with 'people like me,' or 'like-minded people' and 'fitting in.'

Macey, a 14-year-old female dancer, cited the importance of a sense of belonging to a community, and fostering friendships as important components to commitment to the training programme:

> If you feel you belong, you are more likely to keep coming. It is hard sometimes, getting up early, travelling, working hard here. But seeing friends, talking with each other in the breaks, doing things together like trips means we have things in common and can share these. We also support each other when we are a bit low or things are not going so well. We can help each other learn movement some times. We understand each other as we are all dancers. We are a community. My friends at school are different. They don't do dance. I am quiet in school but come alive at CAT. The teachers here really know me. They have time for me. They care and want me to achieve my best. That's why I love coming here, even if it is a Saturday and I'm tired after a long week at school. I want to get myself out of bed and come. At my normal school I am lost among the mass of people. There are too many of us. I don't think some of my teachers know my name even.

Saffy, a 15 -year-old male dancer, cited gaining personal recognition and feeling part of a special group as a member of CAT, he stated: 'I am recognised in a crowd.'

Access to esteemed choreographers as part of the CAT programme was cited by Lucy, a 16-year-old female dancer as being aspirational:

> I am from a single-parent family and have three brothers. We don't have spare money. When I got into CAT, we were given money for the first time to buy dance kit and travel and things like that. It felt like I got that for us because I am good at dance. This

> felt good. Other people here are in the same boat. We all struggle a bit balancing everything with school, money, time but it is worth it. This CAT has given me opportunities, a ladder to climb. We have projects with different choreographers and to work alongside, to have them choreograph on us, is amazing. This is special. I never thought someone like me would get this sort of opportunity. I feel important and as though I am worth something. It has really helped me see what it is like to be a contemporary dancer and what it is like to be a choreographer. We get to perform at this fabulous theatre. This is exciting and makes me want more. I do want to be a dancer in the future and the CAT is going to help me get there. It is a goal and this inspires me.

Being recognised as talented in dance and gaining a place on the CAT programme has opened doors to a wider range of opportunities for the young dancers. The sense of belonging and identity as a contemporary dancer, as well as gaining a greater sense of worth are significant for continuation and capital gain. Some dancers cited feeling special, valued and accepted due to the CAT teachers knowing them well, for example, Saffy a 15-year old dancer stated: 'I am recognised in a crowd.' Lucy, a 16-year-old dancer was very aware of the worth/value, legitimisation and transformative potential of the CAT when she stated: 'this CAT has given me opportunities, a ladder to climb …I feel important and as though I am worth something.' Another key aspect of legitimisation is friendships. The ability to build positive friendships gives a sense of acceptance, belonging and social validation. Interactions with friends also facilitate identity as a dancer and 'identity capital' Warin (2015). Position and value is defined by capital as currency, which in turn shapes life experiences and possibilities for action because the field is continually producing and reproducing. Capital gained can be used to advantage to accumulate more as symbolic exchange.

Discussion

Bourdieu's conceptual framework of field, capital and *habitus* was not intended as pessimistic and deterministic (Bourdieu, 1990). Although this study of young dancers is small-scale and cannot be generalised, findings suggest that there are examples of struggle, capital gain, symbolic exchange and transformative potential. The field of dance training however, is not equal. A belief in so-called 'talent' and 'widening participation' are powerful and seductive discourses but these are embroiled in cultural judgement and social construction. Those that begin with particular forms of capital are still viewed as advantaged. Advantage is related to social, cultural and physical (symbolic) capital, that are deemed as having a high exchange value, such as economic capital as financial means and physical capital as experience of dance technique training.

Economic capital

As evidenced by the young dancers in this study, a lack of economic capital acts as a barrier to access dance training, for example technique classes. A strength of the Centre of Advanced Training (CAT) strategy is the financial support through the part or full (means-tested) bursaries. This is significant as the bursary money can be used for dance kit, travel and additional dance classes outside the CAT programme for example. The bursary that the dancers received from the Dance CAT has given access and opportunity for them to engage in the dance training programme and has, to an extent, widened access and participation. In Bourdieu's terms this has allowed dancers to enter the game or arena that would not 'normally' be able to enter.

Exchange-value

The CAT outreach workshop strategy is a positive and targeted recruitment strategy that can be enabling. For many of the dancers, this was the first time that they were recognised as having potential in dance and could have their dance talent developed. The next step for the dancers that have been identified as talented is an audition process. This is a struggle for recognition and value, a public performance of oneself as a 'subject of value' or an 'exchange-value' self (Skeggs 2004). Yet, despite limitation in technical resource, the dancers in the study were willing to make a stake for value and legitimacy during an audition process. Notions of judgement were felt by the dancers in the study, either due to their previous experiences as 'working-class struggles' and sense of worth (Skeggs, 2004) or through the symbolic boundary marking in auditions and/or expectations of levels of technical training. Some dancers, in order to legitimise their success at audition, felt that they had just been 'lucky' to have been selected to join the CAT programme, rather than acknowledging that their success was attributed to their own merit (Austin, 2003). The dancers did demonstrate that they could enter the game and navigate the social world and distinctions of the Dance CAT to gain power and capital.

Acceptance and legitimisation

As the young dancers participate in the Dance CAT there are possibilities for them to increase their value through the acquisition, conversion and accrual of capitals. The model of the exchange-value self, where capitals are lived and displayed on the body is the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977; 1989). Value can be accumulated in the social arena of the Dance CAT through the social game and knowledge of 'rules', translated as the particular and expected ways of thinking, being and doing. Those that embody the *habitus* demonstrate understanding of the rules, for example the conventions of a technique class and embodiment of that technique, and such understandings are read by others as demonstration of 'fitting in' and having worth. Acceptance, legitimisation and a sense of belonging is significant to the struggle for value, capital gain, symbolic exchange and transformative potential.

Concluding thoughts

Many of the young dancers in this study were given opportunities to invest in 'playing the game' and to mould their *habitus* within this dance CAT context through engaging in a workshop at their school. The workshop was part of a widening participation strategy that was targeted at recruiting dancers from lower socio-economic areas. This set the dancers identified as talented on a path that has begun to open doors to economic, cultural, social and physical (symbolic) capital in the social field of dance. However, government policy and strategy that is premised on raising aspirations, meritocracy and 'luck' ignores the socio-economic complexities of fair access and participation. For those talented dancers not able to access a workshop at their school, be identified as talented in dance, gain knowledge of a CAT programme or gain success at an audition, social inequalities and *misrecognition* exists through a (re)production of the hierarchy of positions and capitals.

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