

**Learning the Steps to Become a Successful
Nightclub Dancer**

Lucy Sims

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Thesis Summary

This study focuses on nightclub dancers. This includes freestyle podium dancers, choreographed stage dancers and pole performers that are paid to provide entertainment in nightclubs. The aim of this thesis is to answer the following main research question: ***how do individuals learn to become successful nightclub dancers?*** This can be broken into two constituent research questions: 1) *what* skills and attributes do individuals require in order to become successful nightclub dancers and 2) *how* do nightclub dancers learn to be successful and professional in their occupation. These questions are addressed through the analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with nightclub dancers, nightclub managers, events entertainment managers and dance teachers. The data suggested that in order to be successful, nightclub dancers need to be proficient in three types of labour that comprise their work: physical dance labour, aesthetic labour and emotional labour. Drawing on theories of workplace learning, it is argued that nightclub dancers learn the various skills required for dance labour through a range of different types of pre-job and on-the-job, formal and non-formal learning. Their learning of aesthetic and emotional labour is mainly characterised by non-formal on-the-job learning from other dancers.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Nightclub dancers are a part of the night-time economy (Hobbs *et al.*, 2000) - a source of considerable and growing academic interest. Yet, they are missing from this literature. This is partly because the night-time economy is generally viewed as problematic, risky, dangerous and in need of greater regulation and policing (Talbot, 2006; Hadfield *et al.*, 2009). This is reflected in the choice of occupational groups for investigation. For example, on the one hand, studies have been carried out on doorstaff (aka ‘bouncers’), both male (e.g. Monaghan, 2002) and female (e.g. Hobbs *et al.*, 2007) who help to control drunk and disorderly punters. On the other hand, research on prostitutes in the night-time economy has focused on the regulation of their ‘sexually disordered’ behaviour (Sanders, 2009). Sheard’s (2011) research on women and their use of spaces in the night-time economy included some bar workers in the sample, but the emphasis of the study was more on their role as consumers rather than as workers. The most closely related group of workers that have been the subject of sociological investigation are lap-dancers/strippers (often referred to as ‘exotic dancers’ in the US where much of the research has been based). Recent research has explored their role in the night-time economy (Sanders, Hardy and Campbell, 2012). However, nightclub dancers are not the same as lap-dancers/strippers and the distinctions between these two groups will become clear throughout this thesis.

One of the key features which distinguishes nightclub dancers from lap-dancers/strippers is the type of venue in which they work. Lap-dancers work in strip clubs that specialise in providing sexual entertainment, whereas nightclub dancers (as their label suggests) dance in nightclubs. In their most recent *Nightclubs UK* market report, Mintel (2012) define nightclubs as:

establishments where the primary offer is that of dancing to music and where drink and food are offered as ancillary items. In addition, admission fee is normally, but not always, levied.

Under the Licensing Act 2003, nightclubs in England and Wales must be in possession of an appropriate Premises Licence; allowing the sale by retail of alcohol, the provision of regulated entertainment and the provision of late-night refreshment.

The same Mintel (2012) report estimates that there are around 1,600 pure nightclubs in the UK, although the figure could be as high as 2,500 if hybrid pub/bar/club venues are included. The nightclub industry is made up of mainly single site businesses and individually branded nightclubs, as opposed to multi-site chains. Based on a survey of around 25,000, Mintel claims that 16.9% of adults aged over 18 years visit nightclubs (2.9% visit nightclubs 'regularly', 14% visit nightclubs 'occasionally'). This is much lower than the figure of 27.4% in the 2006 report which was the latest available at the commencement of this PhD study. Indeed, the recession has hit nightclubs hard. In late October 2011 Luminar – the largest multi-site operator and owner of the branded nightclub chains Oceana and Liquid, went into administration. Lower footfall as a result of a squeeze on disposable income brought about by the recession, combined with impact of the smoking ban on alcohol sales were cited as the main reasons behind the failure of the business.

In addition, since the introduction of the revised licensing laws in 2003, nightclubs in the UK have faced increased competition from pubs and bars which can now open for longer hours but do not usually charge an admission fee. Previously, longer opening hours were unique to nightclubs (Mintel, 2006). One way in which nightclub managers can compensate for this loss of their unique selling point is by providing high quality entertainment. In this way, they can compete on quality of experience rather than price, in order to draw customers in and away from late opening pubs (Mintel, 2005). Dancers (including podium dancers, pole performers and choreographed stage dancers) are often hired by nightclubs to provide such entertainment, helping to create a good atmosphere, contribute to the theme of the venue and encourage customers on to the dance floor. This includes male dancers as well as female dancers. However, despite the prevalence of dancers as a form of entertainment in a number of nightclubs across the UK, the occupation has so far been unexplored.

The inspiration for studying nightclub dancers came from a participant in the researcher's Masters thesis (Parker, 2007) on students who engage in paid work during term-time. 'Jane' worked part-time as a podium dancer in a rock nightclub to supplement her income from her student loan. She was keen to stress that this was 'podium dancing - not stripping'. In order to get the job, Jane had to show the manager of an entertainment agency that she had experience and qualifications in dance. She then 'auditioned' for the job at the nightclub and was assessed by the owner on her performance, her skill at combining dance moves in a small space and whether she had

the right image and appearance for the rock club. Jane passed the audition and got the job, but the nightclub manager said that she should 'wear less' than the trousers and vest top she had worn to the audition in because 'it's what the punters want.' Consequently, when she started the job she danced in hot pants. She was also given glow-sticks and neon accessories so that she could be the designated 'Cyber Goth' in contrast to the 'Romantic Goths' who already danced at the club. She then learned the ropes of the job by 'shadowing' these other dancers. Before long, Jane was confident and proficient enough in her job to help others learn to become podium dancers at the nightclub.

The aim of this thesis is to answer the following main research question: *how do individuals learn to become successful nightclub dancers?* This can be broken into two constituent research questions: 1) *what* skills and attributes do individuals require in order to become successful nightclub dancers and 2) *how* do nightclub dancers learn to be successful and professional in their occupation.

Chapter 2 reviews previous academic literature and evaluates the extent to which this literature can provide a sound basis from which to address the research these questions. Literature on 'exotic dancers', combined with some evidence from the podium dancer 'Jane' from the researcher's MSc thesis (Parker, 2007) is used to suggest areas of literature, concepts and theoretical perspectives. These are then organised in relation to three areas of skills and attributes which individuals might require in order to become successful nightclub dancers: 'dance skills', 'looking the part and staying in shape' and 'performance'. The question of how might nightclub dancers learn to become successful and professional in their occupation is addressed through an exploration of the workplace learning literature, with a particular emphasis on 'participation-orientated' theories of learning (Sfard, 1998).

Chapter 3 critically evaluates the research methods used to collect and analyse data suitable for addressing the research questions. It is organised into three main parts which relate to different stages of the research process. Hence, the first part outlines and explains the research design and choice of methods. The second part explains and evaluates the actual process of collecting data, including a discussion of how participants were recruited and interviewed. The third part of methods chapter describes the way in which the data were analysed through the use of thematic coding. The chapter concludes that the data were of sufficient quality to stand up to analysis and address the research questions.

The three empirical chapters are based on three types of labour which nightclub dancers need to learn to perform in order to be successful: physical dance labour, aesthetic labour and emotional labour. Each of these chapters are divided into two parts in order to address each of the two constituent research questions outlined previously. Hence, Chapter 4 posits and addresses firstly the question of what makes a good dance labourer for nightclubs and secondly, how do individuals learn dance labour for nightclubs. As the sample included freestyle podium dancers, choreographed stage dancers and pole performers who performed both freestyle and choreographed routines, a distinction is made between nightclub dancers who perform dance labour to ‘known’ music and those who perform dance labour to ‘unknown music’. Each of these two types of dance labour requires different skills and have different implications for learning. These two types of dance labour are compared and contrasted to Felstead *et al.*’s (2007) examination of the ‘pre-choreography’ and ‘freestyle’ approaches to ETM (Exercise To Music). Eraut’s (2004) definitions of different types of non-formal learning, as well his definition of formal learning, were important in understanding how nightclub dancers learn to dance for nightclubs. The discussion also draws on the concept of activity systems (Engeström *et al.*, 1995) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1990).

Chapter 5 focuses on the nightclub dancers’ aesthetic labour (Warhurst *et al.*, 2000) and addresses the questions of what makes nightclub dancers appealing how they learn to make themselves look appealing. It suggests that nightclub dancers are selected based on their attractiveness and the extent to which they embody a particular corporate look (Witz *et al.*, 2003). Nightclubs are considered as ‘strategically sexualised’ organisations that prescribe and utilise the sex appeal of nightclub dancers as deliberate corporate strategy (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009). Nightclub dancers learn to enhance those aspects of their appearance that can be worked upon through communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which collectively identify what does and does not look good.

Chapter 6 focuses on emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) and addresses the questions of what makes a good performer and how nightclub dancers learn to perform like professionals. It draws on the work of Muphy (2003) and suggests that nightclub dancers need to learn how to perform emotional labour on the ‘centre stage’ for customers, which includes the performance of confidence and ‘loving it’. They also have to engage in *prescriptive* emotion management (Bolton, 2000) on the ‘organisational stage’ in the way they interact with co-workers and managers.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by bringing together and summarising the main findings from the three empirical chapters. It also highlights themes which intersect the three empirical chapters, before considering the implications of this study on nightclub dancers in terms of its contributions to academic literature and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The lack of research on nightclub dancers discussed in Chapter 1 meant that there was no obvious starting point from which to begin a review of previous literature. However, the area of research most closely related to nightclub dancing available has explored the work of lap-dancers/strippers. The majority of this work has been based in the United States, where the term ‘exotic dancer’ is widely used. “An ‘exotic dancer’ is defined as one who removes all or most of her clothing in a sexually suggestive fashion to a paying audience in a performance environment” (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970 quoted in Bernard *et al.*, 2003). Exotic dancers may be referred to as ‘strippers,’ ‘stripteasers,’ ‘table dancers,’ ‘lap dancers,’ ‘go-go dancers’ and ‘adult entertainers.’ In the UK, due to changes in licensing brought in under the Policing and Crime Act 2009, strip clubs in England and Wales are being reclassified as Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs). A guidance document produced by the Home Office for Local Authorities defined SEVs (in reference to the Policing and Crime Act 2009) in the following way:

A sexual entertainment venue is defined as “any premises at which relevant entertainment is provided before a live audience for the financial gain of the organiser or the entertainer.”

The meaning of ‘relevant entertainment’ is “any live performance or live display of nudity which is of such a nature that, ignoring financial gain, it must reasonably be assumed to be provided solely or principally for the purpose of sexually stimulating any member of an audience (whether by verbal or other means).”

(Home Office, 2010: 7)

‘Nudity’ is defined in the same document as follows: “In the case of a woman, it means exposure of her nipples, pubic area, genitals or anus and, in the case of a man; it means exposure of his pubic area, genitals or anus” (Home Office, 2010: 8).

The performance of nightclub dancers – who are the focus of this study – does not involve any nudity (according to the above definition) and the entertainment they

provide is not '*solely or principally* for the purpose of sexually stimulating any member of an audience' (emphasis added). Hence, although they may wear little clothing, nightclub dancers perform in venues (i.e. nightclubs, as defined in Chapter 1) that would not be classified as SEVs. Additionally, unlike 'exotic dancers', they do not receive tips from audience members as payment for their performance. Rather, they are paid a set fee by the nightclub or through their events entertainment agency.

However, despite these differences between the work of nightclub dancers and exotic dancers, both groups are dancers employed in the night-time economy to provide entertainment. Therefore, research on this area, combined with some evidence from the podium dancer 'Jane' who was referred to in Chapter 1, helped to suggest *what skills and attributes individuals might require in order to become successful nightclub dancers*. These skills and attributes are organised into the three main areas of skills – 'dance skills', 'looking the part and staying in shape' and 'performance'. These are then related to and organised under the headings of broader theoretical concepts and ideas provided by different areas of literature. These concepts include: body techniques, habitus, aesthetic labour, body projects, emotional labour, sexualised labour and performativity. In this way, the usefulness of these concepts is evaluated in relation to addressing the first of the two research questions. The discussion of this literature also partly suggests some answers to the second research question of *how might nightclub dancers learn to be successful and professional in their occupation?* However, this second question is mainly addressed through a review of the literature on workplace learning with an emphasis on 'participation orientated' theories of learning.

What skills and attributes might individuals require in order to become successful nightclub dancers?

In order to get her job as a podium dancer in a rock nightclub, 'Jane' had an interview with the manager of an events entertainment agency which specialised in providing 'alternative' dancers and other performers to rock/metal themed nightclubs and events. In this interview, Jane had to prove that she had experience and qualifications in dance. She produced official certificates and described how she had began ballet dancing at 3 years old and had been trained in various types of dance. Jane also had to demonstrate a number of skills in her audition for the nightclub manager of

the rock club. Clearly, she had to demonstrate her ability to improvise a combination of dance moves which could be performed in a small space in time to the music. However, the nightclub manager's comments that she should 'wear less' (i.e. show more flesh) and Jane's acceptance that this is 'what the punters want' reflected an expectation that part of her work was to appear sexually attractive. Once Jane got the job, her 'look' as a dancer was developed further with the addition of neon accessories so that she could become the club's resident 'Cyber-Goth' dancer and appeal to those patrons who also identified themselves as such. Hence, her existing skills and attributes continued to be developed and she also learnt new skills on-the-job by 'shadowing' the other dancers. In this way, Jane became proficient at her job.

Therefore, the following discussion draws on a range of literature to suggest what sorts of skills and attributes individuals require in order to become successful nightclub dancers. This includes those skills and attributes which are required in order to obtain employment, as well as those which are developed as nightclub dancers progress from novice to professional throughout their careers (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Dance Skills: Body techniques and habitus

As discussed previously, in order to get her job as a podium dancer, Jane had to prove that she had dance skill and experience verbally in an interview with the manager of an events entertainment agency as well as physically in her 'audition' for the nightclub manager. However, dance skill and experience is a form of embodied knowledge and Nick Crossley (2007) points out that embodied knowledge is potentially difficult to research because it cannot be converted into discursive knowledge without distorting it. Embodied knowledge is based on the learner grasping practical principles behind movements in the act of doing them; there is no point in asking how someone learnt to swim because they just do it. Crossley argues that Mauss' (1973) concept of 'body techniques' provides a way of converting embodied knowledge into a researchable format.

Mauss (1973; originally 1936) defines *techniques of the body* as 'the ways in which from society to society men [sic] know how to use their bodies' (p.70). He developed the concept when he made observations about variations in the 'art of using the human body' (p.73). For example, during the First World War he noticed that the

English troops did not know how to use French spades and vice versa, which revealed that the technique of digging had to be learnt collectively. He also observed how English troops marched differently to French troops and could not march to the rhythm of French buglers and drummers. Mauss also observed that French women, on the one hand, were beginning to adopt walking styles that they had seen in the movies. On the other hand, Maori women in New Zealand had a particular style of walking which involved a loose-jointed swinging of the hips which was taught to girls at an early age. He also observed that swimming techniques had changed during his lifetime, and that the ability to squat diminished between childhood and adulthood in France, yet remained more common amongst adults in other societies. Hence, Mauss suggested that certain techniques of the body were specific to particular societies or varied in style between them. There were also variations in type, form and style of body technique within societies; particularly between social groups such as between men and women. Body techniques were, therefore, not developed by the individual but collectively through the transmission of traditions through education within particular social settings.

According to Mauss (1973) children and adults learn techniques of the body by imitating those actions which are shown to be successful by people they respect who proficiently perform them. Focusing on how particular body techniques are taught and learnt in context therefore allows researchers to gain an understanding of embodied knowledge at the point it is transferred. Crossley (2007) points out that in the teaching of body techniques (such as a particular form of dance), situations arise when students struggle to learn a movement because they do not 'get it' and so teachers have to find ways of making 'it' more *explicit*. This means that if the researcher can witness this process they also have an opportunity to understand 'it' and how it is being learnt. Crossley suggests that participant-observation is therefore an ideal method for doing this, but one could also possibly ask teachers what they did last time a student struggled to grasp a particular move. This means that Mauss' work on body techniques has been useful to researchers of embodied learning and can be readily applied to a study on nightclub dancers. Considering the body techniques of nightclub dancers would help to break down and identify what their performance typically consists of; what sets them apart from other types of dancers and, importantly how they learnt to move in their particular way.

Additionally, in his discussion of techniques of the body, Mauss (1973) also drew the concept of *habitus*. After being developed further by Pierre Bourdieu (1990) it became another key concept for researchers of embodied learning. According to Jenkins (2002:74) its translation from Latin literally refers to ‘a habitual or typical condition, state or appearance, particularly of the body.’ Mauss used *habitus* to refer to the ‘collective and individual practical reason’ (1973:73) which underpins the techniques of the body performed by a person occupying a particular social context. Bourdieu’s definition of *habitus* also suggests that it is a form of collectively produced and shared practical knowledge which underpins embodied action, but Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* not only informs techniques of the body but ‘practice’ in a broader sense than Mauss’ use. *Habitus* is a system of practical sense making which works at a sub-conscious level to produce, structure and organise the everyday practice of individuals in the social world:

Systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of the conductor.

(Bourdieu, 1990: 53, emphasis added)

Dispositions are socially produced, predisposed tendencies towards particular ways of acting, thinking and feeling which influence behaviour in a range of situations. Therefore, *habitus* refers to the whole system of dispositions which people unconsciously draw upon in order to successfully navigate their way through everyday practice in social life.

Bourdieu also draws on the concept of ‘bodily *hexis*’ to shift the focus of *habitus* more specifically to bodily movements. He argues that the symbolic power of a social order works partly through the control of people’s bodies through the use of imperatives such as ‘sit up straight’ and ‘hold your knife in your left hand’ (1990:69). The focus of such imperatives is on seemingly insignificant physical and verbal manners which form an implicit pedagogy of respect for the ‘natural’ established order, without requiring any

explicit knowledge or discussion of the underlying system. Bodily hexis is the outcome of this:

Bodily hexis is the political mythology realized, embodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking.

(1990: 70)

The notion of bodily hexis therefore has a strong resemblance to what Mauss would consider to be the habitus (in part because hexis is the Greek translation of habitus). The overlap between Mauss and Bourdieu's theories are particularly apparent in Bourdieu's discussion of the differences between the movements of men and women in the region of Kabylia in Algeria. For example, a Kabyle man, on the one hand, is expected to walk purposively, at a steady and determined pace with a large stride, whilst looking forward and refusing devious glances, words or gestures, and look straight into the face of the person he is meeting. A Kabyle woman, on the other hand, is expected to walk carefully with a slight stoop, avoiding a heavy stride that would cause excessive swinging of the hips and keep her eyes fixed on the ground in front of her, particularly if she has to walk past the men's assembly. The differing bodily hexis of Kabyle men and women are underpinned by systems of oppositions such as bent/straight, upwards/downwards and outwards/inwards, which implicitly become naturalised within the social order. Therefore, Bourdieu argues that 'the relation of the body is a fundamental dimension of the habitus' (1990: 72) because the fundamental structures and expressive systems of a group are instilled through schemes of perception which intervene between the individual and his/her body. These processes of acquisition and reproduction are learned by the body and do not result in knowledge that one has, but in 'something that one is' (p73). This means that Bourdieu's theories are particularly useful for considering the way in which individuals' embodied learning is a process of becoming which results in them literally embodying a particular habitus; for example, of nightclub dancer.

Hence, the discussion below focuses on research which has explored the habitus of the (US) army, ballet, capoeira, and circuit training which individuals come to embody. Some of this research also draws on Mauss' notion of body techniques. This is partly a result of the close relationship between Mauss' and Bourdieu's theories. However, it is also apparent that drawing on the notion of body techniques alongside

Bourdieu allows the researcher to explore the specific shifts in bodily position and deportment which are involved in the process of displaying and reproducing a particular habitus. Additionally, a limitation of Bourdieu's discussion of habitus (and hexis) is that he tends to over-emphasise the idea that this process is unconscious and implicit. This neglects that body techniques can be and are taught and, as Crossley (2007) has highlighted, in order for body techniques to be taught and learnt; teachers have to find ways of making the implicit embodied knowledge which they rely upon to perform particular techniques more explicit to their students.

Brian Lande's (2007) ethnographic study of US army cadets is a clear demonstration of how Mauss' and Bourdieu's theories can be utilised to understand learning which is clearly embodied. Lande argues that learning to be a soldier involves becoming a member of a specific military culture. However, for Lande this was not just an abstract intellectual process involving the internalisation of norms, values, beliefs and cognitive structures which shape identity and guide action. Rather, this happens at the level of the body which is transformed through the process of becoming a soldier. Therefore, he argues that 'military culture is largely a *military habitus*' (2007: 97, original emphasis) which generates specific body techniques. Hence, there are specific, controlled breathing techniques which cadets must come to embody in order for them to be proficient at shooting on target, running for long distances and even shouting commands. For example, when conducting participant-observation for his study, Lande started hyperventilating whilst trying to run. A senior cadet told him to slow down his breathing and bring it under control by breathing in through his nose and out through his mouth. Lande points out that this breathing technique is learned by cadets who are attentive to what is required for them to become an accomplished cadet. Such techniques of the body are incorporated to form dispositions which modify their habitus into that of a soldier.

However, whilst Lande's study is a good demonstration of the power of body techniques and habitus, the types of body techniques that individuals learn as part of becoming a soldier are very different from the body techniques that nightclub dancers would need to learn in order to proficiently perform dance moves. Wainwright, Williams and Turner (2006) explore three forms of habitus in the field of ballet, which can be seen as a more closely related vocation to nightclub dancing. These are the *individual*, *institutional* and *choreographic* habitus. The *individual* habitus of a particular ballet dancer is unique as it is mainly a result of his or her physical capital,

which consists of embodied attributes and technical abilities – for example stature and speed. This physical capital influences what roles dancers play in a performance and the ways in choreographers work with dancers' bodies whilst inscribing their style of dance steps upon them (or *choreographic* habitus). Each (national) ballet school/company produces its *institutional* habitus, which produces dancers who literally embody the unique culture, discipline and style of their schooling. For example, Megan - a person responsible for holding auditions and selecting dancers for the Royal Ballet (London) - could tell where a dancer had been trained by looking at her posture at the *barre*; how she stands, how she supports her arms and how she uses her head. Differences in institutional habitus are partly a result of variation in *choreographic* habitus between schools/companies. Each ballet school is influenced by particular choreographers and this forms traditions in what is taught and how it is taught there. For example, the Royal Ballet is highly influenced by the choreography of Frederick Ashton and Kenneth Macmillan. The discussion of these three forms of ballet habitus has shown that they are interrelated and that they are both a product of and perpetuate the reproduction of variation in body techniques within the wider ballet habitus.

On the one hand, it would seem that Wainwright *et al.*'s (2006) analysis could easily be applied to a study of nightclub dancers. This would be particularly useful for considering the skills and learning of those who have been trained formally at a dance academy or those that have had a lot of ballet lessons, such as the podium dancer 'Jane' referred to earlier. On the other hand, becoming a professional ballet dancer – in common with becoming a soldier – comprises a complete way of life and this would not be the case for most nightclub dancers, who might have a 'day job' to supplement their income from 'gigs' which are largely confined to one or two nights on a weekend. Indeed, at the time that 'Jane' worked as a podium dancer she was first and foremost a student and viewed her podium dancing almost as a paid leisure pursuit. Additionally, a lot of nightclub dancing is 'freestyle' podium dancing and so the choreographic habitus might not have as strong an influence as it would for ballet dancers. These factors place some limitations on the extent to which Wainwright *et al.*'s work might be applied to a study of nightclub dancers.

However, Delamont and Stephens (2008) have applied Wainwright *et al.*'s notions of *institutional* and *individual* habitus to explore the Brazilian dance/martial art/game of *capoeira* in the UK and demonstrate that these notions can be applied to other areas. Like nightclub dancing, capoeira occupies a relatively small portion of most

UK students' lives, yet like ballet dancers successful capoeira students will still be involved in (re)producing their institutional habitus as well as an individual capoeira habitus. Additionally, capoeira can be performed in bars and nightclubs and as it is partly a fight/game it is not necessarily choreographed as much as ballet. Indeed, breakdancing (aka b-boying) is a form of freestyle dance which is popular amongst nightclub dancers and this can be performed as a battle between two or more dancers. Hence, capoeira perhaps has more in common with nightclub dancing than ballet.

Delamont and Stephens point out that the capoeira equivalent of the ballet school/company is the group. Each group has a unique historical lineage based around the strong influence of the famous Brazilian *mestre* (capoeira master) or *mestres* who founded it. Loyalty to one's mestre is a core value in capoeira. 'Achilles' – the main capoeira teacher in the study – is a member of the *Beribazu* group and so the *institutional* habitus of his students is the habitus of Beribazu. Using two fieldwork extracts, Delamont and Stephens show that this habitus is apparent from the following: the name Beribazu on the students' uniforms, the teacher's authority; his insistence that experienced students adjust their game to encourage beginners, his emphasis on students playing the special capoeira musical instruments frequently and correctly and his teaching of two different styles of capoeira. All of these are central aspects of the Beribazu *institutional* habitus.

Delamont and Stephens (2008) also observed the *individual* embodied habitus in capoeira which was made explicit when Achilles explained the requirements which the students needed in order to be awarded their third (brown) belt (different coloured belts correspond to different levels of expertise like in karate). These were a mixture of visible, technical competencies and more tacit ones. They included: physical ability (being able to perform moves stylishly), grasp of terminology and vocabulary (Portuguese names of moves and lyrics to songs), musical ability, grasping the subtleties of the game, participating in class (co-operatively) and showing loyalty (to Achilles and his group through participating in public performances etc). Each student who was deemed by Achilles to be ready to be awarded their third belt demonstrated mastery of each of these competencies to varying degrees. For example, some students had advanced physical ability but did not show loyalty or did not know the names of the moves they are performing. Each student's unique mixture of mastered competencies comprised their *individual* capoeira habitus.

Combining the work of Wainwright *et al.* (2006) and Delamont and Stephens (2008), one can begin to see how the notions of the individual habitus, the institutional habitus and to a lesser extent the choreographic habitus might be applied to a study of nightclub dancers. Nightclub dancers who have been professionally trained may (re)produce the institutional habitus of their dance academy, which will affect what types of dance they are trained in and how they are trained (including the influence of the choreographic habitus of the teachers). However, even those dancers who have not been professionally trained may reproduce the institutional habitus of their events entertainment agencies and possibly even the nightclubs they dance in. For example, nightclubs may play music (e.g. 'Hip-Hop') that lends itself to a particular dance style (e.g. 'Street'). Additionally, some events entertainment agencies specialise in providing a particular type of dancer; for example 'Jane's' agency specialised in providing 'alternative' dancers and performers for rock/metal themed nightclubs (or club nights). Like the ballet dancers and capoeira students, a nightclub dancer would also have an individual habitus; a dancer's unique mixture of mastered competencies which is partly influenced by the dancer's stature, strength, stamina as well as gender and physical appearance. These two (or possibly three) forms of habitus interact to produce variations in body techniques within a wider nightclub dancer habitus and therefore variations nightclub dancers' performances.

Nick Crossley (2004) also draws on the concepts of habitus and body techniques in his discussion of his research on circuit training, which with its aerobic exercise component and its use of music is easy to relate to a study of nightclub dancers. Specifically, he coins the concept of '*reflexive* body techniques' to focus on those body techniques which are specifically employed to modify the agent, with exercise being the key example of this. Crossley's concept relates heavily to the idea of the body as a project (which will be explored in further detail below), but his article also explores how the mastery of body techniques and other forms of embodied knowledge contributes to the production of a circuit training habitus. At one level, he argues, circuit training is a sequence of reflexive body techniques. However, simply mastering these individual body techniques is not sufficient for successfully participating in and completing the circuit training session. Newcomers must also gain a 'feel for the game' of circuit training; they must learn the 'language' of circuit training used to describe these body techniques in order to perform the correct bodily movement at the right time, as well as how to organise their movements in terms of lived pacing and space.

For example, in terms of learning the language, during the aerobic phase of the circuit training session an instructor will shout out the names of body techniques in succession. When the instructor shouts ‘grapevine,’ participants must not only know how to perform the series of movements which comprise this body technique, but also how to time the shift to this move from the previous one. This might involve modifying the last repetition of the previous move so that they are in the right position for the next. This has to be done automatically; otherwise participants will fall out of time because there is no time allowed for them to think about it. In order for the aerobic phase to be successfully completed, all members of the class must perform all sequences at the same time in the same order and so experienced members develop a shared sense of rhythm. Hence, newcomers tend to fall out of time or perform the wrong exercise at the wrong time. Their incompetence is a result of them not having learnt the specific body techniques and being respond to the verbal commands without thinking and also because they have not developed a feel for the rhythm of the session. Crossley argues that this ‘demonstrates that the habitus of the circuit training is both structured and structuring’; the habitus of newcomers is unstructured and they cannot reproduce the ‘structure of the game’ (2004: 47). Once they have incorporated the body techniques and practical sense required they can begin to acquire the circuit trainer’s habitus and play an active role in reproducing it as a social practice.

Another type of embodied knowledge which is required for circuit training is a practical sense of the timing and pacing of the class. The circuit training session is formally timed externally by the instructor; it begins and ends at a specific time, has prescribed stages which must be progressed through and there is a time limit for how long one should spend at a station doing its particular activity. However, Crossley points out that the session is also timed internally by participants’ own sense of timing and pacing, which allows them to spread their activity equally within each station and throughout a session. Hence, newcomers who have not mastered this feel for the ‘lived temporality’ of the class are prone to, for example, putting in too much effort in the first half of the session and then becoming exhausted and having to stop. However, experienced circuit trainers might also have their sense of timing ‘thrown off’ if the instructor does not time the session correctly. Newcomers must also master their practical sense of space in a circuit training session. This requires knowledge of the equipment at each station, how to use it and also how they can use the same equipment in different ways to vary the type of work-out and its results; ‘Steps and dumbbells have

a practical meaning in exercise but only in virtue of the ... body techniques, which appropriate and utilise them' (Crossley, 2004: 51). For example, through experience they can learn to judge the weight of a dumbbell by its appearance and so what is possible for them to do with it. As they master how to use the equipment and perform the activity at each station correctly, newcomers must also learn to navigate their way around the space of the room and move around the circuit smoothly and in the right direction. They can learn this partly through following others before them.

Some of the findings and ideas from Crossley's (2004) paper are particularly relevant for a study of nightclub dancers. Firstly, learning 'the language' and developing a sense of rhythm would be particularly important for learning to become a nightclub dancer. The idea of learning the language would be most applicable to those who are being trained or have had formal training in dance and those who might be learning a choreographed routine to perform at a special nightclub event. Such dancers would need to be able to perform the correct body technique on the command without thinking. Developing a feel for the rhythm is obviously essential for nightclub dancers who would have to fit their body techniques to the rhythm of the music being played in the nightclub, again without thinking too much. Dancers also have to master a practical sense of timing and pacing. Nightclub dancers could be expected to dance constantly for an hour at a time (as was the case with 'Jane') and may not be able to see a clock; but if they do not pace themselves correctly they could become exhausted before the end of their set. Nightclub dancers also have to develop a sense of the space they are dancing in and adapt their body techniques accordingly. All of this embodied knowledge and skill would be combined to produce a performance that is visually impressive to nightclub patrons.

There is, however, a limitation in the capacity of the studies discussed above to suggest what and how nightclub dancers might learn. In all cases, there is some form of leader who is teaching and directing body techniques or at least supervising them in some way, whereas nightclub dancers are not *always* led. Although some may have had or are taking structured dance training, other nightclub dancers may be entirely self-taught. Additionally, whilst some dancers who are part of a troupe might perform a choreographed routine, a lot of nightclub dancers have to improvise their own individual performances. This limits the extent to which the studies that have drawn upon the concepts of the habitus and body techniques discussed above can be applied to the present research project.

However, some research on exotic dancers has explored how dance skills are developed in the absence of a clear instructor or leader. The concepts of body techniques and habitus have not been employed heavily, but researchers have focused on the pre-job and on-the-job socialisation of dancers. This includes the role of dance experience prior to commencement of employment as exotic dancers and the development of dance skills and other related physical capabilities throughout their careers. For example, Boles and Garbin's (1974) study of female strippers (based on interviews with and field observations of exotic dancers in the US) found that the majority of the strippers in their sample had previous experience in entertainment. All but two of the feature dancers (high skilled, professional strippers that toured clubs on short term contracts) in their sample had previously been employed in 'show business' in occupations such as chorus line dancers, burlesque dancers and theatrical actresses. All of the feature dancers reported that they had formal training in dance. Some of these had received extensive training in stripping prior to performing in front of an audience. This involved learning basic dance steps, developing an appropriate act and the utilisation of a gimmick or trademark under guidance from an expert in stripping. More than half of the 'house girls' (non-touring, non-contractual strippers who danced one club for an extended period) claimed that they had professional dance training and the rest had some training in music or drama (Boles and Garbin, 1974). Therefore, formal training combined with experience played an important role in these strippers' pre-job socialisation and learning.

However, more recent research by Lewis (1998) which was based on a larger sample and focused specifically on how women learn to strip suggests a slightly different picture with regards to exotic dancers' pre-job socialisation. Using data from field observations (conducted in several cities in southern Ontario, Canada) and in-depth interviews with exotic dancers and other key informants, she found that pre-job socialisation was more likely to take the form of some experience in entertainment related work, rather than professional training in dance, music or theatre or preparation for exotic dancing by an agent. Informal 'anticipatory' socialisation played an important role for women entering exotic dancing. For example, some women reported that they had been curious about dancing so they spent times in strip clubs and with dancers to gain familiarity and find out if it was something they could do. Other women in the sample did not originally plan to enter exotic dancing but gradually drifted into the occupation through associations with people in the industry or working as a waitress in

a strip club. Two women had agents who found them work in exotic dancing, but they reported that these agents did little to prepare them for stripping. Bott (2006) also found that vast majority of the British migrant lap dancers she interviewed in Tenerife had not planned to enter stripping, but had drifted into the occupation from bar work because it brought significantly higher earnings than bar work and the other service sector jobs available.

Dressel and Peterson's (1982) study on the recruitment and socialisation of male strippers suggests that males entering exotic dancing have much less pre-job socialisation than has been reported for female strippers. Using evidence from interviews with 14 male strippers, they found that unlike the female strippers in Boles and Garbin's (1974) study and Lewis's (1998) study, few had prior experience in entertainment and only two participants had been involved in previous work which involved bodily display (one as a stripper in another club and the other as a nude art model). There was certainly no formal training available for males. The dancers reported that they did not know what to expect prior to entering the occupation, particularly as males were usually prohibited from attending male strip shows. Additionally, during the time of their study male stripping was a fairly new occupation. However, like female strippers, informal contacts and connections to the stripping business (such as knowing male or female strippers or having a friend who had been to a male strip show) played an important role in their recruitment into the occupation.

Therefore, whilst some exotic dancers may have experience of dance or entertainment and may even be formally trained, it does not seem to be essential to them gaining employment. However, Jane's experience as a podium dancer suggests that dance experience and formal training in dance is much more important for individuals wishing to become nightclub dancers. This is mainly because nightclub dancers are providing entertainment in the form of a performance of impressive dance moves to a general audience; where as exotic dancers are providing sexual entertainment. Additionally, exotic dancing is a more stigmatised occupation than nightclub dancing and one would expect that employers of exotic dancers would not be able to fill vacancies if they required individuals with experience or qualifications in dance. All this suggests that a leader or instructor may play a role in the pre-job learning of nightclub dancers, but less so for exotic dancers.

Research which explores exotic dancers' development of their dance skills and other embodied capabilities *on-the-job* is perhaps more relevant to a study of nightclub

dancers, although the findings and discussion related to this particular aspect of exotic dancing is fairly limited. The podium dancer Jane explained how when she auditioned for the job and when she first started that she ‘shadowed’ the other dancers. Hence, Jane was expected to improve and refine her dance skills on-the-job, partly by mimicking the other dancers as there was no formal training with a dedicated instructor or time set aside. The research on exotic dancers also suggests that upon gaining employment in a strip club dancers are expected to develop their dance and performance skills in order to be successful in their occupation, but without formal training. For example, Boles and Garbin (1974), in their study of female exotic dancers, point out that strippers must learn to project themselves to the audience (considered as important as developing an original gimmick); the tease (removing clothes in a sexually provocative manner); what order to take off clothes; tricks of the trade - such as wetting the bottom of their shoes to prevent them from slipping on stage; and how to deal with hostile customers.

In Lewis’s (1998) study, experienced strip club staff played an important role in on-the-job learning and socialisation. As there was little formal training, novice dancers learnt how to be successful at their job through interacting with and observing more experienced dancers. This included how to dress, dance and interact with customers in order to maximise tips, as well as how to handle customers that were breaking the club’s rules. Similarly, based on a period of observation at the strip club ‘Paper Dolls’ and interviews with dancers and other staff members, Murphy (2003) found that some of the strippers had mentors who helped them to learn the tricks of the trade, such as how to spot a wealthy customer by looking at what he wears and how to get his attention and ask him if he wants a table dance. Novice dancers who did not have a mentor had to learn through subtle observation as there was fierce competition for customers’ tips.

The male strippers in Dressel and Peterson’s (1982) study did not receive any formal training in exotic dancing at all and were expected to be fairly self-reliant in terms of dance skills. However, they could improve their tips by mimicking and picking up cues from other dancers, and sometimes asked for help with learning and mastering specific dance moves. Other important job requirements were learnt through socialisation such as how to properly place the g-string to prevent accidental exposure of the genitals during the performance and remembering to hold it in place when receiving tips from patrons who placed notes under the string. Keeping their genitals covered at all times was an embodied aspect of the ‘occupational code of ethics’ (Boles

and Garbin, 1974) that the male strippers had to learn, although this code was not formalized in any way. This code also included the stipulation that strippers should not touch that area during the performance and not mingle with the audience during the show. Norms governing strippers' interaction with the audience stipulated that the dancers should not allow audience members to touch their genitals, that they should not have sex with customers on the premises and that they should not date more than one woman from the same social group who attended the show. Dancers also had to learn who the good and bad tippers were and how to move quickly between customers to maximise tips without the customers feeling 'short-changed.'

Montemurro (2001) points out that in the non-institutionalised setting of the male strip club, loaded with hypersexuality, intoxication and partial (sometimes full) male nudity, "it is essential that boundaries be drawn and norms be established to keep the entertainment under control and within the law" (p. 277). At the case study male strip club 'The Hideaway' there were three main rules that the dancers had to follow: (1) dancers should maintain a professional demeanour at all times; (2) no drinking; and (3) no prolonged contact with any particular patron. In exploring social control in a male strip club, Montemurro draws on the work of Edwards (1979) and suggests that male strippers are controlled by both *simple* and *bureaucratic* methods. Bureaucratic control involves the use of formal written rules. At The Hideaway, the rules regarding drinking, prolonged contact with customers and maintaining a professional demeanour were written in the dancers' contract. The dancers also had to adhere to the laws of the city and the state which stipulate that a certain portion of the dancers' backside should be covered. These rules were also embedded in the social relations of the club. For example, if a dancer tried to purchase a drink from the bar while he was working the bartender would not serve him. Simple control is based on a personal relationship between employees and their employer. At The Hideaway the dancers' behaviour was controlled through the manager's presence at the club every night and encouraging the staff to report rule violations at meetings. A similar form of control was also used by the manager of the female strip club studied by Murphy (2003). The manager of 'Paper Dolls' used a panoptic gaze (Foucault, 1977) whereby he did not tell the dancers when he was working and could be watching them at any time, thereby encouraging dancers' self-regulation. As a nightclub dancers' occupation is also fairly non-institutionalised, this raises the questions of whether there are occupational norms for nightclub dancers.

Overall, the research on exotic dancers suggests that social networks incorporating experienced dancers play an important role in determining what dance skills and (other embodied skills) are learnt by novice exotic dancers on the job. Unfortunately, the extent to which exotic dancers can learn these skills from each other is limited by their competition for customers' cash. Nightclub dancers, however, do not have to compete for tips as they are paid a fee either directly by the nightclub or through their events entertainment agency. This suggests nightclub dancers' embodied skills might be improved and benefit from a more cooperative relationship with their colleagues at the club(s) in which they work. It is also likely that events entertainment agencies like the one which Jane worked for would produce an additional network of dancers from which to learn new dance moves. However, with a lack of previous research on nightclub dancers, this is only speculation, although the literature on exotic dancing does raise the question: what is the role of more experienced colleagues in the development of nightclub dancers' skill in dance?

The emphasis on the social aspects of learning embodied skills in the exotic dancing literature and the role of these aspects in what and how nightclub dancers learn also suggests that the concept of body techniques could be utilised well in the present study. The question is: what types of body techniques do nightclub dancers need to learn and how do they learn them? The related concept of habitus could also be usefully applied to this study of nightclub dancers. However, before the possibility of a nightclub dancer habitus can be considered, there are further skills that nightclub dancers might require which need to be explored.

Looking the Part and Staying in Shape

When Jane got her job as a podium dancer, as well telling her to 'wear less', the manager of the club also decided that her 'look' could be developed further so that she could become the club's resident 'Cyber-Goth.' This would appeal to patrons who preferred this style of music and image over the more traditional 'Romantic Goth' style of the other dancers who were already well established at the rock club. Consequently, 'Jane' was given glow sticks and other fluorescent accessories that are typical of the Cyber style. This suggests that as well as dance skill and experience, dancers are also recruited based on their appearance and are required to continue to 'look the part' once

they obtain employment. Hence, they not only have to be reasonably attractive and well groomed in order to obtain employment, but they also have to put a lot of ‘work’ into maintaining their appearance; looking good is both an attribute and a skill which nightclub dancers require in order to be successful in their occupation. Therefore, this section begins by reviewing the growing body of literature on what has now been termed ‘aesthetic labour’ (Warhurst, Nickson, Witz and Cullen, 2000), a concept which has been developed largely in relation to selection and recruitment in the service industry.

Looking the Part: Aesthetic Labour

Hochschild’s (1983) classic research on flight attendants considered the role of aesthetics in the selection and recruitment of employees as well as their ability to perform ‘emotional labour’ (which will be explored further below). She found that airline companies sought to recruit female flight attendants who had a particular physical appearance. For example, United Airlines sought for female staff with an appearance associated with a (Anglo-American) ‘girl next door.’ For most companies this also entailed meeting the required weight-to-height ratio, having a gleaming smile and a clear complexion. Delta Air Lines recruits were trained to maintain a generally well groomed appearance, including the application of the required make-up. If a flight attendant weighed a pound over her required weight during one of the regular weight checks she would have to take action to ‘rectify the problem’ or face disciplinary action. Delta Air Lines were actually less strict with regards to controlling its employees’ appearance in comparison to other airlines. For example, PSA (Pacific Southwest Airlines) took the thigh measurements of their female flight attendants and Pan Am flight attendants were required to wear eyeshadow that was the same shade of blue as their uniform. According to research by Tyler and Abbot (1998), similar practices were occurring in the airline industry fifteen years later. During an airline recruitment session they observed, some of the applicants were rejected for reasons such as:

the applicant was too old, the applicant’s skin was blemished, the applicant’s hair was too short, too messy or too severe, the applicants nails were too short or bitten, the applicant’s posture was poor or the applicant’s legs were too chubby. Other applicants were rejected on the basis that their weight was not considered to be in proportion to their height, they were too introverted, they lacked ‘poise and style’. Others were rejected because, as one of the recruitment interviewers

noted, they had a 'common accent'. One applicant was rejected by recruitment personnel on the basis that her teeth were too prominent in relation to her other facial features.

(Tyler and Abbot, 1998: 441-442)

An 'aesthetic performance' was required of successful applicants and this continued into their employment. Their bodies were the material signifier of the airline's 'personality'; an efficient airline was signified by a 'slender' flight attendant. Therefore, female flight attendants were weighed regularly and their uniforms were labelled one size bigger than their actual size in order to encourage them to watch their weight. Additionally, as in Hochschild's (1983) study, the airline in Tyler and Abbot's (1998) study often selected staff that did not quite 'match up' to the company's ideal in terms of appearance so that they would try to compensate for their apparent aesthetic shortcomings by working hard to smile warmly and please passengers.

However, such recruitment practices have not been confined to the airline industry. For example, McDowel (1995: 77) notes that Asda seek to recruit people with a 'well groomed appearance' and that 'maintaining an appropriate weight and size' is a condition of employment for Disney theme park employees. Similarly, Adkins (1995) found evidence that hotel and leisure park staff were selected and recruited based partly on their appearance. For example, at 'Fun Land,' the female bar staff were selected by the male bar manager because they were judged to be attractive and they were fully aware of this. Most of the waitresses in Fun Land's cafés and restaurants were aged between 16 and 21 and were selected for 'brightness' in their appearance, which meant being 'attractive and looking fresh' (p.105). Two female applicants who applied for a job in the catering division of the park were sent over to the parks manager to apply for ride operator jobs because their 'butch' appearance did not match up to the manager's ideals for catering staff.

Adkins points out that the appearance of male staff in Fun Land did not have as significant an impact on selection, recruitment and employment as it did for female staff. For example, the few male catering division staff (most of whom were only working in catering rather than as ride operators because they were too young [under 18] to operate machinery) did not have to be attractive and the male bar staff only had to have a 'smart' appearance. Similarly, Adkins shows that the uniform requirements for

female staff at Global Hotel were more detailed and prescriptive than those for the male staff. On the one hand, the hotel staff manual instructed its female employees to:

Arrive promptly for duty at 7.00am dressed in uniform: navy blue skirt, white/blue blouse, blue or black shoes. Hair should be clean and tied away from the face if long. Tights in a neutral colour, stockings and shoes should be well cared for. A minimum of jewellery to be worn. Entire appearance is to look attractive, clean and fresh.

Male employees, on the other hand, were simply asked to:

Arrive promptly for duty at 7 am wearing Global limited uniform: navy blue trousers, white shirt, navy blue jacket. Shoes and socks should be black or navy blue.

There are specifications for how hair, make-up and jewellery should be worn for female staff where as the uniform description for male staff is confined clothing only. Adkins argues that at Fun Land and Global Hotel women were recruited based on their apparently 'natural' attributes of being attractive and wanting to take care over their appearance (as well as their 'natural' warmth and friendliness, i.e. their ability to perform emotional labour). Similar arguments have also been made by Tyler and Abbot (1998) and Hochschild (1983). Hence, Tyler and Abbot note that although only female staff had to endure weight checks and were under far more pressure to maintain a 'polished' appearance, male and female staff were given the same dry cleaning and make-up budget. Women were required to maintain their sexual attractiveness through regular visits to health and fitness centres and hair-dressing salons, but this was at their own expense because it was expected that women enjoy such activities as part of their leisure.

However, some of the research on *professional* interactive service workers (as opposed to the routine service work sector) suggests a slightly different picture with regards to gender and aesthetics. Although there is a relative lack of the use of explicit dress codes and uniforms in such occupations such as banking and financial services, there are informal dress codes which limit the extent of possible dress styles available to workers (McDowell, 1995). This means that the dress codes for men in such occupations are usually more prescriptive than those for women. Hence, the following

advice described by Fiske (1993: 59) was given to male candidates for professional employment by a consultant with an outplacement firm in the USA:

A blue suit and a white shirt are common to all male candidates: what will ... really attract the corporate interest is the details. The lower tip of the tie should come to the top or centre of the belt buckle and the back of the tie should go through the label so it cannot escape control and reveal its undisciplined self to the interviewer. The belt should not only be new, but should show no sign of weight loss or gain.

Similarly, the clothing of the male merchant bankers in McDowell's (1995) study was confined to a dark suit, a shirt and tie and black shoes. They pay careful attention to their appearance in order to present the right image to clients, particularly with regards to the cut, style and quality of their suit, shirt and tie. Senior executives advised their subordinates to buy high quality shirts, get a 'decent' haircut and take care over their personal hygiene. Female staff technically had more flexibility over their dress, but this could actually be problematic for women trying to succeed in a male dominated occupation. Many female merchant bankers wanted to minimise their distinction from their male colleagues and therefore adopted a style of dress that was very similar; they felt that they needed a suit in order to look professional and this meant moving away from clothing that accentuated 'natural femininity.' Additionally, many of the females who occupied professional positions in the male dominated world of merchant banking were careful to differentiate themselves (through their 'masculine' dress styles) from the largely female secretaries, who typically adopted more stereotypical 'feminine' dress styles.

Coffey's (1993) ethnographic PhD research on the organisational socialisation of graduate accountants at 'Western Ridge', found that 'appearance management' was a key aspect of their transformation into professional accountants at the firm. This was apparent from unwritten but explicit dress and personal grooming codes, which were reinforced through ridicule of the appearance of accountants both within and outside of the firm. The handbook which the graduate accountants were sent before their training commenced simply advised them to wear 'normal office clothes', but when they arrived at the firm for their first day of training their clothing was scrutinised by the senior accountants who were training them. For example, one male student was ridiculed for wearing white socks and another was told that brown suits and shoes were 'not worn by professional accountants' (p. 187). In common with the merchant bankers in

McDowell's (1995) study, female accountants had more choice in what they wore than male accountants, although most wore a skirted suit to avoid having to make difficult decisions about what to wear everyday. However, female graduate accountants at Western Ridge were given a separate single-sex training session in which they received "advice on hair care, make-up and colour coordination" with the help of "an 'expert' from a city department store" (Coffey, 1993: 195). They were also told that "body hair was best not seen" and that legs should be "waxed not shaved" (p.197). Two of the female trainee accountants were told that they had bad skin and what to do about it. The female manager who led this training session introduced it as a "bit of fun" and "doing what we all enjoy most" (p. 194), echoing the findings of Tyler and Abbot (1998) which suggested that employers thought women enjoy spending time working on their appearance as part of their leisure.

It could be argued that the research on the service sector discussed so far which has highlighted the role of aesthetics in recruitment is based on unique instances that occur due to specific and extreme circumstances. For example, Hochschild (1983) noted that there were large numbers of applicants to flight attendant positions and at the time it was difficult for many people to find jobs in any occupation. This meant that airline companies were able to recruit based on appearance and employees would accept strict grooming regulations because there was always another person waiting for their job. However, Witz, Warhurst and Nickson (2003) suggest that recruiting based on aesthetics is becoming the norm for a sector of the service industry. This growing 'style sector' of routine service work relies heavily on what they refer to as 'aesthetic labour.' This is defined as "a supply of embodied capacities and attributes' possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment" (Warhurst *et al.*, 2000: 4). As aesthetic labourers, employees become part of the 'hardware' of the organisation as well as the 'software.' As company hardware, employees are recruited based on their appearance and they are told what to wear, how to groom themselves and how they should use their body (such as standing in a particular position) to present the 'right' image to clients. This is in addition to the usual emotional labour that employees are expected to perform in their interactions with clients as they are also the software of the company.

On this basis, Witz *et al.* (2003) found that employees in a stylish retail store they refer to as 'Leviathan' were told where to stand in relation to the door and how to stand (e.g. not folding their arms because it is a 'closed' position) and at what angle to the door if they were not replenishing stock. There was a company ideal of the

'Leviathan Girl' and the 'Leviathan Boy' which employees were expected to embrace and embody, which meant that employees had to, for example, ask permission from management before they changed their hair in a dramatic way. Similarly, 'Elba Hotels' sought to employ an 'Elba person' with an 'Elba look.' The manager wanted to employ graduates between aged between 19 and 25, who could be summed up by thirteen key words which were on the job advertisement. This job advertisement included a photograph of a model who portrayed the ideal female Elba employee. However, as in Tyler and Abbot's (1998) study, the manager was actually looking for plainer looking people than the model in the advertisement; those who could be moulded and had the potential to look like an Elba person. This *potential* was brought out through a ten day induction course, including extensive grooming training (how to wear the uniform, hair, make-up and how men should shave) and a day spent on an exercise which involved new recruits going out and taking photographs that encapsulated the thirteen key words which personified Elba. In the service sector, particularly the 'style market' in Glasgow, such aesthetic 'skills' are being placed far above technical skills, to the extent that Nickson *et al.* (2003) developed a training programme aimed at unemployed people to teach them the importance of these skills, including how to present oneself both in terms of appearance and communication.

However, Dean (2005) points out that aesthetic labour has been a long expected and accepted part of professional acting in her application of the concept to the work of television and theatre performers. She argues that aesthetic requirements are different for male and female performers. Generally, there is less work available for female television and theatre performers than males and that is easier for older men to find work than older women. Additionally, performers are often 'type cast'; they are chosen for a part based on whether their appearance matches a common perception or stereotype of what that character should look like. For example, white males are very often selected to play solicitors, even though there are actually equal numbers of men and women in the occupation, as well as people from other ethnic groups. There are also broader types of parts based around gender and age. For female performers well known examples of these types are "pretty young lead, less-pretty best friend, variations on non-sexual mother" (p. 764). Dean reports how performers' awareness of the role of aesthetics and stereotyping in casting resulted in them learning how to adjust their appearance for auditions according to the part. For example, one female interviewee

explained how she would ‘dress down’ and wear little make-up if she was auditioning for the part of a victim.

As nightclub dancing can be considered a performing art, this raises some interesting points about the aesthetic labour of nightclub dancers. Is it an expected and accepted part of nightclub dancing for dancers to be selected based on their appearance as much or if not more than their technical skill at dancing? What is the relationship between dance skill and appearance? Do ‘less attractive’ dancers have to ‘compensate’ through improving their dance skills? Although there is little discussion about whether exotic dancers are recruited based partly on their appearance, the research literature suggests that aesthetic labour is an important aspect of their work. For example, Frank (2002, cited in Wolkowitz, 2006: 139), who danced outside on the patio of a strip club described the importance of paying attention to every detail of her appearance:

You can’t miss a stray hair on an ankle or thigh. Pubic hair must be carefully tended – you cannot be completely clean-shaven and must, for legal purposes, have at least an inch of trimmed fuzz in the front, but most of the women remove the rest. Razor burn looks awful ... Bruises and veins show up mercilessly, as do scars. Makeup can cover them inside, but out here, unless you are endlessly vigilant, the makeup will streak or be just a shade away from your natural skin color ... Eye makeup also needs to be perfect. Chipped nail polish, gray hairs, and fine lines around the eyes – every detail must be tended diligently.

Although the term aesthetic labour is not used specifically here, it is clear that this female exotic dancer had to put a lot of effort maintaining a well groomed appearance.

Additionally, the male strippers in Dressel and Peterson’s (1982) study were socialised into the necessity to maximise their sexual attractiveness to the audience in order to make more money. They learnt techniques which included the use of makeup to reduce the glare of the lights on their features and making eye contact with audience members, as well as learning the importance of keeping their body toned and trimming excessive body hair. Their general appearance and image was also a concern in their development of their own ‘gimmick’ – a role with a corresponding costume, dance style and piece of music to enhance their performance and make it unique and eye-catching.

On the one hand, nightclub dancers do not remove their clothes and so they might not have to pay quite as close attention to the appearance of every part of their body that an exotic dancer like Frank would. On the other hand, the nightclub manager’s comment that the Jane should ‘wear less’ next time she danced at the club

highlights that nightclub dancers are fairly scantily clad. Nightclub dancers would therefore have to pay close attention to the small amount of clothing that they do wear as well as the details of their face, hair and the rest of their body. Dressel and Peterson's (1982) study also highlighted how it was important for the male strippers to keep their body toned. If the ideal male stripper body is a toned one, then this is also likely to apply to male nightclub dancers. In any case, both male and female dancers would be expected to 'stay in shape,' not only to conform to dominant ideals of bodily attractiveness but also because dancing is physically demanding. This implies that for nightclub dancers, maintaining a toned and well groomed appearance is something which they have to engage in long term and colonises time outside of the workplace. Therefore, the idea of the body as a project and research literature which has drawn on this notion provides a way of exploring this skill and work performed by nightclub dancers. The literature on aesthetic labour focuses mainly on the criteria which employers set in terms of the appearance of employees at their place of work, whereas the notion of the body as a project allows a consideration of this labour from the perspective of employees (i.e. nightclub dancers).

Staying in Shape: the Body as a Project

Giddens (1991) explains how the conditions of high modernity have swept away traditional types of social order and meaning systems and hence people have developed an increased sense of reflexivity about life. Under such conditions, the reflexive development and management of one's identity becomes of central importance in order to maintain a stable sense of self in an unstable world. To achieve this, people adopt lifestyle and identity projects and the body is a key tool in this process. The body has been emancipated by various technologies which allow the body to be 'worked upon' (p.218). Moulding the body to reflect one's identity therefore becomes a project in itself. Hence, the following discussion focuses on two pieces of research which have explored the notion of the body as a project in order to assess whether this notion could be utilised in a study of nightclub dancers.

Through a long-term ethnographic study, Lee Monaghan (1999) explored the 'variable body-projects' in which bodybuilders were involved in order to create their idea of the perfect body. However, for the 'hard-core,' dedicated bodybuilders in his study, 'the perfect body' was not a universally accepted physical reflection of

hegemonic masculinity. As such, bodybuilders' efforts to achieve a muscular physique could not be adequately explained as a response to a crisis in masculinity. Rather, Monaghan argues that bodybuilders' conceptions of the perfect body are dependent on a subculturally learned 'ethnophysiological' appreciation of excessive muscularity. This informed the way in which bodybuilders looked at bodies and allowed them to develop their own preference for a particular muscular body type that they could work towards achieving.

However, the type of body which they could hope to achieve was constrained by 'genetics' which would predispose an individual towards a particular type of body. For example, genetic factors such as height would affect the way in which bodybuilders 'carried' their muscles, so many of the top competitors were actually below average height and this would make them appear wider. Additionally, a bodybuilder's individual perception of their ideal body would change over time. Hence, drawing on Monaghan's typology of bodies and his interview data, bodybuilders may begin training with the aim of achieving a type of 'athletically muscular/toned body' or even a type of 'powerful-looking body,' but as they spend more time training within the bodybuilding subculture their ideal body may shift towards one of the 'competition standard body physiques.' Yet, in achieving a type of body that is considered to be of competition standard within the bodybuilding community, they would face stigma from members of mainstream society who tend to view them as freaks for their excessive muscle. For example, Monaghan quotes from an interview with a bodybuilder referred to as 'Soccer' who after peaking at a 16½ stone competition standard physique perceived from the glances of other people during a summer holiday that he had 'gone too far' and was unattractive to women. Soccer notes that as he is currently 'out of shape' (or would be perceived as so within the competitive body building community) he feels more comfortable with his shirt off in public on a sunny day; more acceptable to people and more attractive to women. Therefore, the creation of 'the perfect body' amongst bodybuilders is developed 'through a social process of becoming' (Monaghan, 1999: 284) and is indeed a 'variable' as well as a highly individualised project.

What is particularly significant about Monaghan's (1999) findings in terms of applying them to a study of nightclub dancers is the way in which the community of body builders had conceptions of the ideal body which were different from the rest of society. Becoming a member of the body building community entailed a process of learning to appreciate excessive muscularity which mainstream society would find

disgusting. This, in turn, influenced how body builders viewed their own body, their perception of the ideal body and how they engaged in the project of achieving their ideal body. Unlike body builders, nightclub dancers would probably want to have bodies which are appealing to a mainstream audience and hence fit dominant conceptions of the ideal male or female body. However, these dominant versions of male and female bodily attractiveness would likely to be reinforced with transgressions policed more heavily than in mainstream society. Hence, this raises the question of whether nightclub dancers also have to learn an ‘ethnophysiological’ appreciation of the ideal body within their subculture.

Monaghan’s (1999) study focused on the extreme body projects in which a particular subculture of men were engaged. Budgeon’s (2003) study engages with the notion of the body as a project in relation to young women’s experiences. Using narratives from interviews with 33 women aged 16-20, Budgeon explored the relationship between embodiment and identity. In contrast to Monaghan (1999), Budgeon conceives of the body as a lived process rather than a project. For example, the narratives suggested that the young women’s perception of their bodies and how they should look is mediated through images of ideal femininity portrayed in magazines, which placed pressure on them to be thin. However, rather than feeling that their bodies were abnormal in relation to these images and trying to modify its surface accordingly, they instead tended to normalise the *feeling* of dissatisfaction with one’s body as something that all young women experience. Similarly, when the young women talked about the transformation of their bodies through dieting, exercise and cosmetic surgery, the emphasis was on transforming the way that the body was lived rather than how it appeared on the surface. For example, on the one hand, undergoing cosmetic surgery could be justified in terms of *feeling* more self confident and the effect of this on one’s whole life. On the other hand, objections to cosmetic surgery focused on the connection between the body – its parts, features and flaws – and self identity. There was also a suggestion that engaging in exercise was more about how it makes one *feel* rather than on how it makes one look. Hence, Budgeon argues that the narratives call into question the division between mind and body as well as Giddens’ suggestion that the body is increasingly a project that is moulded according to the narrative of the self which is under construction.

Although Budgeon’s (2003) research presents an alternative explanation to the notion of the body as a project, her conception of the body as a lived process adds an

additional dimension to considering the work which nightclub dancers would be involved in to ‘stay in shape.’ Firstly, the normalisation of the *feeling* of dissatisfaction with one’s body is likely to be present in a community of nightclub dancers (particularly amongst female dancers) who are scantily clad and highly subject to the critical gaze of others. Additionally, as mentioned previously, staying in shape entails not only looking well toned (in order to conform to dominant notions of attractiveness) but also *feeling* in shape and generally being physically fit so that they can keep dancing for as long as they are required. However, even nightclub dancers who are physically fit might become exhausted during a long dance set. Nightclub dancers have to learn to pace themselves as suggested previously, but they must also learn to disguise the exhaustion on their face in order to maintain a polished performance. This type of capability will now be explored in more detail below.

Performance

Nightclub dancers are professional performers who are employed to provide entertainment to nightclub patrons. A key role of nightclub dancers is to help create an ‘atmosphere’ appropriate to the nightclub they are dancing in. One of the major ways they can achieve this is through the careful management of their expressions and gestures to create the ‘right’ impression to their audience, depending on what is required by the nightclub managers. This section will therefore consider this aspect of nightclub dancers’ work by examining the interrelated concepts of impression management, emotional labour, sexualised labour and performativity.

Impression management and emotional labour

Goffman (1990) used the term ‘performance’ in relation to social interaction to refer to the activity of an individual on a particular occasion which serves to influence the observers who are present. The standard expressive equipment that an individual draws upon during his or her performance is referred to as ‘front.’ This consists of the ‘setting’ (which supplies the scenery and stage props for the performance and is usually geographically fixed) and the ‘personal front’ which remains intimately attached to the performer wherever he or she goes. Personal front includes: ‘insignia of office or rank;

clothing; sex, age and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like' (1990a: 34). These can all be thought of as embodied characteristics. Goffman (1990) points out that some of these individual 'sign vehicles' are relatively fixed, stable and do not vary from one situation to another (e.g. sex and size). Those that do vary, are mobile and transitory – i.e. clothing, posture, speech patterns, facial expressions and bodily gestures (with the addition of movements) - have been referred to collectively elsewhere as 'shared vocabularies of body idiom' (Goffman, 1968). This conventional form of non-verbal communication is a central part of behaviour in social settings (Shilling, 1993). Although individuals do not have control over the meanings attributed to this non-verbal communication, knowledge of what messages they convey through body idiom allows individuals to manage their impression to others.

Hochschild (1983) drew on Goffman's (1990) notion of 'impression management' in the development of her concept of 'emotional labour.' Emotional labour is defined as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (p.7). In the sphere of work, *emotional labour* refers to the management of emotions by employees as part of their job. Hochschild also highlighted how women perform *emotion work* in the home through attending to their husbands' and children's emotional needs whilst suppressing their own emotions. Her classic study on air stewardesses suggested that such emotional labour went beyond the 'surface acting' which the term 'impression management' suggests. Employees were encouraged to engage in 'deep acting' whereby their actual emotions would be merged with the emotions the company desired. For example, stewardesses who worked for one particular airline were told to treat the customer as if they were a close relative. Hence, airline employers were exploiting and commodifying the 'caring' disposition which they believed that women naturally possessed. This 'transmutation of feelings' potentially leads to workers becoming alienated from their feelings and their true self.

Following a rapid growth in research studies that have employed Hochschild's (1983) theories that Bolton (2005: 53) has referred to as an 'emotional labour bandwagon', the concept of emotional labour has come under increasing critical scrutiny and has been a subject of intense debate. Some of these criticisms are outlined in Guerrier and Adib's (2003) discussion of their research on tour reps. Firstly, they argue that Hochschild's analysis ignores the subjective experience of employees who have been reported to find 'performing' to customers enjoyable (Korcynski, 2002).

Secondly, they take issue with the idea that there is an 'authentic', true self which emotional labourers betray when they produce false emotions. Rather, they suggest that the notion of an 'authentic self' is a part of late modern Western social discourses (Fineman, 2000). Finally, Guerrier and Adib (2003) point out that Hochschild's analysis underplays the ability of employees to seek out spaces within their work where they can resist commodification and feel that they are interacting in a more authentic way with customers. Indeed, they found evidence that tour reps were able to do this, partly because tour reps experienced a low level of management and supervision. Additionally, tour reps saw their work as a good lifestyle and a reflection of their true selves, blurring the distinctions between leisure and work.

Bolton's (2000, 2005) typology of 'emotion management' is an attempt to move away from Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour and address some of its limitations. In particular, she feels that the popularity and widespread application of the concept to so many forms of workplace emotionality has meant that the analytical value of 'emotional labour' has been degraded (Bolton, 2000). Bolton has criticised Hochschild's analysis for overemphasising the distinction between public and private emotional performances and using the terms 'public' and 'commercial' interchangeably. In addition, she has accused Hochschild of mistakenly equating a physical labour process with an emotional labour process (Bolton and Boyd, 2003). Bolton and Boyd explain how Hochschild compares factory workers' production of tangible goods from which they are estranged to flight attendants' production of 'customer contentment' from which they also feel estranged, resulting in flight attendants being 'alienated from their emotional labour' in the same way as workers can be 'alienated from their physical labour' (p.293). However, they argue that unlike factory workers, cabin crew own the means of production and the capacity to present a more or less sincere performance depending on how much feeling they invest, creating space for resistance.

Bolton (2000) therefore proposes that there are four types of workplace emotion management occur within and across different sectors of employment: *pecuniary*, *prescriptive*, *presentational* and *philanthropic*. *Pecuniary* emotion management is that which is performed for commercial gain and is comparable to Hochschild's concept of emotional labour (Bolton and Boyd, 2003). *Prescriptive* emotion management is performed according to organisational/professional rules of conduct. *Presentational* emotion management is performed according to general social 'rules' as a result of primary socialisation. Bolton and Boyd (2003) view this as similar to Hochschild's

(1983) concept of emotion work. Finally, *philanthropic* emotion management may be offered as a ‘gift’ beyond employers’ expectations of employees in their interactions with customers and colleagues (Bolton, 2000). Bolton and Boyd (2003) argue that this typology of emotion management allows a consideration of the extent to which this work can be viewed as ‘skilled’; organisational actors select and draw on the appropriate set of feeling rules for the situation rather than those solely controlled by the organisation create a polished performance.

Callaghan and Thompson (2002) draw on Bolton’s (2000) typology of emotion management suggest that even call centre workers who are heavily managed and closely monitored find space to offer ‘philanthropic emotional labour’. For example, some of the customer service representatives at ‘Telebank’ discussed how if they perceived that a customer just wanted to ‘chat’ they would not try and cut them off. Indeed, these workers are selected and recruited for their ‘personality’ which makes them good at building rapport with people. This comes into conflict with strict guidelines and targets on call handling time as well as attempts to ‘mould’ employees into a ‘Telebank person’, creating tensions in the labour process and a high turnover of staff.

However, Bolton’s work on emotion management in the workplace has faced criticism from other authors. For example, Payne (2009) has refuted the claim that emotion work is skilled work (Bolton, 2004; Bolton and Boyd, 2003). He argues that “emotion work fails to fully or convincingly satisfy two key elements in the definition of skill, namely task complexity and discretion/control in the labour process” (p. 355). Drawing on Cockburn’s (1983) study of print workers Payne also identifies ‘social closure’ (the ability to limit the supply of labour with the required skills) as a third element in the definition of skill. He suggests that the ability to perform emotion work is based on primary socialisation and personality (including moral and ethical values) rather than requiring ‘skill’. Hence, Payne argues that most people are able to perform emotion work and therefore questions the extent to which it can be considered as skilled, particularly when different kinds of emotion work that might differ in its intensity and complexity is lumped together and labelled as such.

Brook (2009) has questioned the foundations of Bolton’s (2000; 2005) conceptual move away from emotional labour by arguing that her analysis of Hochschild’s (1983) original concept is flawed. He argues that Hochschild defines emotional labour by its commodification as labour power; her interpretation of labour power is as Marx defined it: “the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities

existing in a human being” (Marx, 1976, in Brook, 2009: 540). However, Brook claims that Bolton (2005) mistakenly defines emotional labour by its commercialisation as a service product. This leads Bolton to argue that emotion management performances in the workplace that are not directly appropriated for commercial profit do not constitute emotional labour, leaving substantial space for uncommodified emotion management in the workplace. However, if emotional labour is defined by its commodification as labour power – as Hochschild does – any emotional performance and display as part of a service, even *philanthropic* emotion management as a ‘gift’, is still commodified. Brook points out that as emotional labour is an integral and inseparable part of labour power – alongside physical and mental labour, Bolton is incorrect to argue that workers maintain control and ownership of the emotional means of production:

For once labour power is commodified, albeit within a contested context, workers no more retain ownership or predominant control over the form, timing and use of their smile, than they do the dexterity of their hands or the mental-moves required in their job.

(Brook, 2009: 540-541)

Finally, Brook (2009) refutes the idea that Hochschild’s concept of emotional labour creates a picture of ‘emotionally crippled actors’ (Brook and Boyd, 2003). He argues that Hochschild theorises transmutation of feelings as an unstable condition and that she gives examples of flight attendants resisting management attempts to intensify emotional labour by, for example, smiling less broadly.

Bolton (2009) published a reply to Brook’s (2009) article in the same issue of *Work, Employment and Society*. She accuses Brook of ‘miraculously’ finding a Marxist core in Hochschild’s (1983) work that is not there. Bolton also emphasises the point that she has not abandoned ‘emotional labour’, but argues that it only applies to some of the emotion management performed in workplaces (i.e. *pecuniary* emotion management). She therefore, again, cautions against stretching the concept of emotional labour to the point that it becomes too weak as an explanatory device.

For the purposes of this study, in agreement with Brook (2009), emotional labour is defined by its commodification as labour power. Nightclub dancers are paid a fee to provide entertainment for a set amount of time. One aspect of their labour power as entertainers is their ability to dance (a physical capability). However, nightclub dancers’ emotional capability is also a key component of their labour power because

one of their main roles is to help create ‘an atmosphere’ through their emotional performance. Exact requirements in terms of ‘atmosphere’ and emotional display will vary between different nightclubs, but as nightclub managers want nightclub punters to enjoy themselves, most would expect their nightclub dancers to at least appear that they are enjoying themselves. Of course, it is likely that nightclub dancers would find a lot of genuine enjoyment in their work and, in common with the podium dancer ‘Jane’ and the tour reps in Guerrier and Adib’s (2003) study, they may blur the boundaries between work and leisure. Yet, from the perspective of nightclub managers, as long as nightclub can convince the audience that they are having a good time, it does not matter whether they actually are or not – the resulting emotional display is the same.

However, Bolton’s (2000, 2005) typology of emotion management is useful for its consideration of *prescriptive* emotion management which is performed according to organisational/professional rules of conduct. The podium dancer ‘Jane’ worked with and learnt from other dancers at the nightclub. It follows that nightclub dancers may be expected to manage their emotions according to organisational/professional rules of conduct so that they are able to work well with other dancers. This would be particularly important for team of choreographed dancers.

With regards to the question of whether or not emotion work can be considered as ‘skilled work’ (Payne, 2009), this thesis will make a contribution to this debate. At this point, it is suggested that the nature and intensity of much of the emotion work that is performed by nightclub dancers is different to that of other workers (such as front-line service sector workers) that have been the subject of studies on emotional labour. In particular, nightclub dancers performing on the stage/podium would need to be able to ‘project’ their non-verbal emotional display so that it can be seen by the audience in a nightclub. This can be considered as a specialised skill. This supports Payne’s (2009) argument against labelling all forms of emotion work as ‘skilled work’ without any consideration of differences in the nature of emotion work in a wide variety of occupations and whether individual or groups of workers are more or less skilled as emotional labourers. However, this also highlights how labelling all emotion work as non-skilled is perhaps equally as problematic.

Research on exotic dancers has suggested that the development of impression management skills (Goffman, 1990) and emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) is an important part of their socialisation and learning on-the-job. For the male strippers in Montemurro’s (2001) study, this meant that they were subject to The Hideaway’s

‘feeling rules’; that they were always very friendly and never rude regardless of a customer’s behaviour. The research on female strippers, however, suggests that their emotional labour went much further than simply being polite and friendly. Using data from interviews with 112 exotic dancers and former dancers, Deshotels and Forsyth (2006) coined the term ‘strategic flirting’ to describe the emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) dancers perform in strip clubs. This was generally conceptualised by the dancers as making the patrons ‘feel special’ and implied the emotional or sexual availability of the dancer. A dancer would spend time carefully listening to a customer and determining the appropriate response in order to manipulate him into believing that the dancer was actually interested in him and only him. She would become his fantasy and he would give her more money. Wood (2000: 12) also noted that “the best paid stripper is the one who is best at creating and conveying feelings of intimacy, interest, and desire for her customers.” One of the key ways in which exotic dancers did this was through smiling and making eye-contact with customers in such a way to suggest that there was ‘something going on’ between the dancer and the customer (p.18).

Drawing on Goffman’s (1990) dramaturgical analogy, Murphy (2003) points out that exotic dancers have to perform on the centre stage (for the customers), the organizational stage (for their manager) and the private stage (for their families). In relation to performing on the centre stage, she found that through socialisation exotic dancers learnt how to manufacture a believable relationship with the customer in order to make more tips. This ‘counterfeit intimacy’ entailed fake smiles, feigned interest in the customer’s personality and lifestyle and the mastering of tactics to politely and playfully control inappropriate touching. On the organizational stage, Murphy found evidence of exotic dancers manufacturing lies and flirting with the manager of the club to avoid the repercussions of breaking ‘house rules’, by, for example not turning up for a shift on time. Finally, on the private stage, exotic dancers used discursive strategies such as ambiguously telling family and friends that they were a ‘dancer’ or that they ‘work in a bar’ in order to avoid the societal stigma associated with being an exotic dancer.

Indeed, Rambo Ronai and Cross (1998) explain how ‘exotic dancer’ is a ‘discursive constraint;’ a negative category which peoples’ identities are defined by. Narrative resistance is a response to a discursive constraint which emerges from and constitutes an alternative stock of knowledge within in a stigmatised group. The narrative resistance strategies used by exotic dancers employ images of deviance as

negative exemplars or standards of comparison to avoid being assigned a negative identity. One of the main exemplars used was 'sleaze.' Participants in Rambo Ronai and Cross' study would label groups of other dancers as 'sleazy.' For example, dancers who did not dance completely naked labelled nude dancers as sleazy and nude dancers who allowed bodily contact between themselves and customers were similarly labelled by other nude dancers who did not. Similar discursive strategies were employed by the British migrant lap dancers in Bott's (2006) study. The British dancers distanced themselves from the Eastern European dancers in Tenerife, who they claimed were trafficked prostitutes. They also compared themselves favourably to other working class women in Britain who were old and trapped; as well as hypothetical, pale, poor, depressed versions of themselves who did not migrate. Bott conceptualises this strategy as 'disidentification with a disreputable Other,' drawing on the work of Skeggs (1997). Barton (2007) suggests that this 'othering' is part of the boundary setting that exotic dancers have to do in order to manage the 'toll' of stripping – rejection, abuse, environmental hazards and societal stigma.

Whilst nightclub dancers are unlikely to face the same level of stigma from society as exotic dancers, Jane's emphasis on the fact that she is podium dancer, not a stripper suggests that nightclub dancers have to do a certain amount of boundary setting in order to avoid being labelled incorrectly and face the stigma associated with being a stripper. However, the next section considers how the sexualisation of nightclub dancers' work may cause them difficulties in maintaining these boundaries.

'Sexualised labour' and 'strategic sexualisation'

Adkins (1995) has drawn on and expanded Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour in her development the notion of 'sexualised labour'. Sexualised labour occurs when employees' sexuality and sexual attractiveness are emphasised and commodified as part of their work and becomes a defining feature of the relations between employees and their employers, colleagues and customers. Some of Adkins' findings about how female employees' sexual attractiveness is emphasised at 'Fun Land' and 'Global Hotel' have already been discussed in relation to 'aesthetic labour'. However, another aspect of sexualised labour that is related to emotional labour is the way in which female catering assistants and bar staff at Fun Land were expected to learn to cope with unwanted sexual attention from male customers as part of their job.

This included verbal and physical sexual harassment, but mostly took the form of ‘eyeing up’ and chatting up which led to them feeling objectified.

The female staff at Fun Land faced similar unwanted sexual attention from male workers from around the park, but saw this as something that they should not have to deal with. However, sexual attention from male customers was seen as something that they had to ‘get used to.’ As one female member of bar staff put it “you don’t really have any choice but to cope with it ... so you just do ... it’s just something we have to do, even if we get upset we can’t show it” (Adkins, 1995: 180). Female staff therefore had to learn to respond to such behaviour in the right way, which was ‘laugh it off’ or ‘play along’ by entering into sexual ‘exchanges’ with the male customers, smile and act flattered by their comments on their appearance. Adkins argues that by responding in this way and giving the male customers ‘what they wanted’ as part of their job, these women were providing sexual services for men.

However, Warhurst and Nickson (2009) argue that in order to fully understand different types of sexualised work in the interactive services, a conceptual double shift is required: from emotional labour to sexualised and aesthetic labour, and then from employee sexuality being *sanctioned and/or subscribed to* by management to it being *strategically prescribed*. They give the example of flirting and sexual relations between employees as an example of employee sexuality which might be sanctioned by management. Warhurst and Nickson cite Filby’s (1992) research carried out in a betting shop, where employees’ ‘sexy’ chat amongst each other and with customers was seen as commercially beneficial by managers. This sexuality was permitted and subscribed to, but not prescribed by management. In both of these cases, sexualisation is not overt and it is driven by employees rather than managers. However, Warhurst and Nickson argue that some service sector organisations actively prescribe employee sexuality. Their chief example of this is the American restaurant chain ‘Hooters’, which has recently opened branches in the UK, including Cardiff. Hooters is explicit about the fact that its business model is based upon the sex appeal of its waitresses, who are expected to embody the ‘Florida Beach Girl look,’ their uniform consisting of short shorts and a tight or cropped t-shirt. ‘Hooters girls’ are also expected to be bubbly and expect sexual joking and innuendo as part of their job which is based upon a sexualised style of service. Hence, Warhurst and Nickson arrive at the concept of ‘strategic sexualisation’ to refer to organisationally prescribed sexualisation of employees and “the mobilisation,

development and commodification of employee sex appeal” as a deliberate corporate strategy (p. 386).

‘Jane’ (Parker, 2007) discussed how when she was offered the job as a podium dancer in a Rock themed nightclub, the nightclub manager told her that she should ‘wear less’. Consequently ‘ended up wearing hotpants most of the time,’ but, she explained ‘it’s just what the punters want so it’s fine.’ Jane also mentioned that there was a bouncer that ‘kept an eye on us all night so if anyone got *too close* or started jeering, they stopped it’ (emphasis added). Jane’s experience suggests that nightclub dancers’ work involves sexualised labour (Adkins, 1995). This thesis will explore whether this is indeed the case and also whether this sexualisation is explicitly prescribed by management as a deliberate corporate strategy.

Gender and performativity

In *Gender Trouble* (1999) Butler introduces the idea that the gendered body is *performative*. She arrives at this through a consideration of drag acts, which have been traditionally seen by feminists as degrading to women. However, at the same time that drag presents a unified picture of ‘woman,’ it also reveals naturalised gender attributes to in fact be false; ‘in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender’ (p. 187). Gender, then, is not a stable identity. Rather, it is an identity which is constituted through a ‘*stylized repetition of acts*’ (p. 191) - bodily gestures and movements - which produces the illusion of an interior and organising gender core or gendered self. Hence, the gender norms which produce the phenomenon of, for example, a ‘real woman’ in a given society also produce a set of corporeal styles which allow ‘real woman’ to be performed. Notions of natural ‘sex,’ masculinity and femininity are therefore constructed through their performance.

Aalten’s (1997; 2007) research on ballet dancers has been influenced by the concept of performativity. For example, Aalten (1997) points out that the performing of the body is highly gendered in ballet and different physical demands are placed on male and female dancers. Female ballet dancers are expected to lift their leg higher than male dancers, but male dancers are expected to perform larger leaps, using their arms to add extra force. Female dancers’ leaps are ‘supposed to be supple and ornamental or tiny and rapid’ (p206). Additionally pointe shoes are only worn by female ballet dancers. As dancing *en point* makes the dancer susceptible to foot injury, learning to repress feelings

of pain becomes a part of the successful performance of ballet for female dancers (Aalten, 2007). In some cases, the ballet dancers interviewed by Aalten learnt to be able to cope with pain to such an extent that they could not longer feel it. For example, one dancer explained how during a rehearsal she repaired a detached ribbon on her pointe shoes with a safety pin and did not feel the pain of the pin bending and poking into her foot to the extent that there was heavy bleeding. Other dancers recalled how they were trained to not cry or complain and to carry on dancing with a smile on their face. This ability of ballet dancers to be able to dance through pain has also been noted by Wainwright and Turner (2006). Additionally, as the ideal female ballet dancer body is one that is 'light and fragile', 'super-slim' and 'without feminine curves' (Aalten, 1997), female dancers must also learn to suppress and mask feelings of hunger in their attempts to obtain and retain this ideal (Aalten, 2007).

Trautner's (2005) ethnographic research conducted at four US strip clubs has explored how exotic dancers perform gender, sexuality and class. Two of these strip clubs marketed themselves towards a middle- and business-class clientele and the other two attracted mainly working class and military customers. Trautner argues that in these strip clubs, class differences are represented as sexual differences. She conceptualises the type of sexuality performed at the middle-class clubs as 'voyeuristic' – based around the admiration of the female form from a distance – and the type of sexuality performed at the working-class strip clubs as 'cheap thrills' – based around more 'interactive' sexual experiences and viewing women as sex objects. These two types of sexuality are constructed through the physical aspects of the clubs (such as the furniture and décor), but also performative aspects: the appearance of the exotic dancers, their dance styles and the interactions that take place between dancers and customers.

For example, dancers in the two middle-class strip clubs studied by Trautner generally wore their hair loose and their make-up often accentuated their eyes through the use of eyeliner, eyeshadow and glitter. Dancers at the two working-class strip clubs had different and 'more creative' hairstyles and their heavy make-up accentuated their lips with dark or bright red lipstick. Dancers at the middle-class clubs tended to wear outfits that were often themed, where as the dancers at the working-class clubs mainly wore bikinis. Additionally, the way in which exotic dancers dance at the middle- and working-class clubs differs considerably: few of the dancers at the middle-class clubs ever touched their breasts and their dance style was slow and sensual, where as dancers at the working-class clubs danced in a faster style which often incorporated simulated

sex. Finally, there was much less physical contact between dancers and customers at the middle-class clubs in comparison to the working class clubs.

As this research project focuses on both male and female nightclub dancers, the literature on performativity has implications in terms of exploring any differences between the way in which male and female nightclub dancers perform their gender and sexuality. In particular, nightclubs market themselves at different groups of customers (Intel, 2006) and may be 'classed' in a similar way to the strip clubs in Trautner's (2005) study. This raises the question of whether nightclub dancers working at a number different nightclubs have to learn to adapt their performance of gender and sexuality to suit the clientele of each nightclub, or whether nightclub managers select dancers who perform their gender and sexuality in a particular way to suit their clientele.

How might nightclub dancers learn to be successful and professional in their occupation?

The discussion so far has focused mainly on the skills that are expected to be important for individuals wishing to become nightclub dancers, with some consideration of how these skills are learnt and developed. This section on 'workplace learning' will explore some of the main theories of learning that have been utilised for workplace studies and consider how they might be applied to a study of nightclub dancers in order to address the question of how they learn to be successful and professional in their occupation.

Workplace Learning

According to Matthews (1999: 19):

Workplace learning involves the process of reasoned learning towards desirable outcomes for the individual and the organisation. These outcomes should foster the sustained development of both the individual and the organisation, within the present and future context of organisational goals and individual career development.

This definition of workplace learning implies that workplace learning should be driven by measurable outcomes, geared towards the developmental goals of the organisation and only fosters the development of the individual in a narrow ‘career’ sense. This view of workplace learning is unsuitable for a study of nightclub dancers for the following reasons. Firstly, nightclub dancers, such as ‘Jane’, do not necessarily view their job as a career. Indeed, Jane viewed her work as a podium dancer as a paid leisure pursuit (see Guerrier and Adib, 2003); being paid for what she would normally be doing on a Friday night anyway – dancing in a nightclub. Secondly, ‘reasoned learning’ implies formal learning that is carefully planned, structured and organised, excluding unplanned, informal and social types of learning which are likely to be more significant for nightclub dancers. Finally, the focus on goals and outcomes in Matthews’ definition suggests a view of learning as acquisition or a product and the limitations of this approach will be examined below. Hence, Billett and Pavlova’s (2005: 196) idea of learning ‘through and throughout working life’ is a more appropriate view of workplace learning for the purposes of this study of nightclub dancers.

A critique of ‘acquisition-orientated’ theories of learning

Sfard (1998) suggested that competing trends in current conceptualisations of learning can be described using two metaphors for learning: ‘learning as acquisition’ and ‘learning as participation.’ The *learning as acquisition* metaphor has historically dominated learning theory. It constructs learning in terms of ‘knowledge acquisition’ or ‘concept development.’ The learner’s mind is seen as a container to be filled with units of knowledge that are accumulated, refined and combined to form increasingly complex cognitive structures. *Learning as acquisition* also implies that the learner gains ownership of these materials and that there is a clear endpoint to learning. Once this endpoint is achieved, the knowledge can be applied, transferred to another context or shared with others.

Similarly, Hager (2004) argues that a view of ‘learning as a product’ has tended to dominate educational policy and practice, including policies and practices which have had an impact on workplace learning. For example, policy documents on generic skills (such as communication skills and problem solving) present them as discrete and decontextualised elements that can be acquired and then transferred to any situation. The dominance of this view of learning has been compounded by the neo-liberal

marketisation and subsequent commodification of education which has resulted in students being viewed as consumers of information and knowledge (Lyotard, 1984; Usher and Edwards, 1994). However, Hager points out that the learning as a product view was dominant in education even before the rise of neo-liberal marketisation of education and this is reflected in the standard international educational rhetoric of “*acquisition of content, transfer of learning, delivery courses, course providers, course offerings, course load, student load, etc.*” (2004: 6).

Felstead *et al.* (2005) also point out that surveys and policies on ‘workplace learning’ are based on a narrow, acquisition-based concept of learning and training. They point out that the Learning and Training at Work survey, for example, relies on a definition of training as “the process of acquiring the knowledge and skills related to work requirements by formal, structured or guided means” which excludes “general supervision, motivational meetings, basic induction and learning by experience” (Training Agency, 1987, p. 14). Felstead *et al.* also note that the individuals being surveyed also regard training as formal courses. This narrow view of training excludes a lot of the learning which occurs in the workplace.

Hager argues that the learning as a product (or acquisition) view raises four major difficulties when considering workplace learning. Firstly, there is the failure of theory/practice accounts of work performance. Theory/practice accounts are based on the technical rationality (Schön, 1983) – that practitioners use their disciplinary knowledge to analyse and solve problems in their daily practice. However, actual practice is not as straightforward and often throws up problems that are not presented ready-made to the practitioners. Hence, not only do these problems first have to be specified; once the problem has been specified, it may not actually fit standard scientific categories and the problem is also likely to be unstable and have to be continually redefined. A second difficulty with the learning as product view is that it underpins the front-end model of vocational preparation (which requires a period of formal education and/or training which needs to be completed by new entrants to an occupation prior to full employment) which has been increasingly criticised for failing to prepare novices for a lifetime of practice. Thirdly, Boud and Solomon (2004) suggest that unconscious commitment to the learning as a product view in workplaces can lead to negative connotations being attached to ‘learning’ and ‘learner.’ Such terms can conflict with workers’ sense of their identity and place within the organisation because the learner is seen as someone who has not acquired the necessary ‘product’ for doing the job; the

learner is viewed incompetent or inexperienced and in a temporary transitional phase with little power which needs to be left as quickly as possible. Finally, in relation to this, the learning as a product view makes the idea of lifelong learning unattractive. Not only would it mean drawing out the undesirable status of 'learner,' the learning as product view also suggests that lifelong learning would involve perpetual enrolment in formal accredited courses.

This view of learning as a product would clearly be unhelpful for a study of how individuals learn to become professional nightclub dancers. For example, a front ended model of dance training would certainly not work for nightclub dancers. Whilst they might acquire dance skills, successful nightclub dancers would need to build on these skills and broaden them, along with incorporating these dance skills into an image or style that will sell to employers. Nightclub dancers will therefore constantly be learning and improving, they are unlikely to reach a level of skill where they can no longer learn anything new. Like most workers, dancers will also have to adapt their skills and knowledge to different contexts; certain moves would be unsuitable for certain venues just as theory can not always be applied to practice.

Participation-orientated theories of learning

The *learning as participation* metaphor refers to a conception of learning that has emerged comparatively recently in the literature. These 'participation-orientated' learning theories replace the terms 'concept' and 'knowledge' (which imply the existence of permanent entities or states) with the noun 'knowing,' indicating action: "the permanence of *having* gives way to the constant flux of *doing*" (Sfard, 1998: 6, original emphasis). The ongoing learning activities are considered as embedded in context, which in turn is rich and multifarious. Learning a subject is conceived of as a process of becoming a member of a certain community, which involves participating in its corresponding activities; communicating in the language of the community and acting according to its norms. Learning involves becoming a part of a greater whole and learners contribute to the existence and functioning of a community of practitioners. Hager (2004) suggests that learning should be viewed as a process and he captures this with his addition of the metaphor of '(re-)construction' to Sfard's two learning metaphors. He believes that this metaphor encapsulates the (re-)construction of learning, the learner and the environment which allows a consideration of how change, learning

and human flourishing are enmeshed. The construction metaphor is therefore more suitable for considering learning at work and lifelong learning.

Eraut (2000) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is acquired” (p.114). However, he adds that learning also occurs when knowledge is used in a new context or in new combinations, which suggests a consideration of learning as (re-) construction (Hager, 2004). Additionally, Eraut (2004) explores ‘non-formal’ (aka ‘informal’) types of learning which are clearly participation-orientated. Eraut defines non-formal learning in opposition to *formal learning*, which is identified by any of the following features of the learning situation:

- a prescribed learning framework
- an organised learning event or package
- the presence of a designated teacher or trainer
- the award of a qualification or credit
- the external specification of outcomes

(Eraut, 2004: 114)

Eraut proposes that there are three types of non-formal learning which are distinguished from each other by the level of intention to learn. *Implicit learning* occurs when knowledge is acquired independent of any conscious effort to learn and when there is no explicit knowledge about what was learned. *Deliberative learning* occurs when time is set aside for the specific purpose of learning. Eraut also adds the category of *reactive learning* to fit in between implicit and deliberative learning. Reactive learning is explicit learning which arises in response to current, recent or imminent situations without any time being set aside specifically for such learning.

Eraut (2000) also discusses the various types of knowledge that arise from learning. *Codified knowledge* (also referred to as public knowledge or propositional knowledge) includes propositions about skilled behaviour, but not skills or knowing how. Codified knowledge is given status by its incorporation into educational courses and examinations and is explicit by definition. *Personal knowledge* is a cognitive resource that allows people to think and perform in a given situation and includes procedural knowledge, process knowledge, experiential knowledge, impressions in episodic memory and the personalised form of codified knowledge. Personal knowledge may be explicit or *tacit* – knowledge which is difficult to communicate to others that

arises from the implicit processing of and acquisition of knowledge (Eraut, 2004). However, Eraut (2000) suggests that implicit learning (such as socialisation into the norms of an organisation without the learner being aware) might be made explicit (through, for example, the transgression of these norms by a third party resulting in negative responses which need to be explained). Explicit learning can also become tacit. For example, he suggests that a person might be very aware of how they learned to ride a bike without being able to describe critical aspects of the knowledge gained.

The discussion of the literature on exotic dancers had already suggested that the concepts of *formal* and *non-formal* (or informal) learning are likely to be useful for distinguishing between the types learning experiences that nightclub dancers have. In particular, nightclub dancers are likely to rely on all three of the types of non-formal learning. For example, they may set time aside for deliberative learning to practise dance moves or to try a new move that they saw another dancer use. There is certainly evidence of exotic dancers doing this (Dressel and Peterson, 1982; Lewis, 1998; Murphy, 2003). Other skills may be learnt more implicitly by a nightclub dancer, such as impression management and performance skills – smiling and creating the impression that s/he is having fun. In relation to this, the concepts of codified, personal and tacit knowledge could also aid the analysis of nightclub dancers' learning. Knowledge about how to be a good performer is likely to be personal and tacit, but dancers might also acquire and use codified knowledge in the form of specific dance moves from formal dance lessons.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) *Situated Learning* presents a clearly participation-orientated theory of learning based on anthropological studies of apprenticeship. Rather than viewing learning as the receiving of a body of knowledge about the world, they conceive learning as 'situated,' implying an emphasis on the view that agent, activity and the world mutually constitute each other and on learning as involving the whole person. However, they argue that learning is not merely situated in practice; "it is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world" (ibid: 35). Lave and Wenger therefore propose the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' to describe engagement in social practice in which learning is integral. It refers to the process by which newcomers move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. The practice of a community creates the 'learning curriculum' (a field of learning resources viewed from the perspective of the learners); therefore a 'community of practice' is an intrinsic condition for the existence of

knowledge. “A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (ibid: 98). Becoming a full participant of the community of practice involves engaging with the technologies of everyday practice, its social relations, discourse and activities. However, as well as engaging in existing practice, newcomers also have a stake in its future development as they establish their identity as members of the community of practice.

Engeström *et al.* (1995) describe *Activity systems* as complex and enduring ‘communities of practice,’ which are enacted through individual goal-directed actions and often take the form of institutions. They argue that approaches to the acquisition of expertise have tended to present a vertical view of expertise. This approach suggests that there are levels or stages of knowledge and skill and assumes a uniform, singular model of expertise. Engeström *et al.* argue that a horizontal element is becoming increasingly relevant for understanding the acquisition of expertise. Workplaces are increasingly characterised by *polycontextuality*:

Polycontextuality at the level of activity systems means that experts are engaged not only in multiple simultaneous tasks and task-specific participation frameworks within one and the same activity. They are also increasingly involved in multiple communities of practice.

(p. 320)

Using a study by Tyre and von Hippel (1993) on the use of new equipment in two industrial plants, Engeström *et al.* illustrate how polycontextuality at the level of activity systems can lead to *boundary crossing*. The study found that in order to solve a particular problem during adjustment to the new equipment the workers had to investigate the issue in two different locations – the plant and the lab. Engeström *et al.* suggest that the plant and the laboratory were two very different activity systems, each with its distinct tools, languages rules and social relations, but in order to solve the problem the workers had to connect the two contexts and become *boundary crossers*.

However, a limitation to Lave and Wenger (1991) and Engeström *et al.* (1995) is that their theories have been developed through studies of types of professional work which is difficult to relate to the work of nightclub dancers. Parker’s (2006) application of Lave and Wenger’s work to a study of English football apprenticeship provides a basis for a consideration of how the theory of legitimate peripheral participation in

communities of practice might be applied to a study of how nightclub dancers learn. He explores how the Youth Trainees of 'Colby Town' were becoming members of the 'professional footballer' community of practice. This meant being disciplined, dedicated to physical fitness, sporting prowess and personal integrity and developing a healthy 'professional attitude.' Having a healthy professional attitude required enthusiasm for football, loyalty to the club and one's team mates, a competitive spirit and a commitment to institutional regulations and procedures. Youth Trainees were coached through harsh authoritarian discipline and had to learn to cope with this as well as the daily practice of engaging in insulting banter with the other team mates. Drawing on Paechter's (2003a, 2003b) application of Lave and Wenger's work, Parker also suggests by engaging in insulting and sexualised banter that the Youth Trainee footballers were also engaging in legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice based on a localised (in this case professional footballer) form of masculinity.

The importance of social networks in the workplace (or communities of practice/activity systems) and the role of more experienced dancers (or 'old timers') for learning to strip and a consideration of these factors for nightclub dancers' learning has already been suggested. However, the consideration of individuals learning how to perform masculinities and femininities through legitimate peripheral participation has brought to light a new way in which the work of Lave and Wenger could be applied to a study of nightclub dancers. It suggests that novice nightclub dancers enter a localised form of masculinity or femininity community of practice as they become members of a nightclub dancer community of practice. This is likely to be based around gendered clothing, make-up and dance styles. It also highlights the way in which nightclub dancers are likely to legitimate peripheral participants in a range of communities of practice; for example, the community of the nightclub in which they work, their talent agency and the male or female nightclub dancer community.

The 'learning as participation' metaphor also contains an implication that learning is embodied. On the one hand, acquisition-orientated theories of learning which have long dominated educational policy and practice place the mind at the centre of learning (as a vessel to be filled with knowledge). Participation-orientated theories, on the other hand - which view learning as an active process of 'doing' - naturally place a greater emphasis on the role of the body in such processes. A good example of this is shown through a study by Hilary Timma (2007) on food production workers, which draws heavily on Lave and Wenger's (1991) theories of learning in its analysis. Timma

argues that workers in her study actively construct knowledge through their embodied actions. They learn best from other workers and through socially located assessment practices which allow them to express themselves through the doing of the task. This type of learning is integral to employees' development, but is often underappreciated or ignored.

Similarly, Somerville and Lloyd (2006) argue that the use of codified knowledge in health and safety training, which generally relies on the use of textual and competency-based training prior to starting work, ignores the integral role of the body in learning how to avoid injury at work. For example, in their study of care of the elderly, it was found that manual handling is a complex practice that cannot be codified easily as it required a subjective consideration of the different shapes and sizes of nurses' bodies as well the patients' bodies. It is also influenced by the culture, practices and beliefs of the more experienced staff in the workplace which are constantly changing. This means that the techniques learnt in training prior to starting work have to be transformed in practice and that manual handling can only really be learnt in practice. Additionally, accounts from builders, miners and fire fighters suggest that workers rely more on an embodied form of situated common sense than on the codified training they receive. For example, miners talk of using 'pit sense' and fire fighters used 'fire sense' which relied on the use of all the senses to sense or feel when danger was near (Somerville and Lloyd, 2006). Indeed, the discussion of nightclub dancers' dance skill in relation to the concepts of body techniques and habitus highlighted the centrality of the body in nightclub dancer's learning. Additionally, embodiment is at the heart of aesthetic labour and emotional labour, which were also identified as being key skills required by individuals wishing to become successful nightclub dancers.

Felstead *et al.*'s (2007) research on the training of Exercise To Music (ETM) instructors provides a bridge between the three areas of embodied skills (dance skills, aesthetic and emotional labour) explored in the first of the two main parts of this chapter and the workplace learning literature. Felstead *et al.* identify two productive systems through which ETM instructors are trained to deliver classes – the 'freestyle' and 'pre-choreography' approaches. The 'freestyle' approach allows the ETM instructor to use their music mapping skills to analyse and select appropriate music and their knowledge of anatomy, physiology, different aerobic dance steps and (again) music to choreograph classes. They also have control over their own image and can bring in their own

personality into their delivery of ETM classes. However, BTS (Body Training Systems) ETM instructors who have been trained through and deliver classes using the ‘pre-choreography’ approach are provided with specially produced pre-selected music and accompanying choreography for their standardised classes. These classes are initially learnt by rote and once the ETM instructors are qualified they are provided with new choreography at regular intervals through the use of an instructional DVD. They are encouraged to not only exactly copy the routine of dance steps of the person demonstrating the class on the DVD, but also their style, words, voice, facial expressions and gestures, conveying the appropriate emotion depending on what type of branded workout they are delivering. For example, delivering a ‘BodyBalance’ class requires a ‘calm’ manner. In addition, BTS sells matching branded clothing which ETM instructors are encouraged to purchase and wear for delivering their classes. Hence, whilst training in the freestyle approach to ETM allows for continuing expansion and the further development of skills, the pre-choreography approach allows skills to wither through lack of use and reliance on other specialist workers to produce music and choreography for them.

This study includes different types of dancers that would be booked to perform in a nightclub: freestyle podium dancers (like ‘Jane’ from the researcher’s MSc thesis), dancers that perform choreographed routines in troupes and pole performers. Felstead *et al.*’s (2007) will therefore be utilised for drawing comparisons between the ‘freestyle’ and ‘pre-choreography’ approaches to ETM and freestyle and choreographed nightclub dancing. In addition, Felstead *et al.*’s examination of ‘conveying an appropriate image’ in ETM relates to aspects of aesthetic labour and emotional labour which have been identified as being important in nightclub dancers’ work.

Summary and Conclusion

This review has drawn upon a wide range of literature to suggest what skills and attributes individuals might require in order to become successful nightclub dancers. Literature from the area of workplace learning has been examined in order to suggest how nightclub dancers might learn to be successful and professional in their occupation. Three main areas of skills and attributes were identified as being important for becoming a successful nightclub dancer: ‘dance skills’, ‘looking the part and staying in

shape' and 'performance'. The concept of body techniques (Mauss, 1973) was examined in relation to investigating nightclub dancers' embodied dance knowledge and skills and how these are influenced by habitus (Bouredieu, 1990). It was then suggested that 'aesthetic labour' (Witz *et al.*, 2000) would be an accepted and expected part of nightclub's work (Dean, 2005). The discussion the final area of skill – 'performance' – argued that nightclub dancers are booked to help create 'an atmosphere' in the nightclub and emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) would play a key role in this. This performance may also be 'strategically sexualised', whereby nightclub dancers' sex appeal – including their ability to flirt with customers and sexual attractiveness – is utilised by employers as a deliberate corporate strategy (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009).

The review of the workplace learning literature began by drawing on Sfard's (1998) two metaphors of learning and a critique of the traditional view of 'learning as acquisition' which highlighted its limitations for a study of nightclub dancers' learning. This was followed by an exploration of studies of workplace learning based on view of 'learning as participation' and how their concepts and findings could be applied. In general, such studies were argued to be highly applicable to the present study because of their focus on 'learning by doing'. Specifically, it was argued that Eraut's (2000; 2004) concepts to define different types of knowledge and non-formal learning could be utilised well to explore the different types of learning which nightclub dancers engage in. Lave and Wenger's (1991) conception of 'situated learning' in 'communities of practice' was also considered as key in understanding nightclub dancers' learning from others. It was then argued that 'participation orientated' literature on workplace learning which considered embodied would be most suitable for a study of nightclub dancers. Hence, Felstead *et al.*'s (2007) study of ETM (Exercise To Music) instructors was argued to be useful in linking the skills and explored in the first part of the chapter to theories and research on workplace learning.

The relative lack of previous research on the area of nightclub dancers provided a challenge with regards to designing this research project. However, the literature reviewed in this chapter has provided a good starting point for addressing the questions of what and how nightclub dancers learn. The closely related literature on 'exotic dancers' has been particularly useful in this respect and also for suggesting broader theoretical concepts which could be applied to this study. Taken together, this literature has provided a sound basis from which to design more specific and grounded questions

for the development of research tools, the process of which will be explained in Chapter 3. In addition, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 draw on and contribute to the theories and concepts discussed in relation to the three areas of skills and attributes identified above, as well as theories of workplace learning. However, nightclub dancers provide a new and unique perspective through which to consider the theories, concepts and ideas presented in the previous literature.

Chapter 3

Methods

Introduction

This chapter will describe, explain and evaluate the research methods employed to investigate how individuals learn to become successful nightclub dancers. It is divided into three sections which focus on different stages of the research process: research design, data collection and data analysis. The ‘research design’ section consists of an explanation of how and why particular methods were chosen that would be most suitable for addressing the research questions. The ‘data collection’ section describes and evaluates how these methods were applied to the actual process of gathering research data. This includes discussion of practical/ethical considerations such as negotiating access and the role of the researcher in data collection. Finally, the ‘data analysis’ section explains how the data were analysed through the use of thematic coding.

Research Design

The main research question being addressed by this project is ‘how do individuals learn to become successful nightclub dancers?’ The two subsidiary questions are: ‘*what* skills and attributes do individuals require in order to become successful nightclub dancers?’ and ‘*how* do nightclub dancers learn to become professional and successful in their occupation?’ Hence, put simply, data were required on what nightclub dancers learn and how they learn. However, due to the aforementioned lack of research on nightclub dancers (see Chapters 1 and 2) and the lack of established knowledge of the field, this provided challenges with regards to selecting appropriate methods and designing research tools. Additionally, reviewing the literature revealed some issues with researching embodied and informal learning which were both expected to play an important role in becoming a successful nightclub dancer. This section will explain how the research design was conceived to address these challenges and fulfil the research aims.

Selecting appropriate research methods

Before the research design was fully developed, preliminary internet research was carried out to gather some information about nightclub dancers in the UK. This mainly involved browsing the websites of events entertainment agencies/talent agencies that include 'profiles' of nightclub dancers. The content of these profiles varied between different sites and dancers, but they often included a list of dance qualifications and/or the styles of dance they had been trained in. Many included a description of previous nightclub dancing experience, usually in the form of list of nightclubs in which they had danced. The vast majority of the profiles had at least one image of the dancer and many had more. Some profiles included the dancer's height, and some profiles of female dancers even included hip, waist and chest measurements. This research helped to establish some knowledge about the occupation and in particular the types of skills, attributes and training that were important in becoming a nightclub dancer. It also aided the researcher in deciding which research methods would be most suitable both in terms of addressing the research questions and practical considerations.

From the outset, it was clear that the use of survey methods or highly structured interviews would be inappropriate for the research aims. This study is exploratory in nature and aims to identify the types of knowledge, skills and learning which are required in order to become a successful nightclub dancer. Although preliminary internet research helped to suggest some types of skills and knowledge that might be significant, much greater prior knowledge of all this would be required to design and frame effective structured questions. In any case, such methods would be more appropriate for *measuring* rather than exploring and understanding the knowledge, skills and learning involved in becoming a nightclub dancer. However, a wholly ethnographic approach would mean narrowing the focus of the research to a particular site or group such as a city (with a few nightclubs that regularly have nightclub dancers) or events entertainment agency. This study aims to create a broader picture of what it takes to become a successful nightclub dancer in the UK and this was expected to vary between different localities and employers.

Therefore, semi-structured interviewing was deemed to be the most appropriate data collection method for this research. Clearly, nightclub dancers would be the main group of participants. However, other groups were expected to play a key role in what

and how nightclub dancers learn. Firstly, nightclub managers are the main driving force in determining what skills, knowledge and attributes nightclub dancers require in order to become successful. They select and employ nightclub dancers as entertainers directly and/or hire them from events entertainment agencies. Hence, managers of events entertainment agencies were also expected to play a role determining what skills, knowledge and attributes nightclub dancers require as they would want to recruit nightclub dancers who would attract a lot of bookings from nightclub managers. Both of these employers, but particularly events entertainment agency managers were also expected to be involved in the training of nightclub dancers to some extent. In addition to this, teachers of certain types of dance class that were expected to be involved in nightclub dancers' learning were identified through the preliminary internet research of nightclub dancers' profiles. Pole dance teachers were obviously expected to be significant in training nightclub pole performers. Podium dancers tended to list a variety of styles of dance, but Street dance was one of the most frequently listed styles. An internet search also revealed that one dance company taught a Podium dance course. Interviews with these three types of dance teacher would focus on how they teach but also how they learnt to dance themselves.

However, the previous chapter highlighted the potential difficulties with researching embodied learning, which was expected to be a key form of learning for nightclub dancers. Specifically, Crossley (2007) suggested that embodied knowledge is difficult for participants to talk about because the principles behind a movement are grasped in the process of doing it. However, he suggested that researchers can gain an understanding of such knowledge through participant-observation of the teaching of *body techniques* (such as those that need to be grasped in order to be able to perform a particular dance move during a dance lesson). In particular, when a student struggles to learn a new movement the teacher is forced to make the principles behind the movement more explicit to the student and the researcher who is also participating and observing.

Additionally, Eraut (2004: 249) outlined some of the problems associated with conducting research on workplace learning which is often informal:

- informal learning is largely invisible, because much of it is either taken for granted or not recognized as learning; thus, respondents lack awareness of their own learning;
- the resultant knowledge is either tacit or regarded as part of a person's general capability, rather than something that has been learned;

- discourse about learning is dominated by codified, propositional knowledge, so respondents often find it difficult to describe more complex aspects of their work and the nature of their expertise.

Although Eraut's (2004) discussion relates to workplace learning in professional, technical and managerial occupations, it was expected that these difficulties would also present themselves when investigating nightclub dancers' informal learning.

Fortunately, Eraut (2004) also provides some suggestions for overcoming these potential issues. For example, Eraut and his colleagues used opportunities for short periods of observation to gain some understanding of the work setting. This enabled the researchers to initiate more specific conversations about practice; they were able to ask the participant how they learnt to do what they were doing. However, Eraut also explained how semi-structured interviews (conducted in addition to the short periods of observation) avoided focusing on 'critical incidents or salient episodes'. He argues that this highlights learning that has arisen from atypical situations rather than everyday practice and would be unsuitable for investigating implicit learning and tacit knowledge, both of which were expected to play an important role in learning to become a successful nightclub dancer.

Hence, the main implications for the design of a research project on learning to be a nightclub dancer from both Crossley's (2007) and Eraut's (2004) research were as follows. Firstly, the design should incorporate some participant-observation of podium, pole and street dance lessons that would be taken by those wishing to become nightclub dancers. This would enable the researcher to investigate embodied learning through witnessing how embodied knowledge is made explicit so that it can be transferred to students. Secondly, some observation of nightclub dancers in their place of work would help the researcher to understand what they do and provide a concrete basis for questions on how they learnt to do it. Both sites of observation would also provide an opportunity to recruit participants including nightclub dancers, nightclub managers, dance teachers and students. Thirdly, semi-structured interview schedules would have to be carefully designed to encourage participants to talk about *all* the forms of learning and knowledge which might be involved in becoming a successful nightclub dancer.

Designing semi-structured interview schedules

Eraut's (2004) discussion of methods also highlighted how interview questions need to be carefully designed if the aim is to encourage participants to talk about *all* the types of learning and knowledge involved in their work, including informal learning and tacit knowledge. A copy of the main interview schedule used for nightclub dancers is included in Appendix A. The main questions were divided into groups focusing on recruitment and employment, pre-job learning and socialisation and on-the-job learning. Although certain key questions needed to be included in every interview, the interview schedule was designed to be a guide and it was expected that the questions would not follow the same order in the actual interviews. The aim was to encourage in-depth and free-flowing responses and allow nightclub dancers to frame their responses in their own terms (May, 1997) whilst remaining focused on the research questions. Some suggested follow-up questions were included in the interview schedule for use for less talkative participants, but it was expected that a lot of the follow-up questions would be improvised to suit the responses of individual participants.

The first main group of questions focused on obtaining data on what skills, knowledge and attributes they perceive employers to value, but also what they value themselves. This section also aimed to explore nightclub dancers' employment conditions and pay to assess their levels of success and professionalism. The second main group of questions focused on dance qualifications, training and experience gained prior to the participant becoming employed as a nightclub dancer. The design of this group of questions also drew on findings from previous research on exotic dancers which has explored the role of previous experience or training in performance/entertainment related work in 'learning to strip' (e.g. Boles and Garbin, 1974; Lewis, 1998). Hence, nightclub dancers were to be asked if they had experience of performing. A question which invited nightclub dancers to reflect on what type of learning they relied on most as nightclub dancers was also included.

A key line of questioning in the final section about nightclub dancers' on-the-job learning was influenced by Eraut's (2004) approach to interviewing. His interviews began by asking participants to describe their work in great detail, including recalling everyday aspects and particular activities they had recently engaged in. He then asked participants what types of skill and knowledge they required to do this work and how

these were acquired. Similarly, nightclub dancers were to be asked to describe the dance moves and types of movement they typically used in the nightclub they were most recently paid to dance in and how they learnt them. Questions on what nightclub dancers' image and what they wear for different nightclubs were also included to collect data on aesthetic labour. A final question on what steps a person should take in order to become a professional nightclub dancer was an opportunity for participants to summarise their responses to previous questions as well as add any additional information on how one would actually go about becoming a nightclub dancer.

The interviews with nightclub dancers were designed to be the longest. The interview schedules for other groups of participants were much more structured and succinct. This was partly because members of each of these other groups had a particular perspective on and contribution to nightclub dancers' skills and learning, which meant that the interviews could be more focused. Hence, interviews with street and pole dance class teachers were centred around their teaching methods and in particular what they did when a student struggled to grasp a particular move. They were also asked about whether they had ever been paid to dance in a nightclub and if not whether they would consider (or have considered) doing it. The main line of questioning in interviews with pole and street dance class students was about how they became proficient in particular dance moves that they had learnt recently. The interviews with nightclub managers and events entertainment agency managers were mainly focused on their selection criteria for booking/recruitment of nightclub dancers; i.e. what they thought made a good nightclub dancer. Events entertainment agency managers were also asked about whether they or their company had a role in training nightclub dancers in any way. The interview schedules for events entertainment agency managers and nightclub managers were designed to be particularly concise and straight-to-the-point because it was expected that these individuals would have little time to spare. The extent to which these expectations were proved correct is explored in the discussion that follows.

Data Collection

The discussion above explained how the research methodology was carefully designed to suit the research aims. The actual process of collecting data from ethics

approval though to leaving the field was also planned in as much detail as possible. However, many practical issues emerged once fieldwork had commenced and much was learnt about the field in the process of gathering data. This section will explain and evaluate the data collection process. This includes sampling and negotiating access, participating in dance classes and how the interviews were conducted and transcribed.

Sampling and negotiating access

Participants were recruited from across England and South Wales. The overall approach to sampling was purposive (or non-probability) and could be described as a combination of convenience and snowball (or network) sampling (Arber, 2001; Bryman, 2012). However, different groups of potential participants required different approaches in terms of making contacting and recruiting them. Additionally, the term ‘convenience’ sampling misrepresents the amount of time and effort required to locate and recruit participants from some of these groups. The strategies employed for negotiating access to each group of participants involved in this study and the challenges presented will be explained below. Informed written consent was gained from all participants, to whom confidentiality assurances were made. Confidentiality is maintained through the use of pseudonyms and removal of identifying information (such as exact locations) throughout this thesis and any presentations and publications that have arisen from it.

Dance teachers and students

Fieldwork began with the researcher’s participation in pole dance classes. In recent years, the number of pole dance schools has increased rapidly (Holland, 2010). An internet search of ‘pole dancing lessons’ was carried out and resulted in a large number of hits for websites of pole schools ranging from large and well established international pole schools to small, locally based pole schools. The researcher perceived that pole dance lessons were often marketed at women who have not enjoyed other forms of exercise. Indeed, Holland (2010) found a reoccurring theme of disliking physical exercise but enjoying pole dancing amongst interviewees who were learning pole. This was ideal for the researcher, who was reasonably strong and healthy but

certainly not a fitness fanatic. In addition, although most courses were open to men and women, some courses were for women only, so gender was not a barrier to participation. Finally, although most pole dance schools specified a minimum age of 16, there was no upper age limit. Hence, the researcher would not be entirely 'out of place' in a pole dance class, although the impact of her participation will be critically examined later.

It was decided that the approach to participation in pole classes would be relatively overt with the researcher's intentions made clear to the managers and teachers of each pole school. As stated previously, these intentions were to recruit participants from the pole classes for interviews and gain a greater understanding of pole dancing. In addition, fieldnotes were not to be made during the pole classes because this would entail obtaining informed consent from all of the students enrolled. The researcher, the pole school managers and teachers were concerned that this might make students feel uncomfortable and dissuade them from attending. Additionally, it was deemed to be impractical to attempt to record fieldnotes whilst participating in learning to pole dance. Rather, fieldnotes would be written up in the evening after the pole classes.

The first school (Pole School #1) that was approached was one of the largest in the UK at the time that fieldwork commenced. At this time the pole school offered pole dance lessons as a hen night activity, but also six-week beginners, intermediate and advanced classes which are marketed as being a 'fun' and 'girly' way of improving fitness and muscle tone. This pole school was the only one in the study to place a particular emphasis on wearing high heels for pole dancing. Access negotiations for this school involved obtaining informed consent via email and telephone from the school's PR manager (who asked for a research proposal as well as the participant information sheet) and then the teacher of the six-week beginner level course. The pole dance teacher of this course declined to be interviewed because she expressed that she was very busy at the time. The approach to recruiting students was to hand out participant information sheets, invite the students to give their contact details if they were interested in participating and then to contact them to arrange an interview. Upon reflection the researcher's approach was deemed to be too formal and 'heavy handed'; only one of the five students from this pole dance class - 'Julie' - eventually agreed to be interviewed after it was suggested that another pole dance lesson was taken together outside of the six-week beginner course. It was therefore decided that the subsequent approach to negotiating access to dance teachers, dance students and nightclub dancers

would be more chatty and friendly and not to give them participant information sheets straight away.

Negotiating access at the three subsequent pole schools was eased by their smaller size. The owners of these schools were also teachers and so they could be easily approached directly. The researcher attended two beginner classes for Pole School #2 (which were part of a six-week course but the lessons were booked and paid for separately unlike Pole School #1) and the teacher ('Sarah') was interviewed after the second class. The owner/teacher at Pole School #3 ('Catherine') was also a nightclub pole performer and a former freestyle podium dancer. She was contacted via email and invited to be interviewed. Catherine initially asked for payment for the interview, but this was avoided by offering to pay for a one-to-one pole tuition session and then conducting the interview afterwards. This was more beneficial to the research as it helped to contextualise and frame questions about her teaching and learning of pole dancing as well as serve as an 'ice-breaker' and help to build rapport with the participant before the interview. Pole School #4 was also an events entertainment agency which specialised in providing pole performers to nightclubs. The two co-owners ('Katy' and 'Zoe'), who were teachers and nightclub pole performers were invited to be interviewed and agreed via email. Another teacher and performer at Pole School #4 ('Nicola') was recruited for interview during participant-observation at an event at a nightclub organised by the pole school. A 'drop in' beginner's class at Pole School #4 was also attended but it was not taught by any of the interviewees.

The original intention was to interview more of the students on these pole dance courses. This was partly because many of the teachers being interviewed were still learning new pole tricks and so this reduced the need to recruit more pole dancing students. Additionally, during the process of data collection it soon emerged that whilst pole dance classes were widely available, pole performers were not in high demand for paid nightclub work. The reasons behind this will become clear in the discussion of the research findings.

The researcher attended one Street dance lesson and interviewed the teacher ('Michelle'). Participant observation was also conducted at the regional contest of an international street dancing competition. Unlike pole dance lessons, adult street dance lessons were structured around the school year because they were usually held at dance studios or community/leisure centres which cater mainly to children and young adults. This meant that the researcher had to join the class at the beginning of the school year

when other new students were joining because she was a complete novice with little dance experience. This provided some barriers to participating in more street dance classes. However, the main reason for not attending more Street dance lessons was amount of time and effort expended in recruiting other participants deemed to be more important. Street dance was only one form of dance that podium dancers might be trained in, where as nightclub managers, events entertainment agency managers and particularly nightclub dancers had a clear contribution to make to the research.

A podium dance class listed on the website of a London-based dance studio was the only one which could be found on the internet at the time the fieldwork was conducted. The dance studio was contacted several times throughout the data collection period to attempt to book a place on this course. However, the response to each phone-call was that the course was not being run due to a lack of interest.

Events entertainment agency managers

The full contact details of events entertainment agency managers were made easily available through agency websites. The approach to contacting these individuals was fairly formal and was also based around the assumption that agency managers would be busy. Agency managers were sent an initial email with the participant information sheet attached. The email itself was kept brief and succinct but emphasised the importance of the role of events entertainment agencies in the research project. Unless there was a reply in the negative to the email, this was followed by a phone-call over the next few days. Several events entertainment agencies were contacted in this way, but only one agency manager ('Ian') was recruited through this method. He was particularly enthusiastic and replied positively to the initial email. Other agency managers said that they were too busy or the researcher could simply not get through to them. Fortunately, another participant ('Catherine') provided the contact details of a former agency manager and podium dancer ('Leon'). In addition to this, one participant had a similar role to an events entertainment agency manager, but for two venues of a specific brand of 'superclub' ('Emma' – the entertainment manager of 'Superbash').

Nightclub managers

Nightclub managers posed a number of issues in terms of recruiting them for this study, but three were interviewed. Whilst such difficulties were anticipated to some extent, it was expected that the number of nightclubs in the UK would compensate. This was not the case in practice. Although some nightclub websites provided email addresses for general enquiries, nightclub managers could usually only be reached by telephone. This meant a lot of ‘cold calling’ and this was not helped by the rate at which nightclubs change managers (Mintel, 2006). Additionally, due to the nature of their working hours (busily engaged in ‘admin’ in the office in the day as well as managing the club at night) it was often difficult to get hold of the actual manager of the nightclub to invite them to participate. When the researcher did eventually get hold of nightclub managers, many said that they were too busy or that they did not have dancers at their club.

There is also a possibility that some managers were actually unwilling to talk about their employment of dancers because of concerns over the legality of their practices. This consideration arose from interviews with ‘Amber’ (nightclub podium dancer) and ‘Lee’ (nightclub manager). Amber complained that nightclubs were always trying to avoid paying dancers’ fees or paying less than they had originally agreed. Lee mentioned at the end of the interview that it would be better to approach managers of nightclubs which were part of large chains rather than the managers of smaller, more independent nightclubs because the latter would be more likely to engage in ‘underhanded’ employment practices. Indeed, on more than one occasion the researcher contacted the manager of a nightclub which nightclub dancers who participated in the study had worked in and the manager claimed that they had never had nightclub dancers.

Nightclub dancers

Nightclub dancers – the most important population at the centre of this study – at first proved to be one of the most difficult groups to contact. A major barrier was that at the time fieldwork was being conducted, few of the nightclubs within reasonable travel distance seemed to be booking nightclub dancers at all and none of them had regular dancers. This meant that recruiting nightclub dancers through conducting

observation in nightclubs would involve a considerable use of limited resources to stay overnight in distant and unknown cities to visit nightclubs. This option was therefore considered impractical. In contrast other groups of participants, the contact details of nightclub dancers were not readily available on the internet. Profiles of nightclub dancers on events entertainment agency websites did not include the contact details of individual dancers as they are booked using the main agency contact details. Most talent directories did not make nightclub dancers' contact details available to the public – only employers of performers could obtain these through registering. There was one dancer agency which listed the email addresses of five nightclub dancers and one of these dancers was recruited for an interview.

Nightclub dancers were, therefore, overwhelmingly recruited through snowball sampling. A group of nightclub dancers who regularly perform at a particular nightclub were recruited via the nightclub manager who provided the contact details of the lead dancer 'Kelly'. In general, once contact with individual nightclub dancers was achieved they were often the most willing participants and were very happy to provide contact details of others. In many cases only the first name and the mobile phone number of potential participants was provided to the researcher. It is therefore necessary to highlight some of the considerations with regards to using mobile phones for negotiating access with nightclub dancers.

In contrast to other forms of portable communications technology, such as laptops, mobile phones can be worn. They become an extension of the body and, unlike landlines, mobile phones are not attached to a fixed physical location (Campbell and Park, 2008). The result is a state of 'perpetual contact' (Katz and Aakhus, 2002b) and constant availability; mobile phone users can interact with each other and, increasingly, access information at any time, in any place – private or public, at home, work, leisure or in between, possibly even whilst driving. Gergen (2002) argues that the fact that the mobile phone user is vulnerable to calls at any time invites careful consideration of who is allowed access to one's mobile number. However, as mobile phone use becomes increasingly widespread and considered as universal, the extent of this control over access to one's mobile phone number becomes limited.

Indeed, in most cases, potential participants were unaware that their name and mobile phone number had been given out by their friend or colleague. Simply 'cold calling' these individuals to invite them to participate as one would using a fixed landline number (as was the case with nightclub managers who were contacted on the

office numbers provided on the nightclub websites) would be highly problematic. The preceding discussion highlighted the extent to which when a person receives a mobile phone call they could be anywhere and doing anything. They might be in a public space, which brings into question the extent to which their participation in the research project could be considered as anonymous and confidential. They might be crossing a busy road, or even driving. They could be enjoying leisure time or be interrupted at work. All of these unfavourable scenarios draw attention to the high risk of inconveniencing or annoying potential participants when contacting them on their mobile rather than a fixed landline. Indeed, this occurred on one occasion when the mobile number of a woman responsible for booking entertainment for a particular nightclub was obtained from one of the managers of that nightclub. She was contacted at a time when it was hoped that she was on her lunch break, but instead she sounded rather annoyed to be phoned whilst she was at work.

However, the ability to contact nightclub dancers on their mobile phones was also advantageous. This is because, as discussed previously, there is not always a fixed location at which to locate nightclub dancers as they often have different 'day jobs' and during evenings they could be dancing in any number of nightclubs. But mobile phones also provide a means of asynchronous communication in the form of text messaging, which was very useful in this study. Sending text messages to dancers before phoning them reduced the chances of causing annoyance and inconvenience to potential participants as texts do not have to be dealt with immediately. Text messages sent to nightclub dancers could be used in a similar way to the emails sent to the agency managers. The text message explained who the researcher was, who had provided the nightclub dancer's mobile number and what the research was about in brief. Potential participants were informed that they would be phoned the following day and were given the opportunity to simply reply 'no' to the text if they did not wish to be contacted again (see Appendix B for examples of SMS messages). In many cases enthusiastic replies were received almost immediately from nightclub dancers stating that they would be happy to help. These individuals were phoned straight away as their rapid response implied availability at that moment to arrange an interview.

The disadvantage of sending texts over emails is the character limit per single text. The information given at first had to be kept brief as it was decided that sending a message in any more than two texts would be too much and would inconvenience the individual receiving them. This also entailed the use of well known abbreviations such

as '2' instead of 'to' and '4' instead of 'for.' Kasesniemi and Rautianen (2002) have explored the way in which Finnish teenagers manage the 160 character limit of SMS, including the use of 'text speak'. However, unlike between groups of teenage friends, a common text speak had not been established with the participants, which meant that effort was required to ensure that the texts were understood. The actual result was that the texts read as less authoritative than the emails, but did perhaps benefit from having a more friendly and everyday tone. Text messaging was also useful for maintaining contact with all participants and for checking their availability for an approaching interview.

The social networking website Facebook was utilised in attempting to recruit participants. Personal Facebook messages were sent to nightclub dancers listed on a talent agency website with a brief explanation of the researcher and the project, inviting them to participate. This resulted in few responses and those who did respond eventually declined to be interviewed because they were too busy.

The sample

The sample size consisted of 24 interviewees. 16 of these were nightclub dancers, but some of these had other roles significant to this research project. 2 of the nightclub dancers were male, the rest were female. Preliminary internet research of events entertainment agency websites suggested that there were a lot more female dancers than male dancers available for nightclub bookings. The interview data also suggested that the sample reflected the gender balance of nightclub dancers. For example, Tina suggested that on the 'straight' nightclub scene there was 1 male dancer for every 20 female dancers. All 4 of the nightclub pole performers were also pole dance teachers. 3 of the other nightclub dancers were managers at events entertainment agencies and 2 further nightclub dancers fulfilled a similar role in but in a particular nightclub. The other participants consisted of 3 nightclub managers in the sample (all male), 1 female Street dance teacher, 1 female pole dance teacher (that was not a pole performer), 1 pole dance student. There was also 1 events entertainment agency manager – 'Ian' – and Ian's male colleague – 'Steve' – who managed the bookings at the agency, bringing the total of non-nightclub dancer participants to 8. Although the various unanticipated difficulties in locating and recruiting participants led to the sample size being smaller than originally planned, the proportions of participants from

different populations were similar to those originally aimed for. In addition, the discussion in the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate that the data collected were of good quality. Details of all the interviewees in this study are included in Table 1. As stated previously, all ‘names’ are pseudonyms.

Table 1: The Interviewees

'Name'	Gender	Role(s) in relation to the research	'Day Job(s)'	Dance skills/Experience/Qualifications
Lee	Male	Nightclub manager	Same	N/A
Luke	Male	Nightclub manager	Same	N/A
Barry	Male	Nightclub manager	Same	N/A
Ian	Male	Events entertainment agency manager	Same	Photographer and stilt-walker
Steve	Male	Bookings manager at Ian's agency. Stilt and fire performer	Same	Stilt-walker and fire performer
Leon	Male	Former events entertainment agency manager, freestyle podium dancer	'government – purchases'	Self taught, some capoeira training
Richard	Male	Nightclub dancer – freestyle podium/ break	Telesales	Self taught in breakdancing
Sonya	Female	Manager of dancers at Ian's agency, nightclub dancer - choreographed and freestyle	Same	Diploma in Musical Theatre and performing Arts. Acro-contortionist and stilt-walker.
Samantha	Female	Bookings manager at Ian's agency. Nightclub dancer – choreographed and freestyle	Same	Formal training in various dance. Angle-grinder, stilt-walker
Emma	Female	Entertainment manager at 2 venues of 'Super Bash' nightclub brand. Nightclub dancer – freestyle and choreographed	Same	Performing Arts at college and uni. Gymnast (former British champion)
Kelly	Female	'Lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub – manager of dancers	Sales rep. for motor factory	Self-taught dancer

Tina	Female	Former nightclub dancer - freestyle podium	Supported by mother	Dance and cheerleading training as a child
Fiona	Female	Nightclub dancer - freestyle podium	Student	Learnt to dance by copying sister Jessica. Enjoyed drama and being in school plays
Jessica	Female	Nightclub dancer - freestyle podium	Student/ Physiotherapist	Training in various types of dance before she was 14
Rebecca	Female	Nightclub dancer - freestyle podium	Social Services	In a theatre group
Amber	Female	Nightclub dancer - Freestyle podium	University student, teaches street dance to children	Studying Dance and Drama at uni. Stilt-walker, fire performer and angle grinder
Emily	Female	Nightclub dancer – freestyle podium	TV/film actress, model, OU student	Dance training at theatre school and dance academy
Catherine	Female	Pole school manager/teacher, nightclub pole performer and former freestyle podium dancer	Same (running pole school and teaching pole dance)	Mainly self-taught in pole dance, but has taken street dance lessons and ETM qualification
Katy	Female	Co-manager of pole school, pole dance teacher, nightclub pole performer	Same + income support	Dance/gymnastics as a child, ETM qualification
Zoe	Female	Co-manager of pole school, pole dance teacher, nightclub pole performer	Same + income support	Learnt pole dance from DVD with sister Katy, ETM qualification
Nicola	Female	Pole dance teacher, nightclub dancer – pole performer	Same + income support	‘Background in dance, drama and gymnastics.’ Learnt pole dance from friend (very quickly)
Sarah	Female	Pole dance teacher	Same	N/A
Julie	Female	Pole dance student	N/A	N/A
Michelle	Female	Street dance teacher	Same	N/A

Participating in dance classes

As stated previously, fieldnotes were written up after, rather than during dance classes to try to minimise the impact of the researcher on the research setting. In this respect, as discussed previously, the approach to recruiting participants in pole school #1 was perhaps too overt. However, this was counterbalanced by the context of pole dance lessons. Learning to pole dance at pole school #1 involved learning various linking moves between pole tricks which were often sexually suggestive. This often led to giggling and created an informal and friendly atmosphere. Indeed, the pole instructor sought to create a fun and relaxed atmosphere in lessons, in part to ease potential embarrassment that might be felt by students. (Re)building trust and rapport was therefore eased by this environment and the fact that researcher was actually taking part in such sexually suggestive performances. For example, the six-week beginners course at pole school #1 culminated in each student performing an improvised pole dance routine of the moves they had learnt during the course to their favourite music. After the researcher performed her routine to music, the instructor said to the researcher: ‘nice arse work!’ In subsequent pole dance classes at pole schools #2 and #4 (the lesson at pole school #3 was private), and also the street dance class, the researcher was more successful in utilising the relaxed atmosphere and chatted informally about the research briefly with dance students she was working with or in close proximity to only if it seemed appropriate or necessary. In this way, the affects of the researcher on the other dance students, their learning and their enjoyment of the classes were minimised.

The fieldnotes from the pole dance classes were not analysed in any systematic way for this thesis but were used mainly for framing interview questions to pole dance teachers and students, as well as improving the researcher’s contextual knowledge for interviewing nightclub pole performers. The main reason for this decision, as already mentioned in the discussion of sampling and negotiating access, was because during the process of collecting data it became clear that there was not as much demand for pole performers as entertainers in nightclubs as was first thought. In addition, during the data collection period pole schools were a fairly new phenomenon. Hence, it was not surprising that the pole dancers/instructors in the sample who were proficient enough to

command a fee for a nightclub performance were largely self taught or learnt from a friend.

The researcher's overall experience of participating in dance classes was positive, including the short term psychological and physiological benefits of engaging in exercise. Physically, the researcher was capable of participating in the dance lessons as part of the research methodology. For example, when performing certain pole tricks the researcher could rely on her pre-existing upper-body strength to some extent. Street dance is fast and the researcher struggled to keep up, but the beginners class did not assume prior dance experience and the lesson was not 'serious' enough for this to a problem. Yet, completely unexpected was the negative affect of mirrored walls and slender pole dance instructors on the researcher's sense of her own body-image. This was compounded by viewing images of and talking to attractive, well-groomed and slim nightclub dancers who were often concerned about their weight. However, this also put the researcher in a better position to understand the internal as well as the external pressures to maintain their physical attractiveness revealed by some nightclub dancers in the interviews.

Interviewing and transcription

The interviews took place at a location and time that was convenient for the participant. All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Some interview locations had high levels of background noise which caused some difficulties with recording and transcription. However, fieldnotes were made after each interview which included the key points that were made by the interviewee as well as contextual information. On some occasions participants would have more to say that was significant to the research questions after all the questions on the interview guide had been covered and digital recorder had been stopped. Warren (2001) suggested that the main reason for this occurring in her experience was that either participants wanted to talk about their own concerns or that they wanted to talk 'off record' about sensitive issues. The reason for participants in the present study continuing to talk after the end of the 'official' interview seemed to be a combination of the two suggested by Warren. For example, three nightclub dancers talked about dieting – their own or that of other dancers – whilst the recorder was not switched on. In general, it seemed that participants

were more relaxed and chatty after the end of the interview so that they would elaborate on points that they had made or alluded to in the interview. When this occurred, notes were made about what was said and read back to the interviewee, apart from on one occasion when the digital recorder was switched back on. Most of the recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher, but some were transcribed by a paid professional. Those that were not transcribed by the researcher were checked thoroughly for errors.

The interviews with nightclub dancers lasted between 20 and 100 minutes. This wide variation was partly due to the fact that as some nightclub dancers had other roles significant to the research, as discussed previously. This meant that interview schedules for nightclub dancers were sometimes combined with, for example, schedules for pole dance teachers or events entertainment agency managers. Additionally, some nightclub dancers were simply more talkative than others. In general, however, most of the nightclub dancers were fairly talkative and gave long and detailed responses. Some nightclub dancers expressed that it was nice for them to have the opportunity to talk about what they do and/or seemed to relish the opportunity to dispel any negative stereotypes and associations with 'sex workers' such as strippers/lap-dancers.

The context of the interviews with nightclub dancers also aided fairly free-flowing conversation with elaboration and detail. Most of the interviews with dancers took place in either a pub, café, or the participant's home, rather than their place of work. This meant that they could express their views without concern of their work colleagues or managers over-hearing (from either their nightclub dancing work or their 'day jobs') and there were also fewer time restrictions. Indeed, the only interviews with nightclub dancers at their workplace were amongst the shortest. These were with nightclub dancers – 'Sonya' and 'Samantha' – who also worked at the offices of their events entertainment agency in the day (Sonya as the manager of dancers and Samantha as a bookings manager). The interview with Sonya was also a joint interview with her manager 'Ian', who tended to dominate the discussion, although seemed in agreement about many aspects. 'Steve' was a booking manager at the same agency and was also interviewed at his workplace.

In contrast to the interviews with nightclub dancers, the three nightclub managers were all interviewed in their respective nightclubs. Their time was restricted (as was anticipated) and their responses to questions were succinct yet, fortunately, revealing; they were willing to be open about their opinions on what made a good

nightclub dancer. The three remaining interviews not discussed so far were with the pole dance teacher 'Sarah' which took place in a pub, the pole dance student 'Julie' which took place in her home and the Street dance teacher 'Michelle'. The latter two interviewees were less confident and more concerned about whether what they were saying was useful than most of the other participants. They required a lot of encouragement and prompting to elicit relatively small amounts of data. However, these participants provided unique perspectives which meant that their contribution was valuable. The next section considers the overall quality of the data and explains and evaluates the process of data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data consisted mainly of semi-structured interview transcripts and this discussion focuses on how these were analysed. Other types of data that were collected included fieldnotes made after the interviews and dance classes as well as fieldnotes of observations at a pole dancing event in a nightclub organised by Pole School #4. The events entertainment agency manager 'Ian' provided a promotional DVD for his company. Additionally, the former podium dancer and events entertainment agency manager 'Leon' copied documents (such as terms and conditions for booking dancers) and videos of dancers from the files still left on his home computer onto a CD for the researcher. These various types of data would not stand up to systematic analysis on their own but helped to enhance the analysis and discussion of the interview data.

The interview data were analysed through an approach to thematic coding adapted from Coffey and Atkinson (1996). The recordings were listened to and the transcripts were read thoroughly. These were annotated by highlighting relevant passages and inserting comments using Microsoft Word. The advantage of using comments in this way is that they can be 'hidden' if necessary, which makes the data easier to re-read even if it has been heavily annotated. Through this process, reoccurring themes emerged from the data which were related to addressing the research questions and these were added to the annotations. These reoccurring themes were then incorporated into a list of codes with corresponding font and highlight colours. Using font and highlight colours together meant that wider, over-arching themes and related smaller themes could be linked together. For example, all data related to 'dance skill'

was highlighted in dark blue. If the participant was talking about choreographed dance skill the font was coloured red, where as if they were talking about freestyle dance skill the font was coloured yellow. All the data related to 'leaning to dance' was highlighted in dark green, with two different font colours used for discussions of informal and formal learning. This coding system was applied and refined several times. A similar method of coding had been used successfully in the researcher's MSc thesis (Parker, 2007).

The main reason for using Microsoft Word for this process rather than a specialist CAQDAS programme was in relation to the heterogeneity and size of the data set. The researcher had received training in the use of Atlas.ti and perceived that it would be ideal for handling larger amounts of data. In particular, Atlas.ti eases the retrieval and organisation of codes when analysing a larger qualitative data set. However, with only 23 transcripts (one of which was a double interview) it was perceived that the use of CAQDAS was not necessary in terms of managing the task. In addition, highlighting passages in different colours allowed the researcher to easily view the coded quotes in context if required, which was important given that there was a lot of variation in the roles which participants had in relation to the research (see Table 1).

Although the length and depth of the interview transcripts varied, the data were generally of sufficient quality to stand up to the process of thematic coding and analysis. There were three main themes which emerged from the interview data and the coded passages of data were copied and pasted into three corresponding Word documents. These would eventually form the basis of the empirical chapters of this thesis on 'dance labour' (Chapter 4) 'aesthetic labour' (Chapter 5) and 'emotional labour and performance' (Chapter 6). The first two of these major themes were anticipated and related to lines of questioning in the interview schedules. In other words, participants were asked about, for example, what dance skills nightclub dancers require and how they are learnt. In addition, they were asked questions about their image as a dancer. However, the third major theme – emotional labour and performance – was largely unanticipated and emerged from responses to more open questions about what participants felt made a good nightclub dancer. As this study did not set out to investigate emotional labour, there were no specific questions included in the semi-structured interview schedules designed to illicit responses on the nature of nightclub dancers' emotional labour or how they learnt it.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined, explained and evaluated the research methods that which were utilised for this research study. The discussion of the research design explained how the methods were carefully chosen to suit the aims of the research and overcome potential challenges in investigating informal and embodied learning. The discussion of the process of data collection explained how participants were accessed and recruited using a range of different tactics, although with varying degrees of success. The resulting sample size was therefore smaller than expected, but the conditions under which the interviews were conducted were favourable. In addition, key participants were generally talkative. The outcome was a set of good quality data which was sufficiently robust for thematic coding using an approach which has previously been effective and proved to be on this occasion. The results of this analysis are presented and discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Chapter 4

Learning Physical Dance Labour

Introduction

In order to be successful, nightclub dancers need to become proficient in three main types of labour which comprise the occupation: physical dance labour, aesthetic labour and emotional labour. This chapter explores what skills are required for individuals to be able to proficiently perform physical dance labour for nightclubs and how they learn these skills. Conceiving dance as labour not only neatly separates paid nightclub dancing from unpaid dancing, it also captures the idea that nightclub dancers are selling their dance performance to employers and therefore have to conform to their demands. Additionally, it allows a consideration of the level of control which different types of nightclub dancers have over the labour process. This is related to how and what they learn before and after they have become employed as nightclub dancers and has consequences in terms of how they are able to utilise their skills in their work. The first half of this chapter will explore what skills nightclub dancers require in order to perform two types of dance labour referred to as ‘moving to known music’ and ‘moving to unknown music’. These are compared and contrasted with the ‘pre-choreography’ and ‘freestyle’ approaches to ETM (Exercise to Music) studied by Felstead *et al.* (2007). The second half of the chapter will explore how the skills required for each type of dance labour are learnt. The chapter will show that all nightclub dancers have to learn to adapt their dance to the demands of nightclub managers in a highly competitive market.

What makes a good dance labourer for nightclubs?

The first half of this chapter will explore the skills which nightclub dancers require to be successful ‘dance labourers’. Different types of nightclub dancer require different sets of skills, depending largely on whether their dance labour is ‘choreographed’ to pre-selected music or is ‘freestyle’ to music which the DJ has selected. Before these two main types of *dance labour* are compared, there is an explanation of the three types of nightclub dancer (choreographed stage dancers,

freestyle podium dancers and pole dancers - who perform both choreographed and freestyle routines); their styles, moves and routines. Most of the dancers in the sample could be identified as freestyle podium dancers and so the data and discussion focuses mostly on this type of dancer. However, the inclusion of the choreographed stage dancers and pole performers allows for contrast which helps to draw out the skills which are unique to podium dancers. Additionally, in the second half of the chapter it will allow for an exploration of how different types of learning have varying outcomes.

Types of dancer: styles, moves and routines

You have got to have ... really good moves. You don't have to be ultra flexible or anything, but you have to have moves that are just eye catching ... Whatever those moves are.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

Whilst freestyle podium dancers make up the majority of the dancers in this study, the sample also included dancers who perform choreographed routines and pole performers who perform both freestyle and choreographed routines. In order to be successful, all types of nightclub dancers need to have 'eye-catching' moves that flow together in a way that is visually satisfying. However, what types of movements are used and how these moves are put together varies between the different types of nightclub dancing which participants specialised in. This has implications in terms of skills and learning.

Choreographed 'stage' dancing

Choreographed 'stage' dancing involves dancers pre-planning the style, selection, order, timing, pacing and spacing of dance moves into a routine to be performed to pre-selected which matches the rhythm and style of the dance. Choreographed stage dancing is performed by teams of dancers. Importantly, there is usually a leader who selects the music, designs and teaches the routine to the other dancers; two of the three dancers in the sample who regularly performed choreographed stage routines in nightclubs had this role. These team leaders specifically require a wide

knowledge of different dance moves, the ability to choreograph these moves into a routine to music and teach it to others. Such dancers therefore require a large enough space (usually a stage, but occasionally another type of space that is separated from the audience) which they need to have prior knowledge of to plan their routine.

Once a routine has been developed, it has to be learnt by all the dancers involved, rehearsed and perfected. For choreographed stage dancing in nightclubs, all this may have to be done at a relatively short notice. As Sonya explains in the two extracts below, this means that choreographed nightclub dancers need be able to ‘pick up’ (i.e. follow and learn) routines quickly:

...they have to be able to pick up routines. When you’re teaching over there, they’ve got like the mirrors and stuff. If I’ve got 15 girls I can’t spend an hour and a half teaching one girl, I really can’t. They’ve got to make sure that they’re quick...

...it’s got to be quite speedy because sometimes you don’t get a lot of time; somebody will phone for a gig and you’ll need a routine by next week and it’s got to be done and it’s got to be good.

Sonya, nightclub dancer (choreographed and freestyle) and manager of dancers at an events entertainment agency

The ability to pick up routines quickly would clearly require a certain level of dance training, with knowledge of basic steps. This will be explored further in the second part of this chapter.

Time constraints aside, a choreographed stage routine has the advantage that it can be practiced and perfected into a polished and ‘professional’ performance. This is particularly appealing to nightclub managers who are organising an event night at their venue. For example, the nightclub manager Lee often books choreographed stage dancers to compliment the theme of the monthly special event night:

...once every month we do basically a big night out extravaganza on a Saturday night. We basically theme the whole club up as a certain event; for instance, the one coming up is big night out Las Vegas, so we are going to have the casino tables in, playing for fun money and stuff like that. But with that there is going to be a choreographed stage show, like a Las Vegas theme.

Lee, nightclub manager

Hence, Ian's events entertainment agency responded to this type of demand by offering dancers that could perform choreographed stage routines (as well as freestyle podium dance sets). This was part of his response to what he perceived to be a highly competitive market which is somewhat flooded with podium dancers who are constantly undercutting each other as they compete for nightclub bookings:

I don't know if you're aware of the market at the minute but with the downturn in the economy and just general undercutting, podium dance work has just become cheaper and cheaper and easier to get a for a cheaper price. People have been undercutting in this business for years and it's probably quite controversial stuff to say but I'm sure you'll hear it from other people as well: what started out as a guaranteed £100 or £75 to dance, people will now go out and dance for 20 quid ...it's a slightly cut-throat market ... You can't be professional at that price obviously, you can't have an insurance policy and you're not going to be getting the cream of the crop by any means. But people are willing to do it; it's a bit all too easy. So we have to try and move things forward a little bit in that area, even further than other dance agencies. A very strong point that most other agencies don't do - or troupes - is the choreographed dance routines. Because so many of our girls are classically trained they can do ballet and stuff and, as I say, proper choreographed routines, which I think sets us apart from the others.

Ian, events entertainment agency manager

In referring to his dancers being 'classically trained', Ian highlights the connection between formal training and choreographed dancing which will be explored in the second half of this chapter. He also alludes to the idea that other nightclub dancers from other agencies are less likely to have received such training and so would be unable to perform choreographed routines. Ian's perception that the nightclub market is flooded by freestyle podium dancers is supported by the following quote from Samantha, where she mentions that she performed more choreographed stage dancing over the last couple of months (which included the busy Christmas period) than freestyle podium dancing:

When people ask me what I do, because I do such a massive range of things now, but primarily it's dancing, whether it's podium or routines. We haven't done podium for a long time now; it feels like ages. I think the last time I did podium it was like November [2008 - the interview was conducted at the end of January 2009]. Since then we've done like loads of shows ... where they book us to do routines and we rehearse. So I'm a professional dancer, no matter how you try to put it, I earn my wage from dance therefore I am a professional dancer.

Samantha, dancer (choreographed and freestyle) and bookings manager at an events entertainment agency

All this suggests that whilst the supply of freestyle podium dancers available for nightclub work is greater than the demand for them, the demand for choreographed stage dancers for nightclub work is either equal to or even slightly greater than the supply. This is partly why Ian can charge a higher fee for his dancers than other agencies, troupes or individuals would command for only offering freestyle podium dancing. The best dancers at Ian's agency are also trained in other performance skills such as fire spinning, which is discussed in the section entitled 'super-dancers'. Additionally, as there seems to be fewer nightclub dancers that can perform choreographed stage routines, they are not easily replaced last minute. This, combined with the way in which choreographed stage dancers carefully plan their dance routine to specially selected music, means that they generally have more control over the labour process than freestyle podium dancers. However, as there is usually a leader in each dance team/troupe, this also depends on power relationships within the troupe and the degree to which each dancer is involved in the choreography process. The implications of this in terms of learning will be addressed in the second part of this chapter.

Freestyle 'podium' dancing

Interviewer: Are you looking for dancers along a kind of particular theme or style of dance?

Barry: No it's all freestyle, because they are not choreographed in any way, shape or form. We look for talented dancers and no particular theme.

Barry, nightclub manager

As the extract above from the interview with Barry suggests, freestyle dancing is best understood in opposition to choreographed dancing. Freestyle 'podium' dancers can be defined as those who do not pre-plan what dance moves they will perform in their dance set. Instead the moves are improvised during their performance in time to the music which is being played by the DJ and has not been pre-selected by the dancer. Nine of the sixteen nightclub dancers in sample could be identified as predominantly freestyle podium dancers. However, the three dancers who regularly performed choreographed routines also performed freestyle podium dance sets. There was also one participant – Catherine – who used to be a freestyle podium dancer but now focuses

mainly on pole performing in nightclubs. They are called ‘podium’ dancers in reference to the small raised platforms which they usually dance on, but they can actually dance anywhere as they dance as individuals, even if they are dancing next to other podium dancers. Indeed, in comparison to choreographed dancers, freestyle podium dancers have less direct control over all of the aspects and conditions of their dance labour (i.e. dance moves, dance style, music, timing and spacing). This is because the DJ has creative control over music choice which dictates what dance moves and style a freestyle podium dancer should use in his or her dance set. Additionally, how long the freestyle podium dancer will be expected to dance for and the type of space he or she is expected to dance in is dictated by the nightclub venue and its manager.

Freestyle podium dancers dance in their own unique style. Some of the freestyle podium dancers in the sample discussed a specific form/style of dance which they drew upon in their dance labour. For example, the nightclub dancer Richard described his style in the following way:

Interviewer: What would you say your dance style is?

Richard: Freestyle – stroke - break dancing. I’d say that’s my style, rather than choreographed.

Richard, freestyle nightclub podium dancer

However, most of the freestyle podium dancers in the sample could not identify a particular form/style of dance which they used in their dance labour. For example, Tina’s description of her style of dance was somewhat tautological:

Interviewer: What was the main style of dancing that you relied on as a nightclub dancer, how would you describe it?

Tina: It’s really hard to describe, it’s sort of like what you see on all of the Club Land videos.

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer ‘on the gay scene’

Each dancer’s style of dancing is a result of their unique combination of influences; namely what styles of dance they have learnt throughout their lives and how they learnt them. This will be explored in more detail in the second half of this chapter.

Generally, all freestyle podium dancers need to have a broad repertoire of moves whether they can be labelled as having a ‘generic’ or ‘specific’ style. This is important

for enabling these dancers to improvise a sequence of dance moves which does not repeat itself:

...to do podium dancing you need to be able to improvise on the spot for about 20 minutes without repeating yourself. So in that sense I guess you either need to be really, really creative and do it on the spot, or to have done enough dancing to know exactly what you can do when you're put on a spot on a podium.

Samantha, podium dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and bookings manager
at an events entertainment agency

Samantha highlights how a dancer's knowledge of what dance moves that they could possibly perform on a podium in a nightclub, as well as their actual ability to perform them, is important for being able to improvise a dance set under pressure. Catherine explained that freestyle podium dancers who repeated their sequence of dance moves too much did not appear as if they were 'there in the moment':

...some podium dancers you watch them for a minute and ... in the next minute they do pretty much the same routine again. I mean everyone is going to have their own styles but some people sort of choreograph what they are doing and you can sort of you can see it, it is not like they are there in the moment. So I think that it is important to have good moves to be able to freestyle rather than just purely do choreographed stuff.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

In Catherine's opinion, podium dancers who seemed to have choreographed their set would be prone to appearing emotionally detached because their performance is too rigid and automatic. This also relates to the idea that nightclub dancers should manage the emotions that they display in a particular way, which is explored in Chapter 6. Emma, the entertainment manager at a large and prestigious nightclub, also thought that it was important that nightclub dancers 'vary their set' (i.e. perform a wide variety of moves in varying sequences) in order to prevent their audience from being 'bored':

...compare one of my dancers to another girl from another club and you would probably be bored when you are watching the girls from the other club, because I teach the girls to vary their set. So when they get out of breath, they stand and they pose and they do different sorts of moves and stances. Then they will get their breath back and then they will jump up and do a massive big leg kick, roll around and spin about ... the energy of the steps are quite dynamic.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and entertainment manager at a large nightclub

Hence, in order to be able to vary their set and make it 'dynamic', freestyle nightclub dancers require ready knowledge of and the ability to perform a wide repertoire of dance moves. This also increases their 'versatility' as dance labourers, enhancing their ability to dance to any music in any space they are given in a nightclub. However, this chapter will later explore how being versatile is often at the expense of being able to demonstrate and develop dance ability through dance labour.

Nightclub pole performing (freestyle and choreographed)

Nightclub pole performers are individuals who are specifically trained and highly skilled in performing moves (pole tricks) which involve them spinning, swinging, climbing and holding their body around and up and down a vertical stainless steel pole (see Holland, 2010). In order for pole tricks to be performed correctly, various physical forces involved must be utilised:

...You need opposing forces to be able to create locks; if you've got a force in one direction, you need an equal force in the other direction and that will then lock onto the pole to create a pose that will stay on the pole without sliding down. With spins you need momentum and friction and gravity....

Sarah, pole dance teacher

Performing pole tricks therefore requires the dancer to learn specific techniques which sets it apart from the other two types of nightclub dancing. Nightclub pole performers therefore tend to charge more than freestyle podium dancers for their unique skills. For example, at Leon's agency, the fee for hiring a freestyle podium dancer for an hour was £80, whereas the fee for hiring a pole performer for an hour was £120.

Pole tricks are then combined into sequences performed to music, in the same way that the other two types of nightclub dancer combine dance moves to music. However, there are specific 'linking' moves which pole performers can learn which enable the pole tricks to flow into one another to create a dance. These moves allow them to use the space surrounding the pole as well as the pole itself. All four nightclub

pole performers in the study could perform choreographed and freestyle routines. Therefore, in relation to the other types of dancer in the sample, the pole performers could experience the advantages associated with performing choreographed and freestyle. They can either plan and perfect a dance routine of a specific length of time to pre-selected music, or they can improvise a routine for as long as they are required to whatever music is being played in the nightclub. This means that their level of control over their dance labour fluctuates between different ‘gigs’.

However, the pole dance teacher Sarah (who was not a nightclub pole performer herself) explained how a lot of nightclubs do not have suitable poles for ‘proper’ pole dancers, which places limitations on where they can work:

...for people it's easier to get a podium dancer than a pole dancer. Not many places have a pole on a stage ... and even the bars you go to that do have them, they're not suitable ... I mean, the website that I write is about poles in bars for the punters to go and play on and how unsuitable they are for real pole dancing. They're usually a piece of scaffolding or brushed stainless steel that doesn't have the right grip and quality to be able to do a proper pole dance on.

Sarah, pole dance teacher

Fortunately, this was not a problem for the nightclub pole performers in the sample. Three of them had access to a portable, self-supporting ‘podium pole’ that could be placed almost anywhere (albeit for an additional fee). The other pole performer lived near a large city which has several nightclubs that have their own suitable pole.

This seems to be largely a result of the growing popularity of ‘pole fitness’ (see Holland, 2010). However, despite this popularity there is still a lot of stigma attached to pole performing due to its association with strip clubs and ‘sex work’, as the two interview extracts below indicate:

Interviewer: Do you have any pole dancers at all on your books?

Ian: Well, we can supply them, we know pole dancers, but to be honest, in house pole dancers we don't have. But we sent a load of pole dancers to Dubai, of all places, the other week ... two of which went missing - didn't get the flight back, God knows what happened to them. It's a slightly grey area, to be perfectly honest, it's not something we want to concentrate on. But if people phone us up and say ‘pole dancer,’ we know agencies we can get them from, but it's not our sort of thing.

Ian, events entertainment agency manager

Interviewer: So you said that you would like to get paid for dancing in a nightclub, would you consider actually going into that at all?

Sarah: Like I said, I wish that there were more opportunities to be able to do that. We advertise to perform at parties and things like that. And it does happen, you'll have somebody having a big party an 18th birthday party or whatever and they'll have a performer come; why not have a pole performer come for your 18th birthday? But at the moment there is still that stigma attached and people think that they're going to get *more* than just a pole dancer.

Sarah, pole dance teacher

Indeed, pole performers often use discursive strategies to separate themselves from the stigma associated with stripping in a similar way to how strippers have reported to use such strategies to separate themselves from more 'disreputable' strippers and prostitutes (Rambo Ronai and Cross, 1998; Bott, 2006; Barton 2007). This is explored further in Chapter 6. In another part of the interview, Sarah also explained how pole performing is too physically demanding to keep going for as long as freestyle podium dancing. When combined with the practicalities and expense of setting up a pole if the venue does not have its own, this means that pole performers are not suitable for all nightclubs. Hence, the demand for pole performers in nightclubs is not as high as it is for the other types of nightclub dancers.

Moving with the music

Being able to dance well to music is clearly at the core of being a nightclub dancer. All dancers require the ability to analyse the music in some way and respond to it with the appropriate movements at the right time. However, nightclub dancers have varying degrees of familiarity with the music is being played in the nightclub, which in turn affects how well their dance 'fits' with the music. Choreographed dancers dance to music that they have selected themselves or their team leader has selected. In either case they know exactly what they will be doing at each part of the track(s). Freestyle dancers may be completely unfamiliar with the music being played by the DJ in the nightclub and have to adapt their dance to it as best as they can. This therefore results in two main types of dance labour which require different sets of skills that are explored below.

Moving to ‘well known’ (pre-selected) music

Nightclub dancers performing choreographed routines dance to music which has been specially selected to fit with their pre-planned moves:

[we] offer routines, [we] say ‘we’re going to send a set of dancers out, but instead of just doing freestyle podium work, how about at some point in the night we just click into a routine, play this track and they’ll go into a routine...’

Ian, event entertainment agency manager

These dancers still have to rely on the DJ to some extent because the DJ has to play their pre-selected track at the right time. However, they can liaise with the DJ before the performance to decide on timings or a cue that the DJ can use to signal the dancers that he or she is about to play their track. Hence, when nightclub dancers perform choreographed routines to pre-selected music they know when it will be played and they know exactly what move they will be doing at each beat.

Two of the three choreographed stage dancers and all of the pole performers in the sample were responsible for analysing and selecting music and choreographing their own routines. Choosing a music for a dance routine requires the ability to ‘music map’ (Felstead *et al.*, 2007); to count beats the beats in the music and make sure that the timing of the chosen dance moves correspond. Zoe, a pole dance teacher and performer in nightclubs, describes this process as she and her sister designed a pole dance routine for beginner students to perform at the end of their course:

...we’ve got a dance routine at the end of it, which ... a lot of schools don’t have. We actually made that up ourselves; me and my sister wrote it down, counted up the beats and made up a song [i.e. selected a track] to match a dance routine.

Zoe, pole dance teacher/co-owner of pole school/events
entertainment agency and pole performer in nightclubs

However, the extent to which nightclub dancers require and use music mapping skills depends on whether they dance as individuals (as is usually the case with pole performers) or in a troupe and the power relations within that troupe. This idea will be explored further in the second part of the chapter.

Dancers performing to pre-selected music know exactly what they will be doing in their dance set and for how long. They can also plan how they will use the space

which they have prior knowledge of. For example, Sonya who managed dancers at an events entertainment agency mentioned that ‘getting the spacing right so everyone is in a certain space, so it looks neat on stage’ was an important part of designing a choreographed routine. Pole performers designing a choreographed routine can also decide exactly when and where they will performing the linking moves which make use of the space surrounding the pole such as the floor and walls:

It’s not always about doing trick after trick either, is it? Sometimes it’s just looking sexy or flicking your head, you know, and that kind of thing, doing stuff on the floor, doing it on the wall, you know, moves, so to speak. So it doesn’t all have to be all on the pole, otherwise you can just look like you’re holding the pole and that’s it.

Zoe, pole dance teacher and performer in nightclubs

However, nightclub dancers performing choreographed routines to pre-selected music still have to conform to the demands of nightclub managers to some degree. For example, those who choreograph the routines have to choose music to dance to which fits in with the theme of the event and/or the genre of music which the DJ is playing for the rest of the night. A good example of this is the Las Vegas theme of the event night that the nightclub manager Lee discussed earlier. Additionally, if a dancer is able to perform choreographed and freestyle, it is the nightclub manager and not the dancer who decides which:

We perform better if we know the track. Personally, I just go with the flow, you know what ever they’re playing, if I’m in the mood I’ll go fast, if not I just don’t go with it. And I think it depends on the event, they might want us to get our own track, or just say what we want played, so again it depends what they want.

Katy, pole dance teacher/co-owner of pole school/events entertainment agency and pole performer in nightclubs

Moving to ‘unknown’ music

Nightclubs can be defined as ‘establishments where the primary offer is that of dancing to music’ (Mintel, 2006) which is played by a paid professional DJ. The popularity of the DJ and his or her selection of music is a major way in which nightclubs can differentiate themselves from competing nightclubs and late bars. The

most prestigious nightclubs have well renowned resident DJ's as well as guest DJ's for special events whose fame and 'pulling power' earns them complete artistic freedom throughout their set. As Emily explains, nightclub dancers can help punters to enjoy the music that the DJ is playing:

You might get a girl that just starts moving the way that you are moving and then they find that they have got some more rhythm that they didn't have you know a minute ago. So it is kind of just helping people to get into the music and enjoy the atmosphere.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

Hence, on most ordinary weekends and some weekday nights, nightclub managers require dancers who are able to dance whatever music is being played at the club; the style, rhythm and tempo of their moves should work with the style, rhythm and tempo of the music. As one nightclub manager put it:

I would be a pretty poor nightclub manager if all I could do was design fliers. So like, I have to be multi-talented, they [nightclub dancers] should be able to be multi-talented as well; they should be able to dance slow, they should be able to dance quick, they should be able to dance to different types of music and be pretty flexible.

Luke, nightclub manager

Freestyle dancers are ideal for this role as unlike choreographed dancers they do not require the DJ to play their pre-selected music. Rather, their dance set is improvised in time to whatever music is being played in the nightclub they are dancing in. In order to maximise this 'flexibility', all freestyle dancers need to be skilled in adapting their dance to different styles of music. This skill is central to freestyle nightclub dancing.

Hence, Leon held auditions for joining his agency in which different types of music were played in order to assess which dancers were the most 'versatile':

...we were auditioning for people to do R&B, Hip Hop, Funky House, Hard Dance and then Drum and Bass. So what we'd do then is you'd have to do 10 minutes to each different style of music. So we'd have everyone doing the Hard Dance and then everyone doing the Funky. So by doing that, we actually see which people are more versatile, which ones are 'ok, they can fit in this one, this one and this one,' so ... they're a good person to have because they're versatile, because you don't want someone who's just into Hard Dance ... 'cause at the end of the day you're limiting the profitability of the people, you want to be able to get as much as you can out of people.

Leon, former freestyle podium dancer and
events entertainment agency manager

According to Leon, nightclub dancers who are more ‘versatile’ in terms of what they can dance to are more employable because they will attract bookings from more nightclubs that each specialise in playing different genres of music:

If you had a club that was a real dance club, it would be different to sort of Kudos where they play funky house, so you would have to change to the club’s style of music so you would have to change your style of dance to suit the music that they play in a specific club.

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer ‘on the gay scene’

There is also variation in the music played within nightclubs. For example, a lot of nightclubs have different nights of the week dedicated to particular genres. For example, the nightclub dancer Fiona was accustomed to dancing to the various types of dance music that the DJ would normally play on weekend nights in the nightclub where she worked, so she found it difficult when she danced on a student night (Wednesday):

[The nightclub plays] mostly Dance and House music and Electro and stuff like that. When I first did like a student night, the club has been R&B, but it’s really hard to dance to, I can’t dance to R&B, because most of it [the music in the nightclub] is Dance music.

Fiona, freestyle podium dancer

This demonstrates the extent to which the nature and quality of freestyle dance labour in nightclubs is heavily influenced by the music being played, over which the dancer has little control if any. Dancers nonetheless have to try to adapt their dance moves to fit with the music being played. In order to do this, there are three main areas of skill which freestyle dancers must have. These are discussed below under the headings of ‘rhythm’, ‘keeping moving’ and ‘owning the space’.

Rhythm

[We would not recruit] people that didn’t have rhythm and flames ... every time the beat goes, there’s got to be something happening. You’ve got some people

who have got an amazing knack to be able to not dance to a beat ... that's a big no-no.

Leon, former freestyle podium dancer and
events entertainment agency manager

...a lot of it isn't kind of skills you can just teach, you can't go 'right, you do that and that and that,' [freestyle podium] dancing's a lot more about having a natural rhythm and it's harder to teach I think.

Steve, fire performer and bookings manager
at an events entertainment agency

'Having a natural rhythm' refers to the ability to pick out the baseline in the music and improvise dance moves in time with the tempo of the beats which comprise the baseline. The extent to which this can be conceived of as something 'natural' will be contested in the second part of this chapter. However, 'having rhythm' clearly relies on highly tacit, embodied knowledge which is what makes it difficult to conceive as something that can be taught or learnt (Crossley, 2007; Eraut, 2000).

Freestyle nightclub dancers require both the ability to pick out the beat in a music track and to respond to it with the appropriate movement. Having a good awareness and knowledge of the type of music that is played in nightclubs is particularly helpful, as Rachel points out below:

I think you've got to have a lot of rhythm, definitely. And be aware of music; if you can't pick up a beat to certain music, then obviously you're not going to be able to flow from one song to another, kind of thing.

Rachel, freestyle podium dancer

As Rachel suggests, knowledge of music helps prevent dancers from disrupting the flow of their movements every time a new track starts; good freestyle dancers are able to pick out a beat as soon as a track starts and respond with their movements. Additionally, having knowledge and awareness of the type of music that would be played in a nightclub means that dancers are more likely to be able to anticipate what is going to happen next in the track and how they will respond to it.

Indeed, some nightclub dancer employers may prefer to recruit dancers that specialise in or have a style of dance that is well suited to particular genres of music that are played in the nightclub:

...we've got ... main room House music, we have upstairs an R&B room, downstairs is an indie sort of Annie Mac style mash up kind of quite studenty sort of led room. That is why it is good having different dancers that look different and act different, because I can put Charlotte [pseudonym] who is a Latino sort of dancer, I will put her up in R&B and she is there bumping and grinding and they love her. And I will put the breakdancing guy there and he is spinning around and doing these tricks ... Then I have got the girl that does the ballroom dancing, she is downstairs. And one of my girls that is a complete nutcase in the sort of studenty room, marching up and down like signalling people and just being silly really. Each of their personalities adds to their performance and which room I will put them in. And then when they all come together again in the main room it is back to like main room style dancing, posey, glamorous; 'I am here, look at me' sort of thing.

Emma, dancer and entertainments manager at a 'superclub'

On the one hand, the dancers that work under Emma can benefit from having prior knowledge of what type of music they will be dancing to. This gives them a little more control over the quality of their dance labour than 'non-specialist' freestyle dancers and enables them to develop and refine the way they dance to that music. On the other hand, it is their manager who decides which room they will be dancing in and not the dancers themselves. Emma not only chooses dancers for particular rooms in the nightclub based on how well they dance to certain types of music, but also their 'look' and 'personality' – attributes explored in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. This strategy seems to work well for Emma because she has a specially selected, dedicated team of freestyle dancers for the nightclub.

Other freestyle nightclub dancers in the study were able to specialise in only performing dance labour to particular genres of music that they had a personal passion for. This meant that they had more experience in and some prior knowledge of the music that they would be dancing to. For example, Tina mainly danced in nightclubs or at events where only dance music was played (her favourite style was Funky House).

I've got a real passion for music and the type of music I've always danced to, I don't really need to think about how to dance because I love the music and I love dancing so much.

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer 'on the gay scene'

Indeed, Tina was so familiar with the type of music played where she worked that she did not have to think about how to move to it. However, on one occasion the DJ played

a sub-genre of dance music, Happy Hardcore, that she was unable to dance to because of its very fast tempo. She asked the DJ to play something other than Happy Hardcore that she could dance to. He eventually did play music that Tina could dance to but only after playing a few more Happy Hardcore tracks. Tina's experience highlights the extent to which the tempo of the music being played in a nightclub can vary quite dramatically. Therefore, even dancers who specialise in particular genres of music need to be ready to respond to such changes.

Catherine also largely took work at nightclubs which played music that she loved. This seemed to be an active choice for her:

...I mean the thing is that my sort of podium, the thing that I used to do is only do it to the music that I loved. So I used to be very much Techno, Hard House, Hard style, so those were the sort of clubs that I did. But if you go to other clubs, kind of like Liquid [commercial nightclub chain] and that, you get paid a lot more doing them; you would have to dance a lot less as well.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

The quote from Catherine suggests she is happy to accept lower pay for dancing in nightclubs which play the music she loves than she would receive from more 'commercial' nightclubs. In another part of the interview, Catherine discussed how she wanted to be actually enjoying herself whilst she was working as a dancer. Indeed, such nightclub dancers tended to view their 'dance labour' as paid leisure (Guerrier and Adib, 2003). The consequences of this in terms of emotional labour will be explored in Chapter 6. However, the consequence for dance labour is that such dancers are less concerned about making themselves more employable and earning more money than they are about enjoying themselves. Whilst specialising in dancing to a particular type of music means that these nightclub dancers are more likely to be demonstrating the best of their ability through their dance labour than more 'versatile' dancers, they may also be limiting their employability at the same time. This is because most events entertainment managers want to recruit freestyle dancers that are able to dance to a wide range of music styles so that they are suitable for and attract a wide range of nightclub bookings.

Therefore, if freestyle nightclub dancers want to maximise their versatility in terms of being able to dance to a wide variety of music genres then they need to have a

broad knowledge of different types of music. This enables them to anticipate what is coming next in a track so that they can produce the appropriate movement at the right time. However, such freestyle dancers also must accept that it is very difficult to be good at dancing to all the music that might be played in a nightclub, but they have to try their best to keep moving anyway. Their ability to do all this depends on them ‘having rhythm’; being able to hear a beat in a track and move to it.

Keeping moving

I don't think that you ever really not know what to do as you just keep moving, you never just stop moving, you are always moving. But sometimes a track might come on and it might just take you a little longer to really properly move but you are always moving, you know you are always feeling the rhythm whatever track comes on. So I don't think that it should ever look like ‘oh my god what should I do’, no one would ever guess that you didn't know what to do... and if you are not doing so much then just ... look like you are meant to be doing it, as opposed to ‘what am I doing’, you know.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

In the extract above, Emily explains how it is important for freestyle dancers to keep moving to the music and ‘feeling the rhythm’ so that even if they are not sure what dance move they are going to do next they should appear as if they do. However, the length of time which freestyle dancers will be asked to dance for varies considerably between different nightclubs and podium dancers may be required to dance for up to an hour at a time. Hence, in order to keep moving, nightclub dancers require fitness and stamina. Emma, the entertainment manager at a ‘superclub’ felt that fitness was part of a nightclub dancer’s job:

...to do 10 minute sets, 5 or 6 times in a night whilst running round the club and doing everything else, they have to be in shape, it is about fitness as well [as looking toned]. All the girls go to the gym, all of them and that is just fitness really ... the girls that are dancers you know, that is what they are going to do, it is like anything, like being a footballer as fitness is part of your job.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and entertainment manager at a
‘superclub’

Emma felt that ‘*looking* in shape’ was as important as ‘*being* in shape’. This idea is explored further in Chapter 5. Fitness was also a key criterion for two of the nightclub managers:

...They’re using a lot of energy, they’re sweating a lot, they need to drink water, but when they’re on for their 20 minute set or whatever they need to be not sort of puffing and panting and stopping every 5 minutes to take a drink and stuff, which is why I’m saying that they’ve got to be fit.

Luke, nightclub manager

...I think that fitness and energy is quite crucial because I think that if you don’t have those 2 prerequisites they tend to be slubonly [sic] and slow. And that is not what we are about, is it? I mean if you in your minds eye picture a podium dancer they are dancing to very high energy music, they are giving it their all ... that isn’t someone who is moving slow or hardly at all and you know and I would suggest that the latter tend to, tend to be not your pro-typical podium dancers.

Barry, nightclub manager

For Barry it is not just about being physically fit but also appearing energetic to reflect the energy of the music and the atmosphere he wanted to create (see Chapter 6).

Similarly, ‘stamina’ was one of Leon’s 3 main criteria when selecting and recruiting dancers for his agency through dance competitions. It was particularly important for dancing to the fast tempo of Hard Dance music:

...stamina obviously right, because they [applicants] start off pretty hard, but ... when you’re dancing to music that’s 146 to 165 beats per minute, that’s pretty damn fast ... But then, some people started sort of tire after 3 minutes [of the 10 minute slot in the dance competition], where as some people started to pace themselves, you’ve got a nice bounce – see that’s the thing: bounce ... Have you ever been jogging right, and if you’ve got a nice rhythm going, you don’t get tired, you just keep going, can’t you? Just like ‘mmm-mmm-mmm’ [humming nonchalantly] until your legs just pack up all the same. You don’t feel tired, you don’t feel out of breath or anything like that. And that’s what’s so important about the bounce, because when you’re bouncing you can keep going. It’s like umm-hmm-hmm umm-hmm.’ Where as people who like force it, it just doesn’t work, they just get really tired out.

Leon, former freestyle podium dancer and
events entertainment agency manager

In the extract above Leon highlights that keeping moving is as much about pacing oneself as it is about fitness and stamina. Having a ‘bounce’ provides a rhythm which helps dancers to pace themselves so that they do not get tired out too early as well as helping them to keep their movement in time to the music. Therefore, whilst being fit and having stamina provides the basis of ‘keeping moving’, it is even more important that nightclub dancers learn how to pace their activity evenly throughout their dance set.

Using the space

Nightclub dancers who choreograph a dance routine to pre-selected music plan how they will use the space that they will be dancing in, which requires prior knowledge of that space. Freestyle podium dancers do not always have prior knowledge of the space which they will be dancing in and, as Amber explains, they could be asked to dance anywhere:

You can be really good at dancing and like taking up the whole of the space and then they can put you on like a box, or something like this [points to the small, round table we are sat at which is no more than a metre wide], and if you’re a jumpy street dancer like me, you just feel really limited, like ‘what am I supposed to do?’ You don’t know where they’re going to put you; they could put you on the bar with drinks all round your feet or with a pole – what am I supposed to with a pole? It’s not sexy at all ... Once I did this gig and I was asked to dance on the dance floor with all the people! What am I supposed to do? You can’t say no.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

Hence, freestyle podium dancers have to learn to adapt their dance moves to different sized spaces that they are given to dance in:

...in [the first nightclub I danced in] there were round podiums, with bars around them, whereas [where I currently work] it’s a massive stage, so it’s entirely different. It’s wherever you are ... you adapt to that area

Kelly, lead freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

As Emma explains below, good podium dancers are able to make use of surrounding objects and physical boundaries and incorporate them into dance moves:

...different venues have different platforms, areas and you know I have danced in one place on a little stage with a speaker next to me and you sort of use your surroundings to aid your performance like you can jump off that or you can do a handstand with your leg on that, each venue is different, you use what is around to raise your performance.

Emma, dancer and entertainments manager at a large nightclub

These moves not only ‘raise your performance’ and make it more interesting, they are also a useful way of filling the ‘musical bridges’ which are present in much of the music that would be played in nightclubs. These are gaps in the pattern of beats in music which can easily disrupt a dancer’s rhythm if he or she does not already know what to do when the beat ‘drops’. It is for this reason that ‘pre-choreography’ BTS Exercise to Music instructors use music which has been specially engineered so that it does not have any musical bridges and ‘freestyle’ instructors have develop innovative ways of filling them (Felstead *et al.*, 2007). However, freestyle podium dancers can learn the types of acrobatic moves that Emma refers to above, which work well during musical bridges and make good use of the surroundings. They also provide dancers with an opportunity to catch their breath and think about what move they will be doing next. In this way, they serve a similar purpose to the linking moves which pole performers use. How freestyle dancers can learn these moves will be explored in the second part of this chapter.

Summary - ‘freestyle’ versus ‘choreographed’ nightclub dance routines: two distinct productive systems?

Felstead *et al.* (2007) examined two approaches delivering Exercise to Music (ETM) classes which formed two distinct productive systems: ‘freestyle’ and ‘pre-choreography’. ‘Freestyle’ instructors design the ETM classes they will be delivering; they choreograph exercise moves to appropriate music which they have analysed and selected using ‘music mapping skills’. ‘Pre-choreography’ instructors, such as those who are qualified and licensed to deliver Body Training Systems (BTS) ETM classes, do not have to use such skills to design classes. Instead, they receive the choreography and music every three months for the branded classes which they are expected to deliver in a standardised way. Hence, freestyle instructors, on the one hand, have the freedom to

use and develop the skills they learnt through their initial training. Pre-choreography instructors, on the other hand, rely on experts who are involved in the design of the standardised ETM classes such as professional DJs and specialist choreographers. Pre-choreography instructors therefore have much less control over the labour process than freestyle instructors.

When the nightclub dancers included in this study summarised to a simple dichotomy of ‘freestyle’ and ‘choreographed’ nightclub dancers, it can be argued that it is choreographed dancers who have more control over the labour process than freestyle dancers. This is the reverse of the case with the ETM instructors in Felstead *et al.*'s (2007) study. Choreographed nightclub dancers have control – in the case of team leaders or pole performers – or at least prior knowledge of the selection and order of the dance moves they would be performing to specially chosen music. For freestyle nightclub dancers, these elements of their dance labour are largely out of their control; the DJ has creative control over the music being played at the nightclub which largely dictates what dance moves will be performed.

However, this does not mean that freestyle nightclub dancers do not have the ability to use, develop and expand their dance knowledge and skills through their dance labour. Unlike ETM instructors, *both* freestyle and choreographed dancers need to develop certain dance-related knowledge and skills on-the-job as well as before they commence employment. How these skills are learnt will now be explored.

How do individuals learn to dance for nightclubs?

Developing dance styles, moves and routines

In the first half of this chapter, it was suggested that the different types of dancer require different types of skills. The discussion below explores the various ways in which these skills are learnt before and after individuals become employed as nightclub dancers.

Choreographed ‘stage’ dancing

Eraut (2000: 114) argues that any one of the following characteristics of the learning situation designates it as *formal*:

- a prescribed learning framework
- an organised learning event or package
- the presence of a designated teacher or trainer
- the award of a qualification or credit
- the external specification of outcomes

Much of the learning which participants identified as involved in the proficient performance of choreographed ‘stage’ routines could be characterised as formal. This was the case with both their pre-job and on-the-job learning.

Pre-job learning

All 3 of the dancers who regularly performed choreographed stage routines in nightclubs had drawn heavily on their formal training in dance and other performing arts. For example, Emma had received extensive training in gymnastics as well as formal training in performing arts (including dance) at college and university:

I did gymnastics for about 15 years and I was at national squad standard and I was British champion ... Then I went from there to do performing arts at college. Then I left college and went to uni and did arts management and performing arts as a degree ... Within my degree I had done events management, so I had a theoretical background and then there was my gymnastics training and dance when I was little.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and entertainment manager at a large nightclub

Similarly, Sonya had a performing arts diploma:

I finished my training in London, I did a 3 year course there and I got a diploma in musical theatre and performing arts and stuff...

Sonya, nightclub dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and manager of dancers at an events entertainment agency

Samantha (a member of ‘Sonya’s Sirens’) did not specifically mention what type of institutions she learnt at or any formal qualifications in the interview, but she had been trained in various styles of dance since she was seven years old. She referred to this

‘professional training’ at various points in the interview. She felt that this training was essential for nightclub dancers:

Interviewer: So what sort of formal dance training have you had then? You say you’ve been dancing since you were seven-

Samantha: Modern, Tap, Ballet, Street, Hip-Hop.

Interviewer: Did you rely on that a lot when you started dancing in nightclubs?

Samantha: I personally don’t think that you can do it unless you’ve got some kind of background training because ... I’ve never met anybody [in the occupation] who hasn’t done any sort of dancing before.

Samantha, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and bookings manager at an events entertainment agency

Samantha later added ‘all the girls I’ve worked with have either trained professionally or have got a degree or have got a professional qualification.’ Indeed, although Samantha could perform freestyle, she much preferred to perform choreographed stage routines because she had been trained in this way:

Interviewer: What’s your ideal gig then?

Samantha: Routines, I’d much rather do routines than podium like freestyle stuff because that’s what the majority of us are trained to do and it’s nice just to be able to put your time into rehearsing a routine and then be able to put that on stage where people can see you. And they’re going to be able to recognise that it’s choreographed and stuff. Also it’s a lot more nerve-racking to do something like that and nerves get the adrenaline going, you know, it feels good to do that, that’s what I like.

This extract also presents further evidence of the way in which dancers performing choreographed stage routines can feel a greater sense of ownership and control over the *quality* of their dance labour than freestyle podium dancers, even if, like Samantha, their routine has been choreographed for them by a team leader.

On-the-job learning

The on-the-job learning for choreographed stage dancing could also be identified as formal; in the form of training sessions taught by the leader of the dance troupe. These training sessions were held in preparation for big events that require the development and/or learning of a new choreographed routine:

Interviewer: It says a lot on the website about training [for the dance troupe], how often do you train then?

Samantha: Whenever a job comes in with something specified which we haven't done before or like you know if a job is coming in with – we need this choreography, then Sonya will put a team together and we'll rehearse specifically for that event so just as and when the events come in.

Samantha, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and bookings manager at an events entertainment agency

Sonya was asked about her main methods of teaching a new choreographed routine to the team of dancers she had assembled for the event:

Just making sure that everybody can obviously see themselves in the mirror, that's a big thing, so they can see what's going on and just breaking it down for them and teach it really slowly.

Sonya, nightclub dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and manager of dancers at an events entertainment agency

In the same interview, Sonya's manager Ian mentioned that Sonya had a good relationship with the dancers. Indeed, Sonya explained that she did not like to push the dancers too hard:

There's been times when I'll say just come out of this routine because there's been quite a few girls on stage, so they'll do like sections of the routine and then go off and then come back on again and do something else. But I don't like putting people under so much pressure that they start to get upset about it because then you're not enjoying your job and that's not the point of it. So I tend to say, hang on a second, just take a break, do this and they'll we'll sort something out.

Although Sonya stated that she had a good relationship with the dancers, her management style was top-down and the teams she put together were *non-self-directing* (Gallie *et al.*, 2012). Using data from the British Skills Survey Series, Gallie *et al.* identified 'non-self-directing' teams as those in which employees have less than 'a fair amount' of influence over their work activities, for example their work effort, the choice of tasks and quality standards. Sonya designed the routine and taught it to the dancers, who were instructed to leave the stage if they could not perform particular sections of the routine. There was no suggestion that Sonya's dancers had any input in the

choreography and/or choice of music. Additionally, as the agency had a large pool of other dancers to draw on for events, if a dancer consistently fell behind the other dancers when learning a routine then she (the dancers managed and trained directly by Sonya were all female) would soon find herself no longer being ‘used’ for bookings. Gallie *et al.* point out that non-self-directing teamwork restricts skill development.

However, Emma’s discussion of ‘mid-week training sessions’ suggests that her team of dancers is more ‘self-directing’ (Gallie *et al.*, 2012), in that all the dancers in her team have an influence on the choreography and other aspects of a performance they are planning for an event:

If we have got a big event, like a gala event, where I want to make a real performance for a big show, then we will definitely do a mid week training session. They will come in and we will practice together and we’ll talk about ideas; even though I am their manager there is a lot of ideas that come together when we all discuss it. Obviously all the girls have an input and we all try something and it might not look great, but someone will say ‘oh how about if we do this’. So we work together on that the choreography, the ideas and stuff.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and entertainment manager at a ‘superclub’

This is indicative of an activity system characterised by a horizontal view of expertise with each participant (regardless of their position) working towards the goal of creating the best possible performance (Engeström *et al.*, 1995). Indeed, Emma in another part of the interview provided evidence of the way in which her workplace was characterised by *polycontextuality*, whereby employees are involved in multiple activity systems:

So in the week I do like the office work ... an example of that is the running order that I will do for the girls on the weekends. So I will book the girls or a guy, I then liaise with the people about photography ... I speak to the lighting guys and the production team and we organise what platforms the girls are going to perform on, if we need anything, any systems ... Every week we have a new theme. So I have a team meeting with the girls and dancers brief, they are the set times and the running order. And then this is the event form that we do and that goes out between all the staff, links all the staff on the night. So I will fill out my area, information, what is going on in any room, what performances we have got on, anything that I need and then it goes out across the whole system. And then everybody knows what is going on in the night

Hence, although Emma is the entertainment manager at the nightclub and not the general manager, all the staff in the club, including security and bar staff are involved in

ensuring that the entertainment for the night runs smoothly. This requires collaboration between different groups of experts such as lighting and sound technicians. This collaborative environment allows for opportunities for dancers to learn and develop skills.

Freestyle 'podium' dancing

In the first half of this chapter, freestyle podium dancers were described as each having their own unique style of dance and many participants could not identify a specific form of dance which they used in their dance set. This is because there is very little specific formal freestyle podium dance training available and none of the podium dancers in the study had received such training. Indeed, the nightclub dancer Catherine felt that such formal training for podium dancers could have disadvantages:

Yes, it would be nice if there was some sort of training. But then you would worry about the fact that all the podium dancers that went training at the same place ... would all be doing the same moves, in the same format, in the same order and it kind of loses its unique appeal.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

The wide range of individual styles of freestyle podium dancers is a result of them each having their own unique mix of knowledge and ability in dance styles and moves, as well as the varying ways in which they learnt to dance. Much of this learning occurs before they enter the occupation and is not geared specifically towards the goal of becoming a nightclub dancer. However, dancers also continue to develop new dance moves on-the-job with the specific aim of improving their dance labour.

Formal pre-job and on-the-job learning

Most freestyle podium dancers in the study had received at least some formal training in dance prior to becoming employed as nightclub dancers. Some had taken various dance classes when they were much younger, where as others still continued their dance training alongside their paid nightclub dancing. The extract below from the

interview with Amber highlights the wide variation in podium dancers' formal pre-job learning and how this leads to there being so 'many different kinds of dancer':

...I think there's a lot of better performers out there than me really. But then there's a whole variety; like I'm more of a street dancer, where as you get dancers that are more classically trained ... there's that many different kinds of [freestyle podium] dancer. And then you get break dancers. It's not exactly fair [for me to compare my levels of dance skill with other podium dancers], because I've got my own style.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

Amber is one of the few dancers who identified a particular form of dance which had a clear influence on her dance labour. She had received formal training in street dance (and other forms of dance) and she also taught street dance to school children at the time of the interview. In a preliminary internet search, street dance was frequently listed under such headings as 'dance experience' on podium dancers' profiles on events entertainment agency websites. A total of 3 nightclub dancers in the study who had been paid as freestyle podium dancers mentioned that they had learnt street dance (Catherine, Emily and Amber). The street dance teacher, Michelle, explained why she thought that being trained in street dance would be useful for freestyle nightclub dancers:

The music that they play in nightclubs is all like up-to-date, isn't it? And to be honest, street dancing is the most up-to-date form of dance, that's probably why they're doing that. It's very versatile as well, it's so many different styles that have influenced street dance, it's not just one style, like I was saying earlier. So I think that's why they do street dance. And you can bring your own personality into it as well.

Michelle, street dance teacher

The freestyle podium dancer Emily agreed that street dance is good preparation for podium dancing because it has a 'big broad repertoire' of possible dance moves. Emily had received formal training in ballet, tap, contemporary, hip hop, street and jazz dance at a dance academy which she attended between leaving theatre school (which also held weekly dance classes) at age 16 and attending drama school at age 18. Her favourite styles of dance were street and jazz and as such she described herself as a 'funky' dancer, rather than a 'ballet girl'. However, Emily explained that she did not rely so much on the 'formal techniques' of her extensive dance training when she was

podium dancing, but rather an exaggerated version of how a nightclub punter would dance:

It's just kind of a mix between a normal person on a night out ... really dancing and then you just kind of turn it up a few notches and really put a lot more into it. So nothing outrageous ... make it sexy and funky at the same time.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

This suggests that if Emily does in fact draw on any of her knowledge from her street dance training, this knowledge has become tacit. Amber's knowledge of street dance is constantly being refreshed and remains codified and explicit because she teaches street dance, making her much more aware of how she uses this knowledge in her dance labour (Eraut, 2000).

Another podium dancer who had received formal dance training was Tina. Tina had learnt ballet, tap and jazz when she was younger. However, it was her more recent training to be a cheerleader that she found most useful in her dance labour:

...it's nothing to do with my ballet or my tap or my jazz. Cheerleading's probably got a lot to do with it [my podium dancing] though, because a lot of the stuff I did like that we'd already done in cheerleading with the pom-poms. Other than that, nothing really, it's just instinct.

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer 'on the gay scene'

The way in which Tina refers to her dance ability as 'just instinct' suggests that, in common with Emily, her dance knowledge has become tacit and has an implicit influence on her dance labour. However, there is also a possibility that podium dancers like Emily and Tina rely more heavily on knowledge gained from the type of non-formal learning which is explored in the section that follows.

Indeed, most of the on-the-job learning which helped dancers to become podium dance labourers was non-formal learning from others. Any formal training available to podium dancers was largely in additional non-dance performance skills such as fire performing, stilt walking and juggling. The large and highly successful events entertainment agency managed by Ian offered this type of training, as did the agency which Amber worked for. The dancer and events entertainment agency manager Leon

was unique in holding workshops where podium dancers could learn breakdancing and capoeira moves to enhance their dance labour, as well as non-dance performance skills:

We did training sessions and things like that. For instance we had spinners who do fire staff and juggling, contact juggling and things like that and we did workshops where the others who were doing podium dancing could train ... to learn these other skills. Also, breakdancing and capoeira. So we ran little workshops for our [dance] crew individually.

Leon, freestyle podium dancer and events entertainment agency manager

The value of non-dance additional performance skills will be explored in the section entitled 'super-dancers'. However, in terms of learning new dance moves and styles, much of this learning occurred on the job and is explored below.

Non-formal pre-job and on-the job learning

Four of the freestyle podium dancers in the study did not receive any formal dance training before they became employed as nightclub dancers. Instead, these individuals learnt to dance in social situations and in non-formal settings through watching other dancers. For example, Fiona learnt to dance through watching her twin sister who started dancing at the nightclub Fiona was working at:

Fiona: I used to work behind the bar ... and I used to work sometimes when the dancers were there. And my sister, she was drunk and got up on the podium and started dancing. And the dancer over there just said 'oh do you do dancing' and she was like 'no'. And they were like, 'do you want to, and get paid for it' and she was like 'yeah ok.' And then she had an audition and she got through. So then when I seen her dancing I was like 'I wanna do that'. So she got me an audition.

Interviewer: Do you dance in quite similar ways to your sister?

Fiona: Yeah, very; everyone says we dance very similar.

Interviewer: Do you think that's to do with being the same size and stuff like that or just because you've had similar experiences?

Fiona: Um, I kind of learnt from her, so that's why. I'd stay and just watch her all the time, so that's why.

Fiona, freestyle podium dancer

This way of entering the occupation is quite similar to the way in which exotic dancers have been reported to learn about and enter their occupation through anticipatory informal socialisation; often ‘drifting’ into the occupation through working behind the bar or as a waitress in a strip club (Lewis, 1998, Bott, 2006). In contrast to stripping, freestyle podium dancing does not bring significantly higher earnings than bar work. For example, Fiona was paid £40 for 4 hours podium dancing each night that she worked (i.e. a higher hourly rate of pay than bar work but with fewer hours available for her to work). However, nightclub dancing does not have as much stigma attached to it as stripping and participants often reported a high level of interest in becoming a paid nightclub dancer from nightclub punters.

The freestyle podium dancer and events entertainment agency manager Leon also ‘drifted’ into nightclub dancing. This was partly through being a PR manager for flyer distribution company:

I started off in the clubbing scene as a ... PR manager for a flyer distribution company, so I’d go out to seven or eight clubs a night, drop off boxes of flyers to give out and take them in at the end of the night. So I got to know all the promoters, sort of passing in, so basically could form a good working relationship with all these guys, before I got into the dance scene.

Leon, freestyle podium dancer and events entertainment agency manager

Leon was also a regular ‘clubber’ on the hard dance scene and became known as someone who attracted a lot of attention on the dance floor. Yet, as he had not received any formal dance training he did not view himself as a professional dancer or as being in a position to teach others his dance skills, as these two extracts demonstrate:

I wouldn’t call myself professional, even though I’ve done lots of professional gigs, purely and simply because I’ve never had any dance training. I’ve never trained really hard for it or studied for it, it’s just something that comes naturally; maybe it’s because I’m black!

Because I haven’t had any training, I don’t feel qualified to teach people to dance to be honest with you. I just do it, I don’t know what happens ... The first time I realised that people liked my dancing was a Sunday morning party. We’d been going all weekend, I think we’d been going since Wednesday or something ridiculous like that ... And I was just stood in the middle of the dance floor and the speakers were just perfectly placed and the music was just crystal ... I was just like ‘wow!’ I kept my eyes closed and I was just going for it, everywhere. I

opened my eyes, yeah, and there was just a big circle of people around me going ‘YEAH!’... And then the next weekend people were coming up to me ‘look that’s the guy, that’s the guy!’ ... that was before I’d done any dance on stage you see. That probably helped [me to become employed as a nightclub dancer]. People knew about me - ‘That dude, that big black dude, he’s mental; he’s off his chops, man!’

Leon often drew attention to his ethnicity during the interview and also when the interview was being arranged. Indeed, as Leon learnt to dance to music implicitly in non-formal settings, he perceives his dance talent to be innate, his joking explanation being a racial stereotype about black people being good dancers.

Like Leon, the other male podium dancer in the study – Richard - was also a regular clubber who attracted attention on the dance floor. However, unlike Leon, Richard set time aside for the specific purpose of learning dance moves both before and after becoming employed as a nightclub dancer. Richard was one of the few dancers who named a specific style of dance that he used in his set: breakdancing. Breakdancing (also known as b-boying) is usually freestyle and performed by individuals who often engage in a ‘battle’ with another breakdancer. This individuality makes it an ideal form of dance for podium dancing. Richard learnt to breakdance (without any intention of becoming a paid podium dancer) through watching short videos of breakdancing move lessons on the website You Tube:

Last year I was practising in my living room type of thing, watching the computer, just learning different things off You Tube...

You can have a look on You Tube at the different moves like, 6-step, 3-step, the caterpillar ... And then the bronco when you jump from your hands to your feet ... 6-step is when you’re on your hands and feet just moving round. The knee drop, you do it like that, [#Richard loosely demonstrates the body position#] when you’re dropping to the floor you put your foot behind your knee and it looks you’re landing on your knee, but you land on your foot and then spin around.

Richard, freestyle nightclub podium dancer

Of all the freestyle podium dancers in the study, Richard was the only one to name specific moves that he would use in his dance set. His use of the internet to search for different breakdancing moves that he can learn means that he gains knowledge of the moves in their textual, codified form.

Since becoming employed as a nightclub dancer, Richard continues to look for new moves to add to his repertoire; on television programmes and You Tube but also through watching the other dancers at the nightclub.

Interviewer: So would you say you've learnt stuff off the other dancers?

Richard: Yeah, you learn stuff off them as well, you know you pick up a move, give it a bit of practice and then you just add that to your routine. And you just think of putting things together - 'oh yeah, that'll be good with that'. The more different moves you learn the more you can put together.

Hence, once Richard became employed as a nightclub dancer he engaged in deliberative learning to improve his performance (Eraut, 2004). The extract also demonstrates how podium dancers can learn what moves work well together so that they can improvise a sequence that flows. Other podium dancers, such as Jessica quoted below, also learnt new moves and how to put them together through watching other podium dancers; those that they worked with, searched for on You Tube or saw when they went out 'clubbing' themselves:

Jessica: I watched [podium dancers] when I was out and I knew that that's how they kind of danced. And then when I started to work, you learn things off people you work with. Like when there's two people dancing and then you look over and you like something they do and then you try and do that. So learning from people you work with I guess...

...One of the other girls we work with she'd never done it before and you can tell ... they kind of think more about what they are doing instead of just doing it...

Interviewer: Did you find you were more like that to start with?

Jessica: Yeah I was like that to start with, I used to think 'I don't know what to do next' ... thinking of different moves. And I used to go on You Tube and watch dancers in nightclubs and think 'oh yeah I'll do that and that'. But now I don't really think like that, I just do something.

Jessica, freestyle podium dancer

Jessica had taken gymnastics, ballet and jazz dance lessons when she was younger. However, in order to become a proficient podium dancer Jessica had to learn how podium dancers dance through watching them and then mimicking their movements. This meant that at first Jessica was very aware of what she was learning and doing, and like other newcomers to podium dancing she had to explicitly think about what she was going to do next. Eventually, through learning by doing her movements became

automatic. This is similar to the way in which circuit trainers in Crossley's (2004) study develop a feel for the rhythm of the session and learn to perform the correct body technique at the right time without thinking about it.

Indeed, whilst formal training in related forms of dance can help to broaden one's repertoire of dance moves, it seems that podium dancing has a style of its own which participants found difficult to describe. As Emily pointed out in the discussion about podium dancers' formal learning, podium dancing has more in common with how one would dance on a night out than other forms of dance that one can be trained in. This is because, as a number of participants pointed out, one of the key roles of podium dancers is to encourage nightclub punters to dance and they can do this through using dance moves which are easy for novice dancers to follow and mimic, as Emily explains:

It helps other people [to dance], other people who are around, and they are dancing and they are watching. Quite often they might do what you are doing or try to do what you are doing.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

Therefore, the non-formal learning which podium dancers engage in on-the-job is what allows them to convert their dance ability and knowledge into dance labour. This is dancing that is aimed towards the commercial interests of nightclub managers; if punters are encouraged to dance though mimicking the podium dancers then they will be more likely to enjoy themselves more and will revisit on multiple occasions. This is one way in which nightclubs can compete with late opening bars on quality of experience rather than the price of drinks (Mintel, 2005).

Pole performing

Unlike the other types of dancers in the study, nightclub pole performers can receive formal training which is directly relevant to their occupation. At the time the data were collected for this study, pole dancing lessons were becoming widely available across the UK and all four of the nightclub pole performers in the study were also pole dance teachers. These pole dance lessons are taught by pole schools, usually in hired function rooms, fitness and dance studios. Increasingly pole schools are acquiring their own dance studios. There are beginners, intermediate, advanced and usually super-

advanced stages to progress through for which outcomes are specified (i.e. moves to be learnt by the end of each six week course) and certificates are awarded. Each pole school has a slightly different philosophy with regards to the balance of ‘fitness’ and ‘glamour’ in its pedagogy (see Holland, 2010). This means that some pole schools would be more suitable than others for learning to become a nightclub pole performer.

However, the four pole performers in the study did not learn to pole dance in a standardised way by progressing through all of the stages at a pole school. One of the pole performers, Nicola, was mainly taught by a friend in her house, although Nicola’s friend had learnt to pole dance with a pole school herself. Nicola was recruited for the study from an event at a nightclub that was organised by Katy and Zoe (sisters who are also participants in this study) which featured burlesque dancers as well as pole performances. Despite the fact that she had been only learning pole dance for about seven months, the pole tricks which Nicola performed at the event were of a super-advanced level. For example, she used a spinning pole and one of her tricks involved her turning upside-down and running on the ceiling.

The other three pole performers started learning pole dance before lessons taught by pole schools became widely available. For example, six years before the interview, Catherine took some of the first pole dance classes available outside strip clubs, but considers herself as mainly self-taught, as these two extracts demonstrate:

I was doing street dance and at the same school that I was on the mail out for street dance classes they suddenly decided to do pole and it was pretty much from the first classes in London that has never been done in a strip club. It was actually taught by a stripper but it was actually in a dance studio and I was quite drawn to trying that; two courses. And then I took the pole home and then just did a lot of self-teaching.

...generally I am self taught at home and the thing is that ... I video myself. I know how it should look and so I can see if I’m doing it right. But if you have got no one there going ‘no just lift up your foot and you’re fine’ or ‘just let go and you are doing it right, you won’t fall off,’ it takes you longer [to learn].

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

In the first extract, Catherine emphasises the setting of the dance studio as a way of separating the type of pole dancing she learnt and now teaches from ‘sex work’ in strip clubs. Again, this type of ‘boundary setting’ (Barton, 2007) will be explored a little

further in Chapter 6. In second extract, Catherine explains the difficulties associated with self-teaching pole dancing. When she started freestyle podium dancing she could practice her moves in front of the mirror. However, when she taught herself pole tricks Catherine could not see what she was doing in the mirror as she moved around the pole and upside-down, often requiring momentum. Video recording herself allowed her to see what she was doing. Yet the process of playing back the recordings, correcting herself and then trying again and repeating this until she performed the pole trick correctly is obviously very time consuming.

Katy and Zoe were also mainly self-taught with the aid of DVDs and books. However, as sisters learning pole dance at the same time they were able to help and motivate each other:

I always wanted to do it but I didn't want to do it in the lap dancing clubs, you know. Back four and half years ago that was the only thing to do really, it was that ... [So] I bought a pole, I got it fitted in my bedroom. We waited for our DVDs to come and we watched them and then me and Katy taught ourselves. And it took about six months to a year to get OK, you know, quite good, but it was great because we pushed each other along, you know, it was- 'look what I can do!' and then 'oh right, I wanna do that,' you know kind of thing.

Zoe, pole dance teacher/co-owner of pole school and events
entertainment agency and pole performer in nightclubs

Zoe and Katy were therefore motivated to keep learning new and more complex pole tricks. However, as Zoe explains below, a good pole performance is not just about being able to perform impressive pole tricks but also being able to link them together in a sequence:

I do do tricks, but I find that if you're going to dance to a song, it's better to do spins, loads of spins and a few linking moves and then one or two tricks, not just trick after trick after trick after trick, because ... it just looks like 'oh wow' rather than 'oh wicked, she can dance, she can move' you know.

This requires knowledge of and the ability to perform a wide range of pole tricks, spins and the linking moves in between so that the pole performer can know which moves work well together. However, as with other types of nightclub dancers, pole performers also need to learn how to perform their moves in time to music.

Learning to move to well known music

As discussed in the previous half of the chapter, nightclub dancers who choreograph their dance to pre-selected music require the ability to analyse music and put together a sequence of dance moves which correspond with the rhythm and tempo of the chosen music. It was also suggested that extent to which dancers require these skills depends on whether they dance as individuals (i.e. pole performers) or in a team of dancers (i.e. choreographed stage dancers) and their position within that team. For example, Samantha regularly performed dance labour for nightclubs in a team of choreographed stage dancers, but she was not a leader of her team. In addition, as discussed previously, her team was ‘non-self-directing’ (Gallie *et al.*, 2012) Therefore, she did not discuss how she learnt to choreograph dance moves to music because she did not require such skills in her work as nightclub dancer. However, her team leader, Sonya, discussed how she learnt how to choreograph dance routines through her formal education:

...we also do the dance routines [at the events entertainment agency] and that [the diploma in musical theatre and performing arts] helped me with choreographing. And also the background of how to deal with people and teaching, it’s all come from being taught.

Sonya, nightclub dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and manager of dancers at an events entertainment agency

Sonya also mentioned that she learnt to teach others and ‘deal with people’ through being taught. This could have been part of the explicit, formal curriculum of her diploma, but the way she refers to her knowledge as ‘the background’ suggests that she learnt it implicitly through observing and experiencing how her educators taught and led the students.

Emma, who managed her own team of dancers at a ‘superclub’, discussed the theoretical, technical knowledge of choreography which she gained from her degree in much greater detail:

...I did dance history as well and so I learnt a lot about technique and how dancers are trained in certain ways; you know theatrical dance and then there is professional ballet ... We got taught specific techniques, examples from different choreographers and that sort of thing. So you get a good taste of ways of dancing and styles and stuff when you go to college because they teach you

everything. If you are training and you study dance then I think that you have got a bit more of an understanding of it than you would do just being a dancer in a dance school that does jazz, tap and ballet, because you don't learn anything about where it has come from. You are just doing it because there is a teacher there telling you to do it.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and entertainment manager at a 'superclub'

This extract from Emma demonstrates the way in which an understanding of the technical and theoretical aspects of dancing allows her and Sonya to have ownership and control over not just their own dance labour but also the dance labour of those they manage. Both Sonya and Emma had the expertise and experience to replace the person who had previously managed them as nightclub dancers in their current place of work. Additionally, it is perhaps not surprising that Emma, whose degree level dance training would be characterised by all of the features of formal learning suggested by Eraut (2004), is able to talk about her learning in great detail. This is because her knowledge is highly codified, explicit and public.

All four of the nightclub pole performers in the study were also pole dance teachers. As part of their training to become pole dance teachers, three of them had taken an Exercise to Music (ETM) course, the other was going to be taking it soon. This was mainly required so that they could lead warm up and warm down sessions as part of the pole class, to prevent muscle strains. Additionally, as Felstead *et al.* (2007) discuss, ETM training includes training in how to count the beats in music and choreograph routines of aerobic dance steps in time to the music. For example, Zoe discussed how this formal training added to the knowledge of music that she believed she and her sister already had:

...for some reason ... we've always been good with music to know when to count beats. Ah, with our last company we did an Exercise to Music class, where we had to learn counting the beats, but we kind of knew it before we did it anyway.

Zoe, pole dance teacher/co-owner of pole school/events
entertainment agency and pole performer in nightclubs

Earlier in the chapter, Zoe gave an example of how she used her knowledge of music (i.e. how to count beats) to choreograph a pole dance routine for students at the end of

their beginners course. In another part of the interview Zoe also discussed how she had ‘written up’ a synchronised pole dance for her and her sister Katy to perform at an upcoming event they were organising:

We tend to freestyle. But for this event that we’ve got coming up we’ve got to practice and get really good and synchronise it and get it spot on. But we’ve already written up the routine, so it’s just practicing now and finding the time. But I’ve already said if we can’t get it very good I’m not doing it, because I said I’m going to be busy anyway, running round on the night, being the host and getting all the girls organised and dressed and changed and the raffle and everything. So I won’t do it if it’s not good.

This formal process of counting beats and writing down the corresponding choreography results in information that is explicit and codified. It provides Zoe and Katy with a clear set of instructions which can be easily communicated to each other as they develop and rehearse the synchronised pole dance to get it ‘spot on’. This also makes it beneficial for teaching pole dance students who do not yet have the confidence and ability to improvise a routine of pole dance moves to music:

We do the dance routines for them so they know when they’ve got to do a certain move and it’s all written down for them; it’s all exactly when, and where and how. So that’s easier for them. I learned differently, but a lot of the girls enjoy learning it as a dance routine ... it took me something like two years to feel natural enough to do it [freestyle], where as with these girls ... by stage 2 they’ve only done 12 weeks of pole dancing; they can’t be expected to go bam, ‘there you go, just dance to that song’ ... So I help along a little bit with the choreography.

Katy, pole dance teacher/co-owner of pole school/events
entertainment agency and pole performer in nightclubs

In the extract above Katy explains how whilst she can teach a choreographed routine to students that have only been learning pole dance for a relatively short period of time, it takes much longer for individuals to have learn enough pole dancing to ‘feel natural enough’ to perform freestyle to music that they have not pre-selected. This suggests a process whereby the knowledge of how to perform particular pole moves (which has been taught and learnt explicitly) becomes tacit to the point that freestyle pole performers can just move to the music without thinking about what they are doing. How pole performers and podium dancers learn to move to ‘unknown’ music will be explored further below.

Learning to move to unknown music

In the first half of the chapter it was suggested that on most normal weekends nightclub managers require freestyle nightclub dancers that are ‘versatile’ and able to dance to whatever music the DJ is playing. To achieve this they need to develop a sense of rhythm, learn how to pace their movements throughout each dance set and throughout the night and make use of what ever space the are given to dance in. The following discussion will consider how these skills are learnt.

Developing a sense of rhythm – ‘knowing your music’

Earlier in the chapter, an extract from an interview with Steve (fire performer and bookings manager at an events entertainment agency) suggested that freestyle podium dancing is about ‘having natural rhythm, which is harder to teach’. However, the interview data suggested some ways in which nightclub dancers can be formally and explicitly ‘taught’ to have rhythm, as well as many ways in which they implicitly developed their sense of rhythm. As discussed earlier, ‘having rhythm’ in this context refers to the ability to pick out the baseline in the music and improvise dance moves in time with the tempo of the beats which comprise the baseline. One formal way in which freestyle nightclub dancers can develop this ability is to be taught the same ‘music mapping’ skills as those used by dancers when they design choreographed dance routines. For example, Zoe and Katy used their ability to count beats gained from their ETM qualification and their knowledge of music in general in their freestyle pole performances, as well as when they are choreographing pole dance routines. The extract from the interview with Katy below demonstrates how when she performs freestyle she combines this knowledge of music with her knowledge of how to perform pole dance moves. It also reveals the extent to which her knowledge of how to perform pole dance moves has become tacit and this enables her to move to the music in the right way without thinking about it:

Interviewer: Do you plan a routine of moves before you go up there?

Katy: No, I just go for it. And you know what, when you get to a certain level in pole dancing, you kind of know what’s going to follow; you know how to push your body into something and you just do it. And you know when a beat’s going

to happen in a song, you know the beats in a song, you know when it's going to drop and you tend to drop [slide down the pole] with that beat or do something or do the splits or something ... it's fluent. You just remember everything, it's automatic. It's like driving a car, when you get in a car, you just know what you're doing ... You just know where to put everything.

Kelly drew on similar music analysis skills to those who had received ETM training which she had developed through playing musical instruments:

...obviously you've got to be able to have some kind of rhythm. You've got to get used to the beat; like I've got a musical background where I've played instruments. So I'm quite good at reading music and listening to beats that you wouldn't normally listen to in music; like when you catch the under-beat or something like that.

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

However, a lot of freestyle dancers developed their rhythm through experience of dancing to music in non-formal settings. For example, as discussed earlier, both Leon and Richard were regular 'clubbers' before they became employed as freestyle podium dancers. In the two extracts below, Richard explains how this experience has meant he is able to 'go with the flow' when performing dance labour:

Interviewer: Have you ever had a moment where a song has come on and it has just been so wrong that you've not known what to do for a minute?

Richard: No, you know, I just go with the flow, I ignore things like that. You don't really think about it, it just goes over the top of your head, rather than like, just pausing. I've been dancing for years; when I go out I'm always dancing...

...I'm used to being out in an environment where it's just music every time. Because I tend to go out most days a week, like on a Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, well not so much Saturdays these days because I'm always working.

Richard, freestyle podium dancer

Like Richard, Leon developed his embodied sense of rhythm through dancing to music in nightclubs. However, through his connections with DJs and general involvement in the Hard Dance nightclub and music scene (which are closely tied together), he seemed to have developed a good technical knowledge of the music he had listened to and danced to as a clubber. For example, Leon knew the typical beats per minute of Hard

Dance tracks. The extract below also demonstrates how he understands the way in DJ's match the beats in music tracks:

I've got a DJ friend who's an amazing DJ and his head never goes to the beat and it's like you try and copy him and no-one can do it, it's impossible and you're a DJ! You know what I mean, you've got a great grasp of beat matching and everything, but you can't move your head to the music, it's a bit strange. I find it impossible; if something's going 'doom-doom-doom' I can try and do it and it's not on the beat, then it automatically ends up going back to the beat.

Leon's DJ friend has the technical ability to pick out and match the beats in different music tracks so that he is able to play them in such a way that they merge into each other seamlessly. However, the DJ does not share Leon's embodied knowledge of how to move in time to the beat.

Whilst the freestyle podium dancer Leon developed his sense of rhythm implicitly when he went out clubbing, Catherine suggested that pole performers can develop their rhythm through more deliberative learning (Eraut, 2004); pole dancing freestyle to their favourite music at home:

Get a pole, put it up at home, put on your favourite music and just dance ... And the more that you practice the better that you get. You get more into the rhythm of the music and if it is music that you love you generally, there are patterns of music you can build up, like the drops [in the beat] and stuff like that. And you can work out to your music how you dance. Then obviously pole trick wise if you then go to classes learn the pole tricks. Sometimes you can put them together into routines and that can help you a bit, but it won't help you as much as if you are just at home dancing on the pole.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

This extract emphasises how nightclub pole performing is not just about performing pole tricks. It also demonstrates the way in which dancers who choose to specialise in dancing to music they have a preference for can benefit from having in-depth knowledge of the typical beat patterns of music tracks they like and how to move to it. This enables them to reassert some control over the aural environment that structures their dance labour.

Indeed, as would be expected, nightclub dancers in the sample who did not receive extensive pre-job formal dance training learnt to dance to their favourite genres

of music. However, once they became employed as nightclub dancers they had to learn to adapt their movements to the varying types of music styles played in different nightclubs. In the following two interview extracts, Kelly explains how she learnt to ‘go with the flow’ of the music and adapt her dance to different styles:

If I remember they just put me on the podium and said ‘get on with it,’ they chucked me in at the deep end basically. I think their words to me was just ‘go with the flow,’ go with the music at the end of the day. That’s what I say with the new girls, just chuck ‘em in at the deep end and they’ll learn. As long as they’ve got a kind of knowing of what the music is like, you just get into it. You put yourself in your little zone, in your little box and you’re fine then. Because I was chucked in at the deep end big time, on my own, get up there and get on with it. But obviously as I’ve got on I’ve been watching the other dancers and picking up bits from them and stuff.

When I first started I used to dance to Hard House music and then I moved on to [a different nightclub that played] Funky, and I couldn’t dance to it first of all because I was so used to the Hard House; I was uncomfortable dancing to any other music. But now it’s the majority Electro music and I find it hard to dance to Hard House. It depends on where you work, because different clubs do vary with their music and you do have to incorporate yourself into the style of the music.

Kelly, ‘lead’ freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

In the first extract, Kelly suggests how knowledge of ‘what the music is like’ provides a good basis for being able to improvise a dance to it. In the process of ‘getting on with it’ she was then able to start picking up cues from other dancers about how to dance to the music being played. This also helped her adapt when she started dancing at a nightclub that played Funky House rather than the more up-tempo Hard House that she was accustomed to. The way in which Kelly talks about incorporating ‘yourself’ into different styles of music in the second extract is indicative of the operation of an ‘individual habitus’ (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006). This will be explored further towards the end of the chapter.

Learning to keep moving

In the first half of the chapter, it was suggested that a certain level of fitness was a pre-requisite for keeping moving. Podium dancers in the study often mentioned how they were already going to the gym regularly before they started nightclub dancing. This

meant that they were already in good exercise habits for when they started dancing for nightclubs. For example, Rachel was going to the gym five times a week when she first started podium dancing for a nightclub, although she found that that podium dancing more strenuous:

Obviously, you've got to be quite fit. I never realised how hard it is to dance. You know, I go to the gym. I went to the gym when I first started, five times a week and dancing on there [the podium] was a totally different kind of fitness to what I do in the gym.

Rachel, freestyle podium dancer

Richard frequently emphasised the importance of keeping fit as well as eating healthily throughout the interview:

... Yeah, just keep your fitness up as well; when you're not dancing, maybe go to the gym, stay in shape, because the fitter you are, the better you dance and the more you'll enjoy it. Eating right as well, like a mixture of everything.

I do a lot of sport and I go to the gym regular. I tend to eat better now these days, a nice healthy mix; you feel more athletic. I think diet is a big thing and just general fitness overall.

... where we're dancing it's boiling hot, so you're always coming off sweating everywhere, so you need to be fit as well. So I'd say go to the gym, get your diet right ... the internet's brilliant for looking up diets, like men's health magazines, etcetera, so you've got to be pretty strict for that.

Richard, freestyle podium dancer

Richard therefore made good use of the internet for looking up special diets as well as new dance moves. After the interview he discussed how he ate 'little and often' and was fairly strict about it. This diet was designed to compliment his healthy and active lifestyle, although Chapter 5 explores how some nightclub dancers watched what they ate because they were worried about putting on too much weight.

Freestyle dancers need to be fit to in order to have the stamina to dance for as long as they are required. Stamina is not just about fitness but also having the motivation to carry on even if one is exhausted or in pain. For example, the circuit trainers in Crossley's (2004) study learned to ignore their bodies' pain signalling them

to stop moving and experience ‘the burn’ as a positive feeling. Hence, Samantha experienced the pain associated with doing a lot of exercise as a ‘buzz’:

...[podium dancing is] really hard work, and I always come off in a massive sweat; I think I must have a problem, because the other girls don’t! But yeah, it’s good to go home and feel really tired and you get up in the morning and your arms are killing you because you’ve worked so hard, that’s a nice feeling.

Interviewer: So it’s good to get that exercise from performing and having fun as well?

Samantha: Yeah I love it, I really do and when I’ve done like a really intense rehearsal as well and the next day you’ve got to come back and do it again and you’re thinking ‘oh, no!’ But secretly I’m like ‘ah yes’ because I’m aching, I’m getting to do this all again. I actually really buzz off it, you know, the pain thing, in a weird way, like if you go to the gym and the next day you’re aching, I like that feeling because you know that you’ve worked hard. And at the end of the day, if you’ve done a gig and you’ve worked hard, you feel good about yourself, because you know that the client’s gonna be happy because you’ve done your best, it’s like a bit of a lift.

More importantly, like the circuit trainers in Crossley’s (2004) study, freestyle dancers need to develop a practical sense of timing and pacing which allows them to spread their activity evenly throughout their dance set and throughout the night. This is particularly important for pole performers because it is very physically demanding. Catherine explains below, when she first starting doing half an hour pole dancing sets for a nightclub, she made the mistake that newcomers to circuit training make and put in too much effort at the beginning:

Catherine: ...So I then did three years dancing once a month for rock night as well, just doing pole and that was quite tough, it was like three half an hour sets in one night.

Interviewer: Right that is tough, yes.

Catherine: Yes, I remember on my first one I decided that you know I wanted to try and impress them, you know show them what I could do. So after 5 minutes I had already done like three upside down moves, a couple of climbs and stuff and I was absolutely knackered and I had like nearly an hour and a half to go through the rest of the night. But they kept me on and I soon got used to doing the half an hour sets, just learning to space it out, like one big move every five minutes, rather than five big moves every five minutes.

Interviewer: So you did a lot of linking moves?

Catherine: A lot of linking moves, lots of padding it out. There was another gig that I used to do, it was weekly for a while and then it went to once a month ... and I was doing ten minute sets and in the ten minutes I could do actually quite a lot and so it wasn’t so much padding it out.

Pole performers like Catherine can use ‘linking moves’ between pole tricks which have a low physical impact. They not only ‘pad out’ a pole dance set but they also give pole performers a chance to rest and think about what pole trick they might perform next. They can be performed during musical bridges which occur in chart music. Catherine learnt through experience on-the-job about the balance of linking moves and pole tricks she should use in a dance set.

As Tina explains in the extract below, in order to avoid becoming exhausted freestyle podium dancers also need to be able to pace and adapt their dance moves according to how long they are required to dance. This requires knowledge and skill in being able to perform dance moves which have a low physical impact when necessary:

Tina: Yeah, it’s a lot of arms more than legs, [so as] not to tire yourself out too much, there tends to be not too much jumping around. A lot more moving your arms in sequence and your head, rather than, you know, jiggling around.

Interviewer: So with those arm movements, would you make quite big arm movements as well?

Tina: Yeah, quite exaggerated. And stopping and catching your breath and making a move to go with it as much as you could.

Interviewer: How long did you dance at a time then?

Tina: Well in Benidorm it was literally 9 hours and you’d have 20 minutes break in the middle ... so it was always quite steady dances or I just wouldn’t dance too fast. But with Dave Roberts [pseudonym – manager of an events entertainment agency ‘on the gay scene’] it’s usually an hour on, an hour off and you could go in the nightclub then or just sit back in the dressing room and you’d have a slot then when you’d go back on. So that was quite good.

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer ‘on the gay scene’

In the extract above, Tina also highlights how podium dancers can use certain moves to give them an opportunity to catch their breath whenever possible. Such moves often make use of the space around them and are usually performed during musical bridges. How freestyle dancers learn to fill and make use of the space around them will now be explored below.

Learning to use the space

As discussed in the first half of the chapter, good freestyle dancers need to be able to adapt to dancing in different spaces. They can also use their surroundings to fill musical bridges and make their performance more interesting to watch. Pole

performers can use ‘linking moves’ to make use of their surroundings. These moves are often part of the ‘curriculum’ of formal pole lessons, alongside pole tricks. Podium dancers can also learn particular moves which make use of their surroundings. Kelly described how she learnt these sorts of moves through watching other podium dancers where she worked:

...how they used the area of the podium and stuff and how they use the bars, because there were always bars on the side of the podium, so how they used that, you could gather from watching them.

Kelly, ‘lead’ freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

The freestyle podium dancer Fiona even turned up early to some of her shifts so that she could learn some of the acrobatic ‘tricks’ which dancers perform using the bars around the edge of the raised stage. This could therefore be identified as deliberative learning (Eraut, 2004):

Yeah, it sounds weird, like when the music is slow and stuff, people like do tricks on the bars and that. Like I used to go early to my shift, so then I could learn some on- you know when the club is shut – I could learn some moves on the bars and stuff like that. I learned quite a lot then.

Fiona, freestyle podium dancer

As Fiona suggests, these ‘tricks’ help dancers to keep moving when the music tempo changes and so are an essential aspect of her dance labour.

Freestyle podium dancing and habitus

The discussion on how freestyle podium dancers learn to dance explored how the different ways in which they learn and the influence of the various styles of dance that they have been trained in on their dance labour as nightclub dancers. As the quote below from Catherine suggests each podium dancer’s unique mix of physical and technical capabilities can be seen in the way they dance. There is also evidence that the height and build of podium dancers (i.e. their physical capital) also has an influence on their style:

I used to know someone who was quite flexible and his style was very bendy, I don't know how he did it but he was just bendy, bendy dancing. I knew somebody else who ran the agency who was tall and gangly and his moves were just massive and you think that he is going to trip over his feet but he never did.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

All this is indicative of an individual habitus like that identified by Wainwright *et al.* (2006) in their study of ballet dancers and Delamont and Stephens (2008) in their study of capoeira. A podium dancer's individual habitus also has an influence on what genres of music they are best able to dance to. However, a podium dancer's individual habitus can come into conflict with the aim of being 'versatile' to different styles of music:

Yeah, you can do anything [i.e. any style of dance] ... But, again, it depends what the club wants, what the music scene is and stuff like that. I mainly do House and Baseline nights because I'm more of fast, sharp dancer, where as Trance nights are not really me because it's really floaty. It's quite good because there's work out there for every kind of dancer, which is good, but then it's hard because I don't think anyone is literally good at every single style ... you have to be versatile to every kind of music. Like you can go somewhere and you haven't got a clue what kind of music they're going to play, but you have to adapt to it. They'll put some kind of new music on and you won't dance anywhere near as good as if there was some other music on. You have to be versatile, you have to adapt, but it's hard to be good at all different things.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

There is also evidence that freestyle podium dancers working in the same nightclub can develop a form of 'institutional habitus' (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006):

Like most of us we've all worked together, we've got our partners who we're comfortable dancing with, like me and Daisy, we're very similar in how we dance so we can kind of take the pressure off if we're un-choreographed, because we are quite similar. Because we've danced together for so long, we bounce off each other.

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

... There is something about the way that we all perform that links in. I think that is because we have been dancing together for quite a while now, we are like a little unit but within that unit there are different styles, it is quite hard to sort of explain, you would have to see it. They are all really different but then we are all sort of singing off the same song sheet so to speak.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and entertainment manager at a 'superclub'

Hence, if freestyle podium dancers work together for a significant period of time, eventually their styles of movements become similar, or, as Emma suggests, the way in which all the dancers perform 'links in'. Emma discussed how she would not dance in other nightclubs in the local areas and she would also discourage the other dancers that worked with her to do the same, because, she explains:

...the way that I dance that is almost like the Super Bash style. If I dance at another club down the road my manager would see that as you know filtering out the Super Bash brand to other places, so I have to be exclusive to here.

This suggests that regular Super Bash clubbers would be able to not only recognise Emma and her dancers by their appearance but also the way in which they dance, providing further evidence of an institutional habitus which could actually prevent these dancers from working at other nightclubs.

Super-dancers

This chapter has suggested that in general the most successful and best paid nightclub dancers are those who are the most 'versatile' and able to meet the demands of as many different nightclub managers as possible. As the nightclub entertainment market is so competitive, this entails being multi-talented in terms of dance skills and, ideally, being able to perform choreographed and freestyle routines.

Indeed, the events entertainment agency manager Ian felt that the only way to be successful in such a highly competitive market was to train his dancers in additional performance skills such as fire and stilt walking so that they could compete on quality rather than price. He referred to these specially trained dancers as 'super-dancers'. *Sonya's Siren's* are the 'cream of the crop':

...even though we do put podium dancers out now, we can't afford simply to try and market podium dancers because the market's flooded with them, we had to bring other skills into the mix. So even though they're primarily dancers and that's where they've had their training, they've had to pick up other skills as well, and then we market them as, well, we call them super-dancers. We used to call them super-dancers before *Sonya's Sirens* was coined. *Sonya's Sirens* are the cream of the crop, but all of our dancers are expected to be able to learn other skills, because it just depends what other agencies are doing; if they're

strapping stilts to their dancers and sending them out there and then again, the price sort of comes down...

Ian, events entertainment agency manager

Everyone has like their own skill in Sonya's Sirens, like Sonya does acro-contortion - I don't know if she told you – she's freakishly bendy. And I do the angle grinding, so that's my specialist skill, and all the other girls are too scared to do it 'cause they think they'll chop their hands off! But yeah, that's my little thing that I do. Um, the girls can all do like fire fans, you know, like dancing...

Samantha, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and bookings manager at an events entertainment agency

Ian's agency had large numbers of performers 'on their books' who specialised in different types of 'circus' performance arts and was trained in stilt walking himself. All of the nightclub dancers at Ian's agency had opportunities to learn these additional skills from experts through training sessions held at the agency headquarters. However, Sonya's Sirens are the 'elite' group of female dancers and are trained to specialise in particular performance skill so that they all complement each other and create an exciting and varied stage show. Hence, Samantha learnt to 'angle grind'. 'Angle-grinding' involves the performer wearing metal plates that an angle-grinder is passed over, which sends bright sparks flying in all directions. Such a performance was once featured on *Britain's Got Talent*. Another podium dancer, Amber, also learnt this additional skill with her events entertainment agency as part of her attempt to 'keep ahead of the game':

There's always going to someone who can do things better than you can. You have to constantly keep ahead of the game. Like when I was doing stilts; when I first did stilts I was like, brilliant. And then I'd see someone do fire and I'd be like 'she can do fire and I can't do fire'. And then you think well, at the end of the day, if there's a gig and I can go to the gig and say 'I can do dancing and stilts', that girl you knew could have the same dance ability but they're after a dancer with fire. You've got to go from there, that's the way you've got to be really, because even if you've got the same dance ability, they've got more skills, they've got more to offer. You do feel like you're constantly competing to be as good. Because there are that many dancers, if you're not that good, you're not going to get any gigs really.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

As mentioned previously, Leon held similar 'skill swapping' training sessions at his agency, where nightclub dancers could learn different types of dance as well as these

additional ‘circus’ skills. However, nightclub dancers who do not work for well established events entertainment agencies with a variety of specialist performers on their books do not have easy access to such training opportunities.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored what skills nightclub dancers require to become proficient dance labourers and the different ways in which they learn these skills. The sample included freestyle podium dancers, choreographed stage dancers and pole dancers who can perform choreographed and freestyle routines. In order to explore the skills required by different dancers in the context of the nightclub, a distinction was made between two types of dance labour: ‘moving to well known music’ and ‘moving to unknown music’. Dancers who choreograph their routine to music which has been analysed and selected using their ‘music mapping’ skills know how they will be moving at each part of their track(s), their use of the space is pre-planned and they know how long they will be dancing for. Nightclub dancers who perform freestyle to whatever music the DJ is playing need to be adaptable: they require a good sense of rhythm, an ability to pace themselves to keep moving for as long as they are need (which could be up to an hour at a time) and they need to make use of whatever space they are given to dance in.

It was initially suggested that in contrast to ETM instructors (Felstead *et al.*, 2007) choreographed dancers have more control over their dance labour than freestyle dancers. However, throughout the chapter it became clear that the contrast between freestyle and choreographed nightclub dancers and ETM instructors was not as straightforward as this. This is partly because choreographed dancers’ control over their dance labour depends on whether they dance as individuals – as is usually the case with pole performers – or in a team of dancers and whether or not they are the leader of a team. In addition, drawing on Gallie *et al.* (2012), a contrast was made between Sonya’s ‘non-self-directed’ teams of choreographed dancers, in which Sonya made all the decisions about choreography and Emma’s more ‘self-directed’ teams, in which all the dancers in the team contributed ideas and had an influence on the choreography. Emma’s dancers therefore had more opportunities to use, learn and develop dance related skills.

The discussion of ‘learning to dance for nightclubs’ drew on the work of Eraut (2000) to suggest that different types of learning were significant for particular types of dancer. For example, formal pre-job and on-the-job learning was important for choreographed stage dancers, whereas other types of dancers engaged in a mixture of formal and non-formal types of learning in developing their dance skills. For freestyle podium dancers in particular, each dancer’s unique mix of dance training and skills contributed to an individual habitus (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006) which could come into conflict with their ‘versatility’ in terms of being able to dance to many different genres of music. Versatility is a key aspect of being a good dance labourer. In fact, the discussion of ‘super-dancers’ suggested that nightclub dancers may need to go a further step in terms of increasing their versatility by training in additional ‘circus’ performing skills such as stilt walking, fire arts and ‘angle-grinding’ to make themselves more employable in a highly competitive market. Nightclub dancers, therefore, may have to be more than dancers. Indeed, ‘dance labour’ is just one of the three main areas of skill which nightclub dancers need to learn in order to be successful. The other two of these will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 5

Aesthetic Labour and Learning How to Look Appealing

Introduction

The previous chapter explored how nightclub dancers learn to perform dance labour for nightclubs. However, an individual who is proficient in all of the aspects of physical dance labour may still find that they are unable to obtain employment in a nightclub. This is because employers of nightclub dancers also want to recruit individuals with a particular ‘look’. Hence, in common with other types of workers in the service sector, nightclub dancers engage in *aesthetic labour*; they are recruited based on their possession of certain embodied capacities and attributes which are mobilised and developed through training to produce a ‘style’ of service encounter (Warhurst *et al.*, 2000). For female nightclub dancers, in particular, much of this aesthetic labour stems from the pressure for their appearance to appeal to the senses of male nightclub managers and punters in an industry that is quite clearly *strategically sexualised*; whereby employees’ sex appeal is commodified and mobilised as a deliberate corporate strategy (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009).

Nightclub dancers must therefore have a face, body shape and height which falls within certain parameters set by nightclub managers, who believe they are responding to what punters want. These parameters are also set to ensure that newly recruited nightclub dancers ‘fit in’ with the existing dancers and the branding of the nightclub or events entertainment agency. In order to be successful, all nightclub dancers must learn to use all the available means of maximising their attractiveness and improving their image; through their use of clothing, make-up, diet and exercise. In doing so, they have to learn what does and does not look good. However, the degree of control they have over their image varies between different dancers and this has consequences for skills and learning. The first half of this chapter will explore what skills and attributes nightclub dancers require to look appealing to employers and nightclub punters. The second half of the chapter explains how nightclub dancers learn to make themselves look appealing.

What makes nightclub dancers look appealing?

Looking the part

‘Aesthetic labour’ is defined as:

a supply of ‘embodied capacities and attributes’ possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment. Employers then mobilise, develop and commodify these capacities and attributed through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into ‘competencies’ or ‘skills’ which are then aesthetically geared towards producing a ‘style’ of service encounter.

(Warhurst *et al.*, 2000: 4).

As aesthetic labourers, employees become part of the ‘hardware’ of the organisation. This means that employers seek to recruit individuals who embody the style of the organisation. For example, the hotel chain ‘Elba’ sought to recruit individuals who had an ‘Elba look’ (Witz *et al.*, 2003). This meant being attractive: ‘nice teeth, neat hair and in decent proportion’ (p.48). There is evidence that nightclub dancers are also selected and recruited based partly whether they ‘look the part’. Looking the part entails having an appearance encapsulates the aesthetic ideals of the organisation (i.e. the events entertainment agency and/or nightclub) and its brand. This prescribed appearance is generally one which conforms to stereotypical Western notions of physical attractiveness.

For example, Rachel discussed how she thought that the ‘certain kind of appearance’ which her employers were looking for included being ‘relatively skinny.’ Hence, perceiving herself as not skinny, she was surprised when she was offered the position as a dancer at the nightclub:

I think they were matching in with particular styles [of dancing] ... but I do think they look for a certain kind of appearance for people, generally. But I did notice- like I’m not a small girl, as you can see; I’m not a twig, but the other girls that I dance with, they are all relatively skinny ... I never went down there [to the audition] with a thought of me ever having a chance to do it, to be honest with you, and when they called me through and [offered me the job] ... I was really surprised, I was really shocked.

Rachel, freestyle podium dancer

There was a fairly widespread perception amongst participants that female nightclub dancers are expected to be ‘skinny’, with only one employer refuting this. For example, the former podium dancer Tina noted that the outfits that she and her fellow female dancers wore were ‘generally in the same size, nothing over a size 8’. However, as the interview extract below illustrates, her employer seemed to prescribe an ideal body shape as well as size:

Interviewer: So did you ever know of anyone who applied for that position with Dave Roberts [pseudonym - employer]?

Tina: Yeah my friend did. I think she’s pretty and that but I think she’s about 6”1”/ 6”2” and she’s really, really thin and really flat-chested and she had like quite short hair and not very nice teeth and he said no she couldn’t do it ... ’cause he used to stencil his name across us, like put the website down our legs, and he said ‘I’m not putting my name across that.’

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer on the ‘gay scene’

Dave Roberts managed an events entertainment agency that specialised in organising events ‘on the gay scene’. This included parades and carnivals as well as nightclub entertainment. The dancers that worked for him were expected to literally embody his brand which was stencilled across their skin. This meant that their appearance had to represent the image of the brand which Dave Roberts wanted to portray, which was highly sexualised. Being ‘flat-chested’ and having ‘not very nice teeth’ was antithetical to this prescribed ‘sexualised look’. This sexualisation will be explored further in relation to the concept of ‘strategic sexualisation’ (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009).

Emma, the entertainment manager at an outlet of a major ‘superclub’ brand which is referred to here by the pseudonym ‘Super Bash’, also made use of skin stencils for her dancers. This meant that nightclub dancers that worked under Emma were physically branded and labelled as well as being digitally branded, labelled and tagged in photos on social networking sites and the Super Bash website:

Facebook and My Space I would say are quite useful, that is the way that I found my make up artist, she was on there and I had to make stencils for her with a Super Bash logo and a Super Bash brand ... and then she paints them on.

We have a photographer every single week to take pictures of them [the nightclub dancers]; the night, the people [i.e. punters] and then those pictures then go online and they also go on Facebook as well. And the girls ... are all tagged in the pictures and they are all labelled ... And so people know who we are now. They know the dancers, they are Super Bash dancers and the girls that are new, that have just started working, they love the fact that they are Super

Bash dancers and ... it's quite a privilege I think. Definitely a privilege to come and work [here] ... I must get about 5, 4 or 5 applications a day.

Emma, dancer and entertainment manager at a 'superclub'

In other parts of the interview, Emma explained how the Super Bash brand was about punters having a 'good party' and 'an experience, rather than just to come in the club and get drunk'. She pointed out that other nightclubs, even other well renowned superclubs do not take entertainment to the level that Super Bash does and that she has access to a particularly large entertainment budget. This, combined with the intense competition for nightclub dancing positions at the Super Bash venue, meant that Emma was able to be very selective and only recruit dancers that matched her aesthetic specifications. This meant being generally considered as 'appealing' but also 'fitting in' with the other dancers in the nightclub:

So initially it is, I do look at height ... what their body shape is like, their stats - they send me their statistics [i.e. body measurements], a dance file and pictures and then I look through them and think would they be suitable ... the girls have to fit in with what I have got here. So I've got blonde haired girls, I've got 3 brunette girls, you know. Even if they are not suitable at the time I will keep them on file for future events.

...they have to look, you know, appealing, there is only so much dressing up that you can do. There by, say I get someone applying and I don't really like how they look, then I think that I have to be fair to my team and say I don't think that she would stand in line with the other girls. And I know that's really quite bad, but I do look for pretty girls. Not necessarily the most beautiful girls in the world, but it does help if they are pretty.

...we are quite renowned for being difficult, not difficult but just having a very high standard and being very specific about what we want...

Emma, dancer and entertainment manager at a 'superclub'

This is 'lookism' (Warhurst *et al.*, 2009) taken to an extreme level. Emma talked at length about her various specifications related to her dancers' appearance throughout the interview. Height was a particularly important concern for her because of "aesthetic reasons really; when the girls all stand in a line and have a picture, if you've got one little tiny one and one massive, it does look silly ... most of the girls are 5ft5/5ft6." It also demonstrates the way in which Emma's aesthetic specifications for her dancers are related to marketing strategies which make use of images posted on social networking sites. It also demonstrates the way in which employers prescribe minimum levels of

'natural' attractiveness that nightclub dancers must meet. Indeed, Emma also used Facebook to 'research' dancers that wanted to work at her club. She would add them as 'friends' to her Facebook page to enable her to view 'their more natural photos of them going out' rather than the often misleading professional photos which dancers would send her with their applications.

The two examples discussed above relate to the way in which employers in a particular events entertainment agency and a particular nightclub sought to recruit nightclub dancers with a certain appearance that they felt embodied the brand. Other participants talked more generally about the way in which different types of nightclubs and/or sectors of the nightclub industry varied in terms of the aesthetic ideal their managers sought in nightclub dancers. For example, to begin with, Leon's events entertainment agency had specialised in the Hard House nightclub scene in which Leon had a personal and social interest in. Hence, he did not seem to have as strict 'stereotypical' aesthetic criteria as he perceived the 'commercial, Funky House arena' to have:

I don't think you need to be like a size zero; we had a couple of girls, one girl was like a size 14 or 16 and she was amazing, people loved her...

...[But] in the commercial, Funky House arena, it's all about looking like a model. You've got to be big-chested, flat stomached, fairly tall and at the end of the day you've got to be able to dance as well. But you'll get much more gigs if you fit their stereotypical criteria, which is why it took us so many years to branch into that area, because I fucking hate that, you know, I'm sorry. At the end of the day, I know so many women of all different shapes and sizes, and they're all lovely people ... but you have to look shit hot if you want to get on in the commercial scene, and I think that's terrible, because there's so many good performers out there that have to take other roles, like backing dancers.

Leon, former events entertainment agency manager and freestyle podium dancer

Emily also perceived that nightclubs and sectors of the industry varied in terms of their vision of the ideal nightclub dancer to embody their 'theme' and appeal to the type of clientele they are marketing their product at:

There are different sectors, there are different types of clubs that want different things. Like I think that [one of the nightclubs I have worked in] prefers the girls to be quite tall, more striking ... so each club has kind of a theme and the kind of people that they want to attract in and I guess that is reflected in the type of dancers that work there and how you are expected to dress and stuff.

...[certain nightclubs] very much want someone that everyone can look at and so the main factor is kind of like what you would wear, it is so important to look glamorous, stand out from just the other girls in the club, the other boys in the club you have to look like you are meant to be up there because you will go to a club and there will be a podium, and it's the club goes, the party goes getting up and dancing [on the podium] and they [the dancers] have to be distinct ... [so] everyone knows when the actual dancers are coming on and so you really have to look the part.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

In this context, the 'theme' of the nightclub incorporates the 'aesthetics of organization'. Nightclub dancers are the animate components of this. The layout, décor and furnishings (etc) of the nightclub venue comprise the inanimate components (Witz *et al.*, 2003). The theme of the nightclub is also created by the types of music that is played and the types and brands of drinks (and sometimes food) that are sold there. Clearly, all of these aspects relate to marketing and the type of clientele which the nightclub aims to attract.

In the first of the two extracts above, Emily also points out how the 'theme' of the nightclub 'and the kind of people that they want to attract' is also reflected in how nightclub dancers that work there 'are expected to dress and stuff.' In the second of the two extracts, Emily discusses how for some nightclubs this entails wearing clothing that 'looks glamorous' and makes nightclub dancers look 'distinct' from punters. This highlights how in order to be successful, nightclub dancers that meet minimum requirements in terms of less easily altered aspects of their appearance such as height, build and facial attractiveness also need the knowledge and ability to utilise and manipulate those aspects that can be, such as clothing and make-up. Nightclub dancers require these skills not only maximise their attractiveness but to use such adornment to portray the right messages about themselves and the nightclubs/sectors of the nightclub industry they work in. For example, Kelly explained the differences in clothing styles which nightclub dancers were expected to wear in Hard House/underground and Funky House/commercial nightclubs:

[In the first nightclub I worked in] it was Hard House and there's an image around Hard House dancing: very vibrant clothing, fluffy boots, you know, you've probably seen them – the fluffy leg warmer things. All very vibrant, bright colours; outrageous, so to speak. You know, you've got the chaps that glow in the dark and you've got the glow sticks and the gloves and all that

aspect. As I've come to [where I currently work] it's gone more commercial, they like it toned down, they like glamour costumes, like sequined costumes and more respectable kind of things. With the underground [Hard House] scene it can be taken as a bit overboard, it's all bright and in your face...

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer for a nightclub

Hence, the Funky House and Hard House sectors of the nightclub industry each have an associated image which nightclub dancers are expected to embody through the style and colours of their clothing and accessories. Similarly, Amber explained the differences between her clothing and make-up at nightclubs that played Electro/Funky House and those that played Baseline:

It's mostly like corsets, tutus - but then again it kind of depends on the place that you work. If it's an Electro/Funky house kind of theme you'll wear more funky clothes, like tutus with a bra and really mad hair and mad make-up, that kind of thing. Then if you go to more of a Baseline place then it'll be more street-y.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

Therefore, nightclub dancers' ability to select and wear the right clothing and to apply make-up appropriate for the musical theme of the nightclub is as important as meeting certain less easily changed aesthetic requirements.

Indeed, there is evidence that employers of nightclub dancers do not necessarily recruit 'the most beautiful girls in the world', as Emma put it in the interview extract included earlier, but those who were plain and could be 'tarted up' with the right clothing and make-up so that they can be groomed into embodying the right look:

...to be honest a lot of dancers are fairly plain, but once they're sort of tarted up and combine that with a good personality and lots of good movement and then you've got someone who does look good.

Ian, events entertainment agency manager

He [Barry] said that one of the regular dancers that he has at the club isn't attractive but is still sexy. He said that if you put her in jeans and a t-shirt and no make-up you wouldn't think she was anything special, but when she is dancing she looks great. She has a nice body, she looks fit, bleach blonde hair and her make-up is great.

Extract from fieldnotes made after interview with Barry, nightclub manager

This is indicative of a recruitment strategy similar to that found amongst airline companies (Hochschild, 1983; Tyler and Abbot, 1998) and ‘Elba hotels’ (Witz *et al.*, 2003), whereby employers seek to recruit employees who are actually plainer looking than the ideal employee portrayed in their ad campaigns. In this way they are recruiting individuals who have the *potential* to look like the company ideal and their appearance can be groomed and moulded from this ‘plain’ starting point through grooming training (Witz *et al.*, 2003). Additionally, airline employers expected that cabin crew who fell short of the corporate aesthetic ideal would compensate through working harder to smile more warmly and please passengers (Hochschild, 1983; Tyler and Abbot, 1998). However, there is also evidence that female nightclub dancers who are deemed to be very attractive may be employed almost solely on this basis, regardless of whether they have any particular skill in dancing and performing. The relationship between gender, aesthetic labour and dance and performance skills is explored in more detail later in the discussion. First, the section below considers the strategic sexualisation (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009) of the nightclub industry as this is at the core of nightclub dancers’ aesthetic labour.

‘Sex sells’: strategic sexualisation in the nightclub industry

Warhurst and Nickson (2009) developed the concept of strategic sexualisation to refer to work which is actively sexualised by management as part of a deliberate corporate strategy. They point out that when certain organisations (such as the American restaurant chain ‘Hooters’) prescribe the looks of employees, the desired corporate image is refined “to include the mobilisation, development and commodification of employee sex appeal” (p. 386). The concept of strategic sexualisation incorporates ‘interactive’ aspects involved in producing a sexualised style of service, such as verbal and non-verbal ‘flirting’ with customers. These aspects will be explored in Chapter 6. Here the discussion will focus mainly on the aesthetic aspects of the strategic sexualisation of nightclub dancers. However, it will consider the way in which male and female dancers perform gender (Butler, 1990) through the way that they dance (Aalten, 1997).

Interviews with two nightclub managers provided clear evidence of the way in which the sexualisation of their nightclub dancers was part of a deliberate corporate strategy:

Looks does play a part [sic], I mean the nightclub industry is designed to sell sex, however unfortunately it may be, that is what we are an industry of; it's mainly for single people who come out as groups of people looking for an entertaining night, but who are also basically on the pull ... The image is what we're selling and the idea of sex is what you're selling.

Lee, nightclub manager

You know, sex sells unfortunately, and I'm under no illusion that that's what we do in nightclubs, you know – boy meets girl, girl meets boy, boy meets boy, girl meets girl or whatever – that's what we're selling ultimately – sex – and we have to create that kind of sexy atmosphere. You know, the dancers have to be sexy, girls and boys up there; looking good, good bodies and fit really, you know.

Luke, nightclub manager

Strategic sexualisation, therefore, has a strong influence on decision making in the selection and recruitment of nightclub dancers. One aspect of this is the way in which employers sought nightclub dancers with a particular body shape and embodied 'assets' (i.e. body parts which are the focus of sexual desire), as the two interview extracts below illustrate:

...although it was a general audition for the agency they also had a guy there from the club who was looking to pick out some dancers as well for an ongoing campaign. And I think they definitely were interested in the look, and how you could dance and how you kind of presented yourself, whether you were very aloof or very friendly and approachable ... But I think that he picked me out because I was more curvy. And I think that he said actually he liked my boobs, not because I had them out, but just because I had some, as opposed to a lot of the real dance dancers [at the audition] who were obviously trained very hard and were very skinny.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

Tina: Oh and the boys had to have six-packs

Interviewer: Did they?

Tina: Yeah, the boys had to have them and they had to have socks down their pants and stuff like that.

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer 'on the gay scene'

As the extract above from Tina suggests, a related aspect of strategic sexualisation is the general requirement for nightclub dancers to wear clothing which

displays a lot of flesh and/or enhances the nightclub dancers' 'assets'. For example, the freestyle podium dancer Amber explained that "9 times out of 10 they want you to show a bit of flesh, so you'll either wear a bra or you'll have to wear some hotpants". The amount of skin which nightclub dancers are expected to display means that it is especially important that they pay attention to all areas of the body in their adornment through the use of make-up and fake-tan:

Just generally, you've got to look appealing to other people, haven't you? It's got to be a full face of make-up and everywhere you went you had to have a spray tan, because everything would be out on show - you'd be in a tiny pair of pants and a bra, do you know what I mean? And you'd have to have a nice-ish body, generally a push-up bra on...

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer on the 'gay scene'

However, the amount of emphasis which employers place on nightclub dancers' sexual attractiveness and the level of effort which nightclub dancers are expected to expend on enhancing and maintaining their appearance is interconnected with gender and sexuality. For example, on the one hand, Tina's employer ('Dave Roberts') and his brand were overtly homosexual and at first he only recruited male dancers. Dave Roberts prescribed an appearance for his male dancers that he felt would appeal to the sexual desires of homosexual male nightclub punters. On the other hand, Emily's employer at the audition she discusses above was a heterosexual male who recruited her (seemingly) largely on the basis that he liked her 'boobs'. Hence, there are variations in the extent to which nightclub dancers are 'strategically sexualised' (i.e. recruited on the basis of their sexual attractiveness) depending on the gender and sexuality of the employer and the gender of the nightclub dancer. These factors, then, impact on the relative importance of nightclub dancers' dance and performance skills. This relationship will now be explored in more detail.

'Tits and arse dancers' versus 'mad dancers': the relationship between gender, sexuality and dance/performance skills

In *Gendered Work*, Adkins (1995) argued that appearance had a much greater impact on the selection, recruitment and employment of female staff at the leisure park 'Fun Land' than for male staff. Additionally, at Global Hotel the dress code for female employees was much more detailed and prescriptive than it was for male employees.

Similarly, Tyler and Abbot (1998) pointed out that it was only female cabin crew which had to endure regular weight checks and they generally faced much greater pressure to maintain their sexual attractiveness and a 'polished' appearance than male staff. The interview data suggest that female nightclub dancers are also more likely to be selected and employed based on their sexual attractiveness than male nightclub dancers. As Ian explains below, this is because the majority of nightclub managers are male:

...The majority of people booking nightclub entertainment - which is where these girls [female podium dancers] get most of their gigs - are male. So you can get away with- if you put a girl in who looks really good, that the manager takes a fancy to, it becomes less important how good a dancer she is, I hate to say it, but it does ... If you send someone in who's brilliantly skilled moves wise who doesn't look the part - that's when I've had comments about people not being up to scratch and it's weird to say that ... I've had this conversation so many times 'but she's shit, she's a shit dancer!' and we'd all go 'the point is, the nightclub owners don't care about dancing talent as much as their punters gawping at somebody and they fancy them themselves and they stand there looking at them' and unfortunately, to be perfectly honest, that's what it's like out there ... I've never seen a girl go 'urgh I'm not watching them, he's ugly,' where as you'll get the opposite blokes watching an ugly- not ugly, but a podium dancer that they don't think is up to standard, you know, she's a little bit overweight or something like that and they'll make comments about it.

Ian, events entertainment agency manager

Hence, Ian ensured that he recruited sexually attractive female nightclub dancers to appeal to the desires of the mainly male nightclub managers, who in turn wanted to book female dancers which would keep their male punters 'gawping' and coming back again for more. This means that female nightclub dancers who work for Ian have to be 'up to standard' in terms of their attractiveness and not judged to be 'a little overweight'. As a friend of the podium dancer Kelly put it, 'no-one wants to see a fat dancer':

... I'm trying to do the same thing as the manager; I go for how a girl looks. So obviously, like my friend used to tell me, 'no-one wants to see a fat dancer.' It's a horrible way to put it, but it is true. If you've got an average looking person who's like an amazing dancer, people wouldn't look at her, but if you've got someone who looks the part and is a half decent dancer, she's going to get more attention from the audience, that's just the way it works ...

... If it was up to me it would be dance skill, it really would, because I love watching people who can dance, but obviously the club managers think, if I hire

someone who doesn't fill up the club you've got to get rid of her, it's really hard ... I'd say that would be the hardest thing ever, to tell someone you've got to let them go purely because they don't fit, their face doesn't fit. That's probably the worst confidence knock you could probably take...

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

Kelly says that she would personally prefer to recruit female dancers based on their dance talent, but she has to keep in mind the nightclub manager's corporate strategy; to draw in and retain male punters through the use of female dancers' sex appeal.

This tendency for male nightclub managers to be more interested in the sexual attractiveness of female nightclub dancers than their 'dancing talent' had a direct impact on the recruitment practices of Ian's events entertainment agency. Steve, who was the bookings manager at Ian's event entertainments agency, explained how there was a conflict in the interests of female employees at the agency who liked to see highly skilled and talented dancers and male employees who acted as proxies for the interests of nightclub managers. This meant that they had to ensure that both male and female employees were present at auditions for nightclub dancers to join the agency:

...A lot of the time they [nightclub managers] would much, much rather have girls that can't necessarily dance, and they'll just pose, not wearing very much Mainly, I'm thinking the kind of commercial venues, that we do most of the time ... that's what they go for, they just want people to look good on stage ... Because if you ask say eighty/ninety per cent of a nightclub audience, they won't necessarily know the difference between a really good and a not so good dancer ... because all they see is a pretty person doing some nice moves...

We do have to be very aware of it when we stage auditions ... most auditions we'll have a couple of girls and a couple of guys there [as judges] and there's always a conflict because the girls will be like 'that was an amazing dancer, she was absolutely amazing' and the guys would say 'yeah, she was amazing, but I don't know a nightclub manager in the country who would want to see her on their stage'...

Steve, bookings manager (and fire performer) at an events entertainment agency

In the extract above, Steve notes that it is the managers of commercial (Funky House) venues, in particular, who are more concerned about female dancers' sexual attractiveness than their dance ability. In the earlier discussion on 'looking the part', an interview extract from the podium dancer and agency manager Leon also highlighted

how commercial/Funky House venues were particularly prescriptive with regards to the appearance of female nightclub dancers.

This tendency for nightclub managers to be more concerned about female nightclub dancers' sexual attractiveness than their dance and performance skills has led to the existence of the type of nightclub dancer which Kelly refers to as 'tits and arse dancers'. These are nightclub dancers who 'can't dance' and are 'there basically to just move about and be looked at':

I know one of the podium dancers that I've seen – not to use it as a bad expression – but me and the girls call them 'tits and arse dancers.' Because they're stunning looking girls, perfect, slim, always looking gorgeous with their make-up, but they can't dance. They're just there basically to just move about and be looked at, where as me and the girls – not to sound big-headed or anything – but we can actually dance and do routines.

Kelly, 'lead' podium dancer at a nightclub

Jessica, who worked at the same nightclub as Kelly at the time of the interview, had a lot of experience of this type of dancer where she used to work:

...I used to work with one girl, I don't work with her any more, but she was really, really pretty. But she couldn't really dance. She could move to the music, but she couldn't really dance that well. All of us danced and we'd get all hot and our hair would be like over here and we'd be a bit sweaty, and she would come off the podium and her hair would be like perfect and her make-up would be like perfect ... she was just there to look really pretty ... [The dancers I used to work] with, they kind of had like big boobs and like long hair extensions and stuff and I didn't wear hair extensions and stuff like that ... one of them worked in [the nightclub where I currently work] for a bit, but she got sacked from there because she didn't really dance that well, she would just turn up and pose and stuff.

Jessica, freestyle podium dancer

The former podium dancer and agency manager Leon also discussed a similar type of nightclub dancer as 'not a dancer' and 'not a performer', but 'eye candy'. However, both Leon and Kelly would not employ such dancers. This suggests that while 'tits and arse dancers' may be able to find work in certain commercial nightclub venues, their employability is limited by their lack of dance skills. Indeed, although the nightclub manager that Kelly worked for stressed that 'looks' are important because 'the nightclub industry is designed to sell sex', dance ability was the first criterion he listed when he was asked what he thought made a good nightclub dancer:

Firstly, and as daft as it sounds, they've got to be able to dance, because you'd be surprised at how many there are that can't and there's a vast difference between dancing and professional dancing.

Luke, nightclub manager

Additionally, the freestyle podium dancers Amber and Emily each raised a similar point that female dancers who are very attractive might be too pre-occupied with their appearance to the extent that it could impact negatively upon their dance performance.

The *ideal* female nightclub dancer would, therefore, be one who is sexually attractive and highly skilled in dance and performance. Such dancers would only work for the most prestigious events entertainment agencies or nightclubs that have the reputation and budget to have such high standards, such as the 'Super Bash' venue for which Emma manages the entertainment (discussed previously). However, a *good* female nightclub dancer suitable for average nightclubs is, as Kelly puts it, 'someone who looks the part and is a half decent dancer' rather than someone who is 'average looking and an amazing dancer' or simply a 'tits and arse dancer'. Hence, for female nightclub dancers the emphasis is generally on sexual attractiveness over dance and performance skills. This is largely because most nightclub managers are male and their appreciation, understanding and marketing of nightclub dancers' sex appeal is based on a hegemonic heterosexual male perspective.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there are fewer male than female dancers working in 'straight' UK nightclubs and that the interview data suggest that employers place less emphasis on their sexual attractiveness. Male nightclub dancers are instead expected to have impressive skill in dance and performance. The best example of this is the following extract from the interview with Tina. She had mainly worked 'on the gay scene', but she was also a regular clubber and had occasionally performed podium dance in straight nightclubs:

Interviewer: So other than the six-pack, what do you think makes a good male nightclub dancer?

Tina: Well me personally, obviously a nice-looking one, a nice body ... if you go in a nightclub - a straight nightclub - you don't really see them anyway, but that's normally a boy who's a really mad dancer and really eye-catching, who can really dance. But in the gay scene you've got to look really good. It's all on appearance. That's what I've come across anyway.

Interviewer: So that's interesting, so the male dancers in the straight nightclubs tend to have to be really good dancers?

Tina: Yeah, that's all they really have to be; they don't have to have anything else. But on the gay scene, you're more likely to get a job if you're better looking and a rubbish dancer, then if you're a really good dancer and not so nice looking.

Tina, former podium dancer 'on the gay scene'

Hence, according to Tina, whilst male dancers in straight nightclubs are expected to be 'eye-catching' in terms of having impressive dance and performance skills, male dancers on the gay scene are expected to be eye-catching in terms of their attractiveness; i.e. their sex appeal to male homosexual punters.

The two extracts below from the interview with Ian (events entertainment agency manager) and Sonya (dancer and manager of dancers at Ian's agency) support this claim further:

Interviewer: You mentioned boys as well, what's your sort of male to female ratio of dancers?

Sonya: Very low, there's not much of a call for male podium dancers. They like the breakdancers, a lot of clubs will go for that because it's a bit different and it does get the crowd going. But male podium dancers, I've actually never worked with one, ever ... the male dancers I've worked with are breakdancers and they're their own thing.

Ian: That's more of a macho thing so they can get away with it. In Spain ... or Brazil, you're probably more likely to find a male podium dancer and like I say, Ibiza, there were quite a few out there, but it was mostly girls. Girls don't mind watching girls or boys. Boys will only watch girls, unless they're inclined towards boys.

Interviewer: And what about your male nightclub dancers, like your breakdancers, what sort of criteria do you have?

Ian: I'm not sure if there is a criteria that I could actually- I mean, there's two or three groups of breakdancers and they've all got the same vibe about them, they're quite cool – um, what's the word – geezers.

Sonya: They're all quite laid back, you know, doing their thing

Ian: They just look cool, they just look cool and so the criteria for them is just looking cool and having talent when it actually comes to having lots of different moves and things ...

Interviewer: Would you say it's more important for female dancers to be particularly attractive than male dancers?

Ian: I would, personally speaking I'd say that, that's probably a really narrow-minded viewpoint. But I would say that that's part of- I mean, at the end of the day, the guys throw themselves around and that's more of a spectacle.

In the first extract, Sonya points out that there is little demand for male *podium* dancers and she has never worked with any. There is, however, demand for male breakdancers. These are seen as separate from podium dancers by Ian and Sonya because they have specialised dance skills. They are not employed based on their sexual attractiveness but on how ‘cool’ they look and act, their dance talent in terms of being able to ‘throw themselves around’ and perform a wide range of impressive dance moves and their ability to ‘get the crowd going’. Ian makes the point that breakdancing is ‘more of a macho thing so they can get away with it’. He then adds that whilst ‘girls don’t mind watching girls or boys, boys will only watch girls, unless they’re inclined towards boys’. This suggests that Ian sees *podium dancing* as inherently sexualised and feels that whilst female nightclub punters are happy to watch female podium dancers who are employed on this basis, male nightclub punters would feel that their heterosexuality would be ‘threatened’ by the presence of a male podium dancer. Other data suggest that podium dancers perform gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990) differently through their style of dance:

Obviously men are more masculine when they dance, but essentially it is the same kind of thing. You know, they don’t dance like girls dance because obviously we’ve got to use the bum and so we wiggle them more, but they are still you know, still basically the same.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

I think that the women are a little bit more sexy doing it. With the guys you wouldn’t imagine them dancing down into the splits and stuff, you know it is just kind of, I think that sort of a different side of things. I think that the girls have more of a sexy style and the guys have more of a ‘come on lads lets have it’ kind of style.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer and former podium dancer in nightclubs

This echoes some Aalten’s (1997) discussion of the way in which ballet dancers perform femininity and masculinity through the way they dance. Female podium dancers’ performance is identified as sexualised and geared towards appealing to heterosexual male punters, whereas male dancers have ‘macho’ style is not designed to be ‘sexy’ for female punters but is instead aimed towards getting mainly male punters to dance and enjoy themselves.

However, Emma employed male dancers who she described as breakdancers rather than podium dancers, one of whom was a 'breakdancing champion'. However, although having specialist dance skills was important to her, she also felt that it was important that male dancers were attractive. Additionally, she employed male hosts who she described as 'the sex appeal' for 'the ladies':

I have male dancers that do breakdancing, I've got male hosts that are around, they walk around pretty much in tight shorts, they are the sex appeal really, they are for the ladies which is another thing that we have sort of introduced because you know dancers are mainly girls.

I think that the guys definitely have a look, I prefer them to be very different, like I've got that mixed race guy with the massive hair, I've got a guy with very short hair and really muscley toned but he is a gymnast. All the guys are all really different that I have got, one is a breakdancing champion, he has got a skill...

Yes the guys definitely I think that either the way they look, obviously it is down to how they dance and how they move but the way that they look has a massive influence. I like character and obviously good looking guys.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and entertainment manager at a 'superclub'

Emma also mentioned that she sometimes had her male breakdancers work as hosts, when required. This meant that at times the male nightclub dancers were strategically sexualised to a greater degree than the female nightclub dancers at Emma's nightclub because the sole purpose of the male hosts is 'sex appeal'. However, despite this, the above extracts account for most of Emma's discussion of her aesthetic criteria for male dancers and she was much more prescriptive with regards to her female dancers' appearance, which she discussed at length and in great detail throughout the interview.

However, Kelly, who was responsible for selecting and recruiting dancers at her nightclub, admitted that she recruits male dancers based largely on their sexual attractiveness:

The body, it's the body and the way he looks, it is looks entirely for me. Because we've had boy dancers who can't dance, they can move, but they can't dance entirely; they can't do breakdancing and things like that, they've just got a general rhythm to them, they're not actually specialised in any particular form of dancing, but they look good. It says it all really, women love them. So like,

we've got Richard [pseudonym] now, he's got a six-pack, he's a good-looking boy as well and the women love him, absolutely love him.

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

It is worth pointing out that Richard, who Kelly mentions above, discussed in an interview how he was able to perform a number of breakdancing moves that he learnt using You Tube (see Chapter 4). It also appears that Kelly is judging male dancers' general dance skills against more specialist breakdancing skills, where as she did not judge female dancers' dance skills in this way. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that Kelly actually recruits male dancers that are equivalent to her female dancers in terms of their attractiveness and dance skill; i.e. 'a half decent dancer that looks the part.'

Therefore, in summary, the data suggest that most owners of mainstream (i.e. 'straight') nightclubs are male and their appreciation and marketing of sex appeal is based on a heterosexual male perspective. This means that there is a greater demand for female dancers in nightclubs and more emphasis on their sexual attractiveness in selection, recruitment and employment of female nightclub dancers than male nightclub dancers. Male nightclub dancers are more likely to be recruited based on them having specialised and impressive dance and performance skills. However, female and homosexual employers of nightclub dancers also place an emphasis on the sexual attractiveness of male dancers, meaning that they have similar selection criteria for men and women. Hence, to some degree, all nightclub dancers have to learn to maximise their sexual attractiveness and 'look the part' through the use of clothing, grooming products, diet and exercise.

How do nightclub dancers learn to look appealing?

Interviewer: Is glamour something you could see as almost natural, like embodied, or glamour in the sense of having a particular image, which you can construct?

Kelly: Yeah, I think most of that, people construct it as in people can have hair extensions to make their hair look longer and nicer, they can have boob jobs, they can have as much make-up as they like on their faces, they can wear false eyelashes. Some dancers go to the extent that they are fake, totally and utterly fake and that is glamour. But we're just normal here.

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

The extract from the interview with Kelly above demonstrates the extent to which nightclub dancers can alter their body to look a particular way. In this case, the ‘glamour’ look becomes defined by its obvious fakeness – its false additions and enhancements to body parts. This is an extreme example of one of the particular images which nightclub dancers can construct through their use of all available means of bodily adornment. Kelly described this as a typical look that work in the larger, wealthier city nearby, but not for the dancers at her nightclub – ‘we’re just normal here’. Nightclub dancers have to learn how to construct an image that is suitable for theme and each nightclub that they work in through the use of make-up and clothing. Many nightclub dancers also have to learn how maintain their sexual attractiveness and with much of their body on display this also entails learning to stay in shape on top of the liberal use of fake-tan. The level of agency which nightclub dancers have in the construction of their image varies between employers and also depends on what type of dancer they are. This has consequences for their learning.

Learning to ‘glam up’: hair, make-up and fake-up

When participants discussed what they did and how long they took to get ready for a ‘gig’ (i.e. a paid performance in a nightclub), a common idea that emerged was nightclub dancers are mainly there to be looked at. As discussed previously, there is particular pressure on female dancers to maintain their sexual attractiveness and female dancers have more means available to them of enhancing their appearance that are socially acceptable: make-up, hair extensions, nail extensions, false eyelashes and fake tan (with the exception of the male dancers that work for ‘Dave Roberts’). As one podium dancer - Jessica - put it, ‘with everybody looking at you, you care what you look like a lot’. Jessica explained how she put a lot of effort into her appearance and the other nightclub dancers she worked were expected to do the same:

Our boss usually likes us looking like - I don’t know. Like when I used to work in [the first nightclub I worked in] we had like a meeting, ‘cause one of the girls didn’t really care what she looked like, she didn’t wear much make-up or tan and she didn’t really care about her hair and it didn’t look very good; if you’re like performing and people are looking at you, you have to look good, I guess. So we had to tell her about that and stuff. They like over-the-top things like eyeshadow and eyelashes and glitter and stuff like that.

Jessica, freestyle podium dancer

The quote from Jessica demonstrates one of the main ways in which dancers learn how to make themselves look appealing through their use of hairstyle, make-up and other products. That is, through participation in their community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which collectively identifies what does and does not look good. In this case, a particular dancer was deemed to not be putting enough effort into her appearance because she was not wearing enough make-up or fake tan and was not styling her hair enough/in the right way. The other dancers therefore had to meet with her to inform her of this. This quote also demonstrates how nightclub managers can be quite prescriptive in terms of their dancers' appearance so dancers need to understand what their employers' requirements are in terms of make-up (etc). For example, Jessica states that her employers 'like over-the top things like eyeshadow and [false] eyelashes and glitter' but other employers have different expectations and may not be as specific.

Another aspect of 'being there to be looked at' is being visible and having an appearance that stands out in a dark and crowded nightclub. As Katy explains below, applying lots of make-up and using fake-eyelashes helps with this:

The [fake] tanning and everything, 20 minutes/ half an hour, then you'd need to do your make-up and stuff. It depends on how rushed you want to be and how well you want to do it, maybe even an hour, if you want it really good. But I mean in nightclubs, it's dark, so it helps to apply lots and lots of make-up as well so people can see you, or fake eyelashes. And it depends if you want to be looking more glam. Like in Ibiza and all that, I think they wear a lot of fluorescent colours and big feathery eyelashes and things like that. It depends what they [nightclub managers] want from you.

Katy, pole dance teacher and performer in nightclubs

This demonstrates how the amount and style of make-up (etc) which female nightclub dancers are expected to wear and the degree of flexibility and choice they have in this respect varies between different 'gigs'. Nightclub dancers have to learn about particular styles – such as 'glam', how to apply them and when it is appropriate to use them. Katy has gained knowledge of the 'glam' look through watching Ibiza nightclub dancers, but whether she uses this style depends on what the nightclub managers want and the theme of the event. When nightclub managers do not specify a style for her or that the event

has a particular theme, she still has to ensure that she is wearing enough make-up to highlight her features.

However, Emily pointed out that some new and inexperienced nightclub dancers often wear too much make-up or make-up which is too outrageous because they are trying to stand out when they are applying for jobs. She discussed how the sorts of prestigious nightclubs she worked in required dancers to look ‘pretty and classy’ and she had learnt what this meant through experience and observation of what make-up other nightclub dancers were wearing and not wearing. Nightclub dancers who are new to the profession often make mistakes with their make-up because they have not yet grasped what make-up is appropriate (i.e. makes them look ‘pretty and classy’):

I would say like when girls come out of college ... they are probably experimenting trying to get jobs, trying to stand out and they don't always think about how they should get work. So, they will probably you know make the most mistakes, I guess. But with time yes I guess you know, I mean it's not rocket science, you know you can soon work out if you are wearing this bright burgundy lipstick and bright blue eye shadow is not a good look. No one else is kind of wearing that kind of thing. They [nightclub managers] want you to look pretty and classy and that, but I guess some people's [nightclub dancers] view of what's pretty and classy is different.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

The data suggests that nightclub managers will often specify that there is a theme for an event that the dancer has been booked for and they expect nightclub dancers to know what make-up (etc) is suitable for the type of venue (i.e. its clientele, genre of music and/or décor). Nightclub dancers are, therefore, generally expected to be fairly self-reliant in terms of their knowledge and skill in applying the appropriate make-up and hairstyle. However, one particular employer – Emma, who was also a dancer – had make-up artists and hairstylists that she booked for events at her nightclub. She took inspiration for themed events from different cultural influences and then directed her make-up artists accordingly:

I mean when I do a brief about you know the nights, I will talk about the theme and sometimes it is just as simple as ‘silver’. So like the other week we had the silver fame ball and all night we had like body painting and make up artists and that was all sort of Lady GaGa sort of styles, just had little gloves on and lightening strikes down their faces ... that was what her music tour was called - the Silver Fame Ball Tour - and that was our theme.

Emma, dancer and entertainment manager at a 'superclub'

Additionally, Emma had hairstylists for events and preferred her female dancers to have long hair:

And long hair as well helps as well because ... we have stylists come in and do their hair and stuff, like big wigs and hair dressers that can do all hair designs and the girls mainly do have long hair.

Emma also used make-up, body paint and other products on her male dancers and the male hosts that walked around the nightclub:

The guys [male dancers] that I have, one guy is like a mixed race guy and he's got like massive afro hair and he looks great, you know put a bit of spray in his hair, glitter him up and just like liven him up and he looks interesting, so that's why I book him.

The guys [as hosts] they are the sex appeal, they walk round in pretty much next to nothing, we body paint them silver so that they don't look naked, or we will body paint them gold ... we will brand them up [using skin stencils] and they will just sort of go round and you know they will have pictures with the girls, the girls love it, they enjoy it.

Emma not only wanted to ensure that all her entertainment staff were made-up to correspond to the theme of the event and the nightclub brand. She would have make-up put on the bar staff, too, so that they became part of the entertainment and the theme:

The bar staff get involved with the theme as well. So, I have like the make up artist do like a pattern on their face because really we think that the bar staff have as much influence on a person's night as the dancer would ... so the guys even have like bits of eye liner or like mad things. They didn't like it at first but now they have got used to it. I have found it like character building, 'yes, if you've got this on your face, you become someone else.' You know it just gives them something a bit more to play with and adds a bit more creativity to their role rather than just being a bar staff, you know or just being a glass collector or just been someone that gets people drinks. You're adding to the experience of the clubber by dressing them up as well and it makes their job nicer, like when the girls come in they want to have a bit of make up on, a bit of glitter on their faces they like that, they enjoy it.

In this way, all the staff in the nightclub embodied the theme of the event, a process which Emma had creative control over. All the staff became characters in the 'story' for the night to create a unique experience for punters. The nightclub dancers that worked for Emma did not have to learn how to create different make-up and

hairstyles for the different themed events as this was all done for them by specialist professionals. Additionally, as Emma's dancers were largely exclusive to her, she gradually groomed them to embody the brand image of the nightclub in general.

Nightclub dancers who have more control over their own image also come to embody the style of the types of nightclubs they dance in through their hairstyle and other bodily adornments, particularly those which are less easy to alter last minute. For example, Catherine used to dance at mainly Hard House venues and also had a regular gig at a Rock nightclub and she had a personal preference for the type of music that was played at these venues. However, when she was once booked for a performance in a commercial nightclub that was part of a national chain, she was told on the night that she could not dance because her appearance was 'too funky' for the nightclub:

...one of my friends had a gig there and she wanted me to come and dance with her and on the night I got there and got ready, then I was told that I couldn't go on stage. I was told that I looked too funky for the club and I thought that I looked quite conservative for me. I thought that I didn't go over the top rocky but because of my hair and I had my nose pierced as well then and still have lip piercings and have a tattoo down my side, and they said I was too funky for the club. And I was about to get annoyed and they were like don't worry we are still paying you, so they paid me £100 to drive up and then drive home!

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

Catherine was part of Leon's events entertainment agency. As discussed previously, Leon felt that commercial venues prescribed a stereotypical image for nightclub dancers. The venues which Catherine usually danced in encouraged an image that was more unique and eye-catching. Catherine had developed her own image (which she seemed to have quite a lot of control over) that corresponded to the music that she liked to dance to that was played in such nightclubs. This meant that even though she tried to make her appearance more 'conservative' for the commercial venue, it was not enough because she still retained aspects of her own image which could not be altered last minute. This supports the argument that employers would prefer to recruit 'plain' looking nightclub dancers that can be 'groomed' to have the right appearance for different venues.

Learning to wear the right outfit

The events entertainment agency manager Ian pointed out that the nightclub industry “is extremely shallow and a lot of it is about appearance”. Ian added that this was one of the main reasons that his agency designed and made its own costumes (as well as props) in a purpose built workshop, “because we want it to look good”. Steve, the bookings manager at Ian’s agency, elaborated further:

Well there’s a lot of it that’s not down to a particular dancer, a lot of it’s to do with costume. Costume is really, really important so we try to put out costumes for our dancers because we’ve got a big workshop to make costumes. So we send people out with matching costumes, that makes a massive difference and we’ve noticed that if we see other dance companies out around the country, if we’re performing in the same club or something like that, we’ll look at them and generally be like ‘oh my god, look at their costumes – it looks like their mum made them!’ [Laughing]

Steve, bookings manager (and fire performer) at an events entertainment agency

This is a further example of how nightclub dancers learn what does and does not look good through participation in a community of practice. In this case, when the dancers and other performers that work with Steve poke fun at the poor quality of the costumes of the dancers from other companies, this solidifies their collective ideas about what good costumes should look like. This is similar to the way in which graduate accountants from ‘Western Ridge’ laughed at other ‘second rate’ office workers for having ‘no style’ in the bar after work, reinforcing their ideas about how professional accountants should dress and groom themselves (Coffey, 1993). By laughing at costumes which look like they are made by amateurs (i.e. ‘their mum’), Steve and his colleagues are reinforcing the idea that costumes only look good if they are made by professionals with access to high quality materials. Hence, the dancers learn that if they do not wear professionally made costumes for nightclub performances then they run the risk of looking silly and being laughed at. They then take this knowledge with them to any nightclub dancing work that they do outside of the agency.

However, most of the nightclub dancers that work for Ian’s agency have little choice in what they wear for ‘gigs’. Rather, Ian and his management team decide what the dancers will wear based on their interpretation of the specifications of nightclub managers. These specifications will vary depending on the theme of the nightclub and/or the night for which the dancers are being booked. As Steve suggested, it is

important that the dancers' costumes match, particularly as they often perform choreographed stage routines in a team. Hence, whilst Chapter 4 considered how choreographed stage dancers might have more control over their dance labour than freestyle podium dancers, here it is suggested that choreographed stage dancers have *less control* over their *image* than freestyle podium dancers, in common with ETM instructors (Felstead *et al.*, 2007).

Emma also provides costumes for her dancers for special events which are designed and made by professional costume makers. For example, at the time of the interview she was in contact with a fashion designer that had previously worked at the Clothes Show in London whom she hoped would design some costumes for an upcoming Halloween event at the nightclub. In general, Emma liked to 'dress' her female dancers in 'glamorous outfits':

Emma: ...if you get the idea of a dancer in a normal club they might be wearing like a pair of fishnet tights or you know a mini skirt or a tiny pair of pants and a bra top. And I go in places like that and I hate it, and I hate the style of dancing ... when people think about club dancing that is what they-

Interviewer: Like the picture on the front of the [participant information] leaflet, yeah?

Emma: Yes, where as I like to style my dancers and dress them in, you know ,glamorous outfits, maybe quirky outfits...

Emma's notion of 'glamour' seems to be quite different to that expressed by Kelly earlier in the discussion. She wanted her dancers to wear clothing which made them look distinct from the dancers in other, less prestigious nightclubs. With the help of her specialist costume makers Emma created an image for her team of dancers which corresponded to the theme of the night. Hence, whilst some of the research on exotic dancers highlights the importance of developing a 'gimmick' with a corresponding costume and image (Boles and Garbin, 1974), particularly with regards to male strippers (Dressel and Peterson, 1982), the nightclub dancers that at Ian's agency and Emma's nightclub are not expected or allowed to develop their *own* image as nightclub dancers. Rather, the image of such nightclub dancers is created by specialist professionals who interpret the ideas of the manager on the brand and theme that the dancers will embody.

Other nightclub dancers may not have access to such a wide range of high quality, well-maintained costumes, but have more choice and flexibility in what they wear for gigs. For example, the nightclub where Fiona worked as a podium dancer did not provide costumes, so she and the other dancers would buy bikinis, hotpants, skirts

and accessories from high street shops. They would then meet up in the nightclub before the start of their shift and put the various pieces of new and old clothing together to make outfits:

We're always on the lookout for good outfits or a couple of bits and bobs and stuff like that and we just put them together. When we get there [to the nightclub] we just chuck them about on the floor and go 'oh, that looks good' so we can wear what looks good.

Fiona, freestyle podium dancer

Hence, through legitimate peripheral participation in the collective activity of laying out the pieces of clothing and matching them up to form outfits that all the other dancers agree look good, newcomer nightclub dancers can quickly learn what a good outfit for nightclub dancing looks like and consists of. They can then eventually use this knowledge to partake in the activity of looking out for new items of clothing in high street shops and bringing them into the nightclub to make good outfits. In this way, they move to being full participants in one of the key socio-cultural practices of the community of dancers at the nightclub (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Fiona also mentioned that because two or three dancers performed together on a suspended stage at the same time they also had to ensure that their outfits were coordinated with each other. This meant that although Fiona and the dancers that worked with her had more control over what they would be wearing than the dancers that worked for Ian and Emma (discussed previously), they were still fairly restricted with regards to developing their own individual image through their use of clothing. For example, Rachel, who worked at the same nightclub as Fiona, discussed how she and the other dancers tended to wear a black or white bikini with a bright coloured bikini over the top with matching leg warmers, but would prefer to wear more 'glamorous' and 'glitzy' costumes, if she had the choice. This was partly because she was part of a theatre group and had performed in pantomimes and other production, so she was accustomed to wearing different costumes that were provided for her. However, Richard, the only male dancer at the nightclub, did not have to match his outfit with the other dancers and therefore had more choice and freedom in what he wore for nightclub dancing than the female dancers:

I just wear three-quarter length shorts/combat, sweat bands, hat sideways, dog tags, maybe a vest and trainers, you know, something that looks good. Yeah, that's basically it, so I just wear different colours, like different coloured shorts, something that makes me feel funky, I like wearing the sweat bands.

Richard, freestyle podium dancer

Richard's choice of clothing is clearly influenced by the 'street' style clothing which breakdancers often wear as this was one of the main types of dance he used in his set.

In common with Richard, other nightclub dancers in the sample had some ability to develop their own image through their clothing, although this often varied between different 'gigs'. For example, some of the more prestigious nightclubs which the freestyle podium dancer Emily worked in provided costumes, which she found made it easier for her because she did not have to think about what to wear. Other nightclubs did not provide costumes but were very prescriptive about what she should wear. However, some allowed her enough freedom of clothing choice to allow her to develop her own image as a nightclub dancer. Emily considered her TV and film acting as her main vocation and so her style of clothing was influenced by some of the clothing that she had worn for certain roles:

I have done actually Bollywood [i.e. acted in Bollywood films] ... and I guess that has influenced kind of my style for when I get up and start dancing really because I have got lots of different pieces of clothes that I will pick between when I need to work. Bollywood is very flamboyant and very colourful and I think that works...

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

Another nightclub dancer that had the opportunity to develop her own image through her clothing choice was Catherine. She worked for an agency which was involved in promotional work for the clothing brand Cyberdog (which specialises in neon and light-up clothing for clubbers on the underground dance scene) and was also sponsored by the clothing brand Punky Fish for a period. As the agency had a strong reputation on the underground dance scene, these clothing companies would provide outfits for the dancers to wear for nightclub performances. However, when Catherine was not required to wear sponsored clothing, she created an image for herself using particular items and colours of clothing:

We were sponsored by Punky Fish for a while as well and so we used to get new clothes when we turned up and sometimes they were suitable and other times they weren't ... but generally I kind of mark myself for wearing red, I have got my favourite black knee high boots, they've got big red flame down the side and I very much go for red and black.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

Catherine used to have a regular gig as a pole performer in a Rock nightclub, so red and black coloured clothing were particularly well suited to this venue and its music. However, her image also reflected her personal passion for Rock music. The male nightclub dancers she worked with also had the opportunity to develop their own image through their clothing choice, although Catherine highlighted how male dancers have fewer options than female dancers with regards to clothing that helps the dancers to 'stand out' (which she felt was important for both female and male dancers). This is because there was a risk of male dancers misrepresenting their sexuality through choosing the wrong clothing:

Outfits for guys can be quite difficult because sometimes if you are not gay then sometimes you could look gay; it's about trying to find those outfits that are kind of bright, eye catching, stand out, but without being anything that you are not...

...bright pink may look good on a girl, but if a guy comes in wearing that it might not look what they want to look like. I mean, one of the guys who I used to dance with he *was* gay and his outfit just screamed out 'gay', but it was fun because that was who he was. Someone else, I don't know how he managed to do it all the time, but he used to find these cyber-goth type outfits and they were really good and they were sort of quite masculine but they really stood out as well, so that was good.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer
and former podium dancer in nightclubs

Catherine seemed have quite a lot of control over what she wore for nightclub dancing. This was particularly the case when she was pole performing and she had to make sure that her outfit was suitable for performing upside-down pole tricks. For example, she could not wear a skirt because it would slip. She pointed out that in comparison to the other dancers her outfit would therefore be 'a bit boring because it would have to be easy to dance in'. However, she felt that she would 'make up for it'

with her ability to perform impressive pole tricks. Similarly, the pole performer and teacher Katy explained that for clothing for pole performing ‘anything dangly is not good, because you’ll just rip it off or it’ll get stuck and when you’re doing a move, so it needs to be simple, but pretty.’ Additionally, she pointed out that pole performers need to have a certain amount of skin exposed to help them to grip the pole (see Holland, 2010, for a discussion of this requirement):

Most of the time, with pole dancing, believe it or not, the less clothes you wear the more you stick, so hot pants and bra ... pretty things are best, but the minimum clothes you wear the better.

Katy, pole dance teacher/co-owner of pole school/events
entertainment agency and pole performer in nightclubs

Katy felt that high heeled shoes or thigh-high boots are required for pole performing, although Holland (2010) suggests that the pole dancing community in general is divided on whether high heels are essential for performing pole tricks. In another part of the interview she mentioned that if there was a theme for the night she was booked for that she would dress for the theme. However, it generally seems that the pole performers in the study have more control over what clothing they wear than podium dancers, partly because they are being booked specifically for their ability to perform impressive tricks on the pole. As pole performers charge a higher fee than podium dancers for their unique skills, it would not be in nightclub managers’ interest to specify that they wear any clothing that might restrict their ability to perform pole tricks.

Conversely, some of the podium dancers in the study reported that the outfits which they were expected to or were specifically instructed to wear often restricted their ability to dance to their full potential. For example, Tina – a former freestyle podium dancer on the gay scene – said that she ‘had to wear really high shoes’, unless she was going to be on stage for a particularly long time. The freestyle podium dancer Emily found that wearing high heels restricted her movements somewhat and made it particularly difficult to dance properly to up-tempo Dance music. Indeed, if Emily was asked to wear trainers for a gig she would take this as a signal that she would be expected to dance with extra energy and vigour:

...what kind of clothes they want me to wear so that will dictate, you know, if they want you to wear very high heels, which is often the case, and you are on a

little platform, then your dance is tailored by that really. If they want you in trainers, then it is more likely that they want more full-on dancing.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

Additionally, whilst pole performers in the study felt that it was important to have a lot of skin exposed to help them to grip the pole, podium dancers reported that the revealing outfits they were usually expected to wear often made them feel uncomfortable, self-conscious and not as confident as they would if they were wearing more clothing. As Amber explains below, this could have a negative effect on their dancing:

Amber: 9 times out of 10 they want you to show a bit of flesh, so you'll either wear a bra or you'll have wear some hotpants. So showing a bit of flesh, that's the only thing I don't like sometimes, especially if you're having a bloaty-belly day, but you have to really, you have to.

Interviewer: So kind of showing a bit of flesh comes as part of the job?

Amber: Yeah. That's the problem, because ... I'm not skinny at all; I've got like a little belly on me and curves and everything like that, and it's horrible because ... if I was covered up I'd dance a lot better, but because you have to show [a bit of flesh], you don't feel as confident.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

Podium dancers, therefore, found ways of accessorising their skimpy outfits so that they could *feel* more covered-up whilst still appearing that they were showing enough flesh to meet the demands of nightclub managers. One strategy was to use stretchy opaque/meshed material to partially conceal those parts of their body which they felt most self-conscious about. For example, Jessica makes little tops from tights to cover her chest and arms, whilst her colleagues were more concerned about covering their stomachs:

Sometimes, I don't like really wearing bikinis and stuff; I don't really like wearing that. Like my sister and some of the other girls - some costumes show your stomach and stuff and they don't like showing their stomachs ... you can buy material and stuff to cover your stomach. I don't really mind that [showing my stomach], but I make little tops out of tights and stuff, because I don't really like just wearing shorts and a bra.

Jessica, freestyle podium dancer

This suggests that Jessica and her colleagues have some knowledge of textiles and skill in sewing. Indeed, a number of the nightclub dancers in the study who were not provided with costumes by their employers mentioned that they customised their clothing in various ways. For example, the freestyle podium dancer Amber discussed how she would buy her clothing (such as corsets) for nightclub dancing from ordinary high street shops and add bits of fabric and trim to make it more unique and eye-catching.

Similarly, when Emily was provided with or was expected to wear a revealing outfit her response was to accessorise it with jewellery and also have her hair done so that she felt less 'vulnerable' and 'naked'.

You are going to have to get up there and dance with everyone looking at you and so if you are not confident in what you're wearing then you're not going to look very good anyway. So you have to be confident, I have to feel good in what I'm wearing ... I think that it's kind of like if you add to an outfit, then you don't feel as naked either, so lots of jewellery and your hair done and lots of accessories can make you feel not so vulnerable I guess, and naked ... [It's] more of a costume [then].

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

The way in which Emily used accessories to her feel less 'naked' and other dancers such as Tina applied fake tan 'because everything would be out on show' has some similarities with the experiences of the exotic dancer Frank (2002, in Wolkowitz, 2006). As discussed in the Literature Review, Frank took great care over every detail of her appearance when she prepared for dancing naked on the outdoor patio of a strip club. However, she did not feel as naked as she would appear:

Naked? No. I am a performer, as fully clothed as anyone here, even without my bikini, if only through my painstaking ministrations to the 'costume' of my bare body.

(Frank, 2002, in Wolkowitz, 2006: 139)

Even the most scantily clad podium dancers are not 'naked' to the same degree as strippers and lap dancers, but without the right amount of accessories and bodily adornment they could potentially feel more naked and exposed. However, as suggested by Emily's point about 'having a fat day', the skimpy outfits which nightclub dancers

are often expected to wear can be a source of anxiety about their body shape. Coupled with more direct external pressures from their managers, nightclub dancers quickly learn how to manage their diet and activity in order to not only appear slim but also *feel* slim and confident when they are performing in skimpy garments.

Learning to stay in shape

As suggested in the first half of this chapter, employers are often seeking dancers with a particular body shape and this usually entails being slim. Upon obtaining employment, nightclub dancers quickly learn that they are expected to maintain their weight in order to remain employed. The data suggest that some employers are direct in their approach to discourage dancers from gaining weight. A good example of this is provided by Kelly:

Kelly: ...it's all about image, you've got to look the right way and you've got to be a certain size, and it's not very nice in that respect ... I have had club managers tell me I'm too fat and I need to lose weight when I'd put a bit of weight on over Christmas. I'm a size 8, and they tell me things like that. People knock your confidence a bit, but at the end of the day it's their club, it's their reputation basically.

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

Kelly feels that nightclub managers are somewhat justified in regulating nightclub dancers' weight because she perceives that if nightclub dancers are judged to be 'too fat' then this would reflect negatively on the 'reputation' of the nightclub managers and their nightclub. However, what is 'too fat' in this context is anything above a size 8, which was also the upper limit suggested by the former freestyle podium dancer Tina.

Hence, being a size 8 or below is seen as the norm for female nightclub dancers. This norm is enforced by managers and nightclub dancers quickly internalise it. The clearest example of this is provided by Emma:

...because of the outfits that they wear lots of the time they have got their bellies out, and if they are a bit chubby round the midriff then, you know, it's not great. I prefer the girls to look toned and fit, they have to look fit. There are times where I have had girls that have been really good, yet you know like anybody a girl's weight fluctuates all the time and this one girl ... I hadn't booked her for ages as she had been away, and she came back and she had put a lot of weight

on. And I had to say to her ‘look, you know, I’m not trying to be detrimental to your personality or you at all but I can’t book you in until you have lost a little bit of weight, got back in the gym’. You have to be really careful though. It is a very, very sore subject but most of the girls that I have working here are my friends anyway and she did take that well, she was like ‘I know, I know I need to get back into the gym’. She came back, you know. I don’t like the girls to look like stick thin, I like them to look toned and strong and it is not about how thin they are; they have to look like they are in shape and they have to be in shape.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and entertainment manager at a ‘superclub’

Hence, in addition to being physically fit in order to have the stamina required for nightclub dancing (as was discussed in the previous chapter), this quote from Emma suggests that it is the norm for dancers at the club to *look* ‘toned’ and ‘in shape’ and to manage their weight through regular visits to the gym. A nightclub dancer that transgresses this norm is likely to find that they are no longer being booked to dance at the club. This would be unlikely to go unnoticed by the other dancers at the nightclub, considering the extent to which Emma referred to them as a ‘team’ throughout the interview. The policing of such transgressions, therefore, further reinforces the notion that *all* nightclub dancers need to maintain a slim and toned body to look good and to be allowed to perform at the club. Hence, being slim and toned is a condition of employment for Emma’s dancers. Indeed, according to Emma, the dancer concerned had already internalised this norm because she knew that she needed to ‘get back in the gym.’

There was evidence from the accounts of some nightclub dancers that participated in the study that they had internalised the norm that all dancers should be skinny. These dancers explained how they carefully managed what they ate in order to stay slim but also to *feel* slim. The data therefore tend to support Budgeon’s (2003) notion of the body as a lived process rather than as a project. For example, Samantha felt making sure that she did not put on too much weight was part of her job and so she had to watch what she ate in general, as well as doing exercise outside of dancing:

Interviewer: On this idea of maintaining yourself then, you mentioned about making sure that you don’t put on too much weight, do you do this through exercise or have you ever gone on diets or anything?

Samantha: You definitely just saw me eat a big doughnut! [laughter] Um, I could be skinnier if I didn’t eat but then, I actually enjoy eating, so why would I want to stop eating. I *do* do other exercise, but in the busy season you get so

toned and the weight just drops off you, just because we're dancing all the time. But yeah, I do try to eat healthy, I don't just eat doughnuts all day long, that was just a one off [laughter]

Interviewer: I'm not scrutinising your eating!

Samantha: I did have a go at those biscuits earlier as well, but like, you do have to watch what you eat to an extent. Like you can't eat McDonald's everyday, you know, you have to limit things like that, but I think any sensible person does that anyway. I'm not going to sit here and say 'ooo, I'm not eating, it's so depressing' because then I just wouldn't enjoy my life. I do sit and moan that I'm fat but that's just me being a girl. I know in my head I'm not fat, I just like to say it. But definitely on the podium you don't realise how much exercise you're getting and you must burn a lot of calories, I don't know how much it is, but you must burn a lot of calories doing it...

Like the young women in Budgeon's (2003) study, Samantha normalises the feeling of dissatisfaction with one's body image as something which is experienced by all young women ('I do sit here and moan that I'm fat but that's just me being a girl'). Additionally, Samantha says 'I could be skinnier if I didn't eat', suggesting that being skinnier would be a normal and ideal body shape for her as a nightclub dancer. Although Samantha admits that she knows that she is not fat, the way in which she draws attention to the sweet snacks she has eaten in the day suggests that she is keeping a mental checklist so as not to eat too much. However, this may also be part of her performance of 'girl' in addition to her complaining about being fat.

Other dancers were particularly concerned with carefully managing what they ate on the days when they had a 'gig'. For example, the freestyle podium dancer Fiona said that she would usually eat more in the morning than she usually would when she was going to be dancing at the nightclub in the evening. She explained that this was because she did not want to *feel* bloated when she was dancing. However, as the quote from Amber suggests below, *feeling* bloated may also be connected to a perception that one *looks* bloated:

Amber: Yeah if I'm dancing I don't have any tea, just because it makes you feel bloated. Yeah, you do because you don't really want to eat anything because you know you're going to have your stomach out and that and I've got a really sensitive stomach, if I eat anything it takes a while [to go down]. And then because you're working 'til like stupid o'clock in the morning you're not having anything to eat, you're just drinking or having like Red Bull or something. It's not very good for you really.

Interviewer: So have you ever had a moment where your blood sugar's got a bit low before?

Amber: Yeah. I did this festival ... and I had to be there at 10 o'clock in the morning and I danced until 12 o'clock at night doing like a set of gigs and I

literally had- I've never felt anything like it, I was just dead and I couldn't move. And you just drink a load of Red Bull because you don't want to eat because you're going to be dancing, and like I hadn't had hardly anything all day. And then I had to drive home and I was just crying all the way home because I just hadn't got any energy and my eyes were just like this [gestures tired eyes]. And the thing is as well, some gigs ... you have to be there like an hour before, you have to. And sometimes you have to skip a meal or you have to make do with stopping at the services. It's really bad for you really, because you have to do what they say they want you to do.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

Hence, in order to avoid feeling bloated and perceiving that her stomach is protruding whilst dancing in revealing clothing, Amber had to learn to ignore her body's signals of pain from hunger and over-exertion on an empty stomach. This has similarities with the findings from Aalten's (2007) study on ballet dancers, many of whom ate little and had problematic relationships with food and their body.

However, none of the participants admitted to having eating disorders. The freestyle podium dancer Fiona noted that some dancers she had worked with 'took it to extremes' in terms of their eating behaviours, such as one dancer she knew who 'only ate sweets'. Sweets would serve a similar purpose to Amber's drinking of Red Bull in terms of providing glucose energy but with little substance that might fill one's stomach and cause it to protrude. Richard was the only dancer who specifically discussed how he was on a controlled diet. This was nutritionally balanced and involved eating small amounts every two hours, which meant that he never felt full. Richard made use of the internet and men's health magazines to research different diets. As mentioned in chapter 4, Richard explained this in terms of being part of a generally healthy and active lifestyle that improved his fitness and confidence when he was dancing, rather than in terms of improving or maintaining his body shape. However, his employer at the nightclub – Kelly – specifically mentioned Richard's six-pack as a desirable attribute and another dancer at the nightclub – Fiona – mentioned how Richard took his shirt off during his performance that she once saw. This suggests that Richard's fitness and diet may also be geared towards looking in shape as well as feeling in shape.

Conclusion

‘Looking the part’ is seen as a key criterion for many employers of nightclub dancers. This entails generally conforming to stereotypical notions of physical attractiveness but also having an appearance that encapsulates the aesthetic ideals of the nightclub or events entertainment agency brand. The desired look varies between different employers and sectors of the nightclub industry and the evidence suggests that the Commercial/Funky House sector of nightclubs put a greater emphasis on nightclub dancers’ attractiveness than the Underground/Hard House sector. Indeed, the Commercial/Funky House sector was argued to be based around the ‘strategic sexualisation of nightclub dancers, whereby their sex appeal is prescribed and mobilised as part of a deliberate corporate strategy (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009). As most nightclub managers are male, this means that female dancers in particular are recruited based largely on their sexual attractiveness. Female nightclub dancers are expected to wear skimpy outfits and they face additional pressures to have and maintain a body shape and overall appearance that is deemed to be sexually appealing.

In common with some service sector workers, nightclub dancers are not only recruited based on their actual ‘natural’ attractiveness but also their potential to look the part through the use of clothing and make-up. Some nightclub dancers are literally groomed to have the desired appearance through the provision of professionally made costumes and hair and make-up artists. Such dancers learn that they will not look good unless their image is left in the hands of such professionals. These dancers are more likely to work at prestigious nightclubs - like ‘Super Bash’ and some of those which the freestyle podium dancer Emily worked at, or a successful agency like Ian’s which recognises the importance of appearance and high quality, matching costumes. Wearing matching costumes is particularly for dancers that perform choreographed stage routines or freestyle podium dancers like Fiona who dance in close proximity to other podium dancers. Freestyle podium dancers who dance at less prestigious nightclubs tend to have a little more control over their image but still have to learn to adapt their style of clothing and make-up to correspond with the theme and sector of nightclub – Underground/Hard House or Commercial/Funky House. Nightclub pole performers have to wear clothing which is practical for performing pole tricks and as they usually dance as individuals they tend to have the most control over their image. In general,

nightclub dancers learn to look appealing mainly through participation in a community of practice (Lave Wenger, 1991) which collectively identifies what does and does not look good.

Chapter 6

Emotional Labour and Learning to Perform Like a Professional

Introduction

The previous two chapters examined the skills which nightclub dancers require to be proficient in dance labour and aesthetic labour and how they learnt them. This chapter will explore what skills and attributes nightclub dancers require for performing *emotional labour* (Hochschild, 1983) and how these skills are learnt. Emotional labour is defined as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (p.7) and its commodification as labour power. One of the main reasons that nightclub dancers are ‘booked’ is to help create and/or enhance ‘the atmosphere’ of a nightclub and emotional labour is a key component of this. This emotional labour is performed on different ‘stages’ that constitute a nightclub dancer’s work environment which includes relations with managers and co-workers.

Drawing on Goffman’s dramaturgical analogy, Murphy (2003) argues that exotic dancers (strippers/lap dancers) perform on three stages: on the centre stage (for the customers), the organisational stage (for their manager) and the private stage (for their families, friends and the public outside of stripping). For example, on the centre stage, the exotic dancers in Murphy’s study performed a ‘counterfeit intimacy’ to manufacture a believable relationship with customers in order to make more tips. On the organisational stage, exotic dancers manufacture lies and use their sexuality to avoid the repercussions of breaking rules set by management. On the private stage, many exotic dancers have to keep their occupation secret from family, friends and others outside of their occupation to avoid the associated stigma. For example, they use defensive strategies to maintain their secret identity such as ambiguously telling people that they are dancers or they work in a bar. The interview data from nightclub dancers and their employers suggest that in order to be successful in obtaining and retaining regular employment, nightclub dancers must demonstrate that they are good performers on centre and organisational stages.

Participants' accounts suggested that nightclub dancers do not experience societal stigma, therefore they did not have to perform on the private stage like the exotic dancers in Murphy's (2003) study. Some participants reported that they were sometimes faced with misconceptions about what they do from friends and members of the public. For example, nightclub dancers may get labelled as strippers/lap dancers and this means that they may find themselves using similar defensive strategies to the exotic dancers in Murphy's (2003) study. As the quote below from Katy demonstrates, this is a particular problem for pole performers:

How would I say it? Because it is difficult to say I'm a pole dancer to other people, isn't it? Because people put a stigma on it, straight away they say 'oh she's a lap dancer' you know ... but if someone came up to me and said 'what do you do?' I would say yeah, 'I'm a performer' or 'I'm a dancer' I tend to just say I'm a dancer in a club, unless they ask me more and then I tell them. But, yeah, you try not to say you're a pole dancer.

Katy - pole dance teacher, performer and co-manager of a pole school/events entertainment company

Some podium dancers, such as Emily, also felt that some people have 'expectations' about what she does that 'can be wrong'. Hence, as she perceived that strippers have a tendency to be deliberately vague in describing what they did (which is supported by the evidence from Murphy's study), this meant that she had to be very clear that she was a 'podium dancer' and 'not a stripper'

Interviewer: What do people outside of club dancing think generally about that sort of work?

Emily: Mixed, I think. I think that some people might think that you are selling your soul or you are just dancing for men. Some people might think that you are a tart and you like a lot of attention. Other people might think that you are really confident, or they really want to do it and how do they get working there ... I think people have expectations maybe of what a club dancer does and sometimes that can be wrong, sometimes it's too much.

Interviewer: Do you ever get people really confusing what your role is as a dancer?

Emily: Yes I think, I mean I always say that I am a club dancer, or a podium dancer and I would say not a stripper because I think that some people might think that if you are dancing in clubs in London then you are a stripper, so I kind of say that I am not. So I find myself doing that, kind of defending it a bit ... [because] someone might not volunteer if they're just a stripper, they just say 'I'm a dancer in London clubs, I work in a club in London,' and the hours and things might be similar.

The way in which Emily emphasises she is not a stripper has similarities with the discursive strategies which ‘exotic dancers’ have been reported to use to manage the stigma they face from society (Rambo Ronai and Cross, 1998; Bott, 2006; Barton, 2007). For example, topless exotic dancers in Rambo Ronai and Cross’ (1998) study would label nude dancers as ‘sleazy’ and nude dancers would label dancers dancers that allowed bodily contact as sleazy. Similarly, the British migrant lap-dancers in Tenerife studied by Bott (2006) distanced themselves from Eastern European lap-dancers who they labelled as ‘prostitutes’ to disassociate themselves with this label.

However, nightclub dancers did not have to perform on the private stage in order to be successful in their occupation. Rather, discursive strategies were used mainly to help prevent acquaintances and other members of the public who did not know the nightclub dancers well from immediately mislabelling them as strippers and/or spending a lot of time and effort explaining what they do as nightclub dancers. Indeed, when nightclub dancers were asked what their friends and family thought about their job, the overwhelming response was positive. For example, one nightclub dancer – ‘Samantha’, said that her parents were proud of her and her work as a nightclub dancer and the former podium dancer Tina said that her friends thought her job was ‘brilliant’ and they wanted to do it themselves. Therefore, the discussion in this chapter will focus only the skills and learning involved in proficient performance on the centre and organisational stages. The first part of this chapter explores the nature of these performances and what skills are required for them. It suggests that employers seek to recruit nightclub dancers who are ‘confident’ and have the right ‘personality’ and ‘attitude’ for interacting with nightclub punters, other dancers and managers. However, it considers these apparent ‘character traits’ as actually performed through management of emotions in the same way in which nightclub dancers portray to nightclub punters that they are ‘loving it’. The second part of this chapter examines how nightclub dancers learn to manage their emotions in order to perform like professionals.

What makes nightclub dancers good performers?

Performing on the centre stage

In order to be considered as good performers on the centre stage, nightclub dancers need to be able to demonstrate that they can interact with nightclub punters in the right way. On the physical stage/podium, this usually requires the use of eye contact to make a connection with audience members. ‘Confidence’ is seen as a key personality attribute required for this. However, nightclub dancers did not think of themselves as confident people, but were able to portray that they were on stage. This was also connected to their ability to convince the audience that they are ‘loving it’. These skills will be considered separately below.

‘Crowd interaction’

Participants discussed how the ability to ‘interact’ with nightclub punters was a key aspect of being a good nightclub dancer. Much of this interaction is non-verbal as it takes place when the dancer is separated from the nightclub punters on a physical stage, podium or other designated performance area. In addition to this, some nightclub managers require nightclub dancers to engage in direct face-to-face verbal and non-verbal interaction with nightclub punters in various spaces in and around the nightclub.

With regards to their performance on the physical stage/podium, this generally meant making eye-contact with audience members. For example, ‘interaction’ was one of the three main selection criteria Leon used when recruiting new nightclub dancers for his agency (the other two were ‘style’ and ‘stamina’). Leon’s agency recruited some nightclub dancers through dance competitions at live club nights (as well as ‘traditional’ style auditions in empty nightclubs outside of opening hours). This helped him and his team leaders to assess how well the dancers interacted with the audience and ‘how the crowd responded to them’. In the extract below, Leon explains what he means by ‘interaction’:

...in the dancing competitions for instance, they catch eyes with someone and someone on the dance floor will go ‘whey!’ and they acknowledge it ... it’s acknowledging people ... it doesn’t alienate – it just shows you’re normal,

you're all having a wicked time ... that was what we deemed as interaction, rather than just sort of show-boating...

Leon, former podium dancer and events entertainment agency manager

Hence, for Leon, making eye-contact and 'acknowledging people' helps the audience to feel included and that everyone in the nightclub is sharing in the enjoyment of the experience.

Similarly, for the nightclub manager Lee, a successful nightclub dancer was one who would interact 'with customers as we would like them to'. Whilst they are dancing on the stage or podium, this entails getting 'the crowd involved in what they are doing' in some way. This could be simply making eye contact with audience members or actual audience participation in the performance:

Lee: A successful dancer on the night is someone who actually gets the crowd involved in what they are doing ... We had two young lads who used to do some breakdancing dance-offs on the stage and the customers would basically be separated into 2 separate groups, one for one dancer, one for the other dancer, so on and so forth. So the dancers would interact with the crowd on their side, shouting and hollering, basically cheering them on.

Interviewer: So from your point of view is the kind of interaction with the crowd that's quite important?

Lee: It's very, it is a key aspect and there is no point in having a dancer who is not going to look at customers, not going to interact with them ... we're in the idea of entertainment and that's what we are all about.

Interviewer: Yes, so proper entertainment then, with a big E if you like.

Lee: Exactly.

Interviewer: So what's the worse kind of nightclub dancer for you then?

Lee: The worse kind of nightclub dancer is someone who's not very outgoing. Someone who's not confident - it really shows in a dance set, someone who is not confident you can definitely tell compared to someone who is, especially when obviously they are dressing up all the time in different uniforms, different outfits to go with the stage shows which we are doing. Not interacting with the customers as we would like them to. We have our dancers on the champagne reception serving out champagne so they get to know the customers before they actually do the stage shows and so they can have photographs taken and things like that and a lot of the people who aren't confident won't go for that.

Lee, nightclub manager

The quote above illustrates that Lee also required his dancers to 'get know the customers' by serving champagne to them as part of the champagne reception which would be a feature of most event nights at the club. For Lee, being confident and

outgoing are key personality attributes which nightclub dancers require for interacting with customers on the stage/podium and during the champagne reception.

Some employers may require a different type of crowd interaction between nightclub dancers and punters. Chapter 5 explored how nightclub dancers are recruited based on their sexual attractiveness because nightclubs are 'strategically sexualised', whereby they utilise and mobilise nightclub dancers' sex appeal as part of a deliberate corporate strategy (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009). Here, it is suggested that this strategic sexualisation also manifests itself in the way in which nightclub dancers are encouraged by some employers to engage in non-verbal flirting with audience members:

...It's also the connection they make with the crowd. So obviously, if you've got a man dancing in front of you dancing, half-naked and he's looking at you and he's flirting with you, you're going to look back; so the connection you make with crowd is a big thing as well...

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

Although Kelly is referring specifically to male dancers in this extract, she also thought that female nightclub dancers should flirt with audience members in this way too. This has similarities with the way in which the exotic dancers in Wood's (2000) study glanced at customers in a way that suggested that there was 'something going on' between the two of them (p. 18). Exotic dancers who were able to do this made more money in the form of tips than dancers who could not. However, nightclub dancers do not receive tips from customers.

Performing confidence

The nightclub manager Lee quoted above pointed out that a lack of confidence 'really shows in dance set'. However, as Emily suggests in the interview extract below, this does not necessarily mean that the dancer has to necessarily feel entirely confident or be considered as having an outgoing personality in general, as long as they can *perform confidence*:

Emily: ...I think that confidence is really key.

Interviewer: Do you think that confidence is something that you always had from a background in performing?

Emily: Well I mean when I say confident, you don't have to be a confident person in day to day life but I think that when you get up there you have to *appear confident* ... a lot of dancers might be quite quiet and they might not be the confident people in normal circumstances but when you get up there to dance people are going to look at you and so you can't be uncomfortable with people looking at you.

Interviewer: Yes, so it is almost like making it look like you are confident.

Emily: Yes, you have to appear confident whether you are or not.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer (emphasis added)

Similarly, Jessica suggests that an 'outgoing' personality is performed:

Interviewer: What do you think makes a good female dancer?

Jessica: I think personality's a big thing in it because if you are outgoing and you're happy and you look like you're enjoying your job, then it kind of comes out in your performance. And confidence, I think that's a really big thing because if you're shy then it shows.

Jessica, freestyle podium dancer

Jessica also suggests that looking 'like you're enjoying your job' is connected the performance of confidence. This supported from the following quote from Amber:

You could be a really good dancer and not be confident and it can make it look like you're not enjoying yourself. But if you show that you love what you do and you don't care what anybody else thinks, it'll make you look better.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

This suggests that feeling nervous or having a lack of self-confidence is not problematic as long as it does not affect nightclub dancers' ability to show that they 'love' what they do. The next section explores the ability of dancers to convince the audience that they are enjoying themselves, whether they are or not.

'Loving it'

Participants highlighted nightclub dancers' ability to portray that they are having a good time whilst they are dancing on the stage/podium as being an important aspect of being a good performer. The former podium dancer and events entertainment agency

manager Leon expressed how it was particularly important that nightclub dancers are able to convince the audience that they are *genuinely enjoying* themselves. Such emotion would have to be read in the nightclub dancer's eyes to be perceived as genuine:

...this is what does it for me; this is what gives you the x factor, right: the eyes. You can just see they're just loving it, you can see it on their faces it's like 'yeaahh!' and it's like 'come on!' ... and you see those and you're like 'wow, they love it so much!' and you just want to go for it ... that is the key thing, that's what I think ... makes a performer, because if they don't look like they're loving it, like they're having it, then you aren't going to make me dance, you just look like you're standing there doing you're thing – 'yeah, wait until it's over, I'll get my money, fuck off,' you know what I mean? And yeah, you've got to love it, you've got to see the love, 'cause you can tell when you go round the dance floor and you've got some people who are dancing like complete idiots ... And people start having it and that's a beautiful thing and this has to be good, see; I love it, I can just see it going off now. I am there. I am there.

Leon, former podium dancer and events entertainment agency manager

Hence, it does not matter whether a nightclub dancer is displaying their actual feelings or is 'deep acting' and bringing their feelings in line with what is expected of them (Hochschild, 1983), as long as the emotional display is perceived as authentic and punters can 'see the love'. The aim of all this is to encourage the nightclub punters to dance: if nightclub dancers look like they are 'loving it' and 'having a wicked time' (see the previous quote from Leon), then punters will want to dance to share in these positive emotions. Kelly explains this further:

...get people dancing and once people start dancing, the night is young then! ... when you got into a nightclub and no-one's dancing, the atmosphere is rubbish, you're not going to enjoy yourself. If you've got one person egging you on and you've got the dancers going and you've got a couple of people on the dance floor going for it, it's an all better atmosphere and a better night at the end of the day. We're generally there just to pick the atmosphere up and get people enjoying themselves. We are quite needed in that club, it's boring without us!

...if you look grumpy, someone's going to say 'ooo, look at her up there, grumpy cow,' but if you're smiling they can see you're enjoying it and it passes on towards them then as well, they just end up enjoying it and getting into it.

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

Creating an ‘atmosphere’ and encouraging punters to dance and enjoy themselves is one of the ways in which nightclubs can compete with other nightclubs and late bars/pubs on the quality of the experience that they have on offer, rather than the price of drinks (Mintel, 2006). Indeed, Emma, the entertainment manager at ‘Superbash’, was clear and explicit about this selling point:

You know our job is to help make people have a good party and have an experience rather than just come into a club to get drunk. That is definitely what Superbash bases itself on, the experience ... it’s all a very positive sort of atmosphere, I think.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed)
and entertainment manager at a ‘superclub’

However, whilst it seems that most employers of nightclub dancers wanted them to make eye-contact with customers and smile a lot, one participant gave an example of a nightclub which required the opposite:

...Another club that I dance at the moment [name of club and location], what they specifically like is kind of very aloof, so the dancers don’t interact with the public, they’re more like something to just look at, so it is less smiley, where as a lot of jobs like want you to be like really smiley and getting the crowds going. This one prefers the girls to kind of sit separately and create an air of mystery, an air of something special when they all perform, coming on stage and with the costumes - it’s got feathers, it’s got masks. So, yeah, it really is like each club prefers a different kind of thing...

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

This suggests that nightclub dancers need to be aware of the requirements of different nightclub managers in terms the ‘atmosphere’ they are trying to create and the corresponding ‘feeling rules’, which in turn inform the type of emotional performance that is desired (Hochschild, 1983). In addition, it is worth pointing out that Emily, on the one hand, worked in some of the most prestigious commercial nightclubs in the UK, including the one she is referring to in the extract above. Leon, on the other hand, initially started his business in the Underground/Hard House sector of nightclubs. The implication here is that there are even more significant contrasts between the type of emotional performance that is expected from nightclub dancers and the amount of emphasis which is placed upon this aspect of their work. This is supported by evidence from Kelly, who contrasted her first podium dancing job in a underground/ Hard House

venue, which had a ‘happy atmosphere’ where punters went because ‘they loved the music and things’ to the commercial/Funky House nightclub where she currently worked which punters would ‘stumble’ into ‘at the end of a night on a night out.’

Performing on the organisational stage

In order to be successful in obtaining and retaining employment, nightclub dancers not only have to demonstrate that they can interact with nightclub punters in the right way on the centre stage, they also have to demonstrate that they have the ability to interact with other dancers and their managers in the right way on the organisational stage. Indeed, often when participants discussed what they felt made a good performer on the centre stage they were also referring to what made a good performer on the organisational stage at the same time:

I think it is definitely about stage presence, their character. If you come into the changing rooms and see the girls when they’re getting ready, they’re all like larger than life ... they are all funny ... they have all got something, like a spark about them. They have to have that otherwise the dynamics of the team are dragged down. I haven’t got one girl that is quiet really, they are really pretty much larger than life.

Emma, dancer (freestyle and choreographed)
and entertainment manager at a ‘superclub’

Similarly, in the extract below, Sonya explains how she looks for dancers with ‘the right vibe’ which is her perception of whether they have right personality and attitude for performing on the centre and organisational stages:

Qualifications are good, but they’ve got to have *something else* as well. Like a lot of dancers, say the ones I went to college with, could have been excellent ballet dancers, but when they’re on stage they’re really boring. So when I’m in an audition I tend to look for girls that - 1) they’ve got to have the *right vibe* when they walk in, just steering away from anybody that’s got a bitchy vibe, it’s a big no-no; I really hate it. So if one person looks at somebody the wrong way I tend to just go ‘ooo, no’ ... And I guess when it comes to their freestyle, they’ve just got to have *energy*. There’s nothing more boring than seeing a girl – or boy – just being really, a bit like dead...

Sonya, dancer and manager of dancers at an events entertainment agency
(emphasis added)

This has some similarities to the way in which employers in Callaghan and Thompson's (2002) study on call centre workers for 'Telebank' focused a lot of their attention in recruitment and selection processes on assessing whether applicants have a 'positive attitude'. However, whilst Telebank employers could assess an applicant's personality and attitude based on their use of language and tone of their voice, as well as their body language in a face-to-face interview, Sonya does not interview applicants and so she has to rely largely on her reading of the applicant's body language directed towards other dancers at the audition to identify any applicants with a 'bitchy vibe'. In common with other employers in the study, Sonya wanted to recruit dancers who had the 'right' personality and attitude for working with other dancers and also those who would work respond well to training and management.

The right attitude for working with other dancers

Ian, the events entertainment agency manager who Sonya (quoted above) worked under, explained how 'bitchiness' was problematic for effective teamworking:

...There is a lot of [bitchiness], as Sonya said, not being a dancer [myself], but being in dressing rooms with dancers – this is why we started our own dance crew – because we were still trying to work with dancers who had a very funny attitude. You'd find it very hard to share a dressing room, you know, you'd move in with your stuff and there would be no communication, a bit of funny looks, just a slight shiftiness like they didn't trust you or something and it was a bit weird...

...We didn't mention the prima donna aspect either, kind of in parallel to bitchiness, the other major personality trait, which doesn't get you very far as a podium dancer - well not in a team of dancers. There's a kind of prima donna tendency, where one girl's sort of playing up, because she sees herself- she wants to be queen bee. Because often people go into podium dancing because they love standing up and showing off in front of their friends, then they start dancing professionally in a dressing room full of people and they still retain that 'I'm a bit special,' I don't know what it is, but that has to go fairly quickly.

Ian, events entertainment agency manager

In her study of gender and teamworking in a call centre, Mullholland (2002) found that managers wanted to recruit individuals with particular personality types who they felt would be 'team players.' By starting his own dance crew, Ian was able to select dancers who he perceived to have the right personality and attitude for working in a

team of dancers. Along with Sonya who managed the dancers at his agency, he therefore avoided recruiting dancers who exhibited behaviours such as ‘funny looks’ at other dancers at auditions as this would indicate ‘bitchiness’. It is also worth pointing out that whilst there was much discussion about negative stereotypical personality traits in relation to female nightclub dancers, there was very little discussion about negative personality traits in relation to male nightclub dancers.

However, just as ‘personality’ can be performed on the centre stage, it can also be performed in nightclub dancers’ interactions with other dancer when they auditioning, as the Emily explains when discussing what she felt employers were looking for at an audition she attended:

I think they definitely were interested in the look and how you could dance and how you kind of *presented yourself*, whether you were very aloof or very friendly and approachable...

Emily, freestyle podium dancer (emphasis added)

Female applicants to a position as a nightclub dancer therefore need to be careful in how they manage their facial expressions and bodily gestures to show that they are friendly and not ‘bitchy’. In an audition, applicants to a position as a nightclub dancer would have to rely on their primary socialisation and perform *presentational* emotion management (Bolton, 2000) to ensure that they portray themselves as ‘approachable’. Indeed, Kelly gave an example of a nightclub dancer she employed who seemed ‘lovely’ at first but soon ‘got very stuck up’:

... I go for mainly the personality because I need to know that they’re going to be loyal to me and the girls and obviously they’ve got to get on with everybody in the club. I hate stuck-up girls, I can’t stand them, because I’ve hired one before, she was lovely the first time we met her but then she got very stuck up and it’s not good then, because it leaves us with a bad atmosphere, then we don’t enjoy it as much and that shows then because if you don’t enjoy working with someone, you can tell straight off.

Kelly, ‘lead’ podium freestyle dancer at her local nightclub

This quote also highlights the way in which a dancer’s performance on the organisational stage, which regards to their interactions with other dancers and their manager, can affect their performance on the centre stage for customers. In other words,

nightclub dancers are expected to perform *prescriptive* emotion management according to implicit organisational/professional rules of conduct (Bolton, 2000) in order to ‘get on’ with their colleagues and manager. If they do not, then this makes their emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) – i.e. appearing that they are enjoying themselves to create a ‘good atmosphere’ for nightclub punters – much more difficult by increasing the distance between their actual feelings and those that they are trying to portray. Hence, it is argued that the prescriptive emotion management which nightclub dancers are expected to perform becomes incorporated into their emotional labour.

The right attitude for working with managers

In the extract above, Kelly discussed how a dancer’s ‘personality’ was important because she wanted to recruit dancers that will be loyal to her as well as the other dancers and ‘get on with *everybody* in the club’. In aiming to recruit nightclub dancers with the right attitude, employers also sought to recruit dancers that would work well with them, their management style and any training and/or advice they gave. In common with Kelly, who sought to avoid recruiting dancers who were ‘stuck-up’ and Ian who wanted to avoid recruiting anyone with a ‘prima donna tendency’, Leon also wanted to avoid recruiting dancers ‘think they’re better than they are’ because such individuals would not respond well to ‘constructive criticism.’ Leon therefore met his dancers before offering them employment ‘to decide if they’re the right sort of personality for our group or not’.

We didn’t like people who have got the wrong attitude; some people are really gobby, some people think they’re better than they are. We like people with humility, we like people who listen, who can take constructive criticism, because at the end of the day, if I think something I’ll say it ... I’m not a horrible person, I’ll only say something if it’s going to make them improve, you know what I mean? I’m in the habit of making people better; see their strengths and for them to identify their weaknesses so they can deal with them you know, and sort of progress and improve themselves. And some people just get the hump about it and just chat behind your back ... we’d meet everybody before we take them on board, and we’d decide if they’re the right sort of personality for our group or not.

Leon, former podium dancer and events entertainment agency manager

This has some similarities with the way in which one of the managers at Telebank sought to recruit individuals with a ‘can-do’ approach who would remain enthusiastic throughout the intensive six weeks of training and the heavy supervision to meet strict productivity targets after this training (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002). The second part of this chapter will now explore how dancer learn to perform the right personality and attitude, along with confidence and emotional dispositions such as ‘loving it’

How do nightclub dancers learn to perform like professionals?

Research on exotic dancers has explored the role of previous experience in ‘entertainment’ in their pre-job occupational socialisation. On the one hand, Boles and Garbin (1974) found that all but two of the feature dancers had previously been employed in ‘show business’ (for example as chorus line dancers or theatrical actresses) and most of the ‘house girls’ had received professional training in dance, music or drama. On the other hand, Lewis (1998) found that although some exotic dancers had experience in entertainment *related* work, professional training in drama (etc) did not play a significant role in their pre-job socialisation. Whether nightclub dancers have any previous training or experience in performance was therefore a key line of enquiry in the interviews. However, the discussion below how on-the-job training and socialisation was also important for nightclub dancers learning to perform on the centre and organisational stages.

Learning to perform emotions on the centre stage

Indeed, many of the nightclub dancers in the study discussed how they had either trained in or had been involved in some way in theatre or drama. The extent of this varied between dancers. For example, Emily was professional trained as an actress at theatre school and she saw this as her main vocation, supplemented by income from podium dancing and modelling. As mentioned in the previous chapter, she has had roles in Bollywood movies. She has also had major roles in British TV shows and feature-length films. All this experience and training meant that ‘getting up on a podium wasn’t so frightening’. Similarly, Rachel (a freestyle podium dancer) felt that her involvement

in a theatre group meant that she ‘built up that confidence to actually get up on stage and perform’. Others, such as Fiona, had been heavily involved in drama at school:

I used to love drama in school, when I was like in comprehensive I was in plays, like all of it every single year, I loved it.

Fiona, freestyle podium dancer

Having experience of performing on stage to a captive audience meant that such dancers felt more comfortable, confident and were better able to overcome nervousness than dancers that had not had this experience.

However, as suggested previously, it is more important that nightclub dancers *look* confident and happy than *feel* confident and happy. In general, nightclub dancers are expected to appear as if they are enjoying themselves, whether they are or not. This is because one of their key roles is to help create an ‘atmosphere’; the nightclub has bought and paid for the dancer’s capacity to display the appropriate emotions (Hochschild, 1983; Brook, 2009). In the interview extract below, Catherine suggests that some of the podium dancers she worked with who had received professional acting training were particularly skilled in this respect:

I don’t know where the guy [the events entertainment agency manager] got them from but they were always sort of be actresses who were doing dancing on the side ...you could tell that they had been trained from such a young age to do dance and all that sort of thing and they were really, really good but they were able just to go up there with a big smile on their face. And it always looked a bit fake at times because you’re like well, at the start of the night there was just me sitting here, him over there, him over there and that’s it. Who are you smiling to? ... They may well have been really enjoying it but I think that because they had the acting side of it they could put themselves into that character and really sort of shine through with it.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer and former podium dancer in nightclubs

Catherine’s discussion of how the podium dancers who were trained in acting were able to ‘put themselves into that character’ to convince the audience that they were enjoying themselves (even though they might not be) is indicative of the use of ‘deep acting’ (Hochschild, 1983). Although in this case there was no evidence to suggest that the nightclub manager has asked them to deep act in this way, the podium dancers who had been highly trained in dance and theatre were so accustomed to smiling when they are

dancing that they did so anyway. Emily, who was highly trained as a professional actress, explained how it was her choice to make eye-contact with audience members as to 'try and enjoy' herself when she is on the stage/podium:

I don't think you are ever really separate, you're very much kind of part of the whole club experience ... and they can engage with you, they are looking at you, you do make eye-contact with people, quite often ... [But] I think that is your choice to make eye-contact or not, some people maybe not but I prefer to. I prefer to try and enjoy myself as well when I am up there.

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

However, other interview data suggested employers *directed* and *trained* their nightclub dancers to smile and make eye-contact with nightclub punters whether they are on the stage/podium or elsewhere:

I talk to the girls about how they make a connection with the audience as well, so when they are on the dance floor I say always smile, they always make eye contact with the girls, if there is somebody there who wants a picture they will stand and they will pause their set and have a picture...

Emma, dancer and entertainment manager at a large nightclub

Kelly: It's all about the face as well because I seem to forget sometimes, if they can see what expression's on my face, I've got to remember: smile, all the time. It's hard sometimes.

Interviewer: So you might have to smile even though you might be feeling not so happy?

Kelly: Yeah. I have a tendency to be quite false some nights ... one of my old managers at the club used to tell me I pay you to flirt with people; flirt with your eyes, your face, however you are, you've got to learn to flirt with someone while you're dancing. And I was like, 'er I don't know if I can just flirt with someone'...

Kelly, 'lead' freestyle podium dancer at a nightclub

The extracts above from Kelly suggest that she engages in 'surface acting' rather than 'deep acting' (Hochschild, 1983) and in addition to this emotional labour, she performs sexualised labour that is organisationally prescribed (Adkins, 1995; Warhurst and Nickson, 2009). As the team leader, she has also passes the advice she received from her former manager to the dancers she manages.

Other nightclub dancers' accounts provided evidence that they often had to keep smiling in the face of a range of insulting and abusive behaviours from nightclub punters, which were likely compounded by intoxication. This increases the distance between the emotions that nightclub dancers might actually be feeling and what they are expected to display, intensifying their emotional labour. The most extreme example of this is provided by Amber:

Amber: ...Like with a normal job you can just go in and you look a mess, you can't, you have to constantly look good and have a smile on your face, be polite. And you get people being absolute idiots to you, being really abusive and you can't do anything about it really, you can't really start a big argument with the people in the club. You get idiots, but you can't really do anything.

Interviewer: So you just carry on dancing when you get people [like that]?

Amber: You have to really. I've had drinks thrown at me and everything.

Amber, freestyle podium dancer

Participants reported different types of abusive behaviour from male and female punters. For example, whilst female dancers had often deal with unwanted sexual attention from male punters (such as grabbing them whilst they were walking to and from the stage/podium), a common type of abusive behaviour from female punters was described by Emily as 'bitchiness':

I mean sometimes you can see girls just around talking about you and they will be like with their friends and they will be looking at you and they will be talking and they will be pointing at you and maybe pointing at another dancer, you know very kind of openly and you just kind of shut it out ... you just deal with it and ... you have got other dancers around you who all have the same experiences...

Emily, freestyle podium dancer

In order to be good emotional performers on the centre stage, nightclub dancers therefore have to learn to deal with such abusive behaviour on the job. As Emily suggests in the quote above, support from other nightclub dancers who are experiencing the same thing can help. This suggests that nightclub dancers rely heavily on 'communities of coping' similar to those found amongst call centre workers (Korzczynski, 2003). The two male nightclub dancers did not mention any *abusive* behaviour from nightclub punters and the other participants did not report any instances of abusive behaviour towards male dancers that they knew. Richard (a male nightclub

dancer) mentioned that ‘sometimes I get a bit of female attention, more than when I go out’, although this was framed in terms of being one of the positive aspects of the job. This suggests that even if male dancers do experience similar abuse to that reported by female nightclub dancers, they may view it, respond to it and talk about it in a less negative way.

For Samantha, being good friends with the dancers she worked further enhanced her enjoyment of her job which she would have enjoyed anyway because of her love of dancing. This outweighed the negative aspects such as ‘lecherous’ behaviour from male punters, which she accepted as part of her job:

As for guys, you’re always gonna gets guys who are gonna be lechey and horrible. But again, you know- although you have to sort of understand that you are there for like viewing pleasure as such – that sounds really awful – you have to understand that’s part of your job. It doesn’t really faze me at all anymore. You get to a point where you’re like ‘oh, grow up’; I’m enjoying doing what I’m doing, I’m having a good time with my friends, I’m getting paid to do what I trained for years and years and what I love doing. How many people can say that they’re getting paid to do something that they love? There’s so many people in the world that are so unhappy in their jobs, you know.

Samantha, podium dancer (freestyle and choreographed) and bookings manager
at an events entertainment agency

The way in which Samantha views her work has a lot in common with findings on the way that tour reps viewed their work (Guerrier and Adib, 2003). Guerrier and Adib argue that as tour reps view their job as reflecting their authentic selves they are willing to accept and find ways of managing the more negative aspects of their work, such as dealing with abusive customers.

Indeed, participants often viewed their work as nightclub dancers as paid leisure rather than employment, particularly as for most of them it was not their main source of income (see Table 1). For example, Tina was mainly supported financially by her mother when she was a podium dancer between the ages of 19 and 21. She summarised her job in the following way:

I was getting paid to have the time of my life, literally, the nights I was there were some of the best nights of my life; it was absolutely amazing. I was getting paid to do something I really enjoyed doing, it made me feel really good about myself, I never felt degraded or I never felt in trouble or worried; I always felt really safe, I felt looked after with the people I was with, so I was just getting paid to have fun.

Tina, former freestyle podium dancer ‘on the gay scene’

Similarly, Richard, who worked in telesales on weekdays, referred to his nightclub dancing work as a ‘hobby job’ and ‘not really working; I’m still out with the music, dancing anyway’ (i.e. what he would be doing on a weekend night anyway). In the same way as ‘tour reps become tour reps because they have learned to be good holiday makers’ (Guerrier and Adib, 2003: 1415), Richard is a good centre stage emotional performer in nightclubs because he learnt to be a good clubber. Nightclub dancers for whom the boundaries of work and leisure are blurred in this way do not have to create the impression that they are enjoying themselves because they are actually enjoying themselves most of the time. This enjoyment far outweighs any of the less pleasurable aspects of the job.

Additionally, in common with tour reps, nightclub dancers find ways of maximising the pleasurable aspects of their job. For example, as mentioned previously, Catherine actively chose to only work in non-commercial nightclubs which played the music that she liked to dance to. This, combined with what she perceived as a lack of pressure from her employers to manufacture positive emotions ‘all the time’, meant that Catherine could avoid feeling inauthentic:

...it is nice to have a good crowd and that you use some vibe off it and it bounces back and forth because we are not robots, we are not sort of made to look like we are enjoying ourselves all the time, it is nice to actually get that feeling back from people....

...and I am not a natural actress, you know one thing that I have never ever done and I think that if you are a natural actress and you can actually maybe switch into that sort of character, where as I like to feel it. I like to be me, I like to be me happy in a situation and going for it rather than me forcing myself into a situation.

Catherine, pole teacher at her own school, pole performer and former podium dancer in nightclubs

This suggests that Catherine’s emotion management is *philanthropic* (Bolton, 2000), but she only seems to offer this gift to a ‘good crowd’ with a positive ‘vibe’. Most participants did not have the level of autonomy as Catherine conveys with regards to avoiding situations where they might have to present positive emotions that they are not feeling. In addition, Catherine was happy to accept lower pay for working in venues

which played the music which she liked which meant that she was able to enjoy herself more. Rather, nightclub dancers experience varying levels of authenticity in their performances in different situations and venues. Yet, it is important to emphasise that it would not matter to nightclub managers whether or not the emotions being displayed are authentic or not, as long as the ‘right’ emotions are displayed and the audience is convinced by the performance. Nightclub managers ‘book’ nightclub dancers based partly on their capacity to display the emotions required to create an ‘atmosphere’. This supports Brooks’ (2009) defence of Hochschild’s concept of emotional labour.

Learning to perform emotions on the organisational stage

In the first half of the chapter, it was argued that employers seek nightclub dancers with the right personality and attitude for working well in a team of dancers. They also try to select dancers who will respond well to training and ‘constructive criticism’. This final section will consider the way in which nightclub dancers are further ‘groomed’ and ‘moulded’ into being good performers on the organisational stage by their employers. As suggested previously, how nightclub dancers interact with each other and their managers has an impact on their ability to perform well for the nightclub punters on the centre stage. Hence, Emma discusses how when she ‘coaches’ her dancers into not being ‘bitchy’, she is not only concerned about the way in which the dancers interact with her and the other dancers, but how they are perceived by nightclub punters as representatives of the brand:

You know the people that dance here, I have a lot of girls come and go because they can’t cope with the pressure of it and they can’t do what I am trying to ask them to do ... a lot of dancers are a little bit bitchy, you know they think a lot of themselves, I am not trying to put them all in a box because they are not all like that, my girls aren’t at all. Yes I have to check them out for that and have to sort of coach them almost into, and mould them into what I want them to do and what I want them to be. And that’s because they are representing [the nightclub], they don’t just represent themselves, they are a brand which is why ... most of my girls are regular, I don’t have girls that come in and do one week and then they don’t do another, ‘cause during that week we might find out something or we might try something that will really work and then we will work at that.

Emma, dancer and entertainment manager at a large nightclub

In other parts of the interview, Emma referred to her dancers as a team and discussed the ways in which they all worked together on choreography and ideas for upcoming special events at the nightclub (see Chapter 4). She also pointed out that they were her friends (see Chapter 5). Emma also discussed the importance of each of her dancers being 'different' and having their own personalities and 'character'. However, in the quote above she contradicts this by saying that she has to 'mould' her dancers into what she wants them 'to be'.

The events entertainment manager Ian also discussed how he and his management team also tried to 'groom' any 'bitchiness' out of nightclub dancers. However, Ian's use of phrases such as 'treat them as one of us' and concern with the happiness of dancers in the dressing room suggests that he is also trying to create and maintain a positive workplace culture (Kunda, 1992):

...there was this whole cliquey, not very nice, slightly bitchy thing going on. And after 3 or 4 months of it I thought 'sod this, if we're going to offer dancers and work with them, we'll do our own; audition them and treat them as one of us' and that's been brilliant. Since we've been doing that, everybody's had much more fun, everybody's worked harder, everybody's happy in the dressing room ... So we try to wipe out that and as I say, any bitchiness we notice, gets steam rolled out; if somebody's a bit too big for their boots, we'll have a word with them, for their own benefit as well really ... [We] groom them a little bit. We want ... actual reliability ... and for them to know that they're part of a company that's good to work for and even though ... they're self employed, technically, ... when they're working for us they're under the bow of everybody's whips and we want everything to be as good. It doesn't matter who they are, they've got to be really, really good and professional.

Ian, events entertainment agency manager

This suggests that *prescriptive* emotion management is particularly important for nightclub dancers working for Ian's agency (Bolton, 2000). Ian also discussed how the Sonya and Samantha 'came to us as dancers' and that when they became employed full time in the agency (Sonya as manager of the dancers and Samantha as a bookings manager) it was good for them to 'join in the family'. It could be argued that Ian is drawing on the discourse of the company a family to present a more positive image of the company to the researcher.

However, Samantha herself discussed how she was good friends with the dancers at the agency and that they would make the effort to 'meet up for a coffee or something and do normal stuff away from work' when there were not any upcoming

events. She contrasts this to her experience of working with dancers from other agencies:

If you bitch or if you're a diva, you're gone. Everyone here is so down to earth and I think that's why it's probably so successful, because there's just no room for any sort of diva strops. And I know there is a lot of bitching; I've worked in nightclubs where there have been other dancers and not enjoyed the experience at all, just because of the way that they function, the way that they were speaking to each other. It sounds really cheesy, but me and the girls really respect each other and we can be honest with each other without being critical, you know what I mean? Whereas I have heard some horrible stories from other dancers about other people, it's just really sad. I'm so lucky that this is my first real experience of dancing that I'm with such a nice team, with nice people. I wouldn't want to go anywhere else.

This suggests that Samantha has been successfully socialised into the organisational culture of the agency. She has learnt the importance of emotion management according to the professional/organisational rules of conduct of her agency and how this beneficial for her work and wellbeing. This is reinforced by discussing 'horrible stories' with other dancers at her agency about what it is like working with dancers who do not adhere to these rules.

Leon also tried to foster a positive workplace culture for his events agency through ensuring good working conditions for his employees. For Leon 'it was all about the performers' and his company was 'very ethical for our performers'. He wanted them to be happy. For example, his terms and conditions for booking (which Leon discussed in the interview and provided a copy of) included a clause that stipulated that performers should be provided with 'at least two drinks tokens each or a supply of bottled water available throughout the night'. Another clause included the following statement:

We expect our dancers to be looked after while in the venue and for security to ensure that they are not harassed or caused distress by any of the people in the club (e.g. people trying to get on stage during a performance). If you are unable to provide stage management we can arrange security for period of time covering our performance...

Leon felt that by ensuring that his employees 'well looked after' and were happy then this would translate into their performance on the (centre) stage; the nightclub punters would be able to 'see the love' in the nightclub dancers' eyes. However, he also expected that his performers understood the boundaries of these conditions and their

rights in general. Hence, when one dancer that worked his agency tried to demand far more than clients (i.e. nightclub managers) were contractually obliged to provide, Leon had little tolerance:

There was one girl who was doing our funky [commercial nightclub] things ... and straight away ... she was a complete diva. And we only worked with her a couple of times. Because part of the terms and conditions of our booking was our performers got drinks ... and they got well looked after. And you know, all the people we ever worked for did respect that and they were really, really, really good, but this girl was like 'oh yeah I want this, I want that and I want' and it was like 'sorry love, this is what you get and you know what you get, end of' ... we could find someone else quite easily ... And she's like 'well I want the money' - 'well you know, you can dance tonight, get your money, fuck off!'

Leon, former podium dancer and events entertainment manager

Therefore, a written contract with nightclubs ensured that nightclub dancers were 'well looked after' when they working, with security staff to watch over them and access to liquid refreshments. However, there was an unwritten contract between Leon and the nightclub dancers that worked for him which carried the expectation that nightclub dancers should not complain and demand more. Those who did not manage their emotions according to Leon's professional/organisational rules of conduct were quickly dismissed and there would be plenty of nightclub dancers ready to take their place. However, Catherine, discussed previously, who worked for Leon's agency, could benefit from the positive work environment he tried to create, which meant she was in a good position to be genuinely happy in her job rather than having to pretend that she was. This again demonstrates the way in which *prescriptive* emotion management (Bolton, 2000) on the organisational stage is related to emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) on the centre stage.

Indeed, nightclub dancers who learn to 'get on' well with their managers and the other dancers they worked with were more likely to find authentic pleasure in their work and experience their job as an extension or wholly constitutive of their social life (Guerrier and Adib, 2003). As discussed previously, this means that they do not have to work as hard to project that they are 'loving it' to the audience. The discussion in this section has mainly focused on how managers of nightclub dancers encourage dancers to manage their emotions in their interactions with co-workers through trying to foster a positive workplace culture based on teamwork. There has also been a suggestion that these efforts have been relatively successful, with Samantha and the dancers she worked

with making the effort to see each other outside of work. However, another way in which nightclub dancers learn to get on with each other which is driven by nightclub dancers own efforts is through the social processes of learning and planning other aspects of their work which were discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. For example, Chapter 4 highlighted how freestyle podium dancers would meet more experienced colleagues when the nightclub was closed to learn ‘tricks’ to make use of their dance space. In addition teams of choreographed stage dancers plan and practice routines together. Chapter 5 explored how nightclub dancers pick out outfits together, laugh at the costumes they are wearing but also those of other dancers outside of their team.

Conclusion

One of the main reasons that nightclub dancers are booked is to help create ‘an atmosphere’ in the nightclub. They do this through their emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). This chapter has explored what skills and attributes nightclub dancers require to perform emotional labour and how these are learnt. Drawing on the work of Murphy (2003), it was argued that nightclub dancers need to be able to manage their emotions in particular ways on the organisational stage – in their interactions with colleagues and managers, as well as the centre stage – in their interactions with nightclub punters.

In auditions, nightclub dancers need to demonstrate that they will be good performers on the organisational stage using *presentational* emotion management learnt through primary socialisation to show that they have the right ‘personality’ and ‘attitude’ for working with managers and other dancers. Upon obtaining employment, performance on the organisational stage involves *prescriptive* emotion management according to organisational/professional rules of conduct (Bolton, 2000). Nightclub dancers mainly learn this through training and socialisation into a workplace culture based on the importance of cooperation and teamwork. Importantly, if nightclub dancers do not manage their emotions in the right way on the organisational stage, then this makes their emotional labour on the centre stage much more difficult.

With regards to performing on the centre stage, employers sought nightclub dancers who can interact with nightclub dancers in the right way, which usually entails making eye contact with audience members and might involve non-verbal flirting. ‘Confidence’ was seen as an important attribute for being able to interact with the crowd

in the right way. Experience of performing in front of an audience can help nightclub dancers to overcome 'stage fright'. However, nightclub dancers do not have to feel confident as long as they can appear confident. Performing confidence is connected to their ability to portray that they are 'loving it', which involves dancers convincing the punters that they are enjoying themselves (whether they actually are or not) so that punters are encouraged to dance and experience these positive emotions too. It was suggested that some nightclub dancers, such as Emily, might benefit from using their acting training to 'deep act'. Evidence of employers training and advising nightclub dancers to smile was also presented. This was particularly difficult in the face of abusive behaviour from nightclub punters. Forming 'communities of coping' (Korzcynski, 2003) can help dancers to deal with abusive behaviour from male and female punters. However, this chapter discussed how in many cases, nightclub dancers did not have to 'pretend' that they were 'loving it' because, like the tour reps studied by Guerrier and Adib (2003), they blurred the distinctions between work and leisure and saw their job as reflecting their authentic selves. Where possible, they tried to maximise the pleasurable aspects of their job, which, in any case, tended to outweigh the negative aspects.

Although this chapter has drawn on Bolton's (2000) typology of emotion management, Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour, as defined by its commodification as labour power (Brook, 2009), is seen as the most important concept for understanding the way in which nightclub dancers manage their emotions as a key part of their work. This is because creating a positive atmosphere and helping nightclub punters to enjoy themselves is one of the key reasons why nightclub dancers are 'booked' and emotional labour is central to this. Whether or not the emotions being displayed by nightclub dancers are 'authentic' or 'philanthropic' is largely inconsequential, as long as the performance is convincing, because the nightclub pays for the dancer's capacity to perform emotional labour. In addition, this chapter has demonstrated that nightclub dancers' *prescriptive* emotion management (Bolton, 2000) is interlinked with their emotional labour. Finally, with regards to the debate about whether or not emotion work should be considered as skilled work (Payne, 2009), it is argued that nightclub dancers require specialised emotion management skills in terms of being able to project the right emotions on the (physical) stage/podium through *non-verbal communication*. In addition, they do this whilst dancing and often suppressing feelings of physical exhaustion (Chapter 4), nervousness and perhaps even hunger

(Chapter 5). It does not follow that all emotion work should be labelled as 'skilled work', but it does suggest that occupations that require particularly specialised emotional labour can be regarded as skilled.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis set out to answer the main research question of *'how do individuals learn to become successful nightclub dancers?'* Here, the findings from the three preceding chapters are brought together to address this question. The final section explores the wider implications of the findings in terms of sociological and educational literature and also suggests areas for further research.

How do individuals learn to become successful nightclub dancers?

The skills and attributes which individuals require in order to become successful nightclub dancers are related to the three types of labour which constitute their work. These are physical dance labour, aesthetic labour and emotional labour. These are represented in Figure 1 below. As a whole, the interview data suggest that the most successful nightclub dancer would be positioned in the middle of the Venn diagram; having all the necessary skills, knowledge and attributes for performing all three types of labour. Indeed, when asked what they thought made a good nightclub dancer, some participants discussed skills and attributes associated with all three types of labour in one sentence, the best example of which is provided by the freestyle podium dancer Emily: 'you have to look the part, and you have to move the part, and I think be charismatic as well.' The findings in relation to each of these three areas of skill and how they are learnt will now be summarised before a consideration of wider intersecting themes.

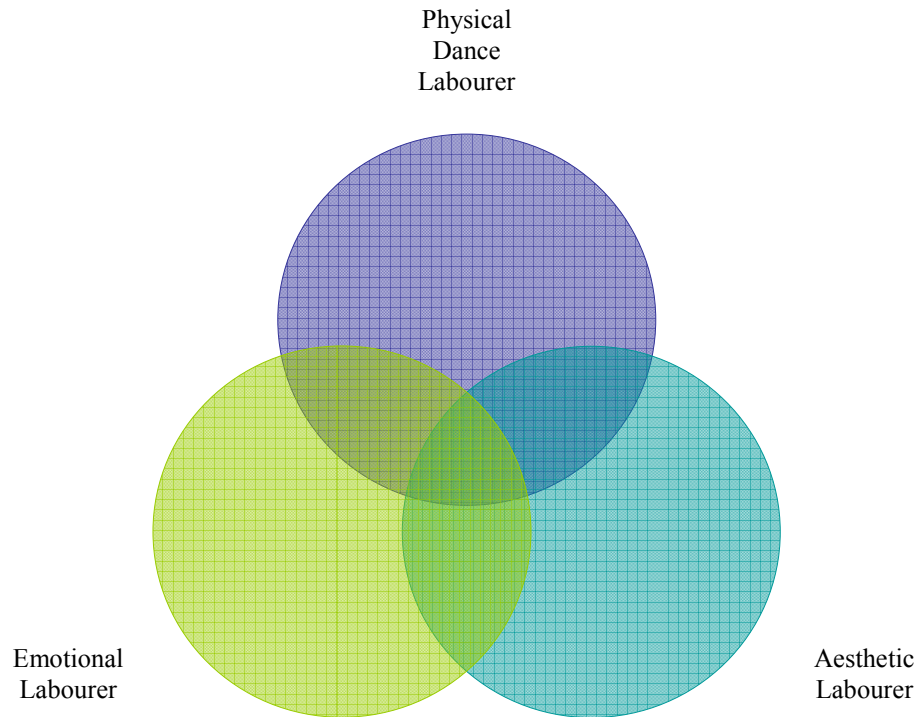


Figure 1: The three types of labour performed by nightclub dancers

The discussion in Chapter 4 argued that being a proficient physical dance labourer requires different skills depending on the type of nightclub dancing. The sample included freestyle podium dancers, choreographed stage dancers and pole performers who could perform both freestyle and choreographed routines. To draw out the skills required by different types of dancer, two main types of nightclub dance labour were identified in relation to the main task of ‘moving to the music’ in the nightclub. These were ‘moving to known (pre-selected) music’ and ‘moving to unknown music’ selected by the DJ. On the one hand, dancers who are able to choose their own music tracks to dance in the nightclub to can choreograph a dance routine which incorporates planning the timing and pacing of moves, the length of the routine and their use of the space which they have prior knowledge of. This requires knowledge of basic dance moves and the use of music mapping skills to analyse and select an appropriate track to dance to (Felstead *et al.*, 2007). Pole performers who are able to choreograph their routine and leaders of teams of choreographed stage dancers exercise a high degree of choice and control over these aspects of their dance labour. In addition,

there is high demand for dancers that can perform choreographed stage routines in nightclubs. On the other hand, dancers that perform freestyle dance routines to 'unknown music' improvise dance moves to whatever music the DJ is playing in the nightclub. They might be asked to dance in any space in the nightclub and sometimes for dance sets of up to an hour in length. The key skills for these dancers are therefore: 'having rhythm', pacing themselves to keep moving and making use of their space in a way which allows them to rest and make use of musical bridges. These dancers therefore tend to have less control over the main aspects of their dance labour. Hence, this presents a relationship between 'choreographed' and 'freestyle' dancers and their control over the labour process that is indirect contrast to Felstead *et al.*'s (2007) findings in relation to ETM instructors, which demonstrated that 'freestyle' instructors had greater control than 'pre-choreography' instructors.

However, the dichotomy between freestyle and choreographed dancers and its contrast to Felstead *et al.*'s findings is not clear cut. Firstly, choreographed stage dancers who are not leaders may play a small role or no role at all in the selection of music and choreography. Secondly, choreographed dancers who do have a role in selecting appropriate music may still have to choose music which fits in with the musical theme of the nightclub and the DJ's creative control. Thirdly, some freestyle podium dancers, such as Catherine, have the ability to assert or reassert control over their aural environment that structures their dance labour by choosing to only dance at nightclub which play music that they like and are familiar with. In general the level of control which any nightclub dancer has over the dance labour process fluctuates between different nightclubs and employers for which they work. Finally, freestyle nightclub dancers have the ability to learn and further develop their dance skills on-the-job.

The second part of Chapter 4 explored how different types of nightclub dancer learn to dance for nightclubs. Drawing on Eraut's (2000) definition of formal learning and his typology of non-formal learning, it was suggested that there was a wide range of ways in which nightclub dancers learnt to dance in settings of varying degrees of formality. Choreographed stage dancers' pre-job and on-the-job learning could be characterised as formal, such as learning how to choreograph dance routines at college or university. The extent to which choreographed stage dancers can learn and develop choreography skills on the job depends on their position in their team and how much influence they have on decisions about choreography; i.e. whether their team is 'self-

directing' or 'non-self-directing' (Gallie *et al.*, 2012). Although pole dance lessons are now widely available in the UK, the pole performers in this study mainly learnt in less formal ways from friends and through making videos of themselves performing pole tricks. These dancers learnt how to choreograph routines through taking ETM qualifications as part of their training to become pole dance teachers. Freestyle podium dancers' pre-job learning of how to dance for nightclubs varied from having been trained in different styles of dance in structured, formal settings to having learnt to dance as a nightclub punter and attracting an audience. However, on-the-job learning was perhaps more important than pre-job learning for freestyle podium dancers because they learn how to make their improvisation of dance moves to different types of music look effortless, adapt to different spaces and pace themselves through experience and from other dancers they work with. This wide variety of influences on each freestyle podium dancer's dance style leads to the (re)production of an individual habitus and also an institutional habitus (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006), which can conflict with the aim of being 'versatile' to the requirements of different nightclubs and their music. Indeed, increasing versatility is key in increasing employability to the extent that some nightclub dancers trained in additional 'circus' performance skills such as stilt walking and 'angle-grinding'.

Chapter 5 suggested that nightclub dancers who were good 'aesthetic labourers' had to possess the correct set of embodied attributes upon entry to employment (Warhurst *et al.*, 2000). They also require skills and knowledge in how to enhance their embodied attributes through the use of clothing, hairstyles, fake tan and make-up. However, different sectors of the nightclub industry have different aesthetic requirements which nightclub dancers need to be aware of. For example, there is a contrast in clothing styles worn in the Underground/Hard House and the Commercial/Funky House sectors of nightclubs. Chapter 5 also explored the strategic sexualisation (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009) of nightclub dancers in an industry which is based largely on the idea that 'sex sells.' As participants suggested that the nightclub managers who book nightclub dancers are often male, this is particularly the case with female nightclub dancers, who tend to face greater pressures to be sexually attractive than male nightclub dancers.

Nightclub dancers mainly learn how to make themselves look appealing through legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which collectively identifies what does and does not look good. This includes the

ridicule of the costumes of dancers from outside the community of practice, similar to the way in which graduate accountants at 'Western Ridge' laughed at the appearance of other office workers in the bar after work (Coffey, 1993). With regards to 'staying in shape,' there was evidence that some managers intervene to advise nightclub dancers when they need to lose weight and 'get back in the gym'. The extent to which nightclub dancers have the opportunity to develop their own image depends on the type of dancer and their employer/where they work. For example, Emma – the entertainment manager of two venues of the prestigious nightclub brand 'Super Bash' had strict aesthetic criteria and utilised the service of professional hair and make-up artists and fashion artists to create the right image for her dancers for special events. In general, dancers like Emma's who performed choreographed stage routines had to ensure that they had matching costumes and had less control over their own image. By contrast, pole performers had to ensure that their clothing was practical for performing pole tricks and so dancers had a lot of control over their image, particularly if like Catherine, they mainly worked in 'non-Commercial/Funky House' sector nightclubs.

Finally, Chapter 6 explored the skills and attributes required by nightclub dancers to perform emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) and how they are learnt. Drawing on Murphy (2003), it was argued that employers seek nightclub dancers with a particular 'personality' and 'attitude' which they will bring to their performances on different areas of the 'centre stage' (where they interact with customers), but also allows them to work well with managers and co-workers on the 'organisational stage'. However, it was suggested that 'personality' and 'attitude', along with 'confidence' and 'loving it', are performed through the management of emotional display. 'Loving it' refers to the dominant emotional display that nightclub dancers are expected to project through non-verbal communication when they are dancing on the stage/podium. Nightclub dancers need to convince the audience that they are enjoying themselves so that punters dance in order to experience these positive emotions too. This creates a good atmosphere in the nightclub.

Indeed, one of the main reasons why nightclub dancers are 'booked' for nightclubs is for their capacity to help create 'an atmosphere' and a positive 'experience' for nightclub punters through their emotional display. This is why Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour, as defined by its commodification as labour power (Brook, 2009) was deemed appropriate for considering nightclub dancers' emotion work on the centre stage. Some managers trained nightclub dancers to manage

their emotions on the centre through advising them on their use of eye-contact and their smile. Nightclub dancers may have to keep smiling and dancing in the face of different forms of abusive behaviour from male and female nightclub dancers, increasing the gap between the emotions they are feeling and those they are displaying and intensifying their emotional labour. They learn to deal with this partly through forming ‘communities of coping’ (Korzcynski, 2003). In addition, like the tour reps in Guerrier and Adib’s (2003) study, nightclub dancers blurred the boundaries between work and leisure; viewing their job as an extension of their social life and a reflection of their authentic selves. They would try to maximise these pleasurable aspects of their job, although their ability to do this was interconnected with their ability to perform *prescriptive* emotion management (Bolton, 2000) in their interactions with colleagues on the organisational stage. This prescriptive emotion management was mainly learnt through socialisation into an organisational culture based on the importance of cooperation and teamwork.

One of the major themes which emerges across all three empirical chapters is the differences in the mixture of skills, knowledge and attributes required by nightclub dancers in relation to the three types of labour in different types of nightclubs. Participants identified a broad distinction between the ‘Commercial/Funky House’ sectors and the ‘Underground/Hard House’ sectors, but differences within these sectors were also apparent. For example, the most ‘prestigious’ Commercial/Funky House nightclubs and nightclub brands, such as some of those which Emily worked at as a podium dancer or ‘Superbash’ for which Emma was the entertainment manager, seek and are able to recruit dancers who are highly skilled dancers, very attractive and excellent ‘performers’ that would occupy the middle of the Venn diagram in Figure 1. Such nightclubs are able to attract such talent because of their prestige; the best nightclub dancers want to work at these nightclubs because these represent the pinnacle of a nightclub dancer career and provide professional dancers with additional experience to add to their portfolio. In addition, prestigious commercial nightclubs charge a high price on the door so that they can have a large entertainment budget to afford the best entertainers from high quality events entertainment agencies, such the multi-skilled troupe of ‘super dancers’ referred to as ‘Sonya’s Sirens’ (in Chapter 4) based at Ian’s agency, who are also selected and marketed based on their attractiveness and themed costumes.

However, the ‘non-prestigious’ Commercial/Funky House nightclub sector and the Underground/Hard House sector place an emphasis on particular areas of skill. For example, employers in the Commercial/Funky House sector tend to emphasise the sexual attractiveness of female nightclub dancers over their dance and emotional labour skills. The Underground/Hard House sector of nightclubs seems to place an emphasis on ‘high energy’ to dancing and nightclub dancers portraying that they are ‘loving it’, with attractiveness seen as less important, as long as the dancers are wearing vibrant clothing. This is because Commercial/Funky House nightclubs are more likely to market themselves based on the principle that ‘sex sells’ – i.e. they are heavily strategically sexualised (Warhurst and Nickon, 2009), whereas the Underground/Hard House sector attracts punters who come to enjoy the music.

A related intersecting theme is the relationship between gender and dance labour, aesthetic labour and emotional labour. This relationship was explored mainly in Chapter 5 with a contrast being made between ‘tits and arse (female) dancers’ and ‘mad (male) dancers’. In addition, Chapter 6 explored how female dancers learn to cope with ‘bitchiness’ from female nightclub punters and unwanted sexual attention and contact from male punters. There were no *reports* of male dancers experiencing *abusive* behaviour from punters, although one of the male dancers noted that his nightclub dancing attracted ‘female attention’ as a positive aspect of the job. Therefore, the data suggest that there are differences between male and female nightclub dancers in terms of what skills and attributes they require to do their job. However, such broad gender comparisons based on a small sample must be made with caution. Although the proportion of male and female nightclub dancers in the sample seemed to reflect the gender proportions in the wider population, there were only two male nightclub dancers in the sample. Further research with a more specifically targeted sampling technique could explore these gender contrasts in greater detail.

Implications

In order to be successful, nightclub dancers have to be proficient in the three types of labour which constitute their work: physical dance labour, aesthetic labour and emotional labour. Although certain sectors of the nightclub industry place more emphasis on particular areas of skill than others, the most prestigious nightclubs and

events entertainment agencies want to recruit dancers who are skilled in all three areas. Nightclub dancers learn dance labour through a mixture of formal and non-formal pre-job and on-the-job learning, whereas learning aesthetic and emotional labour is mainly characterised by non-formal learning from others and socialisation on-the-job.

This study on nightclub dancers – a previously under-researched group of workers – has provided a unique lens through which to view a wide range of sociological and educational concepts and ideas. It has explored theories of workplace learning in a new context which allows for a consideration of the whole range of ways in which individuals learn the skills and knowledge required for their job. In particular, the way in which dance was conceived as physical labour allowed a consideration of the factors which are conducive to learning, which mainly relate to the level of agency and control nightclub dancers have in determining the conditions of their dance labour.

This thesis has also made a contribution to debates surrounding emotional labour. It has argued that Hochschild's (1983) original concept is still ideal for understanding the commodification of feeling as labour power, whilst recognising that more recent studies and theories of emotional labour, such as Bolton's (2000) typology of emotion work, can also be utilised to understand motivations behind and the nature of different types of emotional performance in the workplace. In particular, more recent literature on emotional labour, including studies by Guerrier and Adib (2003) and Korzcynski (2003) as well as Bolton's typology, place an emphasis on the agency of emotion workers. This is important for considering the way in which individuals can learn emotional labour or at least how to cope with its negative effects. In addition, this thesis has considered emotional labour performed by nightclub dancers as a specialised skill, which supports Payne's (2009) arguments against labelling all emotion work as 'skilled' work, but also points to the need for further research to establish whether there are other types of specialised emotion work that can be regarded as skilled.

However, it must be emphasised that emotional labour was not a focus of this research from the outset. Rather, it was an aspect of nightclub dancers' work which emerged from responses to questions about what makes a good nightclub dancer. A key finding was the way in which the nature and intensity of the nightclub punter-nightclub dancer 'service encounter' varied between and within nightclubs. Much of the 'crowd interaction' which the nightclub dancers in the study talked about was non-verbal communication with audience members from a distance whilst they were dancing on a designated and separate performance area such as stage or podium. However, the data

also suggest that nightclub dancers are often expected to engage in higher intensity face-to-face interaction with customers. For example, before their dance set they may temporarily play the roles of hosts and hostesses as they welcome customers into the nightclub through a champagne reception. Further research with a specific focus on the emotional labour of nightclub dancers could investigate and categorise this variation in the nature of the service encounter in order to make clear-cut comparisons with other interactive service workers. This would entail the careful design of structured interview questions and/or the use of intensive observation of nightclub dancers in their interactions with customers.

This thesis also made a major contribution to the literature on aesthetic labour. It has considered the way in which employees can learn the skills required for aesthetic labour through socialisation and participation in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), as well as employees being trained in these skills by managers. However, a particular strength of this study is its argument that nightclubs – particularly those in the ‘Commercial/Funky House’ sector – are strategically sexualised (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009). Two of the nightclub managers were explicit about how the nightclub industry was based on the idea that ‘sex sells’ and that nightclub dancers were booked based on their sex appeal as part of this deliberate corporate strategy. This idea was also supported by evidence from other participants in the study.

This raises implications in terms of further research on nightclubs and strategic sexualisation. The main question that needs to be addressed is: how widespread is strategic sexualisation amongst and within UK nightclubs in general? This would include investigating the extent to which nightclub bar staff are strategically sexualised. Previous research has suggested that bar staff perform sexualised labour (Adkins, 1995), but that this is not prescribed by management as part of deliberate corporate strategy (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009). In addition, one participant – Emma – highlighted a link between aesthetic labour and the use of photographs of dancers posted on social networking sites by nightclub staff and punters as a marketing tool. A recent market report has highlighted the ways in which nightclubs in general can make effective use of social networking sites to advertise their brand to particular target groups (Mintel, 2012). This suggests that it will become increasingly important that nightclub employees snapped in photographs on social networking sites embody a corporate image based on sex appeal.

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Appendixes

Appendix A:

Nightclub Dancer Interview Guide

Interview Questions (Nightclub dancer)

Information

- Age
- What is their main source of income
- How long have you been dancing professionally?
- Where they have worked and currently work as a nightclub dancer
- Type of dancer?

Recruitment and employment questions

- How did you find out about nightclub dancing as an occupation?
- How did you find out about your current/most recent nightclub dancing job?
- **What did you have to do to get your current/most recent job(s)?**
 - What criteria were used by your employer to judge whether you and/ or other applicants were suitable for the position? Is appearance or dance skill more important?
 - Do you know of anyone who applied for a position as a nightclub dancer and was rejected? Why do you think they were rejected?
 - **What do you think makes a good female nightclub dancer? What do you think makes a good male nightclub dancer?**
- How are you paid?
- How much are you paid?
- Did you have to sign a contract or agree to any particular terms when you joined the agency/ before you started dancing in any nightclubs?
- What happens if you are meant to be dancing on a particular night but you cannot make it (e.g. if you are ill)?

Pre-job learning and socialisation questions

- Have you taken any pole dancing/ podium dancing lessons?
- Have you had any other dance lessons?
- Do you have any dance qualifications?
- What other dance experience have you had?
- Do you have any previous experience in other types of performance (such as drama classes or being in a school/theatre production)?

- **Out of all of your previous dance and performance experience, what do you rely on most when you are dancing for a nightclub? (Ask about specific nightclubs)**

On-the-job learning questions

- **Tell me about your first shift** in [first nightclub they danced professionally in].
 - What did you wear? What did you do? Did it go well? How did you feel?
- Were there other dancers at [first job nightclub]? Were they helpful on your first night? What did they do?
- Were the other staff in the nightclub helpful on your first night? What did they do?
- **Now tell me about your first shift in [current/most recent job]**
 - What did you wear? What did you do? Did it go well? How did you feel?
- Are there other dancers at [current job]? Were they helpful on your first night?
- Were the other staff in the nightclub helpful on your first night? What did they do?

- What styles of dancing do you usually do as a nightclub dancer?
- What style of dancing do you do in [name of nightclub]?
- Tell me about some of the dance moves or types of movement that you use in [name of nightclub] on a typical night.
- **How did you learn that/those move(s)?**
- **How do you view your level of dance skill in comparison to other dancers you know?**

- **Do you have a particular image as a nightclub dancer?**
- **Did you come up with this image?**
 - What do you usually wear when you are nightclub dancing?
 - How do you prepare for nightclub dancing?
 - What do you wear when you are dancing for [nightclub]?
 - How much say do you have in what you wear for dancing at [nightclub]?
 - What is your favourite genre of music to dance to?
 - What music do they play at [nightclub]?
 - Does the DJ put on particular tracks for you to dance to?
- **How would you describe what you do as a nightclub dancer to others?**
- **What do your friends and family outside of nightclub dancing think about what you do?**
- **What steps would a person need to take to become a professional nightclub dancer?**

Appendix B:

Examples of SMS Messages Sent to Participants

(Names have been replaced with pseudonyms)

Text message sent to Leon

Hi Leon, I'm a PhD student from Cardiff Uni & I'm doing a project on becoming a nightclub dancer. Catherine gave me ur number as she thought u might want 2 talk 2 me about being a dancer & an agency manager. I will phone you tomorrow 2 invite u 2 take part, unless u reply 'no' 2 this text. Lucy Sims.

Text message sent to Fiona

Hi Fiona, I'm a sociology student from Cardiff Uni & I'm doing a research project on club dancers – how they learn their job. Kelly gave me ur number as she thought u might like 2 talk about ur experiences. I will phone u 2moro 2 invite u 2 take part, unless u reply 'no' 2 this text. Lucy Sims.