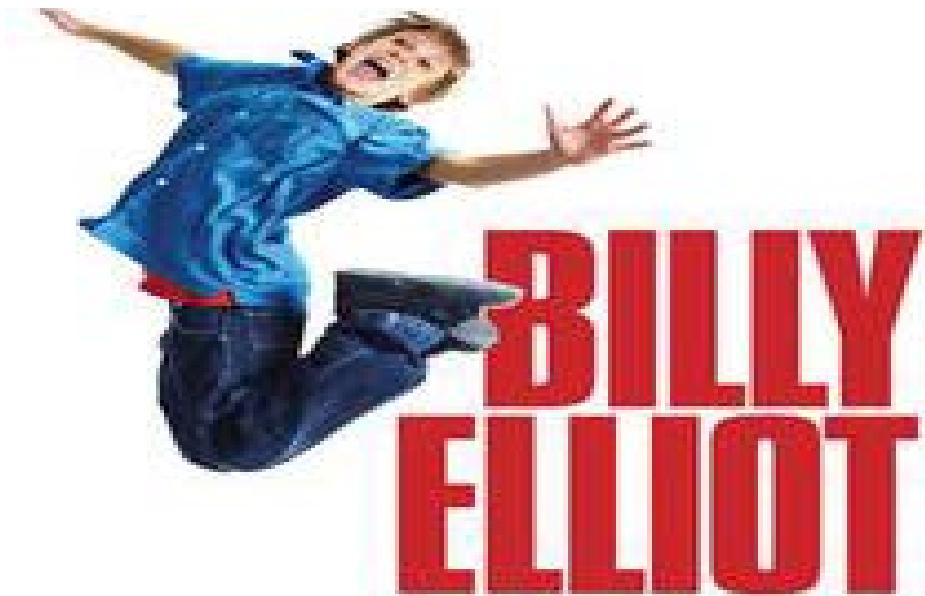


“Oi.Dancing Boy!”: exploring the limits of movement and masculinity



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Dance & Masculinity : the dominant discourses

- “the Western European paradigm situates dance as primarily a ‘female’ art form” (Risner,2009) >> male dancers as ‘Other’ & ‘Othered’(Paechter, 1998):



- boys who dance are often subject to a homosexual presumption (Berger,2003 ; Gard,2008)

Aim & Research Questions

- RQ1 What are boys' experiences of dance education and training in their dance schools and day schools ?
- RQ2 How do young male dancers conform to, negotiate with and contest the dominant discourses about dance and masculinity ?
- RQ3 What do these research findings imply for policy and practice in boys' dance education and training?

• Theoretical Frame

Poststructuralist lens - gender and sexuality as performed identities and social constructions (Butler, 1990,1999) >
masculinities are therefore multiple and relational

“Inclusive Masculinity Theory ” (Anderson, 2009): >>> a social constructionist theory based on ethnographic research in UK & USA in 2 main contexts – sports (cheerleading, rugby, soccer) and education (sixth-forms & universities) .

Key finding - declining homophobia and homohysteria and a new stratification of men’s gender (to replace Connell’s schema of hegemonic, complicit, marginalized and subordinated masculinities) with “inclusive” and “orthodox” masculinity (Anderson,2009).

Orthodox & Inclusive Masculinity

Orthodox Masculinity – anti-femininity & misogyny, conservatism, stoicism, excessive risk-taking, homohysteria (males remain tactically and emotionally distant from one another)

What does Inclusive Masculinity look like ?

- A softening of heterosexual masculinities
- An erosion of policing mechanisms that were predicated on compulsory heterosexuality ; decreasing homophobia
- Homosocial tactility – kiss/cuddle/maintain ‘bromances’
- Decreased sexism, racism and masculine bullying
- Inclusive of gay peers/ pro-gay language > positive social effect
- Expanded range of behaviours – Dance ?

Methods

Qualitative data generation

- semi-structured interviews with 26 male dancers, aged 11-18, attending 23 secondary schools in NW England, (19 state + 4 independent) and 16 dance schools
 - 8 working class (31%) ; 18 middle class (69%)
 - 1 bisexual (3.8%); 7 homosexual (26.9%) ; 11 heterosexual (43.3%); 7 unknown (26.9%)
- semi-structured interviews with 6 dance teachers (4f/2m), 4 parents (2f/2m) & 4 dance policymakers (3f/1m)
- data were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

1. Gender essentialism & heteronormativity > policing > regulation > conformity (Foucault, 1979/1990; Butler 1990), especially in day schools

'Open' dancers & 'secret' dancers

12 'Open' dancers (46.2%) ; 14 'Secret' dancers (53.8 %) at day school, but time frames varied from a few weeks to 5 years.

Int: Who knew about your dancing ?

Owen: No one knew...I kept it to myself but then I won a competition and it was in the newspaper and then everyone knew. After that, there were so many incidents of bullying ...I can't count the times I had comments saying I was gay because I danced ... and they would write stuff on bus windows ...it was a hard time. I wasn't proud of dancing anymore. I'd still dance but it would make me feel bad because I felt everyone was judging me.

2.Bullying in day schools

Verbal, physical and online 22/26 84.6%

None	4	15.4%
Mild	10	38.5%
Moderate	7	26.9%
Severe	5	19.2%

Verbal (n=22): often homophobic “ gay/ homo /fag “ ; “that’s so gay “ - used to police masculinity (Chambers et al 2004; Lahelma,2002; Pascoe,2007) - problematizes the ‘pro – gay discourse’ of IMT (McCormack, 2012)

Physical (n=6): kicking, pushing, shoving, stamping (on feet),punching

Online (n=1): homophobic comments via social media

3. Masculine recuperation / Heterosexual recuperation

Masculine recuperation - e.g. Hansen 1996; Epstein & Steinberg 1996 ;Lingard & Douglas 1999; Martino 2006; Lingard 2012 – a rejection of gender equality and a desire to recoup the patriarchal gender order

Heterosexual recuperation- McCormack, 2012, / ; strategies used to establish and maintain heterosexual identities without invoking homophobia

“Masculinity must be proved, and no sooner is it proved that it is again questioned and must be proved again – constant, relentless, unachievable...”
Kimmel, 1994,p122

3.1 Gender policing of dance genres > youth ‘taste cultures’ (Cann, 2014) that delineate the limits of masculinity > safe & cool dance genres valorise masculinity

“ ...many boys are reluctant to engage with materials or activities regarded as ‘feminine’ for fear of being Othered, harassed and bullied “ (Jackson, 2006, p.128)

Safe/Cool = Urban dance (break/hip-hip/street)

Unsafe/Uncool = Ballet, Latin-American, Tap, Contemporary, Ballroom

Int: You’ve done Street dance for a year or so now. Would you like to try other styles?

*Caleb : Mmm...I...I...well, I don’t know how it’d go down if I did that jazz type stuff. Yeah, like contemporary and...which is good, but it wouldn’t be ...like... cool. My mates at college, they’d take the p**s big time, call me fag...*

3.1 cont. Gender policing of dance genres > youth ‘taste cultures’ (Cann, 2014) that delineate the limits of masculinity > uncool dance genres threaten masculinity

Int: So, is this idea of dance being ‘cool’ important?

Gareth: Yes, to attract guys to dance the first thing is for it to be cool. If something isn't cool, guys won't want to do it, definitely. (Gareth,14)

Reece :I did Irish dancing from 6 to about 14, and I did that because I'm Irish and my little sister did it and I went along... When I was in high school I got bullied a bit and got called gay and that upset me...I stopped it [Irish dancing] when I got into the middle of high school because it wasn't cool.... (Reece,16)

3.2 Self-policing of movement and choreographic practices

Embodiment : of nature (our biological body) and nurture (our socially constructed body) ; sexual and gendered bodies are contested sites (Foucault,1977)

Even now, people will joke a little bit because of how I move my hips and stuff like that. Like if I'm in Tropicana [a student club], it's just a habit because I'm a dancer and I move my hips in a certain way, maybe more Latin like. There is definite stereotyping that goes hand-in-hand with the idea that someone isn't heterosexual if they have these mannerisms, or maybe it's more in dance because it's seen as a more feminine domain. (Marcus, 16)

3.2 cont. Self-policing movement and choreographic practices

Marcus: They [the teachers] expected me to do the same moves as the rest of the class. I remember when I started I really wasn't into doing some of the moves. I really was like, "I'm not doing that". And they'd be like, "Okay, we'll come up with a different move that's maybe not quite as feminine or what not".

Int: Can you describe these moves to me? What made them 'feminine'?

Marcus: I don't know, like.... there was one where you had to crouch down to the ground and come up straightening your legs so obviously your butt comes up and out, like the end of a 'slut drop' almost, as it would be known nowadays

3.3 Professing attraction to females (conquestial recuperation, McCormack, 2012)

Int: Have you ever felt the need to say or do anything to 'prove' your (hetero)sexuality?

Billy: Yes, maybe early on. You just say that you've got a thing for a particular female celebrity or something like that, just to make it clear... because in the past I've had people who... my mate thought I might be gay because I wasn't bringing loads of girls back from nights out or stuff like that. So, on the back of that, I got paranoid that people thought I was gay and I wasn't. But to set the record straight I might have said something to reinforce my attraction to girls. Ha, ha, I'm making myself sound really insecure, now aren't I? But I think, since then, I've become a bit more cool with it. At the start, I was a bit like, "I'm a guy doing ballroom dancing, so I've got to reinforce who I am, and what I am, and say I'm not anything that you think I might be", but since then I've just let it roll off my shoulders. I've not had to face or prove anything (Billy, 17)

3.4 Acquiring popularity through achievement in dance (Jackson, 2006 ; Francis, Skelton & Read, 2012)

Gareth: At first, people would just laugh at me... but over time I disproved their perception. I won a lot of trophies and I started to be more confident in saying I was a dancer because people could not judge me because I was qualified to say I was a dancer because I had won lots of competitions and I was proud to say I was a dancer. Even though they treated me like a different kind of person, they still thought, "This guy is unique", instead of thinking of me as a girl or gay stuff.

I started gaining more confidence in dancing and then became more popular in school. The teachers knew I was a dancer and asked me to do some performances in school. I did it lots of times in my primary school which was mixed sex and I performed in their "graduation" ceremony. At secondary school, I performed at school fairs and things like that. It was fun, and I started getting lots of confidence in telling people I was a dancer and my popularity improved. I started organising a dance society at high school which was the first ever society they had related to dance. I was really proud of this, I was 15. (Gareth,14)

3.5 Participating in sports and acquiring a ‘sporty’ boy identity

By enacting masculine behaviours focused around competitive sports, boys and young men both form for themselves, and project for others, identities that are at least partly constructed around sporting masculinities (Paechter, 2007, p.100)

Masculinity is overwhelmingly constructed through participation in football” (Paechter,) 2007, Swain, 2000; Epstein et al., 2001; Connolly, 2003; Renold, 2005).

Marcus,(16) a ‘sporty’ Ballroom and Latin-American dancer, recalled :

I'd always been into my football and stuff; you obviously you get a little bit of stick off the guys at football – “Oh, you do dancing! “and that sort of thing. I think it helped me that I was also doing other sports. If I'd only been a dancer, then maybe... but because they all knew me from football and everything before that... I don't know, I guess it's maybe different if you're just a dancer. I think it would have been different

3.5 cont. Reconfiguring dance as a sport : “making it macho” (Fisher, 2007)

I remember he told me there are more girls than guys in this sport and you need to be prepared that people will say you are doing something girlish. Just be prepared, because the majority of people think a guy’s sport is like football, but dancing, my dad says, it’s more like a girls’ sport. I said okay, I can take it. I was seven or eight when he said that.
(Gareth, 14)

Yeah, we do comps [competitions] in Street and Hip-hop in solos, duos and in teams. I’m in a team – that’s my favourite sort of comp, but we call them battles – cos that’s what they are, you’re battling to win, like you would if you were playing footy (Seb. 16)

Project B - Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)

- Launched in June 2017 to “*increase the proportion of boys taking part in dance activities by 2020*”
- Aims to “*promote the strong connection between dance and sport and challenge the traditional stereotypes of both cricketers and dancers*” via workshops in primary schools led by a cricket coach and a dance teacher
- School workshops will “*focus on strength, stamina, balance and fitness and the links between sport and dance*”

Project B - Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)

- RAD Male Dance Ambassador Iain Mackay has “*created choreography that will challenge stereotypes surrounding male dance, and ballet in particular, and celebrate boys who dare to dance*”
- “*Ian’s choreography draws on his experiences as a dancer, teacher and father. Based on terms of reference from popular culture, it will get boys busting ballet moves in a language they can relate to*”
- ‘Cool’ dance moves “*inspired by the popular male motifs of sports and superheroes ...from the Usain Bolt and Transformer pose to the Ronaldo jump ... spinning across the room like Angry Birds, or creating patterns and shapes like building blocks in Minecraft...an outlet for their natural energy*”



Project B

Conclusions

These findings trouble :

- “inclusive masculinity theory” (Anderson, 2009)
- the “declining significance of homophobia” and the “model of homosexually themed discourse ” or “pro-gay language” which “lacks any intent to marginalize or wound and has little, if any, negative social effect ” (McCormack,2012)
- current dance pedagogy (Li, 2010; Pike 2011; Lehikoinen, 2006)



Recommendations

Co-ordinated support for male dancers home >school>dance school

School anti-bullying policies > review and enforce

Improved initial teacher training and CPD for dance teachers across public and private sector with a greater emphasis on equality and diversity > pedagogic practices

Better support/advice services from One Dance UK (the subject association for Dance) and CDMT (Council for Dance, drama and Musical Theatre)

Reconceptualistion of the philosophy of dance in education (process > product); wider spectrum of genres ; movement not dance ?

Raise the status of all arts subjects